

situation was dependent upon a depressive mental state rather than upon true physical weakness.

How far the persistence of emotional and mental influences when continued for many years may predispose to organic disease by permanently impairing the secretions, and altering the vascular tone, is a subject less clearly defined.

Probably the most characteristic effect of an acute emotional shock, acting upon the mind of a person predisposed to such influences, is the production of those physical and mental symptoms, paroxysmal or paralytic, which go towards the make-up of a case of acute hysteria.

*Hysteria* is a disease which has excited interest and curiosity throughout all time. Its nature and causation were as much a source of speculation to the ancients as to ourselves. As its name implies, the disease was supposed to originate in the womb. As a later development, this idea was supplanted by the view that the sexual organs in general were concerned in the production of hysterical phenomena. The most recent hypothesis, enunciated only during the last few years, again places the causation of hysteria in sexual disturbances, but based in this case upon a psychical and not a physical foundation.

Our modern conceptions of hysteria, however, are mainly founded upon the observations and writings of Briquet, Charcot, and the Salpetriere School. It was recognized by them that hysteria was no privilege of the female sex, but that its origin had to be sought for in disturbances of the psychical functions of the brain. Charcot expressed his strong belief in the psychical nature of hysteria, and demonstrated the possibility of reproducing hysterical symptoms by hypnotic suggestion and of effecting their disappearance by a similar means.

Since his time the psychical side of hysteria has been greatly developed, and this aspect of the subject is the one which now commands the most respect.

The theories of "Nervous Mimicry" (Paget) or of "Paralysis from Idea" (Reynolds) have been displaced, and replaced, by the broader view of the subconscious mind and of the dissociation of the personality.

I shall now refer very briefly to the three chief theories of hysteria, which at the present time attract most attention. They all view the malady from the psychical side, two of them make use of the theory of the subconscious mind (Janet, Freud), and the third emphasizes the cardinal importance of suggestion (Babinski).