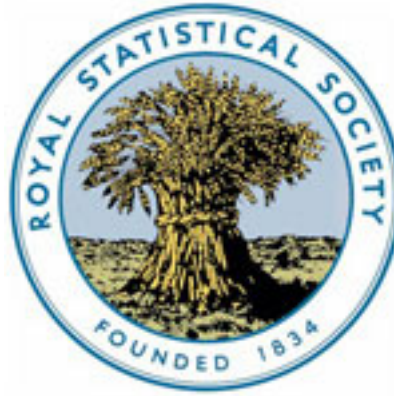


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Readings and Problems in Statistical Methods by Horace Secrist

Review by: G. U. Y.

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deviations. When so defined it often has a useful meaning in non-linear regression. The author fails altogether to mention the correlation ratio or mean square contingency for both of which a fairly complete theory exists and which can be applied to skew distributions. For the case of characters not capable of quantitative measurement, the only measure of correlation given is Yule's formula for a fourfold table  $R = (ab - cd) / (ab + cd)$ . The derivation of Bernoulli's law in Chapter vii is of doubtful validity. Partial and multiple correlation are not mentioned. There is no index, and the works consulted by the author are not always the latest available editions. On the whole this is a disappointing work, not up to the standard of Italian books on statistics. L.I.

2.—*Readings and Problems in Statistical Methods*. By Horace Secrist, Ph.D., xii + 427 pp. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1920. Price 16s. net.

This volume, intended to be used in conjunction with the same author's *Introduction to Statistical Methods*, was written, he tells us, "to illustrate concretely the attitude of mind in which statistical analysis must be undertaken, and to develop logically the steps and processes through which statistical data must be carried in order to be used as bases for logical inference." But the book is not a collection of arithmetical problems, nor of mathematical problems—it is not a mathematical book at all—nor of illustrations primarily intended to exemplify the use of "statistical method" in the narrower sense of the term. It is intended rather to show how statistics can be used "for planning, whether it is related to questions of social control, business policy, or statecraft." Much stress is laid, in certain sections, on the second head, *i.e.*, the work of the statistical department of a business corporation: we should judge the work, in fact, to have arisen as much from the author's position as Director of Business Research in the North Western University School of Commerce as from the courses given by him in his capacity of Professor of Economics and Statistics at the North Western University.

The volume consists to a large extent of reprints or adaptations of articles by the author and others. It opens with a chapter on the Meaning and Application of Statistics and Statistical Methods adapted in part from Professor Pearson's *Grammar of Science*, and subsequent chapters deal with the sources and collection of data, units of measurement (one section adapted from Dr. Bowley's article, "On the Improvement of Official Statistics," in the *Journal* for 1908), illustrations of methods in collecting data, tabular presentation, graphic presentation, averages, index-numbers, description and summarization—dispersion and skewness, and comparison—correlation. In each chapter are given a number of "review questions" the nature of which may be illustrated by citation:—

Can such a problem as the eight-hour day be settled by statistics? Would statistics have any bearing on such a problem as the tariff? Why? On the establishment of a wage policy? How? (Chapter I).

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What interest has the farmer, the manufacturer, the railroads, the salesman in crop reports? What interest have you in such reports? (Chapter II).

Illustrate the application of the laboratory method to advertising. How does the law of averages in mass phenomena apply here? Is the case different in the determination of price policies? Why? (Chapter II).

What things were considered, and why, in fixing the wage groups for tabulation? In fixing the time units for expression of wage data? Do the considerations noted here seem to you to be of general application, or are they limited to this particular statistical problem? (Chapter IV).

How is the practice of rounding and abbreviating numbers in tabulation related to accuracy, to "spurious accuracy," to compensation of errors, to the serviceability of tables? (Chapter V).

The volume as a whole suffers from a certain irregularity of arrangement due, we should judge, to its being so largely a compilation. Thus collection of data is dealt with in Chapter II and again in Chapter IV, the subject of units being sandwiched in between. The difficulties of international comparison are dealt with in Chapter X which, in a space of less than 25 pages, has to cover correlation as well. It must be admitted that the test of through-reading may be hardly fair to a volume intended to be used mainly for illustrative purposes, but the reader who takes the volume, like the reviewer, as a whole, does suffer from a sense of discontinuity, finding himself thrown from one subject to another. The work would have been the better for more digestion of the material, for being written rather than compiled.

To the English statistician and to the teacher of statistics for students of economics in this country, the book will, we think, be mainly useful in the light it throws on American practice and ideas. The sections on crop reports, on estimating lumber, and on the statistics of the U.S. Shipping Board, for example, may be quite valuable from this standpoint. The sections in Chapter II dealing with statistical methods in the development of markets (say for the sale of trade-marked hats or of a Catholic publication) cover ground not dealt with, so far as we are aware, in any volume published here, and will interest those concerned with statistics for business purposes. It will be gathered, from the description given, that the volume is in purpose and scope of a novel kind, distinctly American in outlook (and occasionally in language, such questions as *Why Statistics and Its Methods?* and *Are dealers sold in proper quantities?* leaving the Englishman gasping), and its value consequently difficult rightly to appraise.

G.U.Y.

3.—*Report on the Pandemic of Influenza, 1918-19*. Ministry of Health: Reports on Public Health and Medical Subjects, No. 4, xxiii + 576 pp. London, 1920. Price 10s. net.

This is a great report. A writer in the daily press, his eye, without a doubt, in a fine frenzy rolling, recently observed that the Minister of Health "has an itch for issuing reports which few people "ever see." Fortunate, at any rate, are those who do see them! The Treasury, it is to be hoped, will shrink from depriving the scientific world of the great joy of beholding the bright countenance