

## "The" Dean

DEAN BRIGGS. By ROLLO WALTER BROWN.  
New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926. \$3.50.

Reviewed by JOHN BAKELESS

WHEN the news reached a certain editorial office a couple of years ago that Rollo Walter Brown was writing a life of Dean Briggs, two young assistant editors declared heatedly over the luncheon table that it couldn't be done. These youths held various degrees, but their chiefest pride was the fact that they were "Fivers." And a Fiver, it should be explained, is a man who has learned the machinery of his craft in Dean Briggs's famous composition course—English 5 at Harvard.

To any one who had known and studied under the Dean—there was only one Dean who enjoyed the definite article in those days—the thing was incredible. What! Put on paper that extraordinary mingling of country shrewdness and academic dignity, that aromatic blend of learning and literature? Pooh! Impossible. Hadn't a rising young novelist just tried it—and shockingly failed?

As one of those brash young scribblers, I offer my apologies to Mr. Brown. The thing was patently impossible. But it is equally patent that Mr. Brown has done it. How these two things may be, I leave to better logicians to determine. At least there is no disputing that Mr. Brown has succeeded admirably in a difficult feat. His book on Dean Briggs is a good biography of a living man, and such books, though one or two have been written before this, are sufficiently rare to be remarkable. As Mr. Brown is himself an old Fiver, the excellence of his biography is one more tribute to Dean Briggs—which is curiously appropriate.

The most remarkable thing about Mr. Brown's book is the extraordinary skill with which he has managed to get into it all the facts and dates that any rational being can desire, without in the least weighting down his pages. "Dean Briggs" is a series of essays in interpretation of a man who is about as hard to interpret adequately as any that has trod the planet. The only fault for a carping critic to find is the inclusion of several photographs of a man who has been painted but can't possibly be photographed.

In his very first chapter, Mr. Brown plunges into his subject, not with a solemn array of dates, but with an opinion and an anecdote. The opinion is that "Le Baron Russell Briggs could not qualify as the hero of a typical biography." It is a perfectly justified opinion—there is nothing typical about Dean Briggs, anyway—but what a stroke of luck that he should have happened on a biographer who is not typical either. The anecdote is the famous tale of the misguided stranger who asked the Dean of Harvard College to hold his horse (the Dean, needless to say, complying), and is perhaps the most entirely revealing of all the entertaining small tales that Mr. Brown has gathered up.

It is not until he is well into his second chapter that Mr. Brown condescends to dates and the other details that must ballast even the best biographies. Even then he does not condescend to very many of them. Mr. Brown is determined that who touches this book shall touch a man. People who are after skeletonized facts can dig them out of the cyclopedia. And so even the customary sentence beginning "he was born—" never appears. "In 1867, when Le Baron Briggs was eleven years old,—," says clever Mr. Brown. Those who are interested in mathematics can deduce the all-important date for themselves. The rest of the world can consult "Who's Who."

These things have to be. You can't very well write a biography without admitting that your hero did, at some time or other, arrive upon the planet, his career on which you are about to chronicle. But it is possible to center the reader's attention on the man instead of on the mathematics of his career.

That is what Mr. Brown has done in the happiest fashion conceivable. By avoiding the conventional sources of information, he has found revealing bits of fact in a hundred unexpected corners, and with them he has adroitly mirrored his man—drawing with excellent taste upon the innumerable anecdotes afloat in Cambridge, the letters of old students, even filling a page or so with a selection from the quaint, penetrating comments scribbled through twenty years on "long themes" and "daily themes" in English 5—those comments that used to strike straight to the heart of the matter in half

a dozen words, leaving nothing more to be said. The book is made up of what an unidentified Freshman wrote in one of the Dean's books in the library, what the college paper said, of whimsical, irresistibly quotable excerpts from the Dean's annual reports—fancy humor in a Dean's reports!—of fragments from speeches, and of the notice that the Dean put up in his stable. Mr. Brown has not even forgotten the more-than-algebraic symbols, the w's, the y's, the u's, and the z's that used to appear in English 5 on the 'prentice work of the men who are today writing the books, magazines, and newspapers of half North America.

Mr. Brown's "Dean Briggs" must not be regarded as a book of limited appeal. It is the story of a Dean, but it is not the story of an ordinary Dean. It is a book for all who are interested in life or education or the great art of stringing words together. Most of all, it is a book that will bear any amount of re-reading.

## Brazil of Today

THE CONQUEST OF BRAZIL. By ROY NASH.  
New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1926.

Reviewed by KERMIT ROOSEVELT

THIS volume of Mr. Nash's is of very general interest, and many a reader who does not know Brazil and feels no particular call to study its progress and present situation, will read the book with enjoyment and profit.

The plan is a comprehensive one, for Mr. Nash deals with the physical, moral, and mental growth of the country since its discovery by Cabral. In collecting his material, he has not only had recourse to the various first-hand accounts of travel and exploration down through the centuries, and the works of the historians, but in addition has voyaged in little known districts along the littoral and in the interior of the country. It is evident that he possessed that ready sympathy and understanding for the people with whom he deals, without which no one should enter upon a work of this sort.

His discussion of the Indian problem is particularly worth close and attentive reading, for his contention that the Indian today is in reality as much of a slave as ever in the past is fundamentally true, although from personal observation I would be inclined to regard his statement as too sweeping. Unquestionably Indian children are carried off and to all intents and purposes sold into slavery, and equally unquestionably the majority of Indians who work for the rubber gatherers are kept in such an intricate system of debt bondage that they are no better than slaves. Still in many districts the authorities have done much to counteract these conditions. Great credit must be given to General Rondon; he has been an untiring worker on behalf of his Indian compatriots and has accomplished much for their emancipation.

Mr. Nash's comparison of the relative merits and abilities of Indian and negro is of great interest and in a large degree just. So much has been written of the noble Redskin both here and in South America that we are apt to regard him in an entirely fictional light. As Mr. Nash points out, it is the negro who is responsible in the final analysis for the building up of Brazil. The back-breaking manual labor of opening up the country has been his; he has been the hewer of wood and drawer of water. The Brazilian Indian is neither intelligent nor hard working; in his wild state he was unable to provide himself with effective weapons for his struggle with nature. Whereas the African manufactured weapons out of iron, the Indian remained in the stone age. His blowgun alone entitles him to any credit; it is a finer article of precision than anything invented by the negro.

The southern European nations are not hasty in drawing the color line, and the situation of the negro in Brazil has always been very different from what it is in North America. In Brazil, even in the early days of slavery, blacks could purchase their freedom and were eligible for almost any office in the Church or in secular life. A negro had one day each week in which he could earn money for himself. Many slaves were freed on the death of their master. When a child was being baptized any one could step up and offer ten dollars on its behalf, thereby securing its freedom. Due to one or another of these methods, there sprang into existence at an early date, a good sized population of free negroes; and throughout most of the black belt intermarriage between these and Brazilians of

Portuguese or Portuguese Indian stock involved no stigma. Before the influx of blacks from Africa, the early settlers had taken to themselves Indian women, for as is always the case in new countries the percentage of women who came over with the conquistadores was negligible.

The European stock in Brazil originates largely from the neighborhood of the Mediterranean. Starting from the north we have the Amazon country and some of the smaller states peopled mainly by the descendants of Portuguese, or the results of their admixture with the aborigines; Pernambuco and Bahia form the black belt, for it was to work their sugar plantations that negroes were first imported. Further south in Sao Paulo, Paraná, and Rio Grande do Sul, there are few negroes, and the stock is largely Portuguese, Italian, and Spanish. German, French, English, and Polish colonies also exist in these southern states but numerically they are so insignificant that unless they come over in greatly increasing numbers they will have little effect in the general strain.

Inadequate means of transportation have retarded and will continue to retard the amalgamation of the varying elements of the population. However, the railroads are gradually pushing their way through plain and jungle and the increasing use of motor vehicles will call for the improvement of the cart roads. In the fifteen years since I first went to Brazil great changes have come about, and by the close of the present century the Brazilian melting pot should have functioned sufficiently to provide absorbingly interesting results.

In a book such as Mr. Nash's one is bound to find many minor points with which one disagrees. The panegyric in honor of the negro seems too strong; but perhaps close acquaintance with the black in his native Africa may have led me to discount unduly certain of his qualities which Mr. Nash rates so highly. I do not know whether Mr. Nash has travelled in Africa; he has laid by a store of personal experiences with primitive peoples in the Philippines.

The volume is most comprehensive and provides food for thought along many lines. It is written vividly, but there is a tendency in making comparisons to indulge too freely in what may be called schoolboy slang. To "point a moral or adorn a tale," an occasional lapse from the paths of formal English may provide added emphasis, but on the written page similes, which when spoken do not seem unpleasantly startling, are often unduly emphatic and bordering on the cheap. This failing in no way affects the genuine intrinsic value of the book.

## Scenic Art

DRAWINGS FOR THE THEATRE. By  
ROBERT EDMOND JONES. New York: Theatre  
Arts. 1926. \$5.

Reviewed by D. M. Oenslager  
Yale University

IT was a brief ten years ago that the name, Robert Edmond Jones, became a thing to conjure with. From the period of his Harvard instructorship, to window-dressing, and until his return from Germany in 1915 with bundles of ambitious sketches, he had been searching, forming new ideas, striving with a something he felt growing greater and deeper within himself. The first opportunity for the release of his talents came in Granville Barker's production of "A Man Who Married a Dumb Wife." Ten years have already made this production a starting point for the whole movement of modern scenic art in this country.

"Drawings for the Theatre," then, stands as a brief but important record of the development of scenic art from this first production. Its pages arrest the spirit, and reflect the life of our theatre of the last ten years. It stands as a monument of one man's achievement and a portent of what is to come. Mr. Jones's selection of sketches is wide and varied. Of his earlier works, he is represented by "A Man Who Married a Dumb Wife," John Alden Carpenter's ballet, "The Birthday of the Infanta," and "Pelleas and Melisande," each wrought with ingenious imagination and all brilliantly executed. To study his interpretations of "Hamlet," "Macbeth," and "Richard III" is to obtain a finer understanding of the trend of modern theatrical production than all the discoursing and literature our period might produce. A director himself, he brings into his sketches a translation in visual terms



of the essence of the play. With his own peculiar powers he casts and encases the play in some new form of imaginative values—each fresh and of itself right. The Cenci drawings are an experiment and cry for the breath of production. The whole play is performed against blackness, surrounded by a crush of figures intensified by strong shadows of lights and darks. And finally some of the O'Neill plays, "Anna Christie," and "Desire Under the Elms," each interpreting and suggesting in its own way for the actor, and heightening and clarifying the dramatic values for O'Neill.

Through these thirty-five sketches of various productions (some unhappily still-born) one can trace a glowing and constant stream of inspiration coursing from theatre to theatre, year by year, and radiating its influence on all about him. These drawings have no detailed captions—they are pictures that speak for themselves and their master. Conceived in terms of color, movement, and form, and born to the theatre for but a day or a year, they evoke through the sheer nature of their purpose a transient quality of something rare, caught for a moment and released—akin to life and eternity itself. Mr. Jones's whole approach to the theatre is contained in the frontispiece of his book, a symbolic representation of "The Soul of the Artist," from an old Tibetan painting. Here is the artist's imagination mounted on a winged horse, ascendant, high above the earth and just beneath the gods, surrounded in clouds of glowing fire, and communing with all his spiritual affinities—a host of strange beasts and mysterious shapes. "With one hand the artist brandishes aloft his staff of power."

Practising his craft, fashioning in wood and cloth and paint, Mr. Jones contrives in the theatre significant emblems and signs. He extracts from the pregnant forms of dramatists inward shadows, and clothes them with sensitive clarity. He imbues the actors with the impelling force and strength of conception of Nietzsche's Superman. This is the work of the artist in the theatre, and this is his reason for existence. He raises finally all of this mysterious creation like thin air into a pendant mirage, and so this book remains a vision for those who care about the theatre, and for whom the theatre cares.

## When Man Perceives

A THEORY OF DIRECT REALISM, and the Relation of Realism to Idealism. By J. E. TURNER. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1925. \$4.25.

Reviewed by RALPH BARTON PERRY  
Harvard University

DURING the last decade or so there has, in English-speaking countries, been a notable centering of philosophical attention on the problem of perception. To understand this problem it is necessary to suppose at the outset a provisional distinction between two realms: on the one hand, the content of our actual waking experience,—the colorful, noisy, fragrant, sweet or bitter, warm or cold, hard or soft world that is spread immediately before us as a perpetually changing scene; on the other hand, the world of physics, composed of matter or energy, atoms or electrons, sound-waves, and light-waves, and which contains and acts upon our bodies. The naive man, who in philosophy stands for the man who has no theoretical (only practical) difficulties, is supposed to identify these two worlds, or believe that the world of perpetual appearances and the world of physical reality are the same world. Reflection, however, raises certain questions. The world the physicist talks about is *not* directly sensed,—we do not see, hear, touch, smell, or taste the electrons, and other peculiar entities which physics talks about; while if a man considers the date of his perception, he soon comes to entertain grave doubts as to their fulfilling the requirements of a physical world. They seem to be peculiarly his own, and do not compose that supposedly public domain in which he and others move about, which was there before he was born, and will go on uninterruptedly after his death. The world of his perception is centred in himself, like a panorama, and shot through with his own subjective idiosyncrasies. So the plain man proceeds from a first naïveté in which he sees no difficulties to a second naïveté in which he thinks that these difficulties are simply removed by dividing the world into two worlds, an objective world and a subjective world,—and letting it go at that.

But now a new difficulty arises,—for the physical world, deprived of all of the characters of experience, becomes an empty nothing; and how can one even know of its existence, since knowledge is a subjective act? At this point naïveté has been left behind and philosophy appears—in the person of the Berkeleyan idealist, who proposes to end the trouble by abolishing the external physical world altogether, leaving the world of percepts and thoughts in sole possession of the field. But whose percepts and thoughts? Naturally the philosopher who is doing the talking refers to his *own* percepts and thoughts, and he has either to annex the whole world to his own ego or recognize a chaos of conflicting claims. Even in his modest recognition of others, he must assume it to be possible that he should know something or somebody that is not just his own percept or thought, and there is a similar assumption if he invokes a "universal" perceiver or thinker to take over the whole job. So far, then, it is not clear that philosophy has done any better than naïveté. Sooner or later it seems to be necessary to suppose what was quite uncritically supposed at the outset, namely, that what a man perceives is a reality other than himself, that an outer reality can be immediately present to the mind.

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Such, in the briefest terms, is the story that lies behind the title, and the argument of the present book. "Direct realism" is, first, *realism* in holding that there is a physical world which is independent of, and for the most part external to, the perceiving mind; and which is, second, *direct* realism in holding that this physical world does when perceived actually, like the proverbial camel, stick its head into the mental tent. While his view may be said to credit the claim of naïve perception to be an eye-witness of the goings-on of the physical world, any naïve person who opens the present book with the expectation that he can remain naïve, will be disappointed. There is no sophistication like that which is required to justify naïve assumption. All of the difficulties enumerated above, and many more have to be met, and each hypothesis introduced to overcome them begets *new* difficulties. The general method of the author is to reconcile the variety and seeming conflict between one perception and another, as when the same stick, thrust into the water, appears both bent to vision and straight to touch, by enlarging the real stick so as to embrace all the different aspects which it presents. This method is based on the analogy of projective geometry. The same penny appears round from one angle, straight from another, and oval from a third. What, then, is the real shape of the real penny? The answer is that real shape is the system of all of its projections to points in surrounding space. The penny as perceived by an observer stationed at one of these points is, then, related to the real penny as part to whole. The mentality of the percept lies in its selecting and isolating a part of the all-ramifying relativity. But to account for relativity of perception we have to suppose that the real object embraces not only all of its special and temporal projections, but also its causal projections, so that the perceiver does not merely view the physical object from his peculiar angle, but also from the standpoint of its peculiar effects on his body.

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This summary statement deals only with the view which the author holds in common with most of his English and American contemporaries. Alexander, Russell, Broad, Kemp Smith, the American "new realists," and the American "critical realists," all hold that at *some point* the content of perception and the structure of the physical world come together, so that *at that point* there is a direct witnessing of independent reality. On this broad common platform there is abundant room for differences of emphasis, and for sharply conflicting opinions. The greater part of the present book is devoted to such domestic arguments. They make hard reading because the view criticized is too summarily stated to be intelligible to one who is not familiar with it in advance. But to a student of contemporary philosophy Dr. Turner's discussions afford an interesting survey of the present state of the question, and much acute analysis by the way.

In his concluding chapter the author turns to metaphysical questions, and does pious homage to Hegel. He is especially concerned to show that Hegel is both a realist and an idealist, a realist as regard the relation of the physical world to the human perceiver, an idealist in the sense that he

holds the universe to be a systematic and intelligible whole. Dr. Turner finds fault with the prevailing view that Hegel is an idealist in the subjectivistic sense, and would free the term "idealism" altogether from any such implication. But to ascribe to reality such characters as "idea," "notion," "thought," and "self-consciousness," when one *means* only that reality is logically coherent, is at the very least to use terms in a manner that is certain to breed confusion. Furthermore, a review of modern philosophy certainly reveals the fact that something began with Berkeley and with Kant which has colored the thought of all who adhere to the Hegelian tradition. This innovating doctrine proclaimed that knowledge is neither a mirroring nor a contemplation of reality as it is, but a *production* of objects, or construction of unity out of the manifold (a "combining intelligence," to use Green's phrase). Unless one were to impute this doctrine to Hegel it would be quite impossible to explain his influence either upon popular thought or upon speculative philosophy. If one recognizes this doctrine, and its continuity from Berkeley through Kant to Bosanquet and Croce, it does not much matter what one calls it. In any case it is the antithesis of realism.

## Meredith's Centenary

GEORGE MEREDITH. By J. B. PRIESTLEY. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1926. \$1.50.

GEORGE MEREDITH: A Study and an Appraisal. By WILLIAM CHISLETT, JR. Boston: Richard C. Badger. 1926.

Reviewed by CORNELIUS WEYGANDT  
University of Pennsylvania

THESE two books on George Meredith herald the centenary of his birth. In 1928 it will be a hundred years since the father of the modern English novel was born. It is time, indeed, that he had a place in the English Men of Letters series, and it is time that an attempt, such as Mr. Priestley's, should be made to state what place Meredith occupies in the long line of English novelists.

Mr. Priestley owns rather grudgingly that "The Egoist" is one of "the six best pieces of fiction in the language," but he is no enthusiast. He labors hard to judge justly of his author and he does judge as justly of him, perhaps, as any English Briton may of a writer largely Celtic in style and fashion of thought. Meredith, of Welsh and Irish ancestry as well as Saxon, is British rather than English, and one must have Celtic sympathies to appreciate all of him. Mr. Priestley makes the mistake about Meredith that Henley made about Stevenson. Henley could not understand the family prayers and other clan ceremonials indulged in by Stevenson in Samoa, and thought them insincere. He could not understand they were simply a natural development of the playboy that was always in his old friend. So Mr. Priestley balks at the tall talk of Meredith and thinks it insincere. The man Meredith, as Mr. Priestley conceives him, is, too, always getting between him and Meredith the writer. The man he conceives of as "Gentleman Georgy," as Meredith was known in boyhood to some of his companions, and from this point of view he builds up a characterization of Meredith as a rather unlovable snob.

It is a pity that Mr. Priestley has this unfortunate point of view, for it was a rare privilege that fell to his lot of putting into short compass what the average man of cultivation who has not read all of Meredith would want to know of him. Mr. Priestley has gathered together into a brief and well proportioned sketch the known facts about the life of Meredith, the progress of his reputation, and his influence on the development of the English novel. It is temperamental and racial *flairs* that prevent his full realization of the greatness of Meredith.

"George Meredith: A Study and An Appraisal" is a contribution to Meredithiana rather than an interpretation and valuation of George Meredith. It is the opinion of its author, Dr. Chislett, that George Meredith is "not widely read," that "he never was popular," that "in spite of himself he wrote for the few." If this is so it is probably as largely due to the obscurity of his style as to his preoccupation with issues of his day that have ceased to be issues now that the world has moved toward his point of view. There is plenty of sheer story,