Previous to 1898 it was illegal for chambers of commerce to hold joint meetings for the discussion of matters of public interest, and they were not even allowed to correspond or consult in any-way, except through the medium of the minister of commerce. The new law relaxed to a certain extent this prohibition, by authorizing direct correspondence and permitting chambers in a district to meet for the joint consideration of questions affecting their district,' but for no other purpose. Such a thing as an association of chambers of commerce is still illegal in France.

When, in 1873, British merchants in Paris started a British chamber of commerce in the French capital, the French government looked rather askance at the new venture, and Μ. Léon Say, when minister of commerce, even threatened it with forcible dissolution unless the title “ Chamber of Commerce ” was dropped. This demand was not ultimately pressed, and the services rendered by the British chamber soon opened the eyes of the French government to the advantages, which they might derive from the formation of similar institutions to represent French commercial interests abroad. In 1883 the minister of commerce started the organization of such chambers, which endeavoured to combine to a certain extent the French and the British systems.

Foreign commercial interests are represented in Paris by seven foreign chambers of commerce, of which the British Chamber is the oldest. The others are the American, Austro- Hungarian, Belgian, Italian, Spanish and Russian chambers. In 1896 these chambers formed themselves into an Association of Foreign Chambers of Commerce, but the French government gave it to be understood that, as they did not allow associations of French chambers, they could not treat foreign bodies more favourably, and the association had to be dissolved.

*b. Consultative Chambers of Arts and Manufactures.*—These institutions, organized somewhat after the model of chambers of

commerce, represent manufacturing and industrial interests. They were established by Napoleon L in 1803, and formed part of the complete system of commercial organizations which he intended to give France. They are now regulated by decrees of 1852 and 1863, and are composed of twelve members elected for six years by merchants and manufacturers inscribed upon an electoral list specially drawn up by the prefects. These chambers, of which there are some fifty in existence, are placed under the control of the minister of commerce, but instead of being kept out of the *patentes,* like chambers of commerce, they are supported by the municipality of the town where they are situated, which has also to provide them with offices rent free, and with clerical assistance. In addition to giving advice in connexion with manufacturing and industrial matters, they have to look after and report upon im- provements in manufactures and machinery, new industrial processes, &c. They are especially useful in the preparation of local and international exhibitions. They are also entrusted with the nomination of the Consultative Committee of Arts and Manufactures, a body whose functions are to advise the ministers of commerce and finance, as well as those of the interior and of public works, as regards the regulation of dangerous trades and industries, patents and trade marks legislation, and the interpretation of customs regulations.

*c*. *Syndical Chambers of Trade and Industry.—*By the side of the official trade organizations other associations have grown up, which, although regulated by law, are in the nature of voluntary and self-supporting bodies, viz. the syndical chambers of trade and industry. The repeal in 1884 of the law of 1791, which pro- hibited the formation of trade or professional association, was the signal for the formation of those chambers, which soon acquired great influence. A few syndical chambers existed before that date, the oldest, the Chamber of Master Builders, dating back as far as 1809, but they were only tolerated, and their existence, being illegal, was most precarious.

The syndical chambers, which are divided into chambers of employers and chambers of employed, are the official organs and representatives of the trade and professional syndicates authorized by the law of the 31st of March 1884, which was the work of M. Waldeck-Rousseau. Each syndicate has its separate chamber. They may be established without government authorization, but a copy of their rules and a list of their officials must be sent to the prefect. Membership is strictly limited to persons of French nationality. The only way in which the government can dissolve them is by application to the courts of justice for an order of dissolution on the ground of infringement of the provisions of the law. In Paris, most of the syndical chambers have formed an association . called the Union Nationale du Commerce et de l'Industrie—Alliance des Chambres Syndicales. Another association, intended to take up the defence of the interests and rights of syndical chambers, has been formed under the title of Syndicat du Commerce et de l’industrie—Syndicat des Chambres Syndicales. The syndical chambers are kept up by the subscrip­tions of their members, and have the right to hold real property, as have also the associations of chambers, which are kept up by subscriptions from the constituent chambers.

According to the law which authorized their formation, the objects of the syndical chambers are exclusively “ the study and defence of economic, industrial, commercial and agricultural interests," and for this purpose they have complete freedom of intercommunication and can hold congresses. They are authorized to establish for their members mutual benefit societies and pension and relief funds, to open employment agencies, to give legal advice to, and in certain cases to bring actions on behalf of their members, and to organize the settlement of disputes by arbitration. They take part in the election of judges of the tri­bunals of commerce and of the Conseils de Prud’hommes.

B.—*Slate Departmental Organization.*

The state commercial departments and offices arç chiefly centred round the ministry of commerce, to which is assigned the commercial part of the duties fulfilled in England by the board of trade. A ministry of commerce existed for short periods in 1811 and in 1828, but it was ultimately suppressed in 1829, and from that date until 1886, when the department received its present form and separate existence, commerce was only represented in the French government by a subsidiary bureau attached sometimes to one ministry, sometimes to another. The ministry is divided into three main bureaus—the first entrusted with all matters connected with the home trade and industry, the second with foreign and colonial relations, and the third with the compilation of statistics.

Attached to the ministry of commerce is a body called the Conseil Supérieur du Commerce et de l'Industrie, which acts as an advisory council to the minister. Its origin goes back to the council of commerce established by Louis XIV., but it is now regulated by a decree of 1882.

The Office National du Commerce Extérieur was established by a law of the 4th of March 1898, and is carried on jointly by the ministry of commerce and the chamber of commerce of Paris, the latter having provided it with an in­stallation at a cost of over 1,200,000 francs. The office, which has been founded for the promotion of French trade with foreign countries and the dissemination of commercial intelligence, fulfils duties similar to those of the commercial intelligence branch of the board of trade. It also publishes the weekly *Moniteur officiel du commerce.*

The Office Colonial, whose duties are especially to furnish in­formation concerning the French colonies, to promote emigration thither, and to foster a demand in France for the produce of her colonies, was established by a decree of the 14th of March 1899. It is entrusted, in addition, with a permanent exhibition of colonial produce and a museum of samples of goods supplied by or required in the colonies. The office is also in charge of a colonial garden at Vincennes, where experiments are made for the acclimatization of colonial plants and produce in France, and the cultivation of French produce in the colonies.. The office publishes a monthly bulletin of miscellaneous colonial information, and issues yearly commercial and other reports dealing with the colonies. It is a dependency of the ministry of the colonies.

French consuls are instructed to transmit to their government all information which they may consider useful for the prosperity of French trade. It is also their duty to spread, in the country where they reside, a knowledge of such French commercial and financial matters as they may consider most useful in the interests of their own country. The close relations which they are recommended to cultivate with the French commercial community within their jurisdiction through the local French chamber of commerce and the councillors of foreign trade are intended to enable them to keep in better touch with commercial questions. They have had, however, to be frequently reminded of their commercial duties, and the French chambers of commerce have criticized them almost as much as the British chambers have British consuls. The most important instructions issued to consuls were contained in circulars from the minister for foreign affairs dated the 15th of March and the 24th of April 1883. French consuls have to make a return to their government every fortnight—every month if the district is not of great commer­cial importance—showing, upon forms specially provided, the nature, quantity, origin or destination, prices wholesale and retail, and chief trade marks of the goods imported into and exported from the district, the results of public sales of produce, the conditions of transport, contemplated public works and tenders advertised, state of the labour market, artistic enterprises, commercial failures and rumours concerning important local firms, effect of foreign competition, imitation of French trade marks,&c. These returns are mostly of a confidential nature, and are not intended for publication, but whenever the minister considers it advisable he causes information to be conveyed through the chambers of commerce, or other channels, to the parties, chiefly interested. The ordinary consular reports are published in weekly instalments in the *Moni­teur officiel du commerce.*