

of enjoying and understanding the work of the former. The individual actors or singers can make themselves intelligible to only about twenty-five hundred people at a time, certainly not more than three thousand. It should be the ambition of the theatre-technician to provide a medium that shall not only give greater freedom to production of existing works, but pave the way if possible for new forms of dramatic thought and inspiration.

As we all know to our sorrow, it takes years to get rid of bad architecture. The tragedy is, if one may say so, that for the last hundred years, at any rate, no real effort appears to have been made to think of the theatre structurally except in terms that our children know so well. The old Globe Theatre of Shakespeare's day had the germ of an ancient idea, which, alas, has been swamped by the vulgarity of a later period. A model of a theatre of

this period (sixteenth century) was included, among others, in the British Theatre Section at the recent International Exposition in Paris. Set beside the work of other living stage-designers this reproduction was the most modern of them all, inasmuch as the idea crudely constructed in this reproduction solved a problem that more modern designers had obviously not even attempted to overcome. One could mentally imagine this old play-house rising from the ashes of, say, Madame Tussaud's, rejuvenated by science and modern engineering, adding one more chapter to the amazing record of action and inaction of the theatre. This time it might be a home, not only for Shakespeare and other drama, but for opera, indirectly supported by a winter garden, restaurant, and hotel, to make it a sound commercial proposition and worthy of the finest site in the greatest city in the world.

THE MACHINE DRAMA¹

BY R. M. FOX

IN Europe the dramatists of the Machine are emerging. Preoccupation with this theme may be observed in the work of the younger German playwrights, as in Toller's *Machine Wreckers* and in the *R. U. R.* of the Czech dramatist, Čapek. But it is in Italy and in Russia that machine-worship has reached its highest and, in some respects, its most ludicrous point.

Marinetti, the Italian futurist, was engaged, even before the war, in daz-

zling us with his angles and geometric figures, which he proclaimed as the highest expression of poetry and art. He was a believer in violence, and as, next to the factory, military organization is the greatest example of men being organized on mechanical lines as 'man power,' it is not surprising that the futurists whole-heartedly endorsed militarism and urged that a great world war would purify, energize, and strengthen our social life, dispel dissipation and give us sterner, simpler, and more ascetic habits. Our post-war

¹ From the *New Statesman* (London Independent weekly), January 9

civilization, with its jazz, night clubs, and other frivolities, hardly justifies Signor Marinetti's philosophy, but he remains unchastened.

Marinetti tells us that machine forms express the true spirit of the age. The machine contains all the finer attributes of man, and he has only to assert the will to be a machine to recapture the best part of himself. So in Italy we have a ballet that reproduces the life and environment of the locomotive; the dancers are enclosed in cylinders, funnels, and so forth, representing parts of the locomotive, the scene being that of a dissected railway-system. Marinetti's idea seems to be that man is a cross between a marionette and a Meccano set.

In Russia the same idea is being worked out, though here it is given a political coloring. According to Meierhold and Foregger, the leaders of the new movement, machine drama has a tremendous significance for labor. They say that workmen and large-scale industrialists both accept the machine age with enthusiasm, the only difference being that the heavy-industry magnates are solely concerned with efficient production on commercial lines, while they want to use machinery to facilitate social changes. Foregger has invented grotesque machine-dances, and actors have to practise 'Taylorized gestures' and to use their limbs in a 'biomechanical' fashion in his *Mast* for theatre. Workmen, too, in the 'Prolectut' theatre are encouraged to develop on similar lines. The idealization of the machine has progressed so far that a sympathetic investigator, Mr. Huntly Carter, says in his book on the Russian theatre, '... they attribute to the machine all their social and moral attributes ... their own vitality, strength, courage, clearness, steel nerves, persistency, precision, rhythm, style, endurance.' In the Zon,

the largest theatre in Moscow, the audience has to make way for the players as they dash up and down on motor-bicycles. In another theatre, familiar sounds are got by means of a jazz orchestra consisting of a variety of instruments — a motor hooter, typewriter, pieces of metal, and so on.

King Machine has been enthroned on the Russian stage, and it is no wonder when we consider how much machinery means in the present need for reconstruction; but when misguided enthusiasts emphasize this as a new revelation it is necessary to ask ourselves just what it is that we want from the stage.

The highest form of drama is that which enables people to develop as human beings — which brings to them beauty, nobility, dignity, all those qualities that differentiate men from machines and raise them above the beasts. In nature we can see much that is beautiful and un-Taylorized; trailing clouds of glory, flowers and tendrils, hold us with their graceful loveliness just as do those human qualities of character and intellect. What has the machine drama to say to all this? It certainly appears as if the triumph of the machine were being celebrated here and not the triumph of man. We are told by Mr. Carter that 'biomechanics, the science of the mechanism of the body, assumes that the worker is an organized piece of mechanism like a machine . . . and that he is so much accustomed to machine movements and sounds that they form his natural modes of expression.' On such reasoning I suppose the swineherd would be expected to confine himself to grunts!

So far it has unfortunately been found impossible to get plays turned out by machinery, and the dramatist is still allowed, within limits, to give us his glimpse of the wildness and sweetness that eludes our machine-ridden

civilization; but the actor is treated like a routine industrial worker. In all this we see man engaged in remaking himself as a machine, and the result is not inviting. It is the apotheosis of the commonplace mass-production of Robot-like men who are not encouraged to aim at anything higher. Growth and development are frowned on, and we are supplied with something that is stamped out as if by a machine that can supply any quantity all exactly the same shape and size.

Mr. Huntly Carter, though he has his misgivings, may try to convince us that the drama of the future will be that of workmen, who, after tinkering about all day with gas pipes and boilers, will dress up as gas pipes and boilers on the stage at night or will go to watch others doing it. But with some industrial experience to go on, I can tell him that, whoever else will stand this, workmen will not; gas pipes and boilers will have lost all novelty and attraction for them by the time the day's work is over. It must be interesting to ramble round Europe and to see a lot of actors made up to resemble a row of screws, but a few years in a motor factory would probably result in a yearning for something else. Peculiar as it may seem to some, the working-class outlook does not mean being reconciled to ugliness, to functioning merely as bits of machinery. Thinking workers, like other people, desire to develop their personalities as men and women, to extend their mental horizons, to gain more experience and acquire fresh stimuli to thought and endeavor.

The directors of this machine drama may not be harmed by it. Apparently there is something in its ugliness that harmonizes with their natures. They may even regard it in the spirit of curiosity as if it were a dance by Fiji Islanders — so quaint! But it will not do; though machinery enters into

drama, it should not be allowed to push life and beauty out.

Workmen, like other people, will continue to crave for beauty, nobility, dignity, for those human attributes of which they are deprived when they work and live in surroundings of sordid ugliness. Progress consists in giving satisfaction to those cravings, not in causing them to be relinquished. The plays they want will deal with realities, crude realities, maybe; that is, the realities they know. But it is the spark of divine fire in such creative work that will move and inspire them.

Typical of this real new drama, the drama that will live because it has a message for humanity, is Mr. Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*, which recently achieved a success in London. The author is a Dublin workman who does not conceive it to be his high destiny to make a play in which the characters function like the wheels and levers in a watch. The action takes place in and around a dingy, dilapidated Dublin tenement whose bare, creaking stairways are haunted by drunkenness, shiftless misery, and death. A comparison of *Juno and the Paycock* with W. B. Yeats's *Cathleen ni Houlihan* reveals the change in the spirit of the age. Between that grand, shadowy romantic figure of the Celtic Twilight days, beckoning to sacrifice, and Juno, the tenement charwoman, saying to her son, 'Ah, you lost your best principle when you lost your arm; them's the only sort of principles that's any good to a workin' man,' lies a world of disillusion. But Juno shares with Cathleen ni Houlihan those qualities of dignity and beauty that rise out of the squalor, shining more brilliantly because of the surrounding darkness. And the widow in the funeral scene whose words are echoed by Juno, 'Take away our hearts of stone and give us hearts o' flesh,' touches a

humanity worth sharing. This is the new drama, derived directly from working-class experience, which sacrifices none of the fineness of the old.

No, there is nothing distinctively working-class about the glorification of machinery in drama. In Fascist Italy it is being done as in revolutionary Russia. To triumph over the machine and use it for social ends is doubtless a fine thing. So is arithmetic, though we don't make plays about it. But to-day many industrial workers have to wait until the engine or the plant needs overhauling before they can have a holiday lasting more than a day or two; they work on night shifts because the machinery must be kept running. Their lives are shaped by the capacities and needs of the machines, and all the rose-colored machine-talk is distinctly premature. Since the cold douche of reality that succeeded the early enthusiasms of the industrial revolution in England, we will have none of it. Although it may suit Italian futurists, it draws too much on futurity. The machine-Moloch has yet to be tamed and whipped to heel.

Mass organization, particularly on military lines, is bound to result in strengthening machine conceptions, as such phrases as 'man power,' 'iron discipline,' and so on, show. But these conceptions are the allies of dictatorship rather than of democracy. Yet the end of all social progress is to make people individuals. We do not want a bureaucracy and a blurred crowd, but a community of thinking, intelligent, striving, and developing human beings, each entitled to an uncramped existence. If in the experiments of collectivism at present being carried out it is assumed that besides attacking individualism it is necessary to attack individuality, there will inevitably be a great human recoil.

I have seen something of the post-

Revolutionary painting and drama in Moscow. The hotels were crammed from floor to ceiling with futurist paintings, weird assemblages of spirals and angles, oblongs and squares, blotches of paint — one, I remember, like a slab of greenish-black caviar. A canvas, painted half red and half white, bore the inscription 'Red v. White.' Some had bits of scrap iron stuck on to heighten the effect. These things were housed in the hotels because nobody would have them elsewhere. And I was informed authoritatively that the people did not like futurist paintings and futurist drama; they found both unintelligible. It was said that futurism belonged to the old decadent order going down in a blaze of delirium. M. Lunarcharsky, the Minister of Education, whom I saw in the Kremlin, told me that he did not take sides but endeavored to hold the balance fairly between the futurist machine dramatists and the rest. My impression was that it is only a passing phenomenon. The French Revolution had its David, the friend of humanity, with his Gargantuan canvases and mediocre results.

It is possible that the mass of the people to-day may be temporarily submerged by the power of the huge factories; they may accept the impress of these machines on their souls and consent dully to be made after the pattern of the iron monsters they tend, but always there will be those standing for human liberation who will decline to accept this position as desirable. The natural impulses of the people will eventually break through all barriers and free us from the purely commercial theatre with its degraded appeal, and from the unhealthy coteries who try to impose a machine drama, the ugliness of which they consider suitable for those inferior 'masses' they quite unwarrantably take upon themselves to speak for and interpret to the world.

WHY I WENT ON THE STAGE¹

BY SIR JOHN MARTIN HARVEY

[THE author, one of the most distinguished actors of Great Britain, has been manager of the Lyceum, the Prince of Wales Theatre, the Covent Garden Opera House. As a member of Sir Henry Irving's company, he accompanied that actor on his various tours through this country, and only two years ago made a trip here with his own company. He has played a great variety of rôles, but is known chiefly as a Shakespearean.]

I WAS born at Wyvenhoe, in Essex, where my grandfather founded a ship-building yard, and my father, John Harvey, in due course succeeded to the business, which under his enterprising management built up a fine reputation for designing and constructing racing yachts. My mother was the daughter of the Reverend David George Goyder (Gwyder), who was the descendant of a well-known Welsh family, and whose name is loved to-day by all followers of Swedenborg, the Swedish mystic. Such blood flowing in my veins probably accounts for my natural love of things artistic.

As a boy, I do not remember much of Wyvenhoe, for my father thought the low-lying district rather unhealthy; and I was packed off to school when quite young; but my first memory is rather a painful one. I recall sitting with my sister in the old roomy house attached to the shipyard. We were in tall chairs, and mine happened to topple over.

I fell into the fire and was rather badly damaged. So my first important recollection of life burned itself in.

My childhood was inseparably woven with sights and sounds of the sea. I have only to shut my eyes, and the shipyard, my first playground, comes back to me. Again I see the boats in the stocks, my father busy with his designing, and so vividly do the scenes flash before me that I seem still to catch the mingled odors from the tar and ropes blended with the sea breezes. When still quite young we moved to Quay House, a rambling, gloomy structure full of weird stairways and numerous passages. The place created an impression on me I have not forgotten, and often those early years were haunted by a sense of unknown terrors.

Then there were long hours spent in sailing about the creeks in a small yacht my father lent us. He was a man of many occupations, but however busy he was he always found time to come up to my bedroom and wish me good-night with a few cheery words before the final tuck-up. My mother was rather an invalid in later years, and the last striking recollection of my early childhood is that of her death.

I think my childish days ended there, and any further recollections I have take me on to my school days and the years when my father expected me to show a preference for the career in life I wished to follow. My first real school was Linton House, Colchester, and my education was planned by my father

¹ From *T. P.'s and Cassell's Weekly* (London popular journal), January 16