

PSYCHOLOGICAL LITERATURE.

The Founder of Mormonism. A Psychological Study of Joseph Smith, Jr. I. WOODBRIDGE RILEY, with an Introduction by Professor G. T. LADD. New York, Dodd, Mead & Co., 1902. 8vo, pp. 446.

The attention of psychologists should be drawn to this study of the originator of a curious and influential religious movement still operative in the United States. The volume is the Doctor's dissertation (Yale) of a careful student, equally conversant with the literary, historical and psychological aspects of the topic. The story is an extremely complicated one, and many of the essential facts are most difficult to discover. As the result of a painstaking search through a great mass of contemporary records, Dr. Riley has succeeded in presenting a consistent—though inevitably in parts a conjectural—reconstruction of the sources and nature of the writings and doings of Joseph Smith, Jr. The keynote of the explanation is a psychological one; that Smith was a neurotic, with distinctive epileptoid symptoms, given to the seeing of visions, steeped in a superstitious form of narrow religious dogma; that his associates and first converts were precisely of that easily suggestible type whose lack of education and religious fanaticism would make them credulous believers of such pretences to revelation and divine authority as Joseph Smith put forth; that the 'Book of Mormon' and many of the revelations that formed the early history of the Church of Latter Day Saints were dictated by the author, Joseph Smith, while the latter was in a quasi-hypnotic condition self-induced—the writings and the account of their production bearing evidences of automatic writing and of the processes observable in 'crystal-gazing.' The force of this argument can be appreciated only in its cumulative mass, and that requires a fair-sized volume to set it forth. The story is confessedly an imperfect one; and further research is not likely to fill in the regrettable gaps in the evidence; still, the internal circumstantial evidence distinctly contributes to the acceptability of the theory which Dr. Riley maintains. Analogical reasoning occupies an important place in the argument, and resemblances to recognized results of the same forms of individual and collective psychoses as those involved in the origin of Mormonism, are

constantly cited. It is somewhat surprising that Dr. Riley's diligent use of recent psychological materials has not brought to his attention the case of the 'revelator' of 'From India to the Planet Mars,' so carefully detailed by Professor Flournoy. In both cases we have the same fantastic explorations of the imagination; the same assumptions of narrative, incidents and style apparently foreign to the subject's normal intelligence; the same invention of fictitious names, persons, places and things; the same possibility of tracing many of the incidents and details of the document to authentic experiences of the subject, but experiences which may have been subconsciously realized and are certainly recorded while in an abnormal state of dissociation; the same periods of incubation preliminary to the further development of a new stage in the automatic revelations; the same participation of the suggestions of others and of the clever adaptation to actual circumstances and incidents, in the subsequent revelations; and so on. The striking differences between the two cases are external and not psychological. In the one case, the revelations are given out as real and inspired, find a congenial soil in which to flourish, and so attain practical significance. In the other case they remain the purely personal expression of a luxurious imagination. Undoubtedly the primitive state of the psychology of abnormal mental states at the time of the miraculous discovery and transcription of the 'golden plates' of the book of Mormon had something to do with the ease with which such a propagandum was disseminated. But we must remember that the kinds of persons who would become converts to such systems are not likely in any community to regulate their beliefs by scientific principles. Recent movements of comparable type in very differently situated communities have revealed the widespread existence of the proper psychological soil for the flourishing of similar delusions. The comparative study of such movements, most of them with a religious tendency, is likely to contribute to their understanding. Dr. Riley's presentation of Mormonism's founder is a notable addition to the collection of psychological documents of this type.

J. J.

Development and Evolution. JAMES MARK BALDWIN. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1902. Pp. xvi + 395.

In this volume Professor Baldwin undertakes, from a decidedly genetic point of view, the discussion of a series of problems of vital interest both to the psychologist and the biologist. The result is a work in which thinkers in both of these subjects will find much food for reflection and investigation. Though written by a psychologist,