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stimulate inventiveness, resource, energy, and economy in railway management as the sight of a rival's success. We believe that competition in the United States has only wasted a small portion of a vast fund of wealth that, but for competition, would never have come into existence at all. And we think that in that country at least—were it only to provide a training-ground for the future managers of monopolistic railways—competition may well be left unrestrained except so far as the competitors may learn by practical experience to restrain themselves.

We have dealt at such length with two of these papers that we must refrain, however unwillingly, from dealing with the rest. We may, however, add that, though there are several papers dealing with foreign countries, we have failed to find more than one inaccuracy; and this is, we may presume, due to looseness of expression rather than lack of knowledge. In the article on "Railway Regulation in France," it is stated (p. 652) that "the railways are encouraged to earn large profits," and a note adds that "M. Pelletan, in his report of May 12th, 1889, pointed out that French railway shares paid from 10 to 24 per cent. of their original cost; since then there have been some increases of dividends." It should be noted, however, that only about 10 per cent. of French railway capital is in shares; 90 per cent. is in bonds bearing a very low rate of interest; so that the overhead remuneration of French railway capital is under 4 per cent.

W. M. ACWORTH

Should our Railways be Nationalised? By W. CUNNINGHAM.
(4th enlarged edition.) (Dunfermline : Romanes. Pp. 295.
2s. 6d.)

Is it not almost time that some economist of position undertook a serious study of this question? The fact that the book before us has reached a fourth and enlarged edition is sufficient proof that the subject is not only of importance but also of general interest at the present time. Within the last twenty years three other books have been published on it in England.¹ No one of the three had any claim on the ground either of accuracy of statement or of force of argument to be treated seriously. And now we have a fourth, which deserves to occupy an even lower place in the category. And yet in default of anything better it

¹ Waring, *State Purchase of Railways*, 1887; Holo, *National Railways*, 1893; Clement Edwards, M.P., *Railway Nationalisation*, 1898.

is actually read and quoted as an authority; for instance, in the evidence given by an influential Irish M.P. before the Viceregal Commission on Irish Railways now sitting in Dublin. A few samples of Mr. Cunningham must suffice. The Kingdom of Prussia is, he tells us (p. 210), "contained within a radius of 134,466 square miles." "The railways"—he calls them "German," but he is evidently speaking of the Prussian-Hessian system—made in 1904 a 'net profit' of £31,000,000." This is the figure, not of profit, but of net receipts from working before paying interest on the capital of between four and five hundred millions. On page 29 he says that in England "the result of careful inquiries shows that the fare per passenger-mile is as near as possible one penny." I know of but one careful inquiry, that made by the North-Eastern Railway, and it shows that the fare per passenger-mile is as near as possible one half-penny. Again, on p. 11 he states, "It is not doubted that, of £1,200,000,000 invested capital in our railways, nearly £300,000,000 of it [*sic*] was paid to lawyers." So much for accuracy. Then for logic. On p. 27 the author says, "The average passenger fare [in Great Britain] is about 8½d., and at fifteen passengers to the ton gives 10s. 6d., against 7s. 0¾d. for goods—and passengers load and unload themselves." Again he devotes a dissertation to the subject of automatic couplings, and deduces from the fact that they have been adopted with success on the private railways of the United States—and nowhere else—an argument for the nationalisation of English railways. Is it not time that a serious subject, which will have to be faced in practical politics ere long, should be rescued from treatment of this kind?

W. M. ACWORTH

Economics of Railroad Construction. By W. L. WEBB, C.E.
(London: Chapman and Hall, 1906. Pp. 339.)

THERE are not many books on the subject of railway economics in the English language, and we gladly welcome this addition to the number. Despite sundry defects, this work is a real contribution to the literature on the subject. Not that there is much that is new in the book, for a large portion was included in Professor Webb's earlier work, "Railroad Construction." Moreover, in both books a heavy debt is due to the standard work of the late A. M. Wellington—"The Economic Theory of Railway Location."