

Confessions of a Ghost-Hunter

By Harry Price. Pp. 396+16 plates. (London: Putnam and Co., Ltd., 1936.) 10s. 6d. net.

THIS volume is a further series of accounts by Mr. Price of his experiences when investigating alleged supernormal phenomena. In the course of his remarks he ranges over a wide field, and thus the records are somewhat unequal in value. Thus, on one hand, space is given to accounts of the performances of palpable frauds; and on the other, we find interesting chapters which contain records of experiments with persons well worth serious attention, like the vaudeville telepathist, Fred Marion. From the scientific point of view one of the most interesting chapters is that dealing with 'spirit' photography, in which Mr. Price details a number of ingenious methods for producing these fraudulent results. From this account it will be seen how valueless reports by untrained and uncritical persons must be, and how difficult is any serious investigation of such claims.

Apart from accounts of these rather dubious manifestations, the book contains a good deal of topical material of importance to psychical researchers, including a résumé of the forthcoming report of the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation on experiments with a subject who exhibited unusual hyperæsthesia; and a summary of the recently staged fire-walk by Mr. Kuda Bux. In this latter case, where the same performer claims to be able to read blindfolded, Mr. Price is of the opinion that this exhibition of eyeless sight is "extremely interesting, entertaining and puzzling", a somewhat startling conclusion, seeing that he himself admits that Bux will not allow the investigators to prevent him seeing down the sides of his nose.

For and Against Doctors:

an Anthology. Compiled by Robert Hutchison and G. M. Wauchope. Pp. 168. (London: Edward Arnold and Co., 1935.) 7s. 6d. net.

DRS. ROBERT HUTCHISON and G. M. Wauchope have fished in all the waters of literature for evidence of the world's opinion of its medical advisers. The feast which they have prepared from their catch is salted with wit and strongly spiced with mustard and pepper. The dishes vary in length from simple statements like "I abhor physicians" to a quotation from Molière occupying three pages. The material is divided chronologically into chapters, and each chapter is prefaced with a summary of its contents. The authors believe that the praise and the dispraise pretty well cancel out. Gravimetrically this may be true, but volumetrically there is more abuse than homage. There is evidence that increase in medical skill has been accompanied by an increase in the reputation of doctors. The first quotation from the "Ancients" states that "the best of doctors is ripe for Hell". The last word of the "Moderns" is that "If a doctor's life may not be a divine vocation, then no life is a vocation, and nothing is divine".

Abraham:

Recent Discoveries and Hebrew Origins. By Sir Leonard Woolley. Pp. 299. (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1936.) 7s. 6d. net.

IN writing this study of Abraham, Sir Leonard Woolley evidently had in mind the class of readers who seek in archæology evidence which will confirm Bible narrative. As he is careful to explain at the outset, his work of excavation in Mesopotamia has produced no concrete evidence of the presence of Abraham at "Ur of the Chaldees"—in any event the epithet is an anachronism. He maintains, however, that the knowledge of the civilisation of Ur, which has been acquired by excavation in the years in which the joint expedition, of which he was leader, was engaged on the site, both explains and expands the Biblical narrative. If Abraham as a young man, and the people of whom he was the leader came from Ur, the patriarch may fairly be regarded as something more than the leader of a nomad bedouin tribe. He and his people had been in contact with the civilisation of a Sumerian city; and to this contact may be ascribed certain peculiarities in the behaviour of Abraham, such as his treatment of Hagar and Ishmael, and certain distinctive characteristics in Hebrew law and religion, which appear with a clearly perceptible change in the character of the historical narrative when Abraham comes on the scene. The Biblical narrative, therefore, Sir Leonard concludes, is substantially accurate. The argument is stated with much force, and the clear and succinct account of the civilisation of Ur brings into due prominence the resemblances which the author finds in the two cultures.

Einführung in die deutsche Bodenkunde

Von Prof. Johannes Waltherr. (Verständliche Wissenschaft, Band 26.) Pp. viii+172. (Berlin: Julius Springer, 1935.) 4.80 gold marks.

THIS book, by a well-known German geographer, is a popular account of the author's views on the geomorphological history of German soils. He sets out to describe the varying climates that have prevailed in Germany since post-Cretaceous times, and their effect on the deposition of soil material and on the plant and animal life. The greater part of the book is naturally concerned with a description of the conditions that prevailed during the Ice Age and their effects on the present-day landscape. He is barely concerned with the details of the chemical weathering of the soil material that has taken place since it was laid down in its present position. Thus the book should be complementary to the usual books on soil formation.

Unfortunately, the usefulness of this book for English readers is limited, for the author justifies very few of the statements made, as it is primarily a popular account of his views. It is thus difficult to distinguish between those statements that are generally true and those that are only applicable to parts of Germany, or between the ideas held by the author and those that are generally accepted.

E. W. R.