

Care Killed a Cat; "Efficiency" the Kaiser

EFFICIENCY is a remarkably good acting play. It was well received on its production in the first bill of the Greenwich Village Players some months ago. With a little imagination the reader to whom it is now made accessible, will experience many of the thrills which the play is intended to arouse; he will also be left with a sense of the inevitable doom which awaits excess in any field of endeavor.

The authors, Robert H. Davis and Perley Poore Sheehan, have depicted what we hope is the logical result of militarism: its own destruction through the very instruments which it has created. Like Frankenstein, the Emperor's Scientist in the play creates a monster of steel and flesh who finally kills the man whom he was intended to serve.

Applauded by Roosevelt.

Theodore Roosevelt, whose letter of commendation appears in facsimile in the book of the play, says:

You show in dramatic manner how the Prussianized militaristic autocracy of the Hohenzollerns has turned Germany into an inhuman machine for the destruction of what is highest and best in mankind.

Germany to-day occupies, toward other peoples and to a great extent toward her own docile and devoted workmen and peasants, a position which in point of international morality does not essentially differ from that of the Mongols under Genghis Khan and the Tartars under Timur.

But in addition to this imitating the Mongols and Tartars, the Germany of the Hohenzollerns has brought every resource of materialistic science to aid in the widespread application of their brutal, treacherous and merciless world ethic.

In consequence, Germany has made herself a source of horror and of danger to all free peoples.

A Fearful Invention.

The scene is laid in the private audience chamber of an Emperor. The Scientist is present as the curtain rises and is explaining his invention, which is to be the Emperor's birthday gift. He says:

SCIENTIST. Our problem was to eliminate the waste represented by the wounded. In brief—we have succeeded.

EMPEROR (beginning to display interest). How so?

SCIENTIST. After countless experiments, we can now take a soldier, no matter how badly wounded, and return him to the trenches—a supersoldier—no longer a bungling, mortal man—but a beautiful, efficient machine.

The Emperor demands proof, and the Scientist brings in his half man, half machine, No. 241, who enters, "erect, with measured tread, observing nothing." His face, limbs—even his ears, eyes and teeth—are artificial.

He is put through the drill, to the astonishment of the Emperor, who caps the scene with a "Colossal!" The Scientist draws a picture of the restoration of five army corps now demobilized "because of missing arms and legs, deafened ears and blinded eyes." No. 241 then performs still more astonishing feats.

EMPEROR. You have brought about the greatest advance in the history of civilization. Tell me, what else of the telescopic eye? That interests me. I shall be surprised at nothing. Your achievements baffle me.

SCIENTIST. The telescopic eye, your Majesty (Scientist circles the left eye of 241 with his finger) is superior to the human eye in two important characteristics. First, it possesses the telescopic quality, as you have observed; and second, its power is undiminished by darkness.

The Emperor is curious to witness a proof of this. The lights are switched off and the automaton describes the Emperor's movements. When the Scientist is rewarded by the Order of Merit, 241 for the first time gives evidence of his human origin—at least "a furtive glance" escapes him, "a thin smile reveals his metallic teeth; a sinister look comes into his eyes." The Emperor then expresses a wish to examine the marvel alone, and the two are left together:

EMPEROR. Your trade? 241 (with a helpless, involuntary gesture, extending his hands). I—was—a—florist. . . . I made—bouquets. Not—with—these (Emperor averts his face)—but—with—my—absent—hands.



FRANK CONROY as the EMPEROR and JOSEPH MACAULEY as 241 in "EFFICIENCY."

EMPEROR. War is not a festival of flowers.

241. Majesty—a wreath—I could make—slowly—for the dead.

EMPEROR. Are you not grateful to science for these wonders performed? (241 salutes.) Speak!

241. What—shall—I—say? EMPEROR. You are a man again—you are whole once more.

241. Yes, Majesty. But—my—heart—is—broken.

EMPEROR. Why?

241. My—people—are—starving—my—wife—is—lonely—

EMPEROR. Then are you not proud that science has found a way to double the strength of our army?

241. By—bringing—me—twice—to—slaughter.

EMPEROR (leaning forward, with ferocity, his hands on the arms of the chair). What, ingrate!

241. By—doubling—the—strength—of—your—army—you—have—multiplied—human—grief. (Takes two steps laboriously toward Emperor.)

EMPEROR. You dare rebel in the presence of your Emperor?

241. Dare? The—fear—has—gone—out

of—my—tortured—body—into—yours. Takes another step toward electric button, his heavy feet sounding ponderously. Emperor covers back in the chair, hollow eyed.)

EMPEROR. Down on your knees and crave your Emperor's pardon!

241. That—part—of—me—which—is—steel—cannot—bend—to—mortal—man. I—will—get—down—on—my—knees—only—to—God—and—ask—Him—to—forgive—me—what—I—now—intend—to—do. Twice—in—the—red—shambles—of—the—trenches! I—am—the—hope—of—the—dynasty! (Throws his arm wide.) No—I—am—the—hope—of—the—people! The—day—of—your—birth—shall—henceforth—be—known—as—the—day—of—your—death—and—celebrated—as—the—birthday—of—liberty!

Justice, Swift and Terrible.

The Emperor gasps for light, but the man of steel tells him that as he has been made to live in the dark, the Emperor shall die in the dark. There is a scuffle and the Emperor is strangled. 241 turns on the light and stands "in full equipment, the Emperor lying at the foot of the shattered throne." 241 takes from the Emperor's breast the order of the Reward of Heaven, fixes it upon his own breast, and calls in the Scientist.

"What is this?" the Scientist asks, after having surveyed the disorder of the room and the dead Emperor. And 241 answers, "raising his metal fingers to heaven with an air of thunderous, choking finality: 'EF-FI-CIEN-CY!'"

Melodrama, yes. Obvious, yes. But the authors may congratulate themselves upon a successful treatment of a timely theme.

EFFICIENCY. Play in one act. By ROBERT H. DAVIS AND PERLEY POORE SHEEHAN. George H. Doran Company. 75 cents.

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