Book Department

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Book Department


There is a very slight difference between the former edition of Builders' Accounts and the present volume, the most important being the fact that provision is made in the pay roll book for handling health insurance under the English national insurance act of 1911. Otherwise no changes of importance have been made since the book first appeared in 1903. That no improvements are suggested during a period in which American building methods have made such enormous strides would seem to indicate that the book will be of but little value to an American.

It is claimed that the system described may be adapted to the needs of both small and large contracting builders, yet the system suggested as suitable for large undertakings has such very burdensome and antiquated methods that we cannot see how even in England it can be advantageously used. For instance, as to pay roll, the foreman makes daily returns in writing, giving the name of each workman. The idea of the foreman writing the names of all the men each day is amusing. No method is suggested for distinctive serial numbers for various classes of work, such as contracts, jobbing work, extra, etc. The overhead, added to actual cost, is a percentage on the wages, instead of in addition thereto a percentage on material handled.

The financial records are made cumbersomely by regarding the cost records as an integral part, instead of being partly subservient thereto. The stores issued are handled in a columnar book instead of on cards or loose leaf—an almost impossible procedure for a large contractor. Accrued wages at closing period are not considered sufficiently important to distribute to the jobs and contracts to which they belong, yet it is advised to take profits on the finished portion of uncompleted contracts. Accrued wages are shown only on the pay roll account as a total. The overhead expenses are not treated scientifically in a separate section of the profit and loss account, thus losing the value of that part of the system whereby they are considered in the cost accounting. Payments of the notes payable are not covered by cheque, although all other payments are so covered. Safeguards on pay roll and other well-known internal checks are not mentioned.

It was to have been hoped that a book from the press of 1913 would give us an insight into the progress in modern accounting of our brethren across the water, but we are disappointed in this. We must, in fact, refuse to accept it as a modern English book. Nevertheless, as nothing like it exists in America it is a valuable book for students and small builders.

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The purpose of this book is to set forth in a clear and simple manner the principal facts relative to interest computations and the calculations of bond values, and also to explain the use of the various tables connected therewith. The author is a member of the faculty of the University of Toronto, and while the book was written mainly for his own classes, it will be found useful by students at other universities and by business men who come in touch with problems of this nature. The meaning of present worths, amounts, sinking funds, present values of bonds, and so forth, is explained, and illustrative examples are given.

The use of algebraic symbols and expressions is almost unavoidable in a book of this nature, and some of the pages will doubtless seem formidable to those not accustomed to algebra. However, the algebraical portions of the book are comparatively small, and should not militate against its value to the business man or student unfamiliar with higher mathematics. The most original work is found in the problems and exercises in the latter part of the text. These are well selected, and a solution of them by the reader should be of great benefit and will much increase his grasp of the subject. A valuable addition is the insertion of five tables of interest computations, covering twelve different rates from one to five per cent for any number of periods from one to fifty. In the case of the tables, it would possibly have been better to have the number of decimal places uniform, say seven or eight, instead of four in some instances and six in others.

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BOOKS RECEIVED FOR REVIEW


