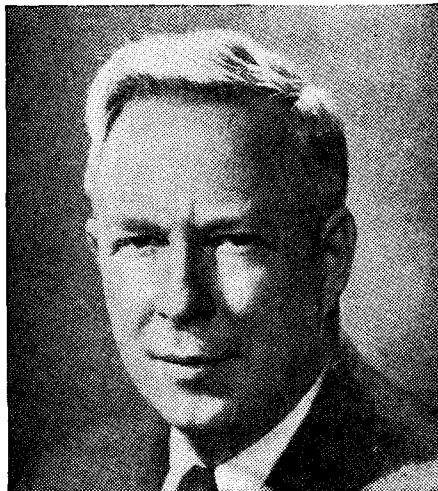


—Pinchot.

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

with the simple desire of talking for five minutes with the President about the necessity for freedom of scientific inquiry and exchange. Promptly he ran into a complex and sinister struggle for private control of atomic power. Some of the people he encountered were cynical, some were ruthless, some were grotesquely stupid. No one except the young statistician Nancy Bascomb really shared his concern for the freedom of science. Mr. Colby has done this part of his book so well, showing the selfishness, hypocrisy, and apathy in Washington and the thinly veiled power of private interests, that it is not easy to believe in the story's happy outcome. If Dan did not succeed so brilliantly, helping to write the President's statement on scientific freedom and getting his pic-

ture in the newsreels as well as getting the Government girl, this novel of political struggle in "a future year, in the first decade of the Atomic Era," might carry more impact than it does.

"The Big Secret" is a topical novel and it throws more light on political institutions and scientific theory than it does on human nature. What a reader will remember longest, I believe, are the striking metaphor with which Dan Upstead describes the hundred-story building of modern science and the appearance at a high-level cocktail party of the Bikini birthday cake (with favors inside) reproducing in confectioner's sugar the column of vapor charged with the deadly rays that are the result of man's speeding up the process of the universe's decay.

Sussex "Snowbound"

THE HAPPY TREE. By Sheila Kaye-Smith. New York: Harper & Bros. 1949. 279 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by ANN F. WOLFE

THERE is in "The Happy Tree" a pleasant little episode in which the hero and heroine have tea out of an old set of Coleport china. Something of the character of that traditional English ware pervades the newest of Sheila Kaye-Smith's novels. It is surely and delicately turned and its strength is of native earth. In its gentle underglaze is enshrined the idyllic charm of the English countryside.

What sets this story apart from Miss Kaye-Smith's other tales of the Sussex scene is the winter setting. It is, in effect, a veritable Sussex "Snowbound." The historic cold wave that caught the Labor Government unprepared turned the hilly Leasan farmlands into a drifted no man's land where a lady who should have stayed home was bound to sprain a patrician ankle. The lady was Alice Candelin, neighbor to Kemp Silverden, widowed young owner of the farm named Eggs Hole. Thanks to the blizzard and the sprain, Alice and Kemp enjoyed a Joan and Darby interlude of happiness together.

They had, it is true, no spiritual right to their snowbound hour in paradise. Alice was the wife of the district's gentleman farmer and the mother of his children. But lonely Kemp was in love with Alice, and Alice—lovely, selfish Alice, *princesse lointaine* from a world of culture and sophistication—perhaps she needed brief respite from a "preposterous" husband. At any rate, there she was, playing house for a spell with her naive young lover.

Alice was sporting enough to warn Kemp that there was a side to her nature that he did not know. And indeed there was, as Kemp was to learn to his sorrow. When he did learn it, pastoral tranquillity hung in the balance, for it was the "preposterous" husband who brought the truth home to him.

"The Happy Tree" is by no means Miss Kaye-Smith's best novel. It is not so good, say, as "Joanna Godden." But even if the prolific author had written no other book, "The Happy Tree" would establish her as one of the dedicated storytellers of our time. Through her slight and innocent plot flows the essence of the rural English spirit, of a Saxon way of life adjusted—
(Continued on page 32)

Your Literary I. Q.

By Howard Collins

FISH, FLESH, OR FOWL?

Richmond Lattimore, of Bryn Mawr, offers twenty-five Shakespearean quotations in which the names of animals have been left blank. Allowing four points for each space you can fill correctly, a score of sixty is par, seventy-two is very good, and eighty or better is excellent. Answers on page 25.

1. Like quills upon the fretful
2. Then imitate the action of the
3. Methought I was enamour'd of an
4. Yon ribaudred nag ...
The breeze upon her, like a in June,
Hoists sails and flies.
5. ... the belching
And humming water must o'erwhelm thy corpse.
6. Thrice and once the .. whined.
7. It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a there.
8. ... sometimes he angers me
With telling me of the and the ant.
9. ... sweet words,
Low crooked court'sies and base fawning.
10. Thou damned and luxurious,
Offer'st me brass?
11. There is ten thousand —
....., villain?
Soldiers, sir.
12. More pity that the eagle should be mew'd
While kits and prey at liberty.
13. Ay, ay, so strives the with the gin.
14. Full of strange oaths and bearded like the
15. On the 's back do I fly.
16. But, I think, thy will sooner con an oration than thou learn a
prayer without book.
17. Which, like the, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.
18. ...daffodils
That come before the dares.
19. ... and my two schoolfellows,
Whom I would trust as I would fang'd.
20. Hog in sloth, fox in stealth, in greediness.
21. No more truth in thee than in a drawn
22. Achilles! a drayman, a porter, a very
23. Here in her hairs
The painter plays the, and hath woven
A golden mesh to entrap the hearts of men.
24. You show'd your teeth like, and fawn'd like hounds.
25. As to wanton boys are we to the gods.