

it is hardly necessary to say much. The need explains itself. Our consular reports frequently deplore the inferiority of the average English commercial traveller in the use of foreign tongues. To quote only one of these, Mr. Wilfrid Powell, H.M. Consul at Stettin, in his report of October 21st, 1897, thus alludes to the question:—

"How many British boys on leaving school or the universities to face life in a business which is world-wide, can speak with fluency or even tolerably any language other than their own? They have—it is true—a certain knowledge of Latin, which is very useful, and a smattering of Greek, which is useful probably for the Church or in the learned professions alone, but could they proceed to France or Germany or Spain and be able to make themselves understood?"

"Undoubtedly the far greater majority of British lads on the completion of their education become what is vaguely termed men of business, and at the present day it is an absolute necessity for the carrying on of that business against the keen competition—which, owing to European peace, has manifested itself in foreign lands during the last twenty-five years—that we, as 'a nation of merchants,' should be able to deal with our customers in their own tongues, and for this purpose it is of the utmost importance that the youth of Great Britain should be instructed for the most part in living languages."

Elsewhere in the present volume the wider bearings of this educational question are discussed. It is not only for commercial reasons that first-rate teaching of modern languages is needed in secondary schools. The purely intellectual as well as the commercial interests of the nation seem to call for it. But for commercial purposes it is obviously an urgent need. And this, not merely in order that our commercial travellers may, as has been humorously said, excel in "the arts of solicitation," but that our men of

business generally may enjoy those facilities for at once divining the needs of foreign customers, and for studying the industrial and commercial conditions of foreign countries in foreign newspapers, books and reports, which are increasingly indispensable for success in modern trade.

The growing stress of the competitive struggle is forcing merchants to shake themselves free from a good deal of old routine. They have to put more brain than heretofore into certain parts of the business of distribution, which, under older conditions, could be left more or less to the chapter of accidents or to the discretion of distant agents. The manufacturer for export (or the merchant who virtually directs him by explicit orders) has to picture to himself more vividly than before the actual conditions under which his goods will be offered for sale in each of a number of distant countries. He has to think out beforehand the point-of-view of the remote customers whom he wishes to attract. He has to project himself in imagination into a number of far off markets and to adjust his plans to their whims and traditional prejudices. He has to pack his goods as his customers are likely to prefer them packed. He has to design his goods and his advertisements so as to appeal to their fancies. He needs, for commercial purposes, that faculty of imagination by which, as Adam Smith said, "We place ourselves in another man's situation, enter as it were into his body and become in a measure him, and thence form some idea of his sensations and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them." In other words, the successful exporter to distant markets needs a realistic imagination. At

*Foreign Office, 1897, Miscellaneous Series, No. 434. Report on Subjects of General and Commercial Interest. Report on the Association for the Promotion of Foreign Commercial Relations in Stettin. (C. 8649—5. 1d.)