

## One hundred years ago

### Reviews and notices of books

**The Mental State of Hystericals.** By **PIERRE JANET, M.D.** With a Preface by the late Professor **J. M. CHARCOT.** Translated by **C. R. CORSON.** London and New York. **G. P. Putnam's Sons.** 1901. Pp. 535. Price 15s. net.

Dr. Pierre Janet has long been known as one of the ablest clinical and psychological investigators among the many brilliant pupils who owed their inspiration to the late Professor Charcot, and the book before us is an excellent example of temperate and judicious examination of a most difficult subject. The author's conception of hysteria is broad and philosophical. Hysteria is viewed as a neurosis which affects the entire personality of the individual, disturbing not only the psychical functions and thus giving rise to a protean assemblage of mental symptoms but modifying also the bodily functions and bringing about various visceral and somatic troubles.

The work is divided into two parts. The first part occupies about 200 pages and deals with the so-called "mental stigmata" of hysteria. The various symptoms and conditions studied here include the anaesthetics of hysterical patients, the forms of amnesia from which they suffer, the disorders, or rather the defects, of will which they exhibit (abouliias), the motor disturbances which they manifest, and, finally, the modifications of character and disposition which they undergo. Under each of these headings a vast amount of facts and observations is collected and discussed and the pathological basis and significance of the conditions are clearly pointed out. Full references are given to original memoirs and articles. The second part of the work occupies nearly 300 pages. It contains the most illuminating description and discussion to be met with in medical literature on such subjects as suggestion and sub-conscious acts, fixed ideas among the hysterical, hysterical convulsions, and the conditions of delirium, delusion, and

somnambulism which are present in the graver forms of hysteria. Among so much that is excellent it is difficult to pick out any particular part of the work for special mention, but the chapter on Suggestion and Sub-conscious Acts may be referred to for the clearness of exposition, depth of insight, and abundance of clinical and psychological knowledge which it exhibits. The work is one that deserves to be consulted and studied carefully in view of the light which it throws on the various clinical and psychological aspects of hysteria. It will for long remain the classical work on the subject. The translation is executed with great felicity and clearness of expression and the text is remarkably free from errors.

### REFERENCE

*Lancet*, 2 August 1902, p. 294.

Researched by Henry Rollin, Emeritus Consultant Psychiatrist, Horton Hospital, Epsom, Surrey