

## TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE  
PUZZLING  
PRESIDENT

There is no more absorbing "topic of the day" than the manner in which the President of the United States suddenly injected himself into the midst of the German peace talk, and scoffers might say that for a good exhibition of one-man power we must go in these latter days to the "freest of free republics." In its result, Mr. Wilson's action will do no harm to the cause of the Entente; but his methods and purposes are open to question. The Allies accepted, as in honour bound, the President's statement that the coincidence was purely accidental: his message was in no way "associated in its origin," he protested, with recent overtures on the part of the Central Powers. But they might well have felt deeply hurt by Mr. Wilson's professed belief that, as regards the objects and aims for which the rival nations are fighting, it is a case of six of one and half-a-dozen of the other. His apologists tell us, it is true, that the President was only putting the matter "according to the statements of leaders on both sides." But on that theory, his presentation of the case must be considered unmeaning and unhelpful. And we cannot forget that this is not Mr. Wilson's first offence. That was committed when he informed the world that the American people had no concern with the origin of the war; and only a few weeks ago he was ingenuously asking if any one could tell him what it is all about, and who started it,—just as though Belgium and Verdun were not in themselves a sufficient answer. This makes it difficult to accept the alternative theory that the President's real purpose was to bring Germany to shame by inducing her to put in black and white, plain for all folks to see, some expression of her long-cherished ambition to impose her will on the rest of Europe. When the war began, the German Emperor told his army that Austria had felt constrained, if she was to remain a Great Power, to take up