**IV.** Germany

A.—*Commercial Associations.*

German trade organizations are of three kinds, viz. :— *a*. Official organizations established by law, and called Handels­kammern, or chamber of commerce;

*b.* Semi-official associations; and

c. Voluntary or “free ” associations.

*a. Chambers of Commerce.—*Contrary to the idea prevalent in England, official trade organizations in Germany are in a somewhat chaotic state. They have been established under more or less different conditions and systems in each state of the empire, and in certain districts still bear the imprint of foreign origin. They are under the control of the local state governments and lack the homogeneity and unity of direction of the French official system.

Before proceeding to a general examination of the German régime, special mention must be made of the chambers of com­merce of the old Hanseatic Confederacy which stand apart, and whose duties, as well as constitution, differ from those of trade organizations in the rest of Germany. The chambers of commerce in Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck are not only the successors of, but (con­trary to what happened in Germany as well as in other countries) have been evolved out of the old corporations which looked after the interests of the Hans traders in the olden days, and which, in the case of the Hamburg “Commerz-Deputation,” for instance, dated as far back as 1665.

The Hamburg Chamber of Commerce, whose present constitution dates from 1860, is composed of twenty-four members elected for six years by the ancient “ Versammlung eines ehrbaren Kaufmannes,” that is to say, the merchants and commercial men whose names appear on the register of the “ Honest Merchants ” of the city. Its income is chiefly derived from special taxation, to which are added the proceeds of the sale of contract and transfer stamps, and also the amount paid every year for the re-registration of each “ Honest Merchant.” This latter source of income amounts to about 70,000 marks per annum. The chamber has to submit its accounts for approval to the Senate of the Republic.

In addition to the general duties of chambers of commerce in connexion with trade matters, the Hamburg chamber—the same may also be said of the other Hanseatic chambers—fulfils the combined functions of a chamber of shipping and of a port and docks board. It has the right of proposing judges and of nominat­ing experts attached to the courts. The exchanges and public sale rooms of the city are under its control, and it publishes the official quotations, as well as a weekly price list of goods and produce at the port of Hamburg. It is entitled to elect members to the “ Bürgerschaft ” or lower house of representatives, who are especially competent to deal with trade and shipping questions, customs duties and emigration. The chamber must be consulted by the “ Bürgerschaft ” with reference to all proposals affecting trade and navigation.

In Bremen the chamber is composed of twenty-four members elected by the “ Ausschuss des Kaufmanns-Konvents, ” which comprises all the important commercial houses of the city. Two members go out every year, and no one can remain a member for more than eighteen years. The Bremen chamber is intimately con- nected with the Senate of the Republic, a standing committee of both being in existence to settle questions affecting trade and navigation.

The Lübeck chamber is composed of twenty members elected for six years by the associations representing the wholesale and retail trades. The president must be approved by the senate, and is sworn in as a state official. He holds office for two years, and is not paid for his services, but when he goes out of office is *pre­sented* with a sum of money subscribed by the townspeople. The Lübeck chamber is probably the wealthiest organization of its kind in Germany, and is entrusted with the administration of the property of the old corporation of the “ Vorstand der Kaufmannschaft, ” which is very important. The senate must consult it not only in trade and navigation matters, but also with reference to all contracts entered into on behalf of the state.

Chambers of commerce in other parts of the German Empire are not so important, nor are their duties so varied, as in the Hanseatic towns. The oldest ones were established by Napoleon in 1802 in Cologne, Crefeld, Aachen, StoIberg and other towns which were then under the control of France, and they were submitted to the legislation which regulated the chambers organized in France at the same time. The model set up by the French was more or less closely followed in the subsequent establishment of institutions of this nature in other German states. The Berlin chamber was only constituted on the 1st of April 1902. A trade corporation called the “ Aelteste der Kaufmannschaft ” previously fulfilled, to a certain extent, the duties of a chamber of commerce. The new chamber rests on a broader basis than the old corporation, which, however, remains intact, though the sphere of its action has been restricted.

Broadly speaking, the German chambers are elected by the registered tradespeople and the merchants. Throughout the whole of Germany chambers are under the strict supervision of the state minister of commerce, and cannot be established except with his permission. He fixes the number of members as well as the amount of the state allocation to the chamber. In Prussia and Bavaria the government is entitled to dissolve chambers whenever it considers it advisable to do so, and there is always a government commissioner in attendance at all meetings. In most cases the local government allows a fixed sum for the expenses of chambers of commerce, and if this amount is exceeded the electors who are on the commercial register have to make good the excess by the striking of a special rate. In some states, *e.g.* Brunswick, Württemberg and Baden, the electors cannot be called upon to pay for deficiencies more than an amount fixed by law. In Bavaria chambers get a subvention from the district and central funds.

The duties and powers of the German chambers are practically the same as those of the French chambers.

The German government did not, like the French, interfere with the liberty of association of chambers of commerce, and as a result German chambers have united, together with other trade corporations, in an association called the “ Deutsche Handelstag,” founded in 1861, and carried on in its present form since 1886.

The German government is understood to be opposed to the forma­tion of German chambers of commerce abroad, and as a matter of fact there are no German chambers in Europe outside of Germany. A few have been established in South America, but they are purely voluntary associations. No foreign chambers of commerce exist in Germany.

*b. Semi-Official Corporations.—*Besides the chambers of commerce, there exist, chiefly in Prussia, various old-established and quasi-official corporations, whose views receive as careful consideration from the government as do those of chambers of commerce. The Berliner Aelteste der Kaufmannschaft is one of the most important of these corporations, but the Gewerbekammer of Memel, the Kaufmännische Verein of Breslau, the Vorsteher Amt der Kaufmannschaft of Koenigsberg also deserve mention. Others exist in Elbing, Stettin, Danzig, Tilsit and Magdeburg. They originated for the most part in ancient gilds or associations of commercial firms, and were organized in their present form between 1820 and 1825.

*c.* *Voluntary Associations.—*Germany possesses also a large number of influential commercial associations of a voluntary character called the “ Freie Vereine,” which, especially in recent years, have greatly contributed to the commercial development of the empire.

B.—*State Departmental Organization.*

The German Empire has no ministry of commerce. As in the United States, commercial matters form only a department of the ministry of state. Most of the states of the empire have, how­ever, their own ministries of commerce, the oldest being the Prussian ministry of commerce and industry, which dates from 1848.

In Prussia, the minister of commerce is advised by the Volks-· wirthschaftsrath, or council of national economy, an official body constituted in 1880 by the Emperor William I. The functions of this council, which assembles periodic­ally under the presidency of the minister of commerce, are also similar to those fulfilled in France by the Conseil Supérieur du Commerce et de l’industrie.

The German government has taken steps to facilitate the dis­semination of commercial intelligence by the establishment of commercial museums, which are variously called “Handelsmuseen,” “Ausfuhrmusterlager” or “Ex- portmusterlager. ” The first of these, which are on the model of the Vienna Handelsmuseum, was opened in Berlin in 1883. Others followed in Munich, Karlsruhe, Frankfort, Cologne, Dresden, Leipzig, Weimar, &c. They perform, to a certain extent, much the same functions as those performed in England by the commercial intelligence branch of the board of trade.

A perusal of the instructions given to German consuls with regard to commercial matters shows that the German consular body is in this respect very much in the same position as the British consular body. If German consuls as a whole have been especially active and successful in promoting German commercial interests, it is not on account of the nature of the instructions received from their government, these instructions being to all intents· and purposes similar to those issued to British consuls, but because particular care was taken to select consuls from a class of men imbued with the desire of increasing the greatness of their country by the promotion of German trade.

Of distinctly commercial attachés, like those of Great Britain and Russia, Germany has none; but in addition to the consular body she is represented in foreign countries by five attachés or experts, whose duties are to study the movements of agricultural produce, and interest themselves in agricultural matters generally. They cover Great Britain, France, Russia, the Danube district and the United States.