

THE DOMINIONS AND THE EMPIRE.

From London, England, *Morning Post* (Unionist), December 10, 1914.

THE Dominions by their splendid loyalty never allow us to forget that not only England but the British Empire is at war. In the negotiations which led up to the declaration we do not know that any of the Dominions were consulted. Their acquiescence in the decision of the Imperial Government and their loyalty to its policy were taken for granted. As the Prime Minister of Canada pointed out, in his inspiring address to the Canadian Club at Montreal on Monday, "the citizens of the self-governing Dominions do not directly participate through their ministers or through their Parliaments in the councils of the Empire which determine issues of peace and war." And he added these significant words; "It would be rash to predict the method by which that great problem will be solved but of this I am convinced that the events of this war will powerfully assist in hastening its wise solution." Sir Robt. Borden went on to mention as bearing on this problem, that the Dominion Government have at present one of their own number as High Commissioner in London and that the position of this Canadian Minister was invaluable in insuring close and intelligent co-operation between the two governments. It may be that this line of development will be fruitful and that the Dominions may all come to have Ministers in London as High Commissioners. These Ministers might perhaps form the permanent nucleus of the Imperial Conference for it is always to be remembered that in the Conference already exists something more than the germ of Imperial consultation and co-operation.

We learn much by war; we learn who are our enemies and who are our friends, what policy is safe and what policy is dangerous, and that political party will have most chance of future success in the country which grasps and acts upon the great national lessons which this war is teaching, and one of the greatest of these lessons is that the British Empire may be trusted to rally to the common cause, and that each part of the Empire strengthens the whole by freely doing its own particular share in the work. It would, no doubt, be invidious to compare the share of the Crown Colonies with the share of the Dominions in the common task; but this much may at least be said, that what has been and is being done best is the voluntary and spontaneous effort inspired by the local genius and spirit of the particular country concerned and not imposed upon it by Whitehall. In Canada, Australia and New Zealand the raising, equipping and despatching of their contingents was in each case a local work, conceived on a generous scale and handsomely carried out. These contingents will be found to justify the local efforts of the Dominions to create their own military forces, albeit with certain features, like words of command and calibre of rifles in common. Even where the Central Authority and the Dominions were in conflict, it is the Dominion judgement that is proving to be right. Thus for example; Australia insisted against a great deal of

opposition at this end on having her own navy, and this Australian Navy when war broke out was found to be the right thing in the right place. The battle cruiser Australia was strong enough to defend the Antipodes against the heaviest metal Germany possessed outside European waters, and the *Sydney* was the instrument, under Providence, of putting an end to the pernicious activities of the *Emden*, and not only did Australia achieve this work of commerce protection and cruiser destruction on the sea, but she also, with the co-operation of New Zealand swept that part of the world clean of German colonies. And if only Australia had not been so long in the leading-strings of Whitehall and had developed this independent policy somewhat earlier, we might not have been under the necessity of applying for the good offices of our loyal and obliging ally in the East. South Africa will do its share in good time, the Union was so new to the constellation that it could hardly have been expected to remain firm in its orbit. Thanks, however to the magnificent behaviour of General Botha, General Smuts and their colleagues and thanks also to the loyal support of the British and the larger portion of the Dutch population, the rebellion is now crushed. Both Beyers and De Wet have been brought to account and we may hope that the still arduous work of conquering German South-West Africa will be accomplished, and this will be done by the Union itself following out its own plans, with the co-operations of the local squadron. As to Rhodesia, the report of the Chartered Company, a summary of which we publish in another column, shows that that great Colony also is carrying out with zeal and enterprise its share in this great war. It has already repelled an invasion from German East Africa; it has annexed the ridiculous "Caprivi Strip" which joins German South-West Africa to the so-called "navigable waters" of the Zambesi (above the Victoria Falls) it has provided a contingent of 500 picked men for the service of the Union Government; and another contingent of 500 is being raised.

The Prime Minister of Canada predicts that the Germans will find a quarter of a million men from the self governing Dominions arrayed in battle against them if the war is prolonged, and not only are the Dominions helping in this direct way in the actual prosecution of the war, but they are providing a great deal of the real wealth — that is to say, food and the raw material for boots and clothing, by which war is largely carried on. They are also providing the gold by which other commodities, bought from foreign countries, may be paid for, and so in many ways they are providing the reality and strength of that Empire which the Germans confidently predicted would fall to pieces at the first touch of war. And these things point also to the great truth that if this Empire is spared under Providence to continue its development that development will be upon lines of freedom and co-operation, and not upon lines of centralization and subordination.