

was adduced to prove that *physical marks of imperfect local bodily development* (the so-called stigmata)—as lack of facial symmetry, malformation of the ears or eyes—were to be found with such frequency among these patients as to indicate that processes of “degeneration” were silently at work, in psychoneurotic families, tending towards still graver disorders, such as idiocy and sterility, as their final outcome. Even when no obvious physical stigmata were present it was assumed that the nervous systems of such patients might be in some way defective, and many mental peculiarities were enumerated which were supposed to be the outcome of these states. As a portion of this doctrine it was sought to bring every form of eccentricity and even genius into the baleful circle of the degenerative tendencies. But to take such an attitude as this was assign to stolidity and commonplaceness a position of prominence in a way that mocked at progress, and the credit of the whole scheme suffered severely in consequence. Sterility and idiocy are not characteristic of psychoneurotic families. The creative genius of the artist and the imaginative writer does indeed rest on a similar basis with the symptoms of the neuroses but neither the one nor the other point necessarily or regularly to “degeneration” as their cause. The main thing to be said in this connection is that there is a real correlation between mental and bodily conditions such as is deserving of careful study. But it is essential that this should be made in a very liberal spirit.

It is also true that defects of bodily nutrition are also found among these patients which serve both as indications or consequences and also as intensifying causes of their impaired nervous states. The enteroptoses, the dry hair and skin, the impaired digestion, weak muscles, poorly acting hearts and feeble eye-muscles, which are observed so often amongst a certain class of neurasthenics, belong in this category of physical signs. But, important as these conditions are and much as they call for local treatment (which is too well known to need re-statement here) neither their clinical nor their biological significance is clear. Their own etiology is indeed in doubt. They certainly can not be considered as essential causes of the psychoneurotic illnesses and on the other hand there is much question whether they are not, to some extent, products rather than antecedents of the disordered nervous and mental states. Disorders of the bodily functions do certainly arise from disordered emotions and may lead in their turn to organic changes on a large scale. Indeed, between the “organic” and the “functional” it is impossible to draw sharp lines. Bodily processes are a bounding-board for mental processes, and *vice versa*. On the whole, the effect of thus seeking to shift the responsibility for these nervous illnesses onto the shoulders of our ancestors has been to