

suasion—hence the name pithiatism (*peitho* to persuade) invented for it by Babinski—yet it may become the most difficult, distorting, deforming, intractable and permanent condition, as may be appreciated when it is known that one in seven of soldiers invalided from the army was discharged through it, and further when it is known to be one of the standing difficulties of the pensions ministry.

Hysteria, or rather the hysterias, are better described than defined; they show themselves primarily in a lack of self-control, there is a morbid self-consciousness, and there is either a deficiency, an exaggeration, or a perversion of sensation, motion, of the special senses, of the vaso-motor system and of the mind—each or all of them may be disturbed. In regard to sensation there may be hyperæsthesia or anæsthesia; hyperalgesia (increased pain) or analgesia (painless areas), there may be dimness of the vision and contraction of the field; deafness, mutism and aphonia. In regard to motion there is tonic spasm or contractures—the latter being difficult to cure—paralysis, tremor or convulsions, and also vaso-motor changes, the hand (especially if previously injured) may swell, the circulation is impeded and the limb becomes blue and cold (acrocyanosis), and there may be fainting, choking, hallucinations, and trance-like catalepsy.

Hysteria only occurs in the temperamentally emotional, viz., in those soldiers who were easily open to suggestibility—70 per cent. of these (Wolfsohn) had a neuropathic tendency or family history, and it is essentially a disease marked by a “dissociation” of consciousness. Charcot described it as a disease of simulation. Janet, his pupil, regarded it as a weakening of the normal mental synthesis through some overwhelming cause or continuous stress resulting in a “splitting off” of certain factors from the Mind; a system of ideas or “complexes” (which are a group of ideas) break away, as it were, from the personality, carrying with it certain sensory or motor symptoms. It may be an idea only, but whether it is an arm or a leg or a feeling of fear, anger, or disgust, it is a distinct area, so to speak, of the personality, and the dissociation is reflected in the part “split off” as well as in the Mind which has lost it.

Freud, another pupil of Charcot, gives as the psychological explanation of hysteria, the principle of mental conflict which occurs when the mind and body are exhausted and weakened through fatigue; repression then takes place, and in the process of some of the “floating” nervous energy in the higher mental processes attaches itself to a senseless fear, which then becomes an obsession, or it is converted into a motor inhibition, with loss of power over the arm or leg, or both; hence the term conversion hysteria, because the dissociated element is thus “converted.” It may also be “converted” into sensory loss, no feeling being elicited on