

## CHAPTER XIV

### Complementary Problems

The death grapple of a world war has modified many ideals and rendered obsolete panaceas springing from a national creed of *laissez-faire*. Great Britain is the microcosm of the world. Her home resources of coal, iron, salt, stone, fireclay, and other earth products, combined with a virile population of ordered industry and her unrivalled system of harbours and sea inlets, gave her a long start in the race of commercial supremacy. The collapse in agricultural output, and the consequent shrinkage in the value of rural lands following on the theories of the Manchester School, accompanied, as they necessarily were, by a rapidly progressive increase in the importation of food and other essentials of life, and also in the number of unemployed in the Homeland, constituted an economic revolution of far-reaching effect. In this connection the problem of water-transport facilities, both overseas and coastwise, has loomed progressively insistent. Great Britain led the world in a sequence of industries. She was the first to perfect her system of roads. She then led the way in the provision of water carriage by canal. Railway connection, having its inception in England, boomed there, and she became the nurse of similar undertakings in other countries. Lastly, mechanical road traction has been perfected by her. In every link in the chain of development she has been more quickly overhauled in the race by rival nations. The old days of "rest and be thankful" are at an end. An improvement made in any country becomes speedily the common property of the world, to be reproduced in remote corners of the earth. An American motor-car traversing a