V.—Belgium

A.—*Commercial Associations.*

The important place which Belgium has taken in international trade has directed much attention to her commercial organization, which comes nearer to the British model than that of any other European country. Belgian chambers of commerce were on the French system until 1875, when all official ties between them and the government were broken, and full liberty was given to commercial associations to establish and govern themselves in their own way. The Belgian chambers have now no administrative functions of any kind, but the Belgian government never fails to consult them in matters likely to interest the commercial community. The most important chambers are those of Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent, Liège, Charleroi, Verviers and Namur. Mention should also be made of the. federations of industrial and commercial associations at Antwerp and at Brussels, and of the syndical union of Brussels. In some places there are Liberal and Conservative chambers of commerce.

In addition to institutions representative of the general interests of commerce and industry, the principal trades have also in the larger cities separate associations or syndicates. There are a large number of associations for the promotion of colonial trade, which have grown up since the establishment of the Congo Free State. A number of Belgian chambers, of commerce also exist abroad, the first of which was established in New York in 1867.

B.—*State Departmental Organization*

The Belgian ministry of commerce, under whose control com­mercial matters are placed, dates only from 1895, previous to which time the department of commerce at the ministry for foreign affairs fulfilled the same functions. The ministry has established in Brussels a Commercial Museum, similar to those of Germany and Austria, to centralize commercial intelligence and facilitate its dissemination.

VI.—Other Countries

*Austria-Hungary,*—The control exercised by the government over commercial organizations in Austria and in Hungary is very close. The only institutions of this kind of any importance within the dual monarchy are the chambers of commerce. They are official bodies, regulated by the law of the 29th of June 1868, which is, as regards the functions of chambers, almost similar to the French law. But the Austrian chambers, in certain cases, have the right to elect members of parliament, which right depends upon taxation. Within the Trieste district one-third of the members of chambers of commerce may be foreigners.

Austria and Hungary have each a ministry of commerce, the former since 1853 and the latter since 1867, whose jurisdiction is strictly confined to internal trade matters in each country. When­ever important questions arise affecting common interests the Gemeinsame Zoll-Conferenz, or Common Customs Conference, is summoned. This conference is made up of representatives of the various ministries of both countries. Matters arising out of commercial relations with foreign countries are under the control of the commercial department of the imperial foreign office.

The Vienna commercial museum was the prototype of similar institutions. It was established in 1875, as a consequence of the Vienna International Exhibition of 1873, and was followed shortly afterwards by the establishment of a similar one in Budapest.

*Italy,*—The chambers of commerce and arts, which are regulated by the law of 1862, are official bodies. They are instituted, and may be dissolved, by royal decree, and their functions are almost similar to those performed by the French chambers. They are, however, at liberty to unite for the consideration of commercial and industrial questions of common interest, and are entitled to own property and to levy taxes for their maintenance.

An advisory council is attached to the ministry of commerce, which dates from 1878. This council is called upon to give an opinion with reference to all matters connected with trade and industry. There are also two commercial museums, one in Rome and one in Milan.

*Spain,—*Spanish chambers of commerce were organized by a royal decree of 1886, which places them under the control of the Ministro de Fomento. They are self-supporting bodies with un­limited membership, but have also an official standing. In order to belong to them one must be of Spanish nationality, be engaged in trade, have paid direct taxes to the state for at least five years for the business in connexion with which membership of the chamber is sought, and pay annually the amount of the subscription provided by the regulations. The government must consult chambers of commerce upon treaties of commerce and navigation, tariff changes, the creation of commercial exchanges and the organization of commercial education. Owing to the peculiarity of their con­stitution the Spanish chambers are much more representative of the feelings of the commercial community, and much less under the strict control of the government, than similar institutions in other continental countries. Spain has no ministry of commerce proper, the duties of this office being performed by the commercial sub-department of the Ministro de Fomento, which dates from 1847.

*Portugal.—*In Portugal the organizations corresponding to chambers of commerce, which are called “ commercial associations, ” are voluntary associations kept up by the subscriptions of their members. The associations at Lisbon and Oporto are the only ones of importance.

*Russia,—*Attached to the department of trade and manufactures of the ministry of Finance, which in Russia does duty for the ministry of commerce, there is an official council of trade and manufactures which sits in St Petersburg, and is presided over by a representative of the ministry. A similar council is also in existence at Moscow. In addition to these there are six local bodies, called the “local committees of trade and manufactures, ” entrusted with the care of commercial interests in Archangel, Odessa, Rostov-on-the-Don, Tver, Tikhvin and Ivanovo-Voznesensk. At Warsaw there is a "committee of manufactures. ” The committees are purely consultative bodies.

Closer to what we know as chambers of commerce are the in- stitutions called “exchange committees.” They are voluntary associations, chosen by a council elected for the purpose by the commercial community; they generally consist of twelve members elected for five years, and the president is appointed by the minister of finance. Two important commercial societies, although unofficial, are recognized and frequently consulted by the govern­ment, viz. the Society for the Encouragement of Russian Trade and Industry, of St Petersburg, and the Society for the Encouragement of Navigation, of Moscow.

The Russian government is represented abroad by commercial attachés, who are known as “ agents of the Russian ministry of finance. ” The duties of these attachés are almost similar to those of the British commercial attachés, but they are entrusted with the promotion of Russian financial as well as commercial interests.

*Japan.—*Commercial matters in Japan come within the cognizance of the minister of state for agriculture and commerce. The chief commercial associations are the chambers of commerce, which are under the direct control of the minister. They are official bodies, with a constitution somewhat resembling that of the French chambers. The members must be Japanese subjects.

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**TRADE UNIONS,** combinations for regulating the relations between workmen and masters, workmen and workmen, or masters and masters, or for imposing restrictive conditions on the conduct of any industry or business.

**I.—**The United Kingdom

By the English common law such combinations were, with certain unimportant exceptions, regarded as illegal. They were considered to be contrary to public policy, and were treated as conspiracies in restraint of trade. Those who were concerned in them were liable to be criminally prosecuted by indictment or information, and to be punished on conviction by fine and imprisonment. The offence was the same whether it was committed by masters or by workmen. But although the common law applied *mutatis mutandis* to both of them alike, it was, practically speaking, in reference rather to the latter than to the former that its effects were developed and ascertained. Although workmen, as indi- viduals, might lawfully consent or refuse to labour for any remuneration or for any time they pleased, the hostility of the common law to combinations effected the result that when two or more of them joined together, and agreed to labour only on certain stipulated terms, their agreements were not only null and void, but were criminal offences subject to punishment. It was immaterial whether the end they had in view was to determine wages or to limit work; or whether the means they adopted for promoting its attainment was a simultaneous withdrawal from employment, an endeavour to prevent other workmen from resuming or taking employment, or an attempt to control the masters in the management of their trade, the engagement of journeymen or apprentices, or the use of machinery or industrial processes; or whether in seeking to enforce their demands they