

**THE STORY OF
THOUGHT
AND FEELING**

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The story of thought and feeling by Frederick Ryland

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FREDERICK RYLAND

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AND FEELING**

The Story of Thought and Feeling

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BY

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PREFACE

THIS little book is intended to serve as an introduction to the study of some portions of the field of Psychology. It deals with the elementary phenomena of mental life in a more or less concrete and simple fashion, and avoids technicalities as much as possible; not entirely, however, because no clear notions can be obtained in any department of human knowledge without the use of at least a few technical terms. My chief object has been to give a clear outline, free from discussions on method and free from confusing detail.

The book was written before Professor Baldwin's volume in the present series (*The Story of the Mind*) was published. I may perhaps be permitted to recommend that work as a most valuable sequel to the present.

FREDERICK RYLAND.

PUTNEY.

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The Story of Thought and Feeling

CHAPTER I

THE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

AS I walk down this suburban street, my mind is occupied by a series of "objects," to which I assign an existence apart from and external to myself. The road and the pavement, the red fronts of the houses, the trees in the garden, the butcher's cart, the children going to school, and the cloudy sky, I know to be somehow in my mind; they are (as I am at the present moment aware of them) ideas of my own. But I also know that, in a sense, they have a reality apart from myself, and that if I were to die or to drop unconscious on the pavement they would continue to exist as realities. What leads me to attribute to them an existence independent of my consciousness we shall have to consider later; for the present let us remember that these ideas are by psychologists called *percepts*, and the act of having such percepts is called *perception*. Under certain conditions I may have a long series of such percepts without interruption; the

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mind passes from one to another without anything to divert it. Sometimes a part of the series is, so to speak, doubled on itself. As I follow with my eyes the figure of a friend on a bicycle, I turn my head and that part of the road through which I have passed recurs to me; the same houses appear again, but in the opposite order, and other changes in the percepts appear. I recognise them as essentially the same, however, in spite of minor changes. Less clearly—in the background, as it were, of my mind—I am occasionally aware of other percepts more peculiar to myself—the pressure of my clothes, the pressure of my boots on my feet, and of my feet on the pavement, the scent and flavour of my cigarette, perhaps a little headache. These less important percepts do not arouse much interest at the moment, but they are in some sense present, and could be brought into fuller consciousness if something called my attention to them.

In addition to these ideas of things actually present, or percepts, I am aware of ideas of a different character coming before my mind. I see a neighbour coming from his house, and I suddenly remember that last time I saw him I promised to lend him a book. Then an idea of a quite distinct type presents itself, brought into my consciousness by the percept of my neighbour. The name of the book and the appearance of the book are, in a way, present to me, so are the circumstances under which I made the promise, and the polite expressions of pleasure with which he acknowledged my offer. But if I cast one of

those side-glances which people call *introspective*, or if, within a short time, I recall the contents of my mind at this moment of recollection, I shall notice that these new ideas have a character in many ways distinct from the percepts which had previously occupied my attention. They are fainter, less full of detail, less impressive. I do not attribute to them the same immediate reality that I do to the percepts of the houses, the garden-fence, and my neighbour himself. They are more easily put aside. Unless I close my eyes I cannot shut out percepts entirely from my mind. If I am a careful mental observer, I am indeed aware that this affair of the book has somewhat thrust the other ideas, the percepts, into the background. But they will come back into full consciousness instantly if I let my eyes wander or my interest in the promise lapse. The objects of my percepts are here and now before me; the objects of these other ideas, my memories or images, are away from me. Under ordinary circumstances, then, memories or images are harder to keep in my mind than the others, as well as less vivid and clear; and I do not believe that they refer to things immediately present to me.

Let us suppose that my neighbour does not see me, and continues his walk in front of me as I go down the road. I suddenly see a carriage drive by, and I recognise a local medical man; this percept leads to a fresh train of memories; I recall that another neighbour has been seriously ill, and I wonder how he is; I think that I ought to have called or sent to know how he is.