

*The Physics of the Divining Rod.* By J. CECIL MABY and T. BEDFORD

FRANKLIN. London : G. Bell & Sons, Ltd. (1939.) 21s. The title, " contents ", list of 51 illustrations, and clear print and paragraphing of this imposing volume of 452 pages, might be expected to bring some feeling of confidence to the intending reader that he will find, in its text, good solid material for his consideration and subsequent digestion. This feeling might be expected to increase as the curious reader turns the pages, and notes the abundance of technical terms and confident statements of astonishing discoveries made, apparently, with rather simple instrumental means. He will note a large number of " graphs ", a few of which show scales of numbers at the bottom and at the left-hand edge. The scales at the bottom are *time scales*, in days, hours, etc., but the other scale, the *ordinale* of the graph, apparently does not refer to the dial or scale reading of any physical instrument, such as a galvanometer, electrometer, wavemeter, etc., taken at the time indicated on the time scale, and acted upon solely by the physical environment. In the reviewer's opinion this is an example of the kind of vagueness which characterises the description of what the authors claim to be physical experiments. This vagueness concerning exact descriptions of the instruments used, their sensitivity, consistency in repeated experiments, etc., is, unfortunately, maintained through the whole book. It will most certainly cause doubts to arise in the mind of the average physicist who reads beyond p. 6 of the introduction, where it is stated : . . . "we think we may claim incontrovertibly to have shown that the causes of the ordinary dowsing reflexes and rod reactions are to be found in certain penetrating, electrically excitor, rays : one class—the more important of the two—consisting of short Hertzian waves of geophysical or cosmic origin, and exhibiting polarisation and electromagnetic phenomena. " Such laxity on the part of the authors might indeed be excused in the interest of providing light and easy instruction concerning well-established knowledge (were this true) for those who are scientifically untrained, and it could also be excused if a reference were given to details of the authors' investigations published in any scientific journal of repute. As matters stand it appears that the novelty of their claims in the field of physics is as astonishing as their disregard for all other possible explanations of the variations of the readings of their instruments, upon which these claims are supposedly based. On p. 174 it is stated : " it is evident that the dowser must respond to the high frequency effects, due to Hertzian radiation . . . his muscles acting both as receiving aerial and detector mechanism ". Strange that his muscles do not get " jammed " by all the short wave radio now being broadcast! C. C. L. G.