

on the ancient philosophical idea that the individual is a miniature copy of the cosmos ; and that by self-identification with the cosmos the individual becomes one with the Absolute. Dr. Rele contends that the Vedas are books on the physiology of the nervous system, written in symbolic language, by authors who were well acquainted with the normal working of that system. For various reasons, anatomical knowledge had to be obtained with great secrecy, and the seers let it be understood that their information was derived through Divine inspiration. Dr. Rele elaborates his theory in detail, identifying the various Vedic gods with different parts of the nervous system.

In the absence of an extensive acquaintance with Vedic literature, any criticism of this book would be impertinent. But no reader can fail to be impressed by the ingenuity with which Dr. Rele has worked out his hypothesis. A perusal of the book gives us some insight into a highly interesting mythology, which is too little known in this country. Those whose recollection of cerebral anatomy is becoming a little hazy will find that Dr. Rele's diagrams recall information laboriously acquired in student days. Much striking symbolism is referred to, which might be elaborated in the light of the psycho-analytic theory. In this connection we would note the legend of Indra, who slew his father, and that of Aditi, the mother of the gods. Students of Swedenborg also will find much that is suggestive in the Vedic philosophy.

M. HAMBLIN SMITH.

Proceedings at the First Latin-American Conference of Neurology, Psychiatry and Forensic Medicine. Buenos Aires: The University Press, 1929. Two volumes. Pp. 708 and 966. Price not stated.

This conference was held at Buenos Aires from November 14 to 17, 1928, under the Presidency of Dr. Arturo Ameghino. The list of delegates shows that there was a good attendance. The social side of such a conference was not neglected, for a banquet and excursions are mentioned. But the scientific proceedings fill two mighty volumes, although the size is increased by the fact that a number of the contributions are reproduced both in Spanish and Portuguese. Considerably more than a hundred papers were presented ; the majority of these deal with topics connected with clinical psychiatry, although neurology is a good second. We are pleased to see several contributions relating to the connection between psychiatry and criminology. The papers vary in length, from elaborate monographs to the briefest of communications. The discussions which took place are reported. A large number of illustrations are reproduced, some of the micro-photographs being most beautiful.

It is impossible to give any detailed criticism of so vast a mass of work. As might be expected, the papers vary widely in their

importance. We hope to epitomize some of them. We heartily congratulate our South American colleagues upon their industry and energy. We gather that the conference will be held periodically, and trust that a British delegate will be present when it is next convened.

M. HAMBLIN SMITH.

Children at the Cross-roads. By AGNES E. BENEDICT. New York: The Commonwealth Fund Division of Publication, 1930. Demy 8vo. Pp. 238. Illustr. 7. Price \$1.50 post-paid.

This work consists of the life-histories of nine children with school or home difficulties, followed by illuminating comments on possible ætiological factors. The work is based on a study of the carefully kept records of visiting teachers in the rural communities of Monmouth county, New Jersey, Huron county, Ohio, and Boone county, Missouri, these being three out of thirty communities selected by the National Committee on Visiting Teachers, sponsored by the Commonwealth Fund, for a three-year demonstration of visiting teacher work.

It presents a point of view and an interpretation of method that should be particularly useful at the present time to all interested in children and their problems, having regard to the efforts now being made to educate the nation on a subject of the greatest importance not only to the individual child but to the adult community of the future.

J. R. LORD.

Report from the Select Committee on Capital Punishment. H.M. Stationery Office, 1930. Pp. 98. Price 1s. 6d. net.

In the autumn of 1929 the House of Commons appointed a Select Committee to examine the question of capital punishment and the possible substitutes for that penalty. The reference was confined to capital punishment in cases tried by civil courts in time of peace. For practical purposes, the Committee had to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the capital penalty for the crime of wilful murder.

The Committee held thirty-one meetings, and examined a large number of witnesses, who may be roughly divided into three classes: (1) Officials from the Home Office, from other public departments, and from the prisons. With a few exceptions these were in favour of retention of the capital penalty, although some suggested certain modifications in practice. (2) Some well-known advocates of the abolition of capital punishment. (3) Witnesses who gave evidence as to the experience of foreign countries, particularly those which have abolished, or suspended, the infliction of capital punishment.

We are informed that the complete evidence will shortly be published. Meanwhile, a report has been presented which, however, does not emanate from the Committee as a whole. This consisted of fifteen members, representing diverse views.