

*The Adjustment of Wages: A Study in the Coal and Iron Industries of Great Britain and America.* By W. J. ASHLEY. Longmans, Green and Company, London, New York, and Bombay, 1903.—xx, 362 pp.

The text of this volume is composed of eight lectures which were delivered by Professor Ashley on the Dunkin foundation at Manchester College, Oxford, during the first three months of last year. The lectures deal chiefly with the subject of collective or corporate bargaining respecting the remuneration and conditions of labor in Great Britain and America. For some time now this method of collective arrangement has superseded the individual agreement in practically all the large industries of England, and, despite much opposition from employers, has made considerable progress in the United States. The author has selected for examination the allied group of industries which have to do with the production of coal and of iron and steel; in the first place, because of the magnitude of these industries, employing, as they do, tens of thousands of men, practically all of whom, in England at any rate, are organized in unions; and, secondly, because these industries best represent the development of the collective bargaining idea. The growth of this form of bargaining has led, especially in England, "to the institution of a certain mechanism for adjusting the remuneration of labour," and it is to a study of this mechanism in its various forms and the very important questions of principle which arise in the course of its working that the author gives special attention.

Preliminary to the more specific discussion of principles the author lays down the broad proposition that unionism should be looked at from the points of view both of psychology and of business administration. As to the psychology of the matter, "unionism is only an example on a large scale of the natural gregariousness of similars." Where tens of thousands of people work under the same conditions, with the same standard of living, and are influenced in their income and expenditure by the same decisions of their employers, they naturally come together, talk over their affairs, and develop a class feeling (pp. 12, 13).

From the administrative point of view, the carrying on of industrial enterprises on a large scale necessarily involves common rules. In the modern large enterprise it is administratively impossible to make specific arrangements as to wages and conditions of employment with each individual workman. Moreover, an employer is seriously hampered if, in addition to the supervision of technical processes and com-

mercial details, he is compelled to be ever on the alert against the competition of rivals who obtain labor more cheaply than he. A common rule of wages for an entire industry is therefore a labor-saving device of great importance to the employer (pp. 14, 15).

In Great Britain the organization of labor in the several coal-mining districts is practically all-embracing (p. 30), while the whole field of the iron industry and a large part of the field of the steel industry is covered by a network of boards of conciliation (p. 142). These organizations of labor have for many years been formally recognized by the employers and through their officers and various boards have negotiated regularly with representatives of their employers; and "not as a matter of condescension, or charity, or courtesy, but as a simple matter of business" (p. 11).

Similarly, in the United States, collective bargaining or, as it is coming to be called here, the "joint agreement" has been adopted in these industries: very generally in the bituminous coal industry in the older coal-producing states; to a very limited extent in the anthracite coal industry, since the great strike; and to a considerable extent in the iron and steel industries. In none of these industries, however, is the institution by any means so permanently established as it is in the parallel industries of Great Britain. And, if we except the operators of the soft-coal industry, especially those of Illinois, it may also be stated that the attitude of employers in this country even in those industries where the joint-agreement idea has made progress, is for the most part one of tolerance rather than of sympathetic coöperation.

In his comparative study of the working mechanism by means of which the workmen of the two countries carry on negotiations with their employers, Professor Ashley shows many parallelisms and some striking differences. In the coal industry, for instance, there is the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, which corresponds with the United Mine Workers of America, although the former is probably more nearly all-embracing than the latter. Again, the British organization is composed, for the most part, of district federations, which correspond roughly with the state organizations which make up the United Mine Workers of America, and in both countries there is of course equal voting representation of employers and employees in all the various boards of conciliation and scale committees. In Great Britain, however, the employers have perfected more formal organizations for carrying on their part in the negotiations than have those in America. In America there is no national organization of coal owners, and, if we except the Illinois Coal Operators' Association, no such well

organized state bodies as these of the British districts. Another point of difference that is noted is the fact that in Great Britain, when the boards of conciliation cannot come to agreement upon issues under discussion, provision is made to call in a disinterested outsider who as neutral chairman or umpire, after hearing the evidence, renders a decision which is binding upon both parties. In America the boards or scale committees themselves settle all questions that come before them for consideration. The parallelisms and differences in the various negotiating bodies in the iron and steel industries of the two countries are found to be much the same as those noted in the coal industries.

If we inquire what are some of the principles which have been asserted in the course of negotiations between employers and employees, we find that that of the minimum or living wage holds a prominent place. In the earlier years, in the British coal industry, miners' wages were for a long time determined by sliding scales, wages following selling prices. Obviously under this simple arrangement there was no limit below which wages could not go; and the coal owners in competition with each other frequently made long-time contracts for the sale of coal at lower and lower prices, knowing that with the sliding scale arrangement they could reimburse themselves through a corresponding depression in the cost of labor. With the establishment of the Federated Districts Board in 1894, however, a new plan was adopted which was to run for ten years. A minimum was established below which miners' wages were not to be depressed, and a maximum above which they could not be raised. Within these limits the board might determine the rate of wages for a given time, and it might make them depend upon prices, or it might take into consideration other factors as well. And as a matter of fact the miners themselves as well as their employers have for some time been taking account of other factors, such as the state of the market, the strength of the demand for mine labor, and the cost of production. The attempt in this plan is, within certain limits, to make the cost of labor a fixed charge on production; in other words, to make the selling prices follow wages rather than to let wages follow prices. Whatever may be said upon this question from a theoretical point of view, so far as the miners are concerned, as the author points out, they have come to regard the compact as an acceptance of their principle of a minimum or living wage. In the American coal industry this question has never presented itself in just this form, if we except the sliding scale features of the anthracite coal industry. Like the British miners the American soft-coal miners have insisted upon the principle that the cost of labor should be determined first, and set high

enough to afford a living wage, and that then prices should follow wages; but the minimum and maximum features have at no time been adopted.

In the British iron and steel industries, in contrast with the rule in the coal industry, general rates of wages with few exceptions are determined by the older type of sliding scales. Thus in the manufactured iron trade of the North of England and of the Midlands "wages are in a fixed ratio to the average net selling price, deduced according to recognized rules from the quantities and prices of the various descriptions of iron as ascertained by accountants every two months" (p. 146). It is interesting to note the reason why the sliding scale method is so generally in vogue in these branches of industry, while it has had to be abandoned in name and, as we have seen, greatly modified in practice in the coal-mining industry. The explanation, the author states, is probably to be found in two circumstances, first, the "long contract" system, which always endangered the sliding scale in the coal industry, does not exist at all in the iron and steel trades, owing to the fact that in these trades the great fluctuations in the price of raw material render long-time contracts too dangerous and speculative; secondly, "there is some reason to believe that combination among the employers has been more successful in 'regulating' prices in the iron than in the coal industry" (pp. 149, 150). In the American iron and steel industries, down to the strike of 1901, sliding scales much like those in the British industries obtained.

A very important fact brought out in the lectures is that strikes are much less frequent where the workmen are thoroughly organized, and also that the stability of the organizations in face of a falling market is increasing, numerous instances being cited of reductions in wages which have been advised by the boards and accepted peaceably by the unions.

The text closes with a lecture on The Legal Position of Trade Unions, in which the author discusses more particularly the legal revolution wrought in Great Britain by the Taff Vale decision, and the question of requiring trade unions formally to incorporate before entering into joint agreements.

Two slight errors in dates may be noted. On page 2 the year 1889 is given as the date when the United States surpassed Great Britain in the production of coal; this occurred in 1899. And on page 231 the great coal strike of 1897 is mentioned as of the year 1898.

Following the text are a number of appendices containing a bibliography and a most valuable collection of reprinted documents illustrative of the chief topics discussed in the lectures. The book is writ-

ten in Professor Ashley's characteristically critical and scholarly spirit, and the suggestions it offers, gained from English experience, will prove of great value to American readers and especially to American men of affairs in these days of industrial disturbances.

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*The Anthracite Coal Communities.* By PETER ROBERTS. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1904. — xiii, 387 pp.

*The Slav Invasion and the Mine Workers.* By FRANK JULIAN WARNE. Philadelphia, the J. B. Lippincott Company, 1904. — 211 pp.

These two volumes together constitute a noteworthy sociological study of a phenomenon now to be witnessed on a larger scale in the United States than elsewhere in the world. The ethnic, social and moral character of a community inhabiting a region 1,700 square miles in extent, is being transformed by the immigration of peoples radically unlike those hitherto dwelling there. The outcome of the changes there taking place will be the answer to the question whether American manners, ideals and institutions have vitality enough to assimilate the Slavonic character as they have assimilated the Celtic and the Teutonic. Thus far in the evolution of the American people, the foreign elements absorbed have been chiefly of the same ethnic stocks that centuries ago combined to create the English blood. The immigration that we are now receiving is chiefly Italian and Slavonic. If we can convert these stocks also into good American stuff, the stability of our national character will be assured.

Dr. Warne's account of the Slav invasion is slight and not altogether satisfactory. His chief interest is in the labor situation, and the conflict that has been precipitated by the attempt of the English-speaking miners to hold their own against lower standards of living. It must be regretted that Dr. Warne accepts the local use of the word Slav as a comprehensive term for all non-English speaking elements in the anthracite mining districts. Ethnically, intellectually and sociologically the Italians and the Slavs are as unlike as the Italians and Welsh, and the writer of a scientific book is without excuse in condoning a misuse of terms that must inevitably lead to confused and mischievous thinking.

Dr. Roberts's volume is a model of detailed, comprehensive and well-ordered description. No other work that has ever been done in this