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Waste.

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Waste. By the Committee on the Elimination of Waste in Industry of the Federated American Engineering Societies. (Published by the Societies, the McGraw-Hill Book Company, sole agents : New York and London, 1921. Pp. xi + 409.)

THE problem of waste in industry presents a wide and, to a great extent, an uncharted and unexplored field. The present study is modestly described as comparable to "the preliminary assay of a mine, to the first pencil drawings of a new machine"; but in it the Committee have done a big piece of necessary work, by laying down general lines for study, and elucidating the various problems to be solved. The object was to carry out through highly skilled investigators a rapid intensive study of a few typical plants in some of the chief industries. Six in all were dealt with—building, metals, textiles, men's clothing, boots and shoes, and printing. How thorough the work was may be judged from the *questionnaire* prepared for the investigators, which runs to just on eleven closely printed pages.

The book opens with a brief discussion of the Sources and Causes of Waste and Recommendations for their removal. In this the Committee gives a valuable analysis of the problem, and a well-thought-out series of definitions. No doubt additions and corrections will be made to both as the inquiry proceeds; but the necessary foundations are excellently laid. Waste is classified as due to low production caused by faulty management; interrupted production of idle men, plant or materials; intentionally restricted production, whether by employers or employees; and lost production from ill-health and similar causes.

The second and third parts of the book follow out the workings of these influences in some detail. The former, which consists of the "engineers' field reports," describes the conditions in each industry investigated. The third part reports generally on the chief individual causes of waste in all the industries. An interesting attempt is made to calculate the proportion of waste attributable to the different factors—management, labour, and "outside contacts"; and it may be noted that by far the largest proportion is held to be due to the first, whilst the responsibility of outside contacts is somewhat less than that of labour.

Whilst, therefore, the investigation set out primarily to learn what there was to learn, it has resulted in far more. For it has produced much that will help directly to solve the problems of waste, and has put much information at the disposal of the future inquirer. The Societies and the Committee, therefore,

deserve the thanks both of economics and of industry; and it is much to be hoped that some similar investigations will be set on foot in this country. For a great opening seems to be offered, in certain industries at least, for work on these lines by Joint Industrial Councils.

N. B. DEARLE