



The Pilgrim

“All the trumpets sounded for him on the other side”

—PILGRIM’S PROGRESS

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Cricket and Cathedral

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I have discovered lately that there are some compensations for senility... For example, I have learned that my aging eyes make it imperative that I — together with all flying things — must head for home shortly after sunset... Travel in the gathering darkness can become dangerous if not impossible... The clock of my days now keeps time with the rhythm of night and day... I see and note the failing light with the obedient acceptance of the sparrow on the telephone wire... I need an artificial clock as little as he does...

Other matters become clearer, too... I know now, more clearly than ever, that the chirp of the cricket strikes a lower note after darkness comes... His acceptance of the night is dynamic... It changes his life...

I was therefore very pleased to read somewhere that my new sense of slow inevitability, vague and formless, has been reduced to mathematics... The cricket beyond my window, as I return home, is now not only a clock but also a thermometer... If you let X equal the number of chirps per minute then X minus 40 over 4 plus 50 equals the temperature in degrees Fahrenheit... There is a strange but sure comfort in that....

The waning summer of 1968 has been marked by quadrennial conventions... A typical delegate is Colonel Bilge whom I met in August. He was slightly pink around the eyes, and he confessed to the remains of a dark brown taste in his mouth... “But it was a great convention,” he declared, mopping his brow with a souvenir handkerchief. “The greatest I’ve ever attended.”

“Yes, yes,” I said heartily, “but do you feel that limiting production is really the best way to increase employment?”

The colonel looked blank for a moment... Then his jaw set in the stern mold it assumes when he rises to a point of order... “The citadel of privilege will fall before the onslaught of an embattled people,” he said firmly...

I tried again. “What is your position, and that of the party, in the matter of technological unemployment?” I queried...

THE CRESSET

A mist seemed to form over the eyes of Colonel Bilge, but it quickly cleared... “The party (and he pointed to his convention badges) has never wavered in its devotion to the cause of the common man,” he murmured reverently... And he added, with a little catch in his voice: “Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute. *Nihil nisi bonum*”....

Still in the mood of evening but in another day... It is good to put the cricket and the cathedral under one overriding arch... I am sure there is one chirping now outside the choir windows at Chartres... Here are a few words I read more than thirty years ago...

“The day is ending and the evening calls us home. We turn reluctantly from the darkened windows of the chevet and descend the wide nave to the Western portals. Long shadows are gathering in the vault, beneath the arches, and around the columns; level rays from the setting sun are pouring through the Western Rose Window while, here or there, a candle shines... with a brilliance that is borrowed from the growing dusk.

“We have the cathedral to ourselves; and yet we are not and never again shall be, quite alone within these aisles, for whisperings come to us from right and left; they rise behind us and follow us; they descend from above — from vault, clerestory, triforium, arch, capital, and column; they rumble up from the crypt, and come to meet us from the portals. They fill the church like the music of a great chord; *langue d’oc* and *langue d’oeil*; Teuton, Celt and Lombard; Latin and Greek; Syrian and Arab; Scythian and Sarmatian; Persian and Babylonian; while, beneath them all, like the inarticulate murmurings of a great multitude, come distant voices from the world’s childhood, and even from its infancy.”

