

The last of the series of Talks to Teachers on Psychology by Professor James (Atlantic Monthly for May) fittingly deals with the Will.

The Professor is neither a materialist nor a fatalist. He "cannot see how such a thing as our consciousness can possibly be produced by a nervous machinery," yet he "can perfectly well see how, if ideas do accompany the workings of the machinery, the order of the ideas might very well follow exactly the order of the machine's operations." To the question, Is or is not the appearance of free will an illusion? He replies that the fatalist theory is very plausible and very easy to conceive; yet, "if free will is true, it would seem absurd to have the belief in it fatally forced on our acceptance. Considering the inner fitness of things, one would rather think that the very first act of a will endowed with freedom should be to sustain the belief in freedom itself." Professor James would have the student clearly realize the associationist view of the will for the reason that no one can ever make any real progress in the study of psychology "unless he has at some time apprehended it in the full force of its simplicity." Setting aside the earlier psychological theory of action as due to a peculiar faculty without whose fiat action could not occur, a theory long ago exploded by the discovery of the phenomena of reflex action, he goes on to the exposition of present day theory. It was discovered fifty years ago that nerve currents not only start muscles into action but may check action already going on, or keep it from occurring as it otherwise might. Nerves of arrest were thus distinguished alongside of motor nerves. The pneumogastric nerve, for example, if stimulated, arrests the movements of the heart. This discovery led to the larger view that "arrest" is a function which any part of the nervous system may exert upon other parts under the appropriate conditions. Examples are given from the emotions. Fear arrests appetite, maternal love annuls fear, and the like. "The expulsive power of the higher emotion" illustrates this.

There are therefore two great types of will: in one the impulsions will predominate, in the other, the inhibitions. The extreme example of the former is the maniac. "His ideas discharge into action so rapidly, his associative processes are so extravagantly lively that inhibitions have no time to arrive, and he says and does whatever pops into his head without a moment of hesitation." On the other hand there are cases of melancholia where there are so many inhibitions that action seems impossible. Of nations the southern races seem to be more impulsive, and the English speaking peoples are generally more repressive, which is the higher type of man? "Cavour, when urged to proclaim martial law in 1859, refused to do so, saying, 'Anyone can govern in that way. I will be constitutional.' Your parliamentary rulers, your Lincoln, your Gladstone, are the strongest type of man, because they accomplish results under the most intricate possible conditions. We think of Napoleon Bonaparte as a colossal monster of will power, and truly enough he was so. But from the point of view of the psychological machinery it would be hard to say whether he or Gladstone was the larger volitional quantity; for Napoleon disregarded all the usual inhibitions, and Gladstone, passionate as he was, scrupulously considered them in his statemanship."

The teacher is strenuously advised to beware of those strained relations where the will of a "balky" pupil becomes pitted against his own. "So long as the inhibiting sense of impossibility remains in the child's mind, he will continue unable to get beyond the obstacle. The aim of the teacher should then be to make him simply forget. Drop the subject for the time, divert the mind to something else; then leading the pupil back by some circuitous line of association, spring it on him again before he has time to recognize it; and as likely as not he will go over it again without any difficulty."

A moral act is defined as consisting "in the effort of attention by which we hold fast to an idea." This definition is made more clear by a reference to the case of the habitual drunkard under temptation. "His moral triumph or failure literally consists in his finding the right name for the case. If he says that it is a case of not wasting good liquor already poured out; or a case of not being churlish and unsociable when in the midst of friends; or a case of learning something at last about a new brand of whiskey which he has never met before; or a case of celebrating a public holiday; or a case of stimulating himself to a more energetic resolve in favor of abstinence than any he has ever yet made; then he is lost; his choice of the wrong name seals his doom. But if he unwaveringly clings to the truer bad name, and apperceives the case as that of "being a drunkard, being a drunkard, being a