

he was essentially a warrior—one of those rare warriors who refused to make political capital of his fame. Had he remained in Texas he would without much doubt have become a general in the Civil War, and had he become a general there would have been a wealth of material of an official nature for the biographer. Captains and colonels do not leave much in the way of records, and Hays was, when not in a fight, so retiring and modest that he left less than most men do.

Mr. Greer has used all the material available on Hays in each of the three states, but much of it is ephemeral in nature, and this is especially true of the Texas period. There is more from California where Hays spent more than half his life, but it is mainly the record of a private rather than a public citizen. In Texas because of his fame and lack of records Hays is and has long been a somewhat mythical character, admirable but often insubstantial. The reader feels occasionally that the author did not discriminate in his use of legendary and factual sources. One episode will illustrate: it is represented that when Hays was on his way to Texas he met a bully in a saloon at Nacogdoches who sought to intimidate the young man by knocking a drink from his hand. According to the story, Hays killed the man on the spot. I for one would want absolute proof that this story is true. For Hays to act thus is out of keeping with his character and his whole record throughout the rest of his life. Professor Greer has rendered a valuable service in making the career of Colonel Jack Hays available to the public, and the nature of his work is such as to reveal that his was a labor of love.

Personal History Notes

HE HANGED THEM HIGH. By Homer Croy. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. \$4. You are sitting through a Western. A couple of adventurers start across the Indian Territory. Pretty soon there is only one, wearing the boots of his pardner. Pardner, he says, sold him the boots, and went off in another direction. Pretty soon a half-decayed corpse is found in a ravine.

(Continued on page 55)

Fiction. *The novel of ideas is one of the most tempting and also one of the most precarious of literary genres. Thus, Vincent Sheean, who has spent a rich and varied life as a correspondent in both hemispheres, presents the fruit of his speculation on what he has observed in the form that is most likely to be read—fiction. So does J. David Stern, one-time titan of a newspaper empire with a good many ideas he would like to get off his chest. But in both Mr. Sheean's "Rage of the Soul" (below) and Mr. Stern's "Eidolon" (page 54) the narrative structure is too fragile to bear the philosophical weight. More successful is "A Matter of Conscience" (page 22), a novel by a new German writer, Werner Bergengruen, who uses Renaissance backgrounds and characters to investigate the possibility that "the discovery of the individual" may tempt men to aspire to be God and commit hubris of the soul.*

Yielding vs. Yoga

RAGE OF THE SOUL. By Vincent Sheean. New York: Random House. 350 pp. \$3.50.

By JOSEPH HITREC

IT would have been pleasant to write that in "Rage of the Soul" the formidable Mr. Sheean has successfully completed the metamorphosis from own-story-teller to teller of other people's stories. He knows a great deal and has seen virtually all there is to see. But, curiously enough, those same qualities that have made his "Personal History" and "Lead, Kindly Light" so compelling—verisimilitude of life that refuses to be plotted—make in "Rage of the Soul" for an aimless fret, something of the order of an evening walk that has no destination but is done anyway for one's health. While Mr. Sheean's purpose here is important enough, the propelling force is slowed down by his self-consciousness of that purpose.

It is his thesis that disillusioned American wives need not go to India to recapture romance of the soul—need not, in fact, travel abroad at all. They must look into their own hearts instead, for that is where peace is. To score the point, Mr. Sheean nevertheless sends his heroine all the way to India. Elisabeth Redwood, wife of Charles Redwood, who occupies a minor "desk" in the State Department, takes her slow boat after being unfaithful to him. How the lapse came about is not satisfactorily explained, but we are told it was unaccountable, apparently one of those moments when the male musk sweeps everything before it. And although Charles, in his plodding kind of loyalty, has forgiven her, Elisabeth feels she must sail just the same.

In the Red Sea, the unaccountable happens again with the ship's captain, and Elisabeth is so contrite that, on landing in India, she looks for a guru forthwith. The sage, in turn, directs her to Santa Rosa, the most famous mystic ashram in India. While she passes time in that spiritual colony, vigorously resisting the notion that Light can only be attained through bodily numbness, back in the States her husband Charles stirs up an international affair by helping a diplomatic couple from a satellite country escape their masters. The scandal threatens to end his career in Washington and Elisabeth, reading of it in the Indian papers, decides to go back and help him. Whether from relief at leaving Santa Rosa or through some genuine communication with her sage, she is suddenly freed of her anxieties. "Look into your heart," the old man tells her—and when she does she realizes her place ought to be with Charles, who at that moment is about to be thrown to the wolves for the sake of diplomatic appeasement. So they meet at Beyrouth and are glad to be together again.

Mr. Sheean, however, does not think they have quite earned their happiness. There follows a long *non sequitur* in Rome in which the State Department, with some help from Charles and Elisabeth, gets its own back on the Cominform and, incidentally, shows Charles that his destiny is really back at his desk in Washington.

What it all proves is not clear—unless it is that innocence of heart, regained the hard way, is a useful thing to have around and can even work as a charm against the contemporary powers of darkness.

The Pride of Murder

A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE.
By Werner Bergengruen. New York:
Thames & Hudson. 312 pp. \$3.

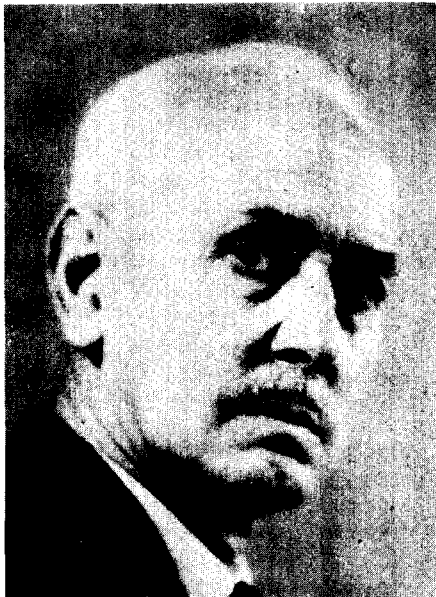
By SERGE HUGHES

IT would be a pity if a quick glance at Werner Bergengruen's novel would lead one to dismiss it as another historical novel dealing with the Renaissance, replete perhaps with stock Machiavellian characters and intrigues. This is no ordinary historical novel. There is no bosomy heroine. There is no epic action thundering through packed pages, no endlessly colorful pageantry. This historical novel is a slow, tense story of a murder committed in a small Renaissance town, with time and leisure for long discussions on questions of jurisprudence and morality and sovereignty; a detective story with deep and disturbing metaphysical implications. It is the work of a master writer, one of the most impressive to have come from a modern German novelist.

In describing the labyrinthian hunt for the murderer of an ambassador of the tyrant-hero, in which the consequences of the dénouement are even more arresting than the solution, the author has written some of the most closely meditated pages of our time on one of the most salient aspects of the Renaissance, the heightened sense of personality, or, as Burckhardt, one of the great historians of the period, has called it, the "discovery of the individual." Burckhardt's attitude, however, was never one of overt approval or condemnation of this new sense of personality. Indeed, there is every reason to believe that he considered it impossible for us to say whether such a discovery was good or evil. The author of "A Matter of Conscience," on the other hand, sees in this discovery the constant danger, the grave danger of man's aspiration to be God. This temptation is not to be considered in simple black-and-white terms, for it is born of the unsoundable depths of man's pride. During the Renaissance it took on such an exuberant and irresistibly impulsive aspect that it continues to perplex and disturb us to this day. The complexity of that aspiration in the Renaissance is preserved intact in Bergengruen's meditation. In a number of brilliant dialogues he gives different facets of that yearning for omnipotence and omniscience: in arguments concerning the nature of the state, the rights and responsibilities of the ruler, the relationship of knowledge to virtue. And to keep it from being an arid novel of



Werner Bergengruen—"closely meditated."



Michael Home—"remarkable power."

ideas, he has peopled his novel with beautiful symbols of craftiness, of simple piety, of subdued malice.

Though Bergengruen imposes no easily formulated answer to his allegorical detective story, he does not fail to imbue his readers with awe for the ineradicable chiaroscuros in man which make impossible naturalistic oversimplified judgments on the condition of man. That God made man in His own image is an inexhaustible truth, and Bergengruen in creating these men of the Renaissance has shown the mysterious forces which move them to be tangible traces of a world in which nature and grace are equally real. This is the serene and noble utterance of a Christian humanist.

Home on the Down

THE BRACKENFORD STORY. By
Michael Home. New York: Mac-
millan Co. 275 pp. \$3.50.

By R. ELLIS ROBERTS

THIS quiet, slow-moving book is a chronicle of a village in England as the customs, the laws, the very structure of the country changed in the years between 1887 and 1950. The village of Brackenford in the county of Norfolk, that country of rich farm land, is typically English—as English as the Walpoles, as George Crabbe, as the grey sea and the east wind. It is a small village; not quite four hundred people lived there in 1887, nearly all of them dependent on Squire Lanfort, who lived in "the Hall." From the Hall, the farms, the cottages, the small holdings are rented. Squire Lanfort is a fair, considerate, if rather patriarchal landlord. The other largish house in the village is the vicarage, where Mr. Philmer, less tolerant than, but as kindly as, the Squire, lives with his daughter Lucilla, the heroine of this chronicle. The village has one general shop; its owner, Herbert Clarke, is a Liberal and a Dissenter: he is the spearhead of the Liberal party in the neighborhood.

When the book opens Lucilla is supervising, with the schoolmaster, the children's performance in honor of Victoria's golden jubilee. She has a talk with a boy of twelve, William Downes, son of the local dressmaker. William's ambition in life is one day to be butler at Brackenford Hall. He is the hero of this story, and helped by Lucilla Philmer and her friend, Dorothy Lanfort, retains with them until the story's end the belief that somehow there will be one day a reconciliation between the old aristocracy which reigns at Brackenford in 1887 and the new democracy which, by 1950, has done little, it would seem, for the village except ruin the squire, destroy the vicarage, and make laborers, who were moderately happy on thirteen shillings a week, sullenly discontented with five pounds.

Not the least of Mr. Home's qualities is his remarkable power to keep small his analysis of the great events which have marked the world in the last sixty years. By keeping small I mean that we have here history as it is known to the men and women who are, either actually or spiritually, bound to one place. For the people of Brackenford, for all except the renege and the deserter, the destruction of the great oaks in the Hall park means more than the cone of red