

REVIEW.

The Evidence for the Supernatural: a critical study made with "uncommon sense." By IVOR LL. TUCKETT, M.D. (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd. London, 1911. 400 pp. Price 7s. 6d. net.)

THIS book is disappointing. A rumour—perhaps false—preceded it that Dr. Tuckett considered that he had demolished the work of the S.P.R. We therefore awaited the appearance of the book with a little anxiety and a good deal of curiosity, thinking he might have discovered weak points in our treatment of psychical research which had escaped our own notice. It turns out, however, that he mainly addresses himself to readers of such works as Mr. Beckles Willson's *Occultism and Common Sense* or the popular psychic treatises of Mr. Thomson and Jay Hudson, and his treatment of his subject is correspondingly superficial.

Dr. Tuckett does not appear to have much acquaintance at first hand with the work of our society, but he has devoted a long appendix to criticism of the first Report on Mrs. Piper—that in Vol. VI. of the *Proceedings*, which gives an account of her English sittings in 1889—which he selected for careful reading. He classifies and discusses weak points which he observes in the evidence given in this report, but they are weak points which we have never overlooked and therefore add nothing to our knowledge. The newest thing in his treatment of S.P.R. evidence is an attempt in this appendix to show that bias in the estimation of evidence has been exhibited by the founders of the Society generally, and by Mr. Myers, Professor William James, Dr. Hodgson, Sir Oliver Lodge, Dr. Leaf, Mr. Piddington and Mr. Podmore in particular. Whether he succeeds in this we must leave his readers to judge, but we may readily agree with him (p. 354) that "However much we may think we are on our guard against the fallacies connected with [bias], we are still liable to be its victims. This is true of every human being"—including, as Dr. Tuckett would fully admit, himself.

He concludes his review of Mrs. Piper's case by "a few remarks about cross-correspondences," although, as he admits, he has "not made any detailed study of the subject." His limitation of his study of Mrs. Piper to her earlier sittings has led him into an amusing slip, for he assumes that as there was contact in these there was also contact later, so that muscle-reading will explain some successes in 1907. This is typical of his somewhat loose method of dealing with the evidence.

Dr. Tuckett's main aim is to show that supernormal explanations of phenomena are often adopted on insufficient grounds. This naturally leads him to choose weak cases as illustrations; but unfortunately he then seems sometimes to confuse them with strong ones. With the aim itself the S.P.R. has no quarrel, but it is to be regretted that a man with a scientific training which might have enabled him to deal usefully with the subject should have undertaken the task without adequate information. In the absence of this his criticisms fail to have any real value.

E. M. S.