

Season of Magic and Mystery

A Fool in the Forest, by Basil Burwell (Macmillan, 430 pp. \$5.95), celebrates the unfailing fascination of the stage. Padraic Colum was a founder of the Irish National Theatre, along with W. B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and others.

By PADRAIC COLUM

WHY IS it, I wonder, that those of us who have been with play-acting groups and writers' groups will read with more nostalgic interest about the first than about the second group of associates? Writers are more learned; they may even be more our own sort than the players; their connections may be more worthwhile for us. But players have their own world, one where people are less depersonalized than in the world of writers. They are more unsophisticated. And so they are more affectionately remembered than writers. When one who has mixed with players reads about them the suspense of rehearsals, the exaltation of successful first nights, the sense of life being not worth living that comes with failures, are all back with him, and he lives once more before and behind the scenes.

In *A Fool in the Forest* Basil Burwell gives us a piece of fictional reminiscence rooted in theatrical history. His personages, members of a stock company, are rendered present to us: There is Sam Hernshaw, experienced and tutorial, "with the beautiful skin that old actors have, though a bit florid, especially on the turned-up, slightly bulbous nose that Sam used to straighten out with nose putty when he was a leading man." There is Ma Barker, professional, sensible, helpful, and given to theosophical sermonizing; there is Mavis, the leading lady, competent and somewhat shopworn, and Don Francis with the cultivated aloofness of the leading man. There is Cyrus, the director, who can impress his cast despite his neuroticism.

They all know the lore of the theatre, and it is rewarding to hear them recount it, as it is to hear the stray pieces of dramatic criticism that one or another of them delivers with authority. Hear Sam Hernshaw: "Gordon Craig and those fellows had done a lot

to ruin the stage with their notions of doing without footlights. Fancy effects were all they thought about, fancy effects that lit the scenery and made the actors invisible . . . In the theatre the actor should be king. Footlights help to make him king. Footlights give magic to human faces, and it's the human being who matters every time."

From each of the comradely troupe young Jeff Ramsey, who tells the story, learns a little. He has had some teaching from schools of drama, but none of it could show him what one appearance on the actual stage could and did— "The phenomenon of the theatre, which turns the presence of the audience into so powerful a stimulant that pain can be forgotten, may explain the joyous mutilations and flagellations of primitive rites."

As I put the book back on my shelf I find that *A Fool in the Forest* takes on a pattern that I had not perceived while reading it. The forest that the immature Jeff goes into has other denizens besides those in the show booth. Prowling through it are two fellows whose gratification is in dirty words, abuse, near-murder. And dryads, perhaps—the two almost mindless girls who give themselves so easily to the young narrator. And here let me say that, for my taste, there are too many lapses from chastity in the story. I use this old-fashioned and negative expression to denote my feeling that the sexual encounters have little of positive desire in them. Perhaps the sense of guilt that Lucy and Vickie force upon him has given Jeff a tragic experience that is needed to make him mature. And there is a memorable lesson in the words of old Cagliari, who has learned that preaching anarchism isn't enough, and who is unable to save his wife and daughter from misery and degradation.

A Fool in the Forest, however, is not an allegory; neither is it a morality; it is a season of that perennial institution, the theatre.

Their Brothers' Keepers

The Seed and the Sower, by Laurens van der Post (Morrow, 256 pp. \$4.50), probes the cultural abyss between prisoners of war and their guards. James Gray, essayist and critic, is the author of the collection "On Second Thought."

By JAMES GRAY

THESE are stories of men at war, and of what certain peculiarly alert intelligences perceive when they are confronted with some of its crucial instances of loyalties in conflict. It is the psychological battle, brought to crisis in prison camp, that interests Laurens van der Post; for there the central issue seems to him to be revealed as it cannot be either in the wordy preliminaries to war or in the brutal, physical emergency of actual fighting. In the momentous passivity of the relationship between guard and defeated victim men face each other with an urgent need to comprehend divisive philosophies—and with the pitiful certainty that they will fail.

In two of the three loosely related narratives brought together in *The Seed*

and *the Sower* this point is made. All men are prisoners of the way of life under which their discipline has been inculcated. The British entered World War II under the control of a tradition that had been shaping their pattern of behavior for centuries. The Japanese had been directed for a much longer time toward the worship of attitudes that were totally different but, for them, equally valid. In the painful intimacy of the prison camp superior representatives of the two cultures can only yearn in vain for a meeting of intelligences; the rigidity of their respective values is such that they are bound to reject any attempt at rapprochement, and mutual hostility steadily mounts in bitterness.

In each of these parallel stories a British soldier senses that there is no hope except through a leap of faith across the abyss of difference. A simple gesture of respect should be enough, each thinks, to show that unlikenesses are trivial compared to the vast, enclosing sameness of human need. A staid British colonel in *A Bar of Shadow* wishes that he had not curbed his impulse to express—with a kiss on the forehead—his respect for the former

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No Time Left to Legislate

***The Congressman: His Work as He Sees It*, by Charles L. Clapp** (Brookings Institution. 452 pp. \$6), and ***A Senate Journal, 1943-1945*, by Allen Drury** (McGraw-Hill. 503 pp. \$7.95), report on some of the underlying causes for the often criticized sluggishness of our legislative branch. Louis W. Koenig, professor of government at NYU, is the author of *"The Invisible Presidency."*

By LOUIS W. KOENIG

TODAY, more than ever before, growing numbers of citizens and even legislators themselves are dissatisfied with the workings of Congress. The shortcomings of Capitol Hill are evident from various vantage points: the low production of major laws by our latest Congresses; the yawning gap between what the late John F. Kennedy promised in his 1960 campaign and what he accomplished in a Congress dominated by his own party; Congress's habit of doing little or nothing about critical problems, whether civil rights, education, health, or unemployment. Capitol Hill's recent record is worsened by the fact that never before has Congress worked so hard. Year-round sessions are now the vogue, with precious few days of adjournment. Even the oncoming 1964 elections, according to forecasts, will not deter the legislators from keeping their collective noses to the grindstone the year through, save for a little time off for convention-going and campaigning.

The reader who wonders about what ails Congress and what the chances are for improvement can take up with much profit these two new works. Allen Drury provides us with the diary he kept in his days as a newsman covering the Senate, 1943-1945—dynamic years of warmaking and peacemaking, when the urgency for Congressional action flamed high. During these two years the Senate encountered the United Nations Charter, the Bretton Woods Agreement, the soldier-vote fight, battles over OPA and FEPC, Alben Barkley's resignation as leader, Roosevelt's succession by Truman. Here is the raw material of *Advise and Consent*, the struggles for power, the high political drama, the sharply etched characters.

Charles L. Clapp of the Brookings

Institution focusses upon the House of Representatives. His book is derived from a Congress made up of two panels, one consisting of nineteen Democratic House members and the other of seventeen Republicans. The groups included such geographically and ideologically varied Congressmen as Richard Bolling, Gerald L. Ford, Thomas B. Curtis, Peter Freylinghuysen, Jr., and Stewart L. Udall. In addition, the author conducted about fifty interviews with his subjects. The result is an important book, an expert analysis, a treasure trove of the concrete material that far too much of our previous writings on Congress has lacked.

Here are several explanations of Congress's abysmally low output of major laws, gleaned from Messrs. Drury and Clapp's pages. For one thing, the Congressman badly needs more time to spend on legislation. He is overwhelmed with citizen demands for personal services. Congressmen are astonished at the things they are asked to do—from making hotel and plane reservations, matching draperies and replacing china; they are commanded to prevent the coming of Khrushchev to the United States. Congressmen pass much time back home in their districts, and there, too, devote themselves largely to constituents' desires. "When you are home you cannot even go to church in safety," says one legislator.

Congressmen, Mr. Clapp finds, feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of legislative proposals and the staggering breadth of subject matter, from international relations to small-business problems and water pollution. For help, they turn to colleagues who specialize in the question at hand. They turn also to committee chairmen, lobbyists, interest groups, prevailing sentiment back home, the press, the Executive branch, and party leaders inside and outside Congress.

Critics of Congress's tortoise-like pace indict the committee system. Committee influence in lawmaking is indeed great, Clapp concludes, and it is heightened by the practice, especially prevalent in the Appropriations Committee, of concentrating efforts to defeat a proposal in the committee's deliberations. The committee chairman is "respected . . . feared, often criticized." The committee's agenda, the priority of its business, the conduct of its hearings, and the quality of its reports reflect his touch. President Kennedy acknowledged the

The Adventures of RODERICK



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