

writing of popular magazine stories. There is always the consciousness on her part that she is writing for a tremendously large audience, and she has always felt the necessity to *say* something to them. That these are homely "truths" by and large there is no gainsaying, but like all writers in any medium she believes in the people she sets down on paper, and she speaks to them and through them. Those who still remain under the delusion that such stories can be tossed off in a tongue-in-the-cheek manner had better read her statement carefully. Much toil, much determination to do her best, have gone into the construction of her stories. Nor is she always inspirational. Such pieces as "Walking on Air" and "Never Again" (the first deals with marijuana smoking, the second with drinking) are worked out uncompromisingly. They contain warnings rather than faiths.

You can also discern, through the notes and the stories, changes which have occurred in the popular-story pattern through the last couple of decades. There is an increasingly freer treatment of sex relations, for instance, and she speaks of how difficult it has become to write the boy-meets-girl type of story. ("There isn't even such a thing as forbidden fruit anymore.") It isn't, as Faith Baldwin recently put it in an interview, that the reader has become so much sophisticated as accustomed.

But anyone who will read the popular magazines with some care will notice another and more important change as well. The fact of the matter is that "serious" stories are now and again appearing in *Good Housekeeping*, *Cosmopolitan*, the *Post*, and *Collier's*, to select some at random. Very often the humorous stories have a high and subtle entertainment value. A few large-audience journals like *Mademoiselle*, *Charm*, and *Harper's Bazaar* will print nothing but a serious kind of fiction. A New York literary agent with a stable that includes some of the best younger American writers can point to his sales records to show how year by year during the past decade more and more of his "good" stories have been sold to high-paying mass markets.

What has happened, perhaps, is that many of the editors have been showing a kind of split literary personality. Recognition has come in almost all circles to the kind of story that Martha Foley and Herschel Brickell have been championing in their yearly anthologies. Editors have been caught between their own discernments and preferences and the "escape" tradition which has dominated the popular field for so long. They will often work

out a balance, printing the better stories alongside those which come from what one such editor termed "the usual sources of supply." Some of them feel that the comprehension and tastes of their audiences have been underestimated, yet in the choosing of stories they feel constrained to adhere to the long established patterns. Circulation and advertising

revenue figures, in addition, can always be used as a check to excessive enthusiasm.

And it can hardly be doubted that the aura surrounding a name like that of Adela Rogers St. Johns still sells lots of copies. You'll find it this very month, in large letters, the only name on the cover of one of the glossiest of all our magazines.

The Twdwrs of Cardiff

SOME TRUST IN CHARIOTS. By Jack Jones. New York: William Sloane Assoc. 1949. 381 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by
MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS

THE Welsh are a tough people, fond of hard work, money, religion, and women. Or so it says here. Most of the time in South Wales was spent by most of the people crawling on hands and knees in the choking dust of mines in those hills of coal. The rest of it they passed singing gloriously in chapels where three long sermons made the best possible Sunday. Much money is also made by men who worked hard at businesses above ground, marry many wives, and have rafts of children, fine houses, mistresses, gold sovereigns, a deep sense of religion, and an insatiable appetite for life. The Welsh had also tremendous religious revivals, oratorios, theatres, mine explosions, unemployment, depressions, the dole, and a lot of politics.

All these things go to make up a novel that hurtles with incredible de-

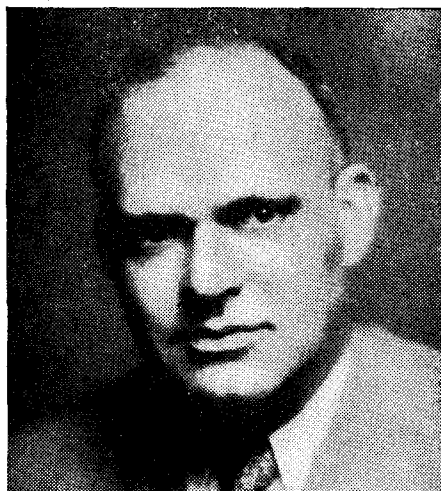
tail through the best part of a century of the booming city of Cardiff, with a bewildering speed that often seems not to be going anywhere at all. The main characters are a son and nephew of that proud countrywoman Elizabeth Twdwr, to whom the Tudor kings of England were only unimportant offshoots of a great family. The religious one is Rhys. The lusty one is Harry. More and more, as the crowding scenes go by in which the Twdwrs become rich, the sexual pranks of Harry carry the narrative. Otherwise the story is one of South Wales itself in the great prosperity of the industrial age and the long, slow decline of the war and the depression. Even the vigorous Welsh seem at the end to be taking some thought as to the real merits of a way of life which once all of them felt was superb. Not, of course, the always exuberant, the indomitable Harry.

The most ingratiating and unusual part of this novel, which seemed often to me almost more crowded than I could bear, is that Jack Jones writes it, long as it is, in what is undoubtedly a Welsh colloquial story-telling style. He pours out all those characters, statistics, events, conversations, as if he had you by the lapel, dropping his voice more confidentially at the bedroom bits, with a shine in the eye, adding his own opinions freely, like a curious, gossiping neighbor. It is a style that by its very humanness makes you friendly to all this pouring vigor. It hustles and nudges and entices you along, dropping winks and side remarks, so that you never have time to think. Without the charm of the style it would be harder to take, in spite of Harry's exploits and that amazing scene toward the end with the two old girls and Harry in the same house.

They say this book is having a great vogue in England. Its lusty vigor, its headlong rush, the knowledge and understanding it gives of a whole countryside, a way of life, a people, over a long period of time, may make it read popularly here. But for me now, let me catch my breath.

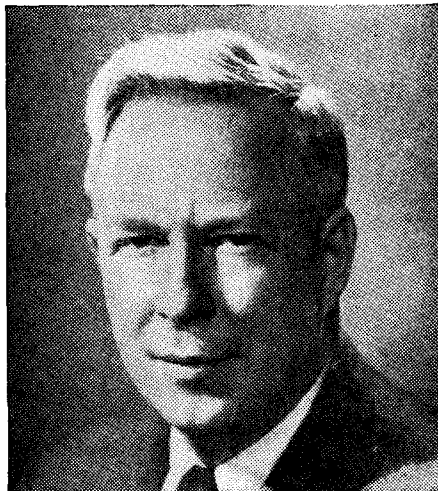


—From the book.



—Pinchot.

Roark Bradford—"poetical speculations on the nature of the universe."



—Fabian Bachrach.

Merle Colby—"more light on political institutions than on human nature."

Roark Bradford's Testament

THE GREEN ROLLER. By Roark Bradford. New York: Harper & Bros. 1949. 118 pp. \$2.

Reviewed by DAVID L. COHN

FOR A SOLID "100 years, no months, and no days," the Green Roller "preached along the bayous and the river banks. He preached in the cities and in the towns, and he preached all over Louisiana. And the people who heard him repented and cried out for salvation."

He taught others to preach and when weariness came upon him "he sat down in the shade of a cottonwood tree on the bank of Red Chute Bayou, and rested." There he talked with the Lord, and, like many a man before him wondered about Time and Eternity. The Lord explained them to Green Roller in terms of Red Chute Bayou and paid him a pretty compliment about the Roller's sermon called "The Time Is Now." "You took up fourteen dollars in that collection, that day. That was good, Fourteen dollars."

Here is the essence of the "Green Roller" and so much else that Bradford wrote: poetical speculations on the nature of the universe, its awe and mystery as evident in a catfish as in Blake's tiger burning bright, man frail but glorious, and God glorious but with human touch.

Here are sermons by disciples of the Green Roller, including one called "The Girdled Lines of Victory," dealing with the question

Now that we've whipped the enemies, What do you reckon we better do next To keep them scoundrels conquered?

Nebuchadnezzar, said the preacher, "chunked Daniel in a den of lines,"

and the Lord put them to sleep "so they wouldn't eat up His prophet." And what did Daniel do?

"The Lord," he said, "put these lines to sleep. But who's going to keep them sleeping?"

They won't do me no evil tonight, But they'll eat me up in the morning! Wherefore, I'll girdle up these lines!"

These sermons are filled with striking images, the moving beauty of the simple speech of a people simple in the sense that they spend their lives with the wind, the weather, and growing things, the knowledge that man is not perfect and the Lord, therefore, does not ask perfection of him, the further knowledge that without faith he is a shriveled gourd. The preacher is talking about Ezekiel's wheel-within-a-wheel:

Remember that little wheel runs by faith?

Well, what I mean, it is whirling! Now man makes faith, and man is in a rush, Because he ain't got long to stay here. . . . His faith so thin, his life so short, I mean, he's got to hustle.

If God created man in His image, it may also be that every man creates God in his image. If this be true, the God of these sermons is sprung from Bradford's heart: just but merciful, busied with his universe but not too busy to listen in on a sermon delivered at Dry Prong, Louisiana, tender to sinners, and filled with laughter.

"Green Roller" is Bradford's last book. And the last line in this volume of moralities is his testament to men if so modest a man could think of himself leaving a testament:

"Don't be proud and foolish."

Atomic Freedom

THE BIG SECRET. By Merle Colby. New York: The Viking Press. 1949. 373 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by WALTER HAVIGHURST

ALREADY there is a vast expository literature, viewing the subject from many angles, about atomic energy. But Mr. Colby's book is a new thing, as new as tomorrow; it is a novel dealing with the devotion of an atomic scientist to the discipline of his subject and with a political struggle for control of the industrial uses of atomic power. In both undertakings it is an informed, skilful, and highly readable book.

"The Big Secret" is the story of Dan Upstead, red-headed, gum-chewing young scientist from a small college in Maine, who comes to Washington on a May morning in a near-future year to attend the annual meeting of the National Physical Association. Dan expected to be in Washington overnight, long enough to hear a paper by the eminent mathematician Christopher Trebst and to make some computations on the vast mechanical brain of the Relay Calculator at the Bureau of Industrial Research. But when he found that the Government was curbing the exchange of scientific knowledge, his resistance was aroused. He stayed to fight a lone-handed battle for the scientist's freedom. He stayed for six weeks, through the sequence of amusing and frustrating episodes and the final outcome, happy for Dan and for his cause, that make up Mr. Colby's story.

During his stay in Washington Dan encountered all kinds of people—from members of the President's Cabinet to a free-swinging taxi driver, including two girls who made him think about non-scientific questions. Mr. Colby draws upon an extensive knowledge of Washington society and he provides a vivid, lively, sometimes outrageous picture of the clubs, the caucuses, the conference and committee rooms, and the play of purpose and cross-purpose that surrounds the serene eighteenth-century manor house whose white portico shines above the seven-plumed fountain in the soft May sun. From this world of human behavior, complex, confused, unstable, Dan Upstead periodically retreats (or advances) to the dimensionless universe of mathematical theory, where a man journeys alone, seeking "the meaning that is locked within meaning."

Dan began his stay in the Capital