

## THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

WITH the exception of the nations of continental Europe and with the further possible exception of Japan, perhaps no country in the world has commanded a larger share of public attention in the past two decades than has South Africa. To Canadians, particularly, the youngest of the self-governing dominions of the British Empire is united by strong bonds of sympathy, for fifteen years ago Canadian blood plentifully consecrated kopje and veldt to the service and destiny of a common Empire. And, indeed, for all our readers South Africa possesses a more than passing interest, for the Union is the latest addition to the two score countries in which the Sun Life of Canada actively operates.

*Political Development*

Politically, the Union of South Africa and the Dominion of Canada present striking similarities. Both are vast partners in a mighty Empire; both are bilingual; both are governed upon the unitary system, and each enjoys the status of a self-governing Colony of the British Empire. Historically, too, the Union of South Africa and the Dominion of Canada have not a little in common. It was in 1497 that Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope opening the sea route to India and the way to European settlement of the sub-continent; it was in the same year that John Cabot first

planted the English flag on the coast of Labrador. For many decades the history of both the Union and the Dominion was one of racial and commercial rivalry between individual and independent Colonies. In the case of South Africa, history tells of generations of strife between two English Colonies, the Cape and Natal, on the one hand, and two Dutch Colonies, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, on the other, a strife culminating in the three-year Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. But it was an animosity resulting in one of the most remarkable experiments in the history of modern government and one which focussed universal attention upon South Africa. In 1907 the surprising proposal was made to unite the four Colonies and to grant them responsible and parliamentary government. On October 12, 1908, exactly nine years to a day from the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War, the National Convention held its first sitting, and by June, 1909, the Draft Constitution had been adopted by the four Parliaments of the Cape, Natal, the Transvaal, and the Orange River Colony. On May 31, 1910, the Imperial Act of Union came into force, General Louis Botha being entrusted with the formation of the first Union Ministry. In the six years which have elapsed since the date of union, racial antagonism and age-long feuds have completely disappeared and to-day the former Colonies have become provincial units in a



CANADA TO THE EMPIRE, 1900

This photograph, reproduced from SUNSHINE, 1900, depicts the embarkation of part of the Second Canadian Contingent to South Africa on SS. "Pomeranian," at Halifax, N. S.