

Power in the Heat

THE MARCH OF THE HERO. By Richard Lee Marks. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts. 338 pp. \$3.50.

By FREDERIC MORTON

IF a philosopher could become king, then the world would have one wise man less, one autocrat more. Power, that delicious virus with which everyone wants to be corrupted, has teased many a budding saint down the primrose path and, incidentally, provided an ever-contemporary theme for moral novels. Mr. Marks has just written one of them, a kind of below-the-border "All the King's Men."

At the beginning of "The March of the Hero" we get a glimpse of Romulo Romana in the full purity of his impotence. Romana heads a scholarly but practically ineffective movement in a South American republic. It is called the Blanco Party and constitutes the only opposition force tolerated by dictator Caballero. His subordinates call Romana "teacher" rather than "leader." A Ghandi under a sombrero, he does not let the activities of his organization go beyond a kindly and vague advocacy of social progress and pacifism, the sponsoring of night schools to educate the masses, discussion forums, and—important for the purposes of the story—the publication of the celebrated liberal newspaper *La Luz*. Caballero permits the paper to print its fervent altruisms because it furnishes his regime with pretty, democratic trimmings. Romana, on his part, hovers picturesquely on the brink of martyrdom.

Everyone is happy until one day, through the clumsiness of Caballero's underlings, Romana is arrested, *La Luz* suspended. The consequences are such as to enlist all of Mr. Marks's energetic capacities for melodrama. With indignation properly rife among the Blancos, the dictator is assassinated. The totalitarians totter. An uproar sweeps the republic like a tidal wave. The plot thickens ferociously while the plausibility thins. After a hundred tightlipped conspiracies, skipped siestas, and assorted soul-searchings, Romana suddenly emerges as the key figure in the country. We see him in the conference room of the war ministry, confronting the grim anxious faces of the colonels of the junta: Will "The Teacher" remain true to his creed of non-violence, equity, and peace? Or will he unleash civil war in order to sacrifice the means to the end and thus make himself master of the country?

Romana's decision is very evil as well as utterly predictable. Cynical

chaps like this reviewer will see it coming as far back as the title page. But what bothers me more in "The March of the Hero" is, first of all, a young Yankee Blanco by the name of Leo Nyberg. Leo discovers "social justice" much as Columbus did America and it is through his excited musings that a good deal of the story is told. But neither his philosophic flashbacks to Okinawa nor his reflections on truth, love, and the uses of women fit into the adobe-colored background.

Then there are the caballeros, Humberto and Margarita, who are so similar to the Perons, Juan and Evita, that their presence occasionally makes a sly *roman à clef* out of what the author meant to be a serious work of the imagination. Just how serious can be judged from the climax in which a terrible blood bath takes place. Here each paragraph is fatal to thousands. Mr. Marks's overenthusiastic special-effects department generates cannon smoke, gapes open wound after awful wound, and throws up entire forests of twisted limbs until the original intentions of the narrative disappear in the tumult.

It's not all waste, though. The author, having lived in Argentina, knows the South American scene well. He has some fine and some touching things to say about it, even if they are usually spoken by Leo, his most ectoplasmic character. The reader, besides getting some exercise out of negotiating a treacherous plot, might, if he listens to these asides, gain an understanding of the stoic tragedy of the peon. On the whole, Mr. Marks's first novel seems more like a strenuous ode to ethics than an effort to write fiction. But Mr. Marks displays, in a few controlled moments, a talented eye and ear.



—Anne Doniger.

Richard Lee Marks—"strenuous ode."

Fiction Notes

GHOST-RIDDEN LADY: Like other ladies of morbid memory—"Rebecca" and "My Cousin Rachel"—Jess Gregg's "The Other Elizabeth" (Rinehart, \$3) seems destined for the best-seller lists. Boston-Gothic in style, it is the tale of Elizabeth Deveny, as unbalanced a ghost-writer as ever got herself entangled in an improbable plot. For about seventy pages this goes along fairly straightforwardly. For purposes of a memoir Elizabeth is delving into the past of another Elizabeth, an aged baroness who had had a pretty hectic life in the early decades of this century, including three marriages and a messy scandal. Wild she was. It is her second marriage—to the great painter Marius Wrenn—that engages the interest of ghost-writer Elizabeth and is supposed to captivate yours. At this point the author says "Boo," Elizabeth begins having hallucinations, and before you know it she has changed places in her so-called mind with the other Elizabeth, and is reliving that past romance as she imagines it to have been. The author's joker is the fact that it hadn't been like that at all. The other Elizabeth had been quite a nasty piece, and had driven the poor Wrenn to suicide. Our heroine almost follows him to death when she learns the truth, but Mr. Gregg rescues her in the last pages and restores her to presumed sanity. Personally, I feel they should still keep a strict watch on her. There is demonstrably a wide audience for this kind of balderdash. Its members are hereby notified of the book's availability. Others are warned.

—EDWARD J. FITZGERALD.

UNHAPPY ANNIVERSARY: In a prose that is pleasantly sentimental but never too sweetened, Anne Miller Downes has re-created in novel form the New England historical legend of Hayes and Dolly Copp. "The Pilgrim Soul" (Lippincott, \$3) starts us off with Hayes's arrival in the wilderness of the New Hampshire White Mountains in the year 1827. His aim was to hew out a farm in the back-hill country as yet unreached by roads, and he did it. Then he married the lovely Dolly, prettiest belle of the nearby settled area. Thereafter the story becomes primarily Dolly's. It's the story of the couple's isolated struggle with nature and their building of a farm, a family, and a tradition. When the children were all grown, married, and moved away, Dolly suddenly and unexplainably moved out on Hayes on their fiftieth wedding anniversary. Mrs. Downes's explanation of that curious

(Continued on page 36)

David Garrick & Sir Joshua

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the recently discovered cache of Boswelliana at Malahide Castle were found a group of hitherto unknown papers by the English painter Sir Joshua Reynolds, the most important of them being character sketches of some of his great contemporaries. One of these, on the actor David Garrick, is published herewith, together with an introduction by Frederick W. Hilles, Bodman Professor of English at Yale University. It is taken from "Portraits by Sir Joshua Reynolds," edited by Professor Hilles, which is to be published early in November by the McGraw-Hill Book Co.

How did these Reynolds documents happen to be among Boswell's papers? After Boswell published his "Life of

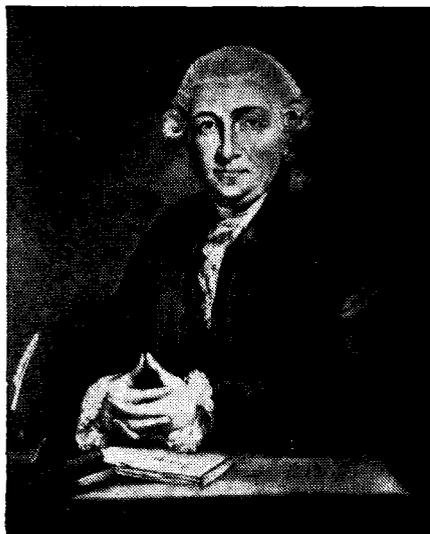
Johnson" in 1791, he decided to write another biography and chose as his subject Sir Joshua Reynolds. Boswell and Reynolds had been intimate friends for thirty years, and now Sir Joshua was very ill and his end was near. Boswell would sit beside Reynolds's bed and ask him questions about his life, writing down the answers then and there. These notes for the biography of Reynolds were carefully preserved and were found among Boswell's papers. With them were certain writings by Reynolds. It is probable that Reynolds had given these papers to Boswell for use in connection with the biography. Boswell never did write the life of Reynolds. Sir Joshua died in 1792; Boswell, far from well himself, died three years later.

By FREDERICK W. HILLES

WITH the contemporary verdict on Garrick's skill as actor Sir Joshua was in agreement. Furthermore he believed that unlike most actors Garrick was also a good judge of plays. But the painter was well aware of his friend's faults, as the brief but striking character sketch on the facing page makes evident.

The manuscript gives no clue as to when or why it was written, but it is clear that when writing it Reynolds was remembering the many conversations which he had had with friends about the great actor. In particular he here echoes what was said at Topham Beauclerk's in the spring of 1779, three months after Garrick's death. Boswell's version follows: "On Saturday, April 24, I dined with [Johnson] at Mr. Beauclerk's with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Jones (afterwards Sir William), Mr. Langton, Mr. Steevens, Mr. Paradise, and Dr. Higgins. I mentioned that Mr. Wilkes had attacked Garrick to me, as a man who had no friend. JOHNSON. 'I believe he is right, Sir. He had friends, but no friend. Garrick was so diffused, he had no man to whom he wished to unbosom himself. He found people always ready to applaud him, and that always for the same thing, so he saw life with great uniformity.' I took upon me, for once, to fight with Goliath's weapons, and play the sophist. 'Garrick did not

need a friend, as he got from everybody all he wanted. What is a friend? One who supports you and comforts you, while others do not. Friendship, you know, Sir, is the cordial drop, "to make the nauseous draught of life go down," but if the draught be not nauseous, if it be all sweet, there is no occasion for that drop.' JOHNSON. 'Many men would not be content to live so. I hope I should not. They would wish to have an intimate friend, with whom they might compare minds and cherish private virtues.' One of



—Portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

David Garrick—"perpetual anxiety."

the company mentioned Lord Chesterfield as a man who had no friend. JOHNSON. 'There were more materials to make friendship in Garrick, had he not been so diffused.' BOSWELL. 'Garrick was pure gold, but beat out to thin leaf. Lord Chesterfield was tinsel.' JOHNSON. 'Garrick was a very good man, the cheerfulest man of his age; a decent liver in a profession which is supposed to give indulgence to licentiousness, and a man who gave away, freely, money acquired by himself. . . .'

THE remarks just quoted serve in part to explain why Reynolds did not have for Garrick the feelings he had for Goldsmith and Johnson. Sir Joshua liked men who would relax when among friends; he enjoyed those who would "unbosom" themselves at the proper time. He disliked Garrick's artificiality, his vanity.

The two must have met at about the time Reynolds met Johnson—in the middle 1750's. In a commonplace-book kept at about this time Reynolds records his admiration of Garrick's critical powers. The first of many portraits was probably begun in 1759 and thereafter the actor was frequently in his studio. Reynolds was an ardent theatre-goer, admired Garrick's acting, was amused at his sprightliness. But as a man he held him in something approximating contempt. Here is a story which Sir Joshua told Malone.

"Not long before Garrick's death, he invited Charles Fox, Mr. Burke, Mr. Gibbon, Mr. Sheridan, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Beauclerk, and some others to dine at Hampton. Soon after dinner he began to read a copy of verses, written by himself on some of the most celebrated men of the time, including two or three of those who were present. They were not very well-satisfied with their characters, and still less when describing Lord Thurlow, who was not present, he introduced the words 'superior parts.' Mr. Burke, speaking of his own character, said afterwards to Sir Joshua Reynolds, that he was almost ready to have spat in his face.

"Garrick, finding the company uncommonly grave, in consequence of his unlucky verses, before they had drunk half a dozen glasses of wine proposed to adjourn to his lawn, where they would find some amusement. When there, the whole amusement consisted in an old man and a young man running backwards and forwards between two baskets filled with stones, and whoever emptied his basket first was to be the victor. Garrick expected that his guests would have been interested and have betted on the runners; but between ill humor