

Metropolis



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PUBLISHER NOTES:

Quality of Life, Freedom, More time with the ones you Love.

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This book is not of today or of the future.
It tells of no place.
It serves no cause, party or class.
It has a moral which grows on the pillar of understanding:
"The mediator between brain and muscle must be the Heart."
—T. vH.

Chapter 1

1 Now the rumbling of the great organ swelled to a roar, pressing, like a rising giant, against the vaulted ceiling, to burst through it. Freder bent his head backwards, his wide-open, burning eyes stared unseeingly upward. His hands formed music from the chaos of the notes; struggling with the vibration of the sound and stirring him to his innermost depths.

He was never so near tears in his life and, blissfully helpless, he yielded himself up to the glowing moisture which dazzled him.

Above him, the vault of heaven in lapis lazuli; hovering therein, the twelve-fold mystery, the Signs of the Zodiac in gold. Set higher above them, the seven crowned ones: the planets. High above all a silver-shining bevy of stars: the universe.

Before the bedewed eyes of the organ-player, to his music, the stars of heavens began the solemn mighty dance.

The breakers of the notes dissolved the room into nothing. The organ, which Freder played, stood in the middle of the sea.

It was a reef upon which the waves foamed. Carrying crests of froth, they dashed violently onward, and the seventh was always the mightiest.

But high above the sea, which bellowed in the uproar of the waves, the stars of heaven danced the solemn, mighty dance.

Shaken to her core, the old earth started from her sleep. Her torrents dried up; her mountains fell to ruin. From the ripped open depths the fire welled up; The earth burnt with all she bore. The waves of the sea became waves of fire. The organ flared up, a roaring torch of music. The earth, the sea and the hymn-blazing organ crashed in and became ashes.

But high above the deserts and the spaces, to which creation was burnt, the stars of heaven danced the solemn mighty dance.

Then, from the grey, scattered ashes, on trembling wings unspeakably beautiful and solitary, rose a bird with jewelled feathers. It uttered a mournful cry. No bird which ever lived could have mourned so agonisingly.

It hovered above the ashes of the completely ruined earth. It hovered hither and thither, not knowing where to settle. It hovered above the grave of the sea and above the corpse of the earth. Never, since the sinning angel fell from heaven to hell, had the air heard such a cry of despair.

Then, from the solemn mighty dance of the stars, one freed itself and neared the dead earth. Its light was gentler than moonlight and more imperious than the fight of the sun. Among the music of the spheres it

was the most heavenly note. It enveloped the mourning bird in its dear light; it was as strong as a deity, crying: "To me... to me!"

Then the jewelled bird left the grave of the sea and earth and gave its sinking wings up to the powerful voice which bore it. Moving in a cradle of light, it swept upwards and sang, becoming a note of the spheres, vanishing into Eternity...

Freder let his fingers slip from the keys. He bent forward and buried his face in his hands. He pressed his eyes until he saw the fiery dance of the stars behind his eyelids. Nothing could help him—nothing. Everywhere, everywhere, in an agonising, blissful omnipresence, stood, in his vision, the one one countenance.

The austere countenance of the virgin, the sweet countenance of the mother—the agony and the desire with which he called and called for the one single vision for which his racked heart had not even a name, except the one, eternal, you... you... you!

He let his hands sink and raised his eyes to the heights of the beautifully vaulted room, in which his organ stood. From the sea-deep blue of the heavens, from the flawless gold of the heavenly bodies, from the mysterious twilight around him, the girl looked at him with the deadly severity of purity, quite maid and mistress, inviolability, graciousness itself, her beautiful brow in the diadem of goodness, her voice, pity, every word a song. Then to turn, and to go, and to vanish—no more to be found. Nowhere, nowhere.

"You—!" cried the man. The captive note struck against the walls, finding no way out.

Now the loneliness was no longer bearable. Freder stood up and opened the windows. The works lay, in quivering brightness, before him. He pressed his eyes closed, standing still, hardly breathing. He felt the proximity of the servants, standing silently, waiting for the command which would permit them to come to life.

There was one among them—Slim, with his courteous face, the expression of which never changed—Freder knew of him: one word to him, and, if the girl still walked on earth with her silent step, then Slim would find her. But one does not set a blood-hound on the track of a sacred, white hind, if one does not want to be cursed, and to be, all' his life long, a miserable, miserable man.

Freder saw, without looking at him, how Slim's eyes were taking stock of him. He knew that the silent creature, ordained, by his father, to be his all-powerful protector, was, at the same time, his keeper. During the fever of nights, bereft of sleep, during the fever of his work, in his workshop, during the fever when playing his organ, calling upon God, there would be Slim measuring the pulse of the son of his great master. He gave no reports; they were not required of him. But, if the hour should come in which they were demanded of him, he would certainly have a diary of faultless perfection to produce, from the number of steps with

which one in torment treads out his loneliness with heavy foot, from minute to minute, to the dropping of a brow into propped up hands, tired with longing.

Could it be possible that this man, who knew everything, knew nothing of her?

Nothing about him betrayed that he was aware of the upheaval in the well-being and disposition of his young master, since that day in the "Club of the Sons." But it was one of the slim, silent one's greatest secrets never to give himself away, and, although he had no entrance to the "Club of the Sons" Freder was by no means sure that the money-backed agent of his father would be turned back by the rules of the club.

He felt himself exposed, unclothed. A cruel brightness, which left nothing concealed, bathed him and everything in his workshop which was almost the most highly situated room in Metropolis.

"I wish to be quite alone," he said softly.

Silently the servants vanished, Slim went... But all these doors, which closed without the least sound, could also, without the least sound, be opened again to the narrowest chink.

His eyes aching, Freder fingered all the doors of his work-room.

A smile, a rather bitter smile, drew down the corners of his mouth. He was a treasure which must be guarded as crown jewels are guarded. The son of a great father, and the only son.

Really the only one—?

Really the only one—?

His thoughts stopped again at the exit of the circuit and the vision was there again and the scene and the event...

The "Club of the Sons" was, perhaps, one of the most beautiful buildings of Metropolis, and that was not so very remarkable. For fathers, for whom every revolution of a machine-wheel spelt gold, had presented this house to their sons. It was more a district than a house. It embraced theatres, picture-palaces, lecture-rooms and a library—in which, every book, printed in all the five continents, was to be found—race tracks and stadium and the famous "Eternal Gardens."

It contained very extensive dwellings for the young sons of indulgent fathers and it contained the dwellings of faultless male servants and handsome, well-trained female servants for whose training more time was requisite than for the development of new species of orchids.

Their chief task consisted in nothing but, at all times, to appear delightful and to be incapriciously cheerful; and, with their bewildering costume, their painted faces, and their eye-masks, surmounted by snow-white wigs and fragrant as flowers, they resembled delicate dolls of porcelain and brocade, devised by a master-hand, not purchaseable but rather delightful presents.

Freder was but a rare visitant to the "Club of the Sons." He preferred his work-shop and the starry chapel in which this organ stood. But when

once the desire took him to fling himself into the radiant joyousness of the stadium competitions he was the most radiant and joyous of all, playing on from victory to victory with the laugh of a young god.

On that day too... on that day too.

Still tingling from the icy coolness of falling water, every muscle still quivering in the intoxication of victory he had lain, stretched out, slender, panting, smiling, drunken, beside himself, almost insane with joy. The milk-coloured glass ceiling above the Eternal Gardens was an opal in the light which bathed it. Loving little women attended him, waiting roguishly and jealously, from whose white hands, from whose fine finger-tips he would eat the fruits he desired.

One was standing aside, mixing him a drink. From hip to knee billowed sparkling brocade. Slender, bare legs held proudly together, she stood, like ivory, in purple, peaked shoes. Her gleaming body rose, delicately, from her hips and—she was not aware of it—quivered in the same rhythm as did the man's chest in exhaling his sweet-rising breath. Carefully did the little painted face under the eye-mask watch the work of her careful hands.

Her mouth was not rouged, but yet was pomegranate red. And she smiled so unselfconsciously down at the beverage that it caused the other girls to laugh aloud.

Infected, Freder also began to laugh. But the glee of the maidens swelled to a storm as she who was mixing the drink, not knowing why they were laughing, became suffused with a blush of confusion, from her pomegranate-hued mouth to her lustrous hips. The laughter induced the friends, for no reason, only because they were young and care-free, to join in the cheerful sound. Like a joyously ringing rainbow, peal upon peal of laughter arched itself gaily above the young people.

Then suddenly—suddenly—Freder turned his head. His hands, which were resting on the hips of the drink-mixer, lost hold of her, dropping down by his sides as if dead. The laughter ceased, not one of the friends moved. Not one of the little, brocaded, bare-limbed women moved hand or foot. They stood and looked.

The door of the Eternal Gardens had opened and through the door came a procession of children. They were all holding hands. They had dwarves' faces, grey and ancient. They were little ghost-like skeletons, covered with faded rags and smocks. They had colourless hair and colourless eyes. They walked on emaciated bare feet. Noiselessly they followed their leader.

Their leader was a girl. The austere countenance of the Virgin. The sweet countenance of the mother. She held a skinny child by each hand. Now she stood still, regarding the young men and women one after another, with the deadly severity of purity. She was quite maid and mistress, inviolability—and was, too, graciousness itself, her beautiful brow in the diadem of goodness; her voice, pity; every word a song.

She released the children and stretched forward her hand, motioning towards the friends and saying to the children:

"Look, these are your brothers!"

And, motioning towards the children, she said to the friends:

"Look, these are your brothers!"

She waited. She stood still and her gaze rested upon Freder.

Then the servants came, the door-keepers came. Between these walls of marble and glass, under the opal dome of the Eternal Gardens, there reigned, for a short time, an unprecedented confusion of noise, indignation and embarrassment. The girl appeared still to be waiting. Nobody dared to touch her, though she stood so defenceless, among the grey infant-phantoms, Her eyes rested perpetually on Freder.

Then she took her eyes from his and, stooping a little, took the children's hands again, turned and led the procession out. The door swung to behind her; the servants disappeared with many apologies for not having been able to prevent the occurrence. All was emptiness and silence. Had not each of those before whom the girl had appeared, with her grey procession of children, so large a number of witnesses to the event they would have been inclined to put it down to hallucination.

Near Freder, upon the illuminated mosaic floor, cowered the little drink-mixer, sobbing uncontrolledly.

With a leisurely movement, Freder bent towards her and suddenly twitched the mask, the narrow black mask, from her eyes.

The drink-mixer shrieked out as though overtaken in stark nudity. Her hands flew up, clutching, and remained hanging stiffly in the air.

A little painted face stared, horror-stricken at the man. The eyes, thus exposed, were senseless, quite empty. The little face from which the charm of the mask had been taken away, was quite weird.

Freder dropped the black piece of stuff. The drink-mixer pounced quickly upon it, hiding her face. Freder looked around him.

The Eternal Gardens scintillated. The beautiful beings in it, even if, temporarily, thrown out of balance, shone in their well-cared-for-ness, their cleanly abundance. The odour of freshness, which pervaded everywhere, was like the breath of a dewy garden.

Freder looked down at himself. He wore, as all the youths in the "House of the Sons," the white silk, which they wore but once—the soft, supple shoes, with the noiseless soles.

He looked at his friends. He saw these beings who never wearied, unless from sport—who never sweated, unless from sport—who were never out of breath, unless from sport. Beings requiring their joyous games in order that their food and drink might agree with them, in order to be able, to sleep well and digest easily.

The tables, at which they had all eaten, were laid, as before-hand, with untouched dishes. Wine, golden and purple, embedded in ice or warmth, was there, proffering itself, like the loving little women. Now the music

was playing again. It had been silenced when the girlish voice spoke the five soft words:

"Look, these are your brothers!"

And once more, with her eyes resting on Freder:

"Look, these are your brothers!"

As one suffocating, Freder sprang up. The masked women stared at him. He dashed to the door. He ran along passages and down steps. He came to the entrance.

"Who was that girl?"

Perplexed shrugs. Apologies. The occurrence was inexcusable, the servants knew it. Dismissals, in plenty, would be distributed.

The Major Domo was pale with anger.

"I do not wish," said Freder, gazing into space, "that anyone should suffer for what has happened. Nobody is to be dismissed... I do not wish it... "

The Major Domo bowed in silence. He was accustomed to whims in the "Club of the Sons."

"Who is the girl... can nobody tell me?"

"No. Nobody. But if an inquiry is to be made?"

Freder remained silent. He thought of Slim. He shook his head. First slowly, then violently. "No—One does not set a bloodhound on the track of a sacred, white hind."

"Nobody is to inquire about her," he said, tonelessly.

He felt the soulless glance of the strange, hired person upon his face. He felt himself poor and besmirched. In an ill-temper which rendered him as wretched as though he had poison in his veins, he left the club. He walked home as though going into exile. He shut himself up in his workroom and worked. At nights he clung to his instrument and forced the monstrous solitude of Jupiter and Saturn down to him.

Nothing could help him—nothing! In an agonising blissful omnipresence stood, before his vision the one, one countenance; the austere countenance of the virgin, the sweet countenance of the mother.

A voice spoke:

"Look, these are your brothers."

And the glory of the heavens was nothing, and the intoxication of work was nothing. And the conflagration which wiped out the sea could not wipe out the soft voice of the girl:

"Look, these are your brothers!"

My God, my God—

With a painful, violent jerk, Freder turned around and walked up to his machine. Something like deliverance passed across his face as he considered this shining creation, waiting only for him, of which there was not a steel link, not a rivet, not a spring which he had not calculated and created.

The creature was not large, appearing still more fragile by reason of the huge room and flood of sunlight in which it stood. But the soft lustre of its metal and the proud swing with which the foremost body seemed to raise itself to leap, even when not in motion, gave it something of the fair godliness of a faultlessly beautiful animal, which is quite fearless, because it knows itself to be invincible.

Freder caressed his creation. He pressed his head gently against the machine. With ineffable affection he felt its cool, flexible members.

"To-night," he said, "I shall be with you. I shall be entirely enwrapped by you. I shall pour out my life into you and shall fathom whether or not I can bring you to life. I shall, perhaps, feel your throb and the commencement of movement in your controlled body. I shall, perhaps, feel the giddiness with which you throw yourself out into your boundless element, carrying me—me, the man who made—through the huge sea of midnight. The seven stars will be above us and the sad beauty of the moon. Mount Everest will remain, a hill, below us. You shall carry me and I shall know: You carry me as high as I wish... "

He stopped, closing his eyes. The shudder which ran through him was imparted, a thrill, to the silent machine.

"But perhaps," he continued, without raising his voice, "perhaps you notice, you, my beloved creation, that you are no longer my only love. Nothing on earth is more vengeful than the jealousy of a machine which believes itself to be neglected. Yes, I know that... You are imperious mistresses... Thou shalt have none other Gods but me. Am I right? A thought apart from you—you feel it at once and become perverse. How could I keep it hidden from you that all my thoughts are not with you. I can't help it, my creation. I was bewitched, machine. I press my forehead upon you and my forehead longs for the knees of the girl of whom I do not even know the name... "

He ceased and held his breath. He raised his head and listened.

Hundreds and thousands of times had he heard that same sound in the city. But hundreds and thousands of time, it seemed to him, he had not comprehended it.

It was an immeasurably glorious and transporting sound. As deep and rumbling as, and more powerful than, any sound on earth. The voice of the ocean when it is angry, the voice of falling torrents, the voice of very close thunderstorms would be miserably drowned in this Behemoth-din. Without being shrill it penetrated all walls, and, as long as it lasted, all things seemed to swing in it. It was omnipresent, coming from the heights and from the depths, being beautiful and horrible, being an irresistible command.

It was high above the town. It was the voice of the town.

Metropolis raised her voice. The machines of Metropolis roared; they wanted to be fed.

Freder pushed open the glass doors. He felt them tremble like strings under strokes of the bow. He stepped out on to the narrow gallery which ran around this, almost the highest house of Metropolis. The roaring sound received him, enveloped him, never coming to an end.

Great as Metropolis was: at all four corners of the city, this roared command was equally perceptible:

Freder looked across the city at the building known to the world as the "New Tower of Babel."

In the brain-pan of this New Tower of Babel lived the man who was himself the Brain of Metropolis.

As long as the man over there, who was nothing but work, despising sleep, eating and drinking mechanically, pressed his fingers on the blue metal plate, which apart from himself, no man had ever touched, so long would the voice of the machine-city of Metropolis roar for food, for food, for food...

She wanted living men for food.

Then the living food came pushing along in masses. Along the street it came, along its own street which never crossed with other people's streets. It rolled on, a broad, an endless stream. The stream was twelve files deep. They walked in even step. Men, men, men—all in the same uniform, from throat to ankle in dark blue linen, bare feet in the same hard shoes, hair tightly pressed down by the same black caps.

And they all had the same faces. And they all appeared to be of the same age. They held themselves straightened up, but not straight. They did not raise their heads, they pushed them forward. They planted their feet forward, but they did not walk. The open gates of the New Tower of Babel, the machine center of Metropolis, gulped the masses down.

Towards them, but past them, another procession dragged itself along, the shift just used. It rolled on, a broad, an endless stream. The stream was twelve files deep. They walked in even step. Men, men, men—all in the same uniform, from throat to ankle in dark blue linen, bare feet in the same hard shoes, hair tightly pressed down by the same black caps. And they all had the same faces. And they all seemed one thousand years old. They walked with hanging fists, they walked with hanging heads. No, they planted their feet forward but they did not walk. The open gates of the New Tower of Babel, the machine centre of Metropolis, threw the masses up as it gulped them down.

When the fresh living food had disappeared through the gates the roaring voice was silent at last. And the never ceasing, throbbing hum of the great Metropolis became perceptible again, producing the effect of silence, a deep relief. The man who was the great brain in the brain-pan of Metropolis had ceased to press his fingers on the blue metal plate.

In ten hours he would let the machine brute roar anew. And in another ten hours, again. And always the same, and always the same, without ever loosening the ten-hour clamp.

Metropolis did not know what Sunday was. Metropolis knew neither high days nor holidays. Metropolis had the most saintly cathedral in the world, richly adorned with Gothic decoration. In times of which only the chronicles could tell, the star-crowned Virgin on its tower used to smile, as a mother, from out her golden mantle, deep, deep down upon the pious red rooves and the only companions of her graciousness were the doves which used to nest in the gargoyles of the water-spouts and the bells which were called after the four archangels and of which Saint Michael was the most magnificent.

It was said that the Master who cast it turned villain for its sake, for he stole consecrated and unconsecrated silver, like a raven, casting it into the metal body of the bell. As a reward for his deed he suffered, on the place of execution, the dreadful death on the wheel. But, it was said, he died exceedingly happy, for the Archangel Michael rang him on his way to death so wonderfully, touchingly, that all agreed the saints must have forgiven the sinner already, to ring the heavenly bells, thus, to receive him.

The bells still rang with their old, ore voices but when Metropolis roared, then Saint Michael itself was hoarse. The New Tower of Babel and its fellow houses stretched their sombre heights high above the cathedral spire, that the young girls in the work-rooms and wireless stations gazed down just as deep from the thirtieth story windows on the star-crowned virgin as she, in earlier days, had looked down on the pious red rooves. In place of doves, flying machines swarmed over the cathedral roof and over the city, resting on the rooves, from which, at night glaring pillars and circles indicated the course of flight and landing points.

The Master of Metropolis had already considered, more than once, having the cathedral pulled down, as being pointless and an obstruction to the traffic in the town of fifty million inhabitants.

But the small, eager sect of Gothics, whose leader was Desertus, half monk, half one enraptured, had sworn the solemn oath: If one hand from the wicked city of Metropolis were to dare to touch just one stone of the cathedral, then they would neither repose nor rest until the wicked city of Metropolis should lie, a heap of ruins, at the foot of her cathedral.

The Master of Metropolis used to avenge the threats which constituted one sixth of his daily mail. But he did not care to fight with opponents to whom he rendered a service by destroying them for their belief. The great brain of Metropolis, a stranger to the sacrifice of a desire, estimated the incalculable power which the sacrificed ones and martyrs showered upon their followers too high rather than too low. Too, the demolition of the cathedral was not yet so burning a question as to have been the object of an estimate of expenses. But when the moment should come, the cost of its pulling down would exceed that of

the construction of Metropolis. The Gothics were ascetics; the Master of Metropolis knew by experience that a multi-millionaire was more cheaply bought over than an ascetic.

Freder wondered, not without a foreign feeling of bitterness, how many more times the great Master of Metropolis would permit him to look on at the scene which the cathedral would present to him on every rainless day: When the sun sank at the back of Metropolis, the houses turning to mountains and the streets to valleys; when the stream of light, which seemed to crackle with coldness, broke forth from all windows, from the walls of the houses, from the rooves and from the heart of the town; when the silent quiver of electric advertisements began; when the searchlights, in all colours of the rainbow, began to play around the New Tower of Babel; when the omnibuses turned to chains of light-spitting monsters, the little motor cars to scurrying, luminous fishes in a waterless deep-sea, while from the invisible harbour of the underground railway, an ever equal, magical shimmer pressed on to be swallowed by the hurrying shadows—then the cathedral would stand there, in this boundless ocean of light, which dissolved all forms by outshining them, the only dark object, black and persistent, seeming, in its lightlessness, to free itself from the earth, to rise higher and ever higher, and appearing in this maelstrom of tumultuous light, the only reposeful and masterful object.

But the Virgin on the top of the tower seemed to have her own gentle starlight, and hovered, set free from the blackness of the stone, on the sickle of the silver moon, above the cathedral.

Freder had never seen the countenance of the Virgin and yet he knew it so well he could have drawn it: the austere countenance of the Virgin, the sweet countenance of the mother.

He stooped, clasping the burning palms of his hands around the iron railing.

"Look at me, Virgin," he begged, "Mother, look at me!" The spear of a searchlight flew into his eyes causing him to close them angrily. A whistling rocket hissed through the air, dropping down into the pale twilight of the afternoon, the word: Yoshiwara...

Remarkably white, and with penetrating beams, there hovered, towering up, over a house which was not to be seen, the word: Cinema.

All the seven colours of the rainbow flared, cold and ghostlike in silently swinging circles. The enormous face of the clock on the New Tower of Babel was bathed in the glaring cross-fire of the searchlights. And over and over again from the pale, unreal—looking sky, dripped the word: Yoshiwara. Freder's eyes hung on the clock of the New Tower of Babel, where the seconds flashed off as sparks of breathing lightning, continuous in their coming as in their going. He calculated the time which had passed since the voice of Metropolis had roared for food, for food, for food. He knew that behind the throbbing second flashes on the

New Tower of Babel there was a Wide, bare room with narrow windows, the height of the walls, switch-boards on all sides, right in the centre, the table, the most ingenious instrument which the Master of Metropolis had created, on which to play, alone, as solitary master.

On the plain chair before it, the embodiment of the great brain: the Master of Metropolis. Near his right hand the sensitive blue metal plate, to which he would stretch out his right hand, with the infallible certainty of a healthy machine, when seconds enough had flicked off into eternity, to let Metropolis roar once more—for food, for food, for food—

In this moment Freder was seized with the persistent idea that he would lose his reason if he had, once more, to hear the voice of Metropolis thus roaring to be fed. And, already convinced of the pointlessness of his quest, he turned from the spectacle of the light crazy city and went to seek the Master of Metropolis, whose name was Joh Fredersen and who was his father.

Chapter 2

2 THE BRAIN-PAN of the New Tower of Babel was peopled with numbers.

From an invisible source the numbers dropped rhythmically down through the cooled air of the room, being collected, as in a water-basin, at the table at which the great brain of Metropolis worked, becoming objective under the pencils of his secretaries. These eight young men resembled each other as brothers, which they were not. Although sitting as immovable as statues, of which only the writing fingers of the right hand stirred, yet each single one, with sweat-bedewed brow and parted lips, seemed the personification of Breathlessness.

No head was raised on Freder's entering, Not even his father's.

The lamp under the third loud-speaker glowed white-red.

New York spoke.

Joh Fredersen was comparing the figures of the evening exchange report with the lists which lay before him. Once his voice sounded, vibrationless:

"Mistake. Further inquiry."

The first secretary quivered, stooped lower, rose and retired on soundless soles. Joh Fredersen's left eyebrow rose a trifle as he watched the retreating figure—only as long as was possible without turning his head.

A thin, concise penal-line crossed out a name.

The white-red light glowed. The voice spoke. The numbers dropped down through the great room. In the brain-pan of Metropolis.

Freder remained standing, motionless, by the door. He was not sure as to whether or not his father had noticed him. Whenever he entered this room he was once more a boy of ten years old, his chief characteristic uncertainty, before the great concentrated, almighty certainty, which was called Joh Fredersen, and was his father.

The first secretary walked past him, greeting him silently, respectfully. He resembled a competitor leaving the course, beaten. The chalky face of the young man hovered for one moment before Freder's eyes like a big, white, lacquer mask. Then it was blotted out.

Numbers dropped down through the room.

One chair was empty. On seven others sat seven men, pursuing the numbers which sprang unceasingly from the invisible.

A lamp glowed white-red.

New York spoke.

A lamp sparkled up: white-green.

London began to speak.

Freder looked up at the clock opposite the door, commanding the whole wall like a gigantic wheel. It was the same clock, which, from the heights of the New Tower of Babel, flooded by searchlights, flicked off its second-sparks over the great Metropolis.

Joh Fredersen's head stood out against it. It was a crushing yet accepted halo above the brain of Metropolis.

The searchlights raved in a delirium of colour upon the narrow windows which ran from floor to ceiling. Cascades of light frothed against the panes. Outside, deep down, at the foot of the New Tower of Babel boiled the Metropolis. But in this room not a sound was to be heard but the incessantly dripping numbers.

The Rotwang-process had rendered the walls and windows sound-proof.

In this room, which was at the same time crowned and subjugated by the mighty time-piece, the clock, indicating numbers, nothing had any significance but numbers. The son of the great Master of Metropolis realised that, as long as numbers came dripping out of the invisible no word, which was not a number, and coming from a visible mouth, could lay claim to the least attention.

Therefore he stood, gazing unceasingly at his father's head, watching the monstrous hand of the clock sweep onward, inevitably, like a sickle, a reaping scythe pass through the skull of his father, without harming him, climb upwards, up the number-beset ring, creep around the heights and sink again, to repeat the vain blow of the scythe. At last the white-red light went out. A voice ceased.

Then the white-green light went out, too.

Silence.

The hands of those writing stopped and, for the space of a moment, they sat as though paralysed, relaxed, exhausted. Then Joh Fredersen's voice said with a dry gentleness:

"Thank you, to-morrow."

And without looking round:

"What do you want, my boy?"

The seven strangers quitted the now silent room. Freder crossed to his father, whose glance was sweeping the lists of captured number-drops. Freder's eyes clung to the blue metal plate near his father's right hand.

"How did you know it was I?" he asked, softly.

Joh Fredersen did not look up at him. Although his face had gained an expression of patience and pride at the first question which his son put to him he had lost none of his alertness. He glanced at the clock. His fingers glided over the flexible keyboard. Soundlessly were orders flashed out to waiting men.

"The door opened. Nobody was announced. Nobody comes to me unannounced. Only my son."