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## The Journal of Commerce

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## Home Rule All Round

ONCE more the old Irish question assumes an acute form, and that at a moment when, if ever, contentment and unity in the Empire's internal affairs are of vital importance in meeting our powerful foreign enemies. In the hope that the convention of Irishmen that has been sitting at Dublin and elsewhere would find a satisfactory settlement of the matters in dispute the British Government have been adopting a most conciliatory policy as respects all Irish affairs, ignoring some manifestations of disaffection that at another time might have demanded repressive action. That the mass of the Irish people understand and appreciate this course is probably true, but unfortunately the disloyal Sinn Fein section has met this kindly policy with defiance and disorder that can no longer be tolerated. Continued and increasing lawlessness in the West of Ireland has made it necessary to send troops to assist the police in restoring order. The convention has about reached the end of its work, including the conference of its committee with the Prime Minister, and there seems to be but little expectation that an amicable agreement will be reached. Students of the subject are finding themselves thrown back to the grounds on which former efforts were vainly made to reach a solution of the problem. More than once in previous discussion the suggestion was offered that the best solution would be the adoption of the Home Rule principle, not for Ireland only, but for the whole United Kingdom—such a redistribution of legislative powers as would leave to the central Parliament the control of the larger affairs, while establishing local legislatures for the several divisions of the Kingdom. The late Lord Grey, whose views were strengthened by his experience in Canada, warmly advocated such a system. Later, one of our Canadian public men who was in England shortly before the war, when the Irish situation had become most threatening, took advantage of the occasion to set forth in letters to the leading London journals the strong argument that could be made in favor of the adoption of the Federal system for the United Kingdom. Almost every intelligent student of British public affairs has to admit that the existing Parliamentary system has broken down. There is a never ending congestion of business in a House of Commons which takes upon itself at once the management of the Empire's greatest interests and of the smaller local affairs which in this country are handled at one of our Provincial capitals. Many able men well qualified to render valuable service either retire from Parliament or retain only a nominal membership, because in the constant over-crowding of the Parliamentary programme they are unable to obtain the atten-

tion of the House for important subjects which they have studied carefully. Local and private legislation is subjected to exasperating delays and is made very expensive. All this is well known. One would think that the benefits of the Federal system would be desired by all. But England is in many respects a very conservative country. Only when the need of reform becomes very urgent is action taken to bring about a change. The question of Irish Home Rule pressed for consideration; the question of similar benefits for the other divisions of the Kingdom could wait. So it happened that a movement which might properly have been made general, for the whole Kingdom, was confined to the providing of a Home Rule measure for Ireland only. Such a measure was, after a bitter struggle, placed on the statute book. The war coming on almost immediately after this, the bringing into operation of the measure was postponed for a time. Now, while the new law is thus held in suspense, even those who were most zealous in procuring its enactment seem to have come to the conclusion that if put into operation it will not be regarded as a settlement of the old trouble.

In this state of affairs it is interesting to note that the merits of a general Federal system for the United Kingdom are again attracting attention. There is, of course, a wider question—that of closer relations between the mother country and the Overseas Dominions—that is much in the minds of many students of the Empire's business. But time will be required to develop a form of constitution that will solve that problem. Meanwhile the question of creating local legislatures for the several divisions of the Kingdom is being discussed anew.

The latest contribution to the literature of the subject is a letter addressed to the London Times by Lord Hythe, who writes:

"The healing of the long standing sore (the Irish question) was never more necessary than it is at the present moment. It affects our relations both with the self-governing Dominions and the United States. Every proposal during the past thirty years to deal with the Home Rule question has broken down because it has been made with reference to Ireland alone. Mr. Redmond and his Liberal friends could have had Home Rule certainly in 1914, possibly long before, had they not insisted on the separate and prior treatment of the Irish claim. There is no more prospect of arriving at a satisfactory settlement of the Irish question—satisfactory to the people of Ireland and to the people of Great Britain—than there has been in days gone by, if this attitude is persisted in. The only hope of a settlement that will keep Ireland united and bring the Ulstermen in is by treating the problem of Irish