

Drama in the Edinburgh Festival

by D. M. ANDERSON

EVERYONE was belly-aching. This formal acknowledgment of an easily predictable state of affairs, endemic in the theatre, is intended only to clear the ground. Of course there were few good plays in the official programme of the festival, for two obvious reasons that no one mentioned. One is that, unlike the concerts, opera, ballet, and even films, the theatrical side of the festival is limited to Britain; a little French is allowed every third or fifth year, but other languages are not spoken here. The other, and more important, is that invitations to come to Edinburgh are issued so far in advance that they can only go to standing companies: the Old Vic, the English Stage Company, the Birmingham, Dundee, and Perth Repertory Theatres being this year's guests. Looking at the plays now running in London, with the hindsight denied to the management a year ago, there are some one would have liked to see, but not many. If Joan Plowright had been asked for a new production, we might have seen Arnold Wesker's *Roots* at the festival, which would by all accounts have been more exciting than most of what we did see; but she is no doubt high on the list for next year, if she will come.

For it is the arrival on stage of the uppish classes, more or less detribalised and discontented, that furnishes most of the liveliness in the theatre these days. Other things are done, and done well. They are of great historical interest. But they have no vitality. Even (it grieves one to say it) Sean O'Casey's



SEAN O'CASEY

Descent into Disneyland

Cock-a-Doodle-Do left me feeling that it was a fine Irish flogging, but a terribly dead horse. Some details of the production accentuated this feeling. There is a demon cock, who is believed in by the parish priest, the most pious of his flock, and a wandering zany; well and good. There is a pretty and very mildly sexy girl, who is witch-hunted; still all is well. When the priest comes to exorcise her late dwelling, things are still credible. But when his entry into the building is followed by thunders, rocking walls, roofs that flap like lids, flashes of blue light, and puffs of smoke, we are in Disneyland. There are also bottles of whisky that become red-hot and glow within; the electricians have been most ingenious, but the play is stone dead. All this is led up to by a whole act of Irish talk, and perhaps the English Stage Company were not Irish enough there. More exuberance might have given us the feel of people liable to be carried away by their own fantasies. As it is, one sees O'Casey fighting with a comic and horrible monster, but one is not convinced that it really exists.

With Eric Linklater's new play, *Breakspear in Gascony*, the question of real existence does not even arise. My own opinion is that he was trying to pull off the trick that worked in *The Lady's Not for Burning*—talking about the 14th century and saying things about the 20th. Other people, catching references to military science, manicheism, the metaphysics of killing, and Lactantius, say he was

(continued on page 26)



ERIC LINKLATER N.P.S. photograph

"The question of real existence does not arise"

N.Z. LISTENER, NOVEMBER 6, 1959.



GermS are everywhere these days...

You just can't avoid contact with germs. That's why it's plain commonsense to ensure that you are adequately protected against germ-laden air in crowded places.

Listerine fights illness originating in the mouth

Tests prove that gargling Listerine Antiseptic reduces germs on mouth and throat surfaces by as much as 98.7% 15 minutes after gargling... as much as 80% even an hour later. Therefore gargling Listerine two or three times daily greatly improves your chances of resisting infection.

Tests over 12 years proved that those who gargled Listerine twice every day had fewer and milder colds than those who did not—so

Reach for Listerine

your No. 1 protection against infection!



Prepared by Lambert Pharmacal Co (N.Z.) Ltd., Auckland