

England and America. III, by Walter Lippmann, on page 662

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Entropy

"SUPPOSE that we were asked to arrange the following in two categories—
distance, mass, electric force, entropy,
beauty, melody.

I think there are the strongest grounds for placing entropy alongside beauty and melody, and not with the first three. Entropy is only found when the parts are viewed in association, and it is by viewing or hearing the parts in association that beauty and melody are discerned. All three are features of arrangement. It is a pregnant thought that one of these three associates should be able to figure as a commonplace quantity of science. The reason . . . it is able to speak . . . the languages of arithmetic" is "There is a side of our personality which impels us to dwell on beauty and other esthetic significances in Nature, and in the work of man. . . . An overwhelming feeling tells us that this is right and indispensable. . . . But is it rational? How can reason regard it otherwise than as a perverse misrepresentation of what is after all only a collection of atoms, ether-waves, and the like, going about their business? If the physicist as advocate for reason takes this line, just whisper to him the word Entropy."

But what is this magic entropy which A. S. Eddington, the Cambridge physicist and astronomer in his most interesting book, "The Nature of the Physical World," holds as a caveat against mechanistic materialism? "The practical measure of the random element which can increase in the universe but can never decrease is called *entropy*. Measuring by entropy is the same as measuring by . . . chance." The increase of the element of chance in the universe, as the amoeba becomes man or the rock breaks and engenders heat, continually increases. We can arrest it in parts as when we organize energy in a steam engine, but cannot turn it into a decrease. Entropy is linked with the sense of becoming, which is our intuitive measure of time. And becoming is a "true mental insight into the physical condition which determines it." Entropy is the only means of proving that the development of the world, growth, life, evolution, is irreversible. It is time's arrow. It is not one of those primary laws of the universe upon which we were all brought up, and which now shake and fall with each new publication of Einstein, but merely a statement of mathematical probability. Nothing is impossible any more, but one thing at least is so absurdly improbable that we can assume that it will never happen. A pack of a million million cards once shuffled never organizes itself again until its elements become indivisible—and then time ceases. Change, which is a shuffling of the universe, can never, except by absurd improbability, go back to the original organization. Such a "fortuitous concourse of atoms" as the materialists have been calling the world can be conceived of, but only as a "scientific rarity" with no relation to experience. Entropy is the only measure of time, and implies an organization in which the element of chance can be introduced.

It may well be that, as Eddington says, entropy, this one deducible measure of the universe which holds, is of no use to the artist. But it is clear that it is of immense use to the critic. For entropy means that science has to do with organization, not merely with particles, that in measuring the change in organization it must assume an organization to change from. In a picture for example, while science is not

Heritage

By WILBERT SNOW

THEY made their graveyards on the hill,
Their houses just below,
And something from the tombs came down
The slope long years ago;

It fastened on the cellar walls,
It climbed the rough-hewn beams
Clear to the attic, back again,
And mildewed in the seams,—

Till those who called these dwellings home
Saw the dark spate leave behind
A tiny fringe of graveyard loam
Upon New England's mind.

This Week

"The Brownings."

Reviewed by DESMOND MACCARTHY.

"Memories of J. M. Dent."

Reviewed by GEORGE HAVEN PUTNAM.

"Believe It or Not."

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS.

"Expiation."

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"Seeing's Believing."

Reviewed by JOHN CARTER.

"The Amazing Life of John Law."

Reviewed by JOHN M. S. ALLISON.

"My Brother Jonathan."

Reviewed by GLADYS GRAHAM.

Translations from the Chinese.

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Next Week, or Later

John Ruskin's Tragedy.

By AMABEL WILLIAMS-ELLIS

concerned with the esthetic effect of the whole, it cannot concern itself merely with the analysis of paint into atoms. It can measure the change in organization when the painter by his conception introduces new elements into the canvas. Chance increases. Entropy is only measurement but it implies that our intuition of a development, a change not merely accidental in the world, has a definite relation to reality. "I am not trying to argue," says Eddington, "that there is in the external world an objective entity which is the picture as distinct from the myriads of particles into which science has analyzed it. I doubt if this statement has any meaning." But there is beauty, organization, development, which we feel, and which is "not warranted by anything found in the scientific inventory of its structure." Entropy proves that this conclusion is more rational than the opposite idea that change (and hence organization) does not really exist.

We have no intention, or at the moment, no competence, to develop the implications for thinking of this "secondary law of thermodynamics" which apparently is a graspable certainty in physical science. (Continued on page 660)

Romance*

By DESMOND MACCARTHY

SATURDAY, Sept. 12, 1846 1/4 11—
11 1/4 a. m. (91)." These few words and figures scribbled down by Robert Browning are the record of the climax of his life, of "a great moment" in it such as he often celebrated in verse as the test of manhood and the crown of existence. They record the date and hour of his marriage in Marylebone Church to Elizabeth Barrett. The figure 91 notes that it was the ninety-first time they had looked upon each other. It was an elopement, but not the ordinary romantic affair. The young Lochinvar in this case was a mature man of thirty-four, happy, spontaneous, eupeptic, blessed with indulgent parents and in himself of conventional rather than violent inclinations; one who although a poet had never before experienced apparently even a brief transit of Venus, or been tempted to experiment in emotions—just to see what they were like—which had clearly inspired so many of his fellow poets. He was exceedingly healthy and intact. He had written about queer characters, mystics, half-prophets, madmen, in the most confusing impetuous manner; about odd arresting anecdotes, or some momentary experience which had happened to run into him, sometime or other, like a pin, drawing one little round bead of blood, quickly wiped away. Above all to release his own marvelous gift of idiomatic expression he had always found it necessary to dramatize emotions; to project himself first into somebody else, an envious monk watching another in the monastery garden or a dying renaissance bishop. Then indeed he could write with an extraordinary vividness and with a passion which crackled erratically like sky-born electricity. The great Macready perceiving his gift for interpreting of character dramatically had given him two chances of writing plays. They had been frosts, (which had barely depressed their author) noble but quite unmistakable failures. He was not a stage dramatist. The drama of internal conflict he could follow and portray magnificently, but when he had to create men and women in the round, and set them opposite each other, he could only make them orate elaborately. None of them spoke out of themselves like his characters in his lyrics:

Gr-r-r- there goes my heart's abhorrence!
Water your damned flower-pots do!

At the beginning of the love story to what shall we compare him? To a cake half-turned towards the fire of life, or to the moon which to the world shows only one face whose other side is yet unseen?

And the lady? The lady was a chronic invalid nearing forty, a gentle, ringletted poetess of far wider fame than his own; a very feminine poet, whose lyric gift, like herself, "half a wonder, half a wild desire," was most imperfect judged as art. She had been gently condemned to death by a morbid father whose tenderness only flourished in an atmosphere of gloom; one of those stern imitation Old Testament fathers to whom the story of Abraham and Isaac intimately appealed. He was a man strict with himself in every respect, only lax in indulging himself in moral emotions. Imagine a patriarchal Mr. Murdstone, whose darkest frowns alternated with smiles of excruciating tenderness.

* THE BROWNING. By OSBERT BURDETT. Boston: The Houghton Mifflin Company. 1929.

who came up every evening to pray heavily over the not yet quite inanimate form of his favorite daughter, "the purest woman he had ever known." His influence upon her and the depth to which the conception of his goodness had sunk into her heart, may be measured by a letter to Browning, the most intimate, she says in it, she had ever written, in which she quotes as a proof of her father's amazing goodness that he had never reproached her for being the cause of her brother's death: he had been drowned during a visit to her at Torquay, prolonged against her father's wishes and at her request. Her rescue from the fat-folds of this affectionate Hydra which was slowly and insensibly sucking away her life was due in the first instance to a literary admiration. Browning with that spontaneous, unenvious power of admiration, so remarkable in him (he was the only Victorian poet who admired all his great contemporaries for just reasons) admired her poems. "You speak out—I only make men and women speak," he wrote, and she on her side, supported only by a few Preraphaelites who saw pictures in the detail of Browning's poems, admired him. He was allowed to visit her sick-room.



In the Browning correspondence we have the history of their ninety meetings spread over more than a year, with of course all the addenda and explanatory postscripts with which, no sooner parted, true lovers supplement their talk together. Week after week, he knocked punctually at the door in Wimpole Street, passing some brother or sister on the stairs perhaps, but making no acquaintance with the family. At first she kept their meetings secret because she could not admit him and refuse other literary admirers, later, of course, for more urgent reasons. Never did lover combine before more ardency in courtship with more unselfish patience or such admirable good sense. This impetuous and breezy adorer exhibited also the gentlest and wisest consideration; a touch would instantly curb him. He wrote, and no doubt he talked, like a wind tearing through a wood, but at a word from her a pause of halcyon stillness reigned. It is not surprising that he worked a miracle. One day the chronic invalid was standing to receive him when he entered the room. The joy of it staggered him. It was too much, he asked her never to do so again or he might lose control of himself.

Presently she is actually writing to him from the back-drawing room. She has walked downstairs; And soon she is taking a drive round Regents Park! Even the doctors now agree that it is necessary for her to go away to complete her recovery—say, to Italy where she wants to go. At this suggestion, however, the Hydra tightened his coils, and doing so revealed to her the nature of his love. Mr. Barrett explained after the elopement to a friend that he had had no objection to the young man, but his daughter ought to have been thinking of another world."

Henry James once wrote a queer story called "The Sacred Fount," the point of which was the narrator's idea (or delusion) that in the case of two devoted people one might draw upon the other's vitality, much as in a hospital blood may be transferred from one person to another. The story of the Brownings is the story of a woman who on the point of decline took a draught from a "sacred fount," in this case undiminishable. It makes the central part of Mr. Osbert Burdett's book which opens with her life before she met Browning. The first chapter is called "A Bird in Cage," a phrase which she used of herself. Chapters two and three deal with Browning, his life and works before he met her. Chapter four, the longest, with their engagement and elopement, and then follows an account of their happy married life, 1846-61, with comments upon the poems which they both wrote during that time. The book concludes with a much briefer account of Browning's widowed life, his later poems, and a brief estimate of his genius.



It strikes me as a hastily written book; certainly it is not well enough written to make one wish to read it slowly, and yet the merits of Mr. Burdett's commentary require attention. Forcing myself to slow down, I discovered his book was considerably more interesting than I had thought while reading it fast. But he has not made it easy to do this. Mr. Percy Lubbock in his "Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her Letters" has told the story both of the courtship and their marriage with fuller illustration and a more delicate literary skill, though not

with more insight and sympathy; and Miss Cooper Willis in a recent book "Elizabeth Barrett Browning" has told it more briefly.

Mr. Burdett is an indulgent critic of Mrs. Browning's poetry. Indeed, in this case one who is not an indulgent critic is no use. She belongs to that class of poets of whom it may be said severally

and you must love him
Ere to you he will seem worthy of your love.

Her poems are personal, and proceed so frankly from her own emotions that they are tantamount to direct appeals for sympathy. If you stand back from them, not allowing yourself to answer that personal appeal only a few of them "will do." At the same time this spontaneity in the "Sonnets from the Portuguese" lends to that form a sweet fluidity which is a grace rarely achieved in the sonnet, while the genuineness of the emotion expressed is infectious when that appeal to one's sympathy is not felt as too clamant. She is *par excellence* feminine, which is a positive quality in literature as in life, not merely the absence of masculinity; just as Browning is preeminently masculine.

The beauty and depth of their marriage was also the result of one partner being all man and the other all woman. It certainly, in beauty and depth, excelled most happy androgenous alliances. Mr. Burdett in his account of their married years shows that though so close to each other the Brownings never altered each other a whit, which shows that their marriage was a union of indefectable opposites. The desolation of Browning after her death, his determined and difficult self-mastery, and his long active sociable widowhood which followed, are adequately treated. Never again did anyone in the world see the other side of "the moon"—except in his poems, which, as Mr. Burdett shows, constantly harked back to the supreme experience of his life. It is a notion, not only of my own but shared by some of the young today, who somewhat helplessly regret it—occasionally, that the world is losing faith in love, or rather that current ideas are making it more difficult to believe in it. Love is certain not to be found without faith, and romantic faith too. Both these poets possessed that. Mr. Burdett does not mention that for a short time Browning did want to marry again and a very arbitrary lady of exalted social position. Gossip on this point is as authoritative as gossip can be. It was an episode of small importance and would have been an event in his life hardly more so, had it actually come about. But slight as the episode is it may account for that curious little poem which he wrote towards the end of his life called a "Bad Dream." Characteristically he projects the emotion described, in this case making not the living but the dead lover the faithless one. It runs as follows:

Last night I saw you in my sleep:
And how your charm of face was changed!
I asked, "Some love, some faith you keep?"
You answered "Faith gone, love estranged."

Whereat I woke—a twofold bliss:
Waking was one, but next there came
This other: Though I felt, for this,
My heart break, I loved on the same.

A Distinguished Publisher

MEMORIES OF J. M. DENT. Edited by HUGH A. DENT. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1929. \$3.

Reviewed by GEORGE HAVEN PUTNAM

THIS Memoir of J. M. Dent, has interest not only for the members of the publishing profession in which he had done distinctive work, but for any thoughtful reader who gives attention to personality, and who finds value in learning what one of his fellowmen had been able to do with his life and opportunities.

Dent's career was one that is more frequent in the United States than in Great Britain. He was a member of a big family circle in Yorkshire and began his education, which at the outset was meagre enough, and later his business career, with very little that could be called advantages. The family was of old Yorkshire stock and his parents, and their parents, were good representatives of a sturdiness of character that has always been associated with the Yorkshire region.

Dent's business work began as a bookbinder in the town of Darlington. But his Darlington employers failed, and he made his way to London, in his nineteenth year, in 1867. He arrived with

the traditional two shillings and six pence in his pocket, and after a few unsuccessful applications, secured work with a small bookbinder in Bucklersbury, his first pay being at the rate of twelve shillings and six pence per week. Two or three years later he married on the munificent income of about thirty shillings a week. He then put energetic labor into the task of building up a bookbinding business of his own, and with the aid of capital loaned by one or two sympathetic friends (Dent had through life the capacity for securing friends and for inspiring confidence in them), he managed, after several setbacks, to get into satisfactory shape a remunerative bookbinding business.

He used his spare hours (and with his business and family cares there could not have been many such hours) in reading, in order to make up the deficiency in his early education, becoming interested in several divisions of literature, and reading so assiduously that before his death he could be called a well-read man. He was in his thirties, when his interest in literature, and a legitimate business ambition, brought him to the decision to develop his bookbinding business into a publishing concern, or to add publishing to his bookbinding ventures.

His first publishing success was *The Temple Library*, a series typical of some of his later successes. The young publisher took the literature which is recognized as belonging to the classics, and put it into a more attractive form than had previously been given to it. He planned his volumes so that they could be sold at a moderate price for the benefit of cultivated and impecunious readers. *The Temple Library* was the forerunner of the *Temple Shakespeare* and of a number of other series of reprints which developed the same idea, and which presented in better form than had heretofore been arrived at, books concerning the reputation of which there could be no question. Dent's editions made of necessity rather sharp competition with existing editions of the same work, but the publishers of these had no ground for question or for criticism. He kept, in fact, in satisfactory relations with all the members of the publishing group; he took active part in the work that was carried on by the publishers for the establishment of "net" book rates, and he came to be accepted, after a few years of publishing, as one of the leaders of the profession.



The most successful of these earlier sets was the *Temple Shakespeare*, but the most important of the publishing undertakings that carried the Dent imprint was the *Everyman's Library*. For this set, he himself did much editorial work, or contributed editorial counsel, though the actual editor was, for a long series of years, the well-known scholar, Dr. Gollancz. The *Everyman's Library* gave, at a lower price than had heretofore been thought practicable, the classics of English literature, with some additions from the literature of the continent. It was necessary, of course, to omit from the series editions of books which, being still protected by copyright, were controlled by other publishers. Dent's business associates found ground for question, or occasionally for criticism, because the *Everyman's Library* included certain portions of sets the literature in which could be purchased in other editions in a form that was not only not more expensive, but in some cases cheaper, but the continued demand for the Library justified the calculations of the founder, and, at the time of his death, it represented a large investment that was decidedly remunerative for the firm. The publisher had the further satisfaction that the *Everyman's* volumes had been accepted by reviewers, students of literature, and readers generally, as conferring a great service upon the reading public.

The Dent list was developed with the publication of editions, in the attractive Dent format, of a number of sets of standard literature, and the town libraries that were adding to their shelves during the last thirty years, found that the Dent books were among those best suited for their needs. Dent had better knowledge of binding than of printing, and, in the earlier publications at least, the typography was not always up to the highest standard, but that defect was largely overcome in the books of his later years.

His work ended in 1926, when he was seventy-seven years of age. He had certainly made the best possible use of his capacities and opportunities. He was a good citizen, a good publisher, and a good man. His memory may well be honored by the publishing profession and by intelligent readers on both sides of the Atlantic.