

BOOK-REVIEWS.

Psychologie im Umrissen auf Grundlage der Erfahrung. Von Dr. HARALD HÖFFDING. Tr. from the Danish by F. BEN-DIXEN. Leipzig.

Essai de Psychologie Generale. Par CHARLES RICHEL. Paris, Bibliotheque de Philosophie Contemporaine.

FEW philosophical reformations have a more instructive history than that which introduced experimental methods and scientific conceptions into the study of mental phenomena. The cleft between the student of matter and the student of mind had no existence in the harmonious mental culture of Greek philosophers. The nature that is the common storehouse of the *physicist*, the *psychologist*, and the *physician*, was also the mine from which the philosopher drew his lore. The great modern revival that separates the sciences, and forces a medical congress to separate into nineteen sections to insure that he who reads will be understood, has left the philosopher in the high altitudes of the mountain-top, while the busy scientists throng down into the mine. Not until our day has the philosopher taken much interest in the carloads of rich ore dug out by the miners, and come to seriously consider the announcement that this patient digging had discovered many rich veins of thought suggesting those unifying generalizations for which he was searching in the clouds. The good effects of this change of method and re-arranging of interest are easily discerned. The 'know thyself' has been interpreted as including the whole man, body and mind, past and present, as modified by all kinds of natural and artificial agencies. But the most distinctly new contribution that this revival of nature-philosophy has brought about is the origination of a scientific psychology, borrowing its methods as well as many of its facts and conceptions from other sciences, — and so re-uniting what should belong together, — while maintaining its distinct character by the use to which it puts this material, and the point of view from which it regards it.

The two volumes before us are both typical results of the new psychology. The one comes from the professor of philosophy in the University of Copenhagen; the other, from a professional physiologist of Paris.¹ Their purpose is to set forth in plain language the conclusions which experimental research and observation have allowed us to draw regarding the nature and function of psychical phenomena, and to delineate the general conceptions to which these facts give warrant. As text-books, both will be eminently useful, and an English version of either would be a welcome contribution to our literature. The point at which the works divide is that the one is written especially for those in whose minds the philosophical interest is uppermost, while the other appeals more directly to the physiologist.

Professor Höffding, while seeing in objective research the central method of psychology, fully recognizes in self-consciousness a most important supplementary means of study. Not only that we can only make our own what we assimilate to our past selves, — the deposit of a host of conscious acts, — but also that the higher mental processes are amenable to no other mode of study. On the other hand, he recognizes in consciousness a somewhat subordinate concomitant of certain psychical acts, and regards with equal interest such acts as have not this accessory; moreover, he holds that the latter can alone determine what is the 'naturally' correct mode of viewing the former. The author thus sees growing around the central 'natural' view of man several psychologies, — a physiological psychology, a psychophysics, a comparative psychology, a sociological psychology. He does not attempt a strict definition of his science, and is more anxious that it should receive the benefit of a number of lights reflected from several quarters than that it should stand out as a distinct, self-made, smoothly finished specimen.

'The experimental basis' on which this psychology rests, includes quite as much such every-day facts as are made interesting by the tact of a humane observer, as rows of formidable tables fresh from the laboratory. The criticism passed upon Wundt's 'Physiological Psychology,' that it is simply a physiology with a psychology attached, would not be applicable here. Professor Höffding makes the physiology distinctly subordinate to the psychology,

while constantly utilizing the facts that physiologists have discovered. For the non-technical student this is perhaps the better plan: it retains for psychology that general broadening interest which its pursuit as a technical specialty may for a time weaken. The plan of the work is somewhat different from those of our text-books of psychology, and is an improvement upon them. After defining his point of view, he considers the relations between body and mind as well from the physiological as the philosophical point of view, and passes to the study of the conscious and the unconscious, treating the phenomena of instinct, unconscious cerebration, etc. Here, as elsewhere, his acceptance of the evolutionary theory, and his use of the analogy between the growth of the individual and that of the race, give life to his pages. He next accepts the trifold division of the intellect, the feelings, and the will, though accenting the fact that each depends upon the other, and the development of all three follow the same path. His chapters upon the mutual relations of intellect, emotions, and will, are full of sound educational material. He devotes an unusual space to the emotions, while rather slighting the will. To single out any points for special treatment would hardly be serviceable: the important aspect of the volume is its modern appreciation of the intimate connection between fact and theory. Dr. Höffding has made a distinct advance in the problem of adopting new psychological results into the body of accepted truth, which serves to educate the next generation.

The main purpose of M. Richet's work is to give a useful summary of those general propositions regarding the functions of the nervous system that have a direct psychological bearing. In this he has succeeded very well, and his success makes us realize the progress made in recent years. It is a book of this nature that impresses one with the rapidity with which mental science is taking on that long-desired scientific aspect. It is no longer meaningless to speak of psychological laws.

What M. Richet means by 'general psychology' can be best gathered from the titles of his chapters. These treat of irritability, the nervous system, reflex action, instinct, consciousness, sensation, memory, ideation, will. Under each heading the treatment is general, stating in brief the conclusions accepted by modern psychology. Within two hundred pages one has here a convenient handbook of the main principles on which an elementary course in psychology should be based.

There is one point in the volume which M. Richet has singled out for separate treatment elsewhere, and which should be noticed here. Between an ordinary reflex action and a conscious act, the author introduces a 'psychic reflex,' and by this he means all those involuntary acts which have become so by interposition of conscious, inferential elements. The dog that trembles when his master shakes a stick at him; the man who feels nausea while reading of a disaster; the vertigo experienced when looking down from a height; many kinds of laughter, as of tears, fear, pain, and pleasure, — are likewise psychic reflexes. These actions all take place involuntarily, but they would not happen if a psychic element did not intervene. Disgust would not occur if the tale were written in an unknown tongue. A psychic reflex is a response to a peripheral irritation insignificant in itself, but so transformed by an act of the mind as to put in operation the reflex centres of the spinal cord. This distinction is a convenient one, and the term will doubtless be adopted.

Ancient Nahuatl Poetry. By DANIEL G. BRINTON. Philadelphia, The Author. 8°.

THE recent volume of the author's valuable Library of Aboriginal American Literature, the seventh of this series, contains a number of ancient Mexican poems with translation, notes, a brief vocabulary, and an introduction. The poems are from a manuscript volume in the library of the University of Mexico, entitled 'Cantares de los Mexicanos y otros opusculos,' and printed from a copy made by Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg. It is unfortunate that the author has not been able to have the texts collated with the original, but his efforts in this direction were unsuccessful: therefore it is probable that some corrections will have to be made in the texts. But scientists will nevertheless be thankful to Dr. Brinton for the publication of the interesting collection of poems

¹ M. Richet is also editor of the *Revue Scientifique*.