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Of Germany's foreign trade, some two-thirds is conducted by sea, hence the security of that sea-borne commerce is of the highest importance. Hitherto that security has been assured by the protection of the navies of other countries, but, in looking to the future, the nation should cease to rely on a protection which may fail them in time of need, and provide for themselves. To do so would involve no inordinate sacrifices, for the appropriation of less than one-half of the ordinary annual growth of the revenue in time of peace would suffice to cover the necessary outlay. The required annual investment in warships and their maintenance would absorb but one part in sixty of the amount available annually for the increase of capital, the funds seeking new investment annually being estimated at £150,000,000 sterling. The diversion of one-sixtieth of this to naval purposes would even relieve industry from excessive expansion and threatening over-production. As to personnel, the men required when, in about 1916, the plans had been carried out, would be only 60,000, or one in a thousand of the then estimated population.

Such is the basis of these speeches, which we do not think needs comment. The anticipation which is expressed that England may abandon her policy of free-trade, and need persuasion to maintain an open door to German exports is, we may hope, not in any degree justified. The most remarkable feature in these addresses seems to us to be the frantic pleading for the means to enforce a free access to and egress from German ports of products of various kinds, in the same breath with the insistence on the need to preserve Germany from the invasion of the products of foreign industry, and with excuses for the actual duties on agricultural imports. With a real appreciation of some of the advantages of freedom of trade, and a desire to have the power to argue with effect with any who should desire to restrict such freedom, is strangely combined a determination to retain existing barriers of German origin.

It may be added that the fleet for which Herr von Wenckstern pleads is carefully represented as desired for the purpose of adding one more to the securities for European peace. At what point, one is sometimes led to wonder, will the growing burdens of an armed peace cease to be more endurable than actual warfare? The conviction that the terrors of the latter probably grow somewhat in proportion to the severity of the former burdens is needed to establish firm confidence in preparation for war as a preservative of peace. A. W. FLUX

The Housing Question in London: being an account of the housing work done by the Metropolitan Board of Works and the London County Council, 1855—1900. Prepared under the direction of C. J. STEWART. (London: P. S. King & Son. [3992].)

EVERY serious contribution to the literature of a problem so urgent and so complex as the housing question merits the most careful

attention, and the volume compiled under the able direction of the ex-Clerk of the London County Council is certainly an important addition to that literature. It is, in the first place, a storehouse of facts and figures which have hitherto been somewhat difficult to obtain, and for this alone it would deserve a cordial welcome. But some of the sections are more than records of facts, and we should select the chapter on Overcrowding as one of the most suggestive articles we have seen upon the subject. Those who have read Dr. Hamer's report to the Council upon the sanitary condition of St. Pancras, Kensington, and other parts of London will be familiar with much of the reasoning, but it is to be hoped that the present volume will be more widely read than ordinary L.C.C. reports. The chapter before us gives a concise account of the various causes of overcrowding, and shows clearly that although the evil has attained to great dimensions, it is by no means hopeless, and that indeed there is every prospect of a cure if only the local authorities—the vestries, now the new boroughs—would play their part. For sixteen years these bodies have had in their hands the machinery for regulating and keeping down overcrowding, and the value of this machinery is well illustrated by the difference between the sanitary conditions of those vestries which have chosen to avail themselves of these powers, and those—unfortunately the greater number—which have either neglected them entirely, or have at best used them in a languid and inefficient manner. There is a most remarkable story on page 93 about the negotiations between the Council, the Bethnal Green Vestry, and the Local Government Board, which, as far as we can discover from Mr. Stewart's pages, looks as if the central authority had determined to throw its weight into the balance on the side of the recalcitrant vestry rather than on that of the unfortunate Council, which has already a hard task before it in attempting to keep the smaller bodies up to the mark. More light should certainly be thrown upon this transaction. It is scarcely possible to over-emphasise the importance of the preventive side of a local authority's work. We have the slums and "unsanitary areas" bequeathed to us by our forefathers, and we have to deal with them as best we may, and the amount of work which the London County Council and the other London authorities have accomplished in this direction is really enormous, as Mr. Stewart's pages show very clearly. We cannot help the existence of old slums, but we can prevent the creation of new ones, and the methods by which this may be accomplished are stated or suggested in the chapter before us, which also points out emphatically the fallacy into which so many would-be housing reformers fall, that local authorities cannot enforce the sanitary laws, because, if they did, half a million people would be in the streets to-morrow. The relations between sanitary laws, overcrowding, high rents, and house famines have not been clearly shown by most of the popular writers on the housing problem, who might spend a very profitable hour over Dr. Hamer's and Mr. Stewart's pages.

The greater part of the book is taken up with detailed accounts of the various schemes, both of destruction and construction, which have been, or are about to be, carried out in London, and these accounts are illustrated by clear and useful plans. One of the points that strikes the reader is that the Works Department does not come out very successfully in its undertakings, at all events as far as price is concerned; another is that outgoings seem to be rather high. There is an interesting comparison between the expenses of administration, &c., of artisans' dwellings belonging to private companies and those managed by the Council, which might with advantage have been fuller, and might also have contained some information as to the amount found necessary in some of the great provincial cities, for instance Liverpool and Birmingham. The information as to many of the schemes is naturally not very full, but it is well arranged, and should be adequate for most purposes. These details of schemes occupy, as has been said, the greater part of the volume, and there is much that is useful and good in the earlier sections of the book. The first chapter gives a clear, if brief, account of the course of legislation upon the housing problem, and the action taken under this legislation by the Metropolitan Board of Works and the Council. The views expressed by the Council, after careful consideration, as to the alterations required in the existing law are interesting and suggestive, though perhaps not always conclusive, and the section which deals with the policy pursued by the Council and by Government Departments is also interesting. The chapter on Overcrowding, which comes next, has already been referred to, and is itself followed by a short but useful survey of Workmen's Trains.

Mr. Stewart and his helpers have naturally not attempted to approach that subject from the point of view of the critic, but the work of that functionary is made infinitely easier, as well as—let us hope—more useful, by the skill that they have displayed as narrators. Their volume is only a report, and not a very long one, but it is an extremely useful piece of work and should be widely known. A knowledge of the facts is the first essential for the formation of an intelligent opinion, and if only a portion of the ratepayers could be awakened to this knowledge the solution of the housing problem would be appreciably nearer. As it is, we may approve or disapprove of some of the views or actions of the London County Council, but we have no longer any excuse for remaining in ignorance of what their work is and how they are doing it, and for this we have to thank Mr. Stewart and his able band of helpers.

LETTICE FISHER

A Short History of English Commerce and Industry. By
L. L. PRICE. (London: Edward Arnold. 1900.)

IN this volume Mr. Price has aimed at writing "a brief account of the commercial and industrial development of England from the earliest times to the reign of Queen Victoria" (*i.e.*, the final establish-