

*The Civilization of the South American Indians : with Special Reference to Magic and Religion.* By Prof. Rafael Karsten. (The History of Civilization Series.) Pp. xxxii + 540. (London : Kegan Paul and Co., Ltd. ; New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 1926.) 25s. net.

SOUTH American peoples have received inadequate attention from ethnologists, and the number of studies of their culture which are of substantial and permanent value is surprisingly small. On this ground alone, Dr. Karsten's book would be welcome as a record of observed fact ; but in addition he is an original thinker whose work must receive consideration as a contribution to theory in social anthropology, whatever may be our ultimate judgment as to the validity of his conclusions when given extended application. In a preface contributed by Dr. E. Westermarck, this distinguished authority says: "Dr. Karsten's book is the most important contribution to the study of certain aspects of the South American native civilization which has yet appeared." The weight of this dictum is indeed increased by the fact that for some pages he then goes on to argue against views put forward by Dr. Karsten in criticism of his own conclusions.

The material contained in the book is the outcome of studies carried on during a stay in the Argentine and Bolivian Gran Chaco from 1911 until 1913, and among the tribes of eastern Ecuador from 1916 until 1919—five years which were devoted specially to the study of religious beliefs and practices. The starting-point of the investigation—and of the book—was the self-decorative practices of the Indians and their connexion with religious beliefs. By a natural transition the author passes on to the study of the bearing of ritual and beliefs, including ornamental art, spirits, magic, taboo, mana, beliefs relating to birth and conception, and the practice of *cowade*.

*Interpolation.* By Prof. J. F. Steffensen. Pp. ix + 248. (Baltimore, Md. : Williams and Wilkins Co. ; London : Baillière, Tindall and Cox, 1927.) 36s. net.

THE theory of interpolation is a subject which has progressed more slowly than many other branches of mathematics, and the reason is not far to seek. A practical computer is sufficiently occupied in performing lengthy calculations and leaves the mathematician to provide the necessary equipment. The mathematician, when interested in interpolation-series expansions, looks primarily at the question as a branch of the theory of infinite series, which is of little use to a computer needing limits to the error involved after the first few terms.

At present a non-rigorous treatment dominates most text-books on interpolation. The earliest attempt to bring together those approximate formulæ which are simple enough to admit a remainder term giving limits to the error involved was made by Markoff in 1896. During the past thirty years, the number of formulæ with workable remainder terms has greatly increased, and the object of Prof. Steffensen in the book before us

is to give an account of the present state of the subject. The formulæ collected here will appeal mainly to actuaries and to computers engaged in calculations of the actuarial type. Prof. Steffensen has very successfully filled a real gap in the computer's library, although he impresses us with the fact that he has published a text-book, and not an encyclopædia on the subject.

*Anatomy : Descriptive and Applied.* By Henry Gray. Twenty-third edition, edited by Prof. Robert Howden. Notes on Applied Anatomy revised by John Clay and Dr. James Dunlop Lickley. Pp. xvi + 1400. (London : Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1926.) 42s. net.

It is just a century since the birth of Henry Gray, a brilliant anatomist who was elected a fellow of the Royal Society at the early age of twenty-five years, and in his thirtieth year published his text-book, "Anatomy : Descriptive and Applied," which after passing through twenty-three editions in the sixty-nine years of its existence is more popular than ever with students.

The success of the book was in large measure due to the excellence of the wood-engravings made for the original edition by Dr. H. Vandyke Carter. Their strength and clearness, their accuracy and insistence on essentials, made an irresistible appeal to students and simplified the process of learning. Prof. Howden is to be congratulated on maintaining the qualities that originally made this book's reputation, and for insisting, in a generation that is prone to be satisfied with half-tone blocks, on the continued use of wood-engraving as the only adequate means for illustrating text-books of anatomy.

The only criticism to be made of the twenty-third edition is to express regret that the section dealing with the central nervous system is not being kept abreast of the growth of knowledge and the needs of the clinician.

*Le calcul des probabilités : son évolution mathématique et philosophique.* Par Prof. L.-Gustave Du Pasquier. Pp. xxi + 304. (Paris : J. Hermann, 1926.) 49 francs.

THIS account of the mathematical theory of probability divides naturally into two parts. After a historical introduction the writer gives an account of the addition and multiplication of probabilities, probable errors, and Bernoulli's theorem. Elementary methods only are used in establishing or illustrating these classical results. The second and more valuable part opens with a fairly exhaustive account of the various interpretations of the calculus of probabilities and then proceeds to a critical analysis of its logical foundations. This investigation is interrupted by a chapter dealing with the applications of the theory of probabilities to physics, and then concludes with a rather diffuse account of a definition of probability resting upon the theory of aggregates. The aim of this work is to place the theory of probability on a satisfactory logical foundation, but this goal appears to recede into the distance as we advance towards it.