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THE ONE GREAT QUESTION

For Canadians there is one great political question and only one. It is not yet a question of practical politics; it does not yet mark the line of division between the political parties. When that time comes—and come it will in the very near future—this new question will cause a realignment of political parties; whether or not old party names survive is a matter of small importance. That question is the political reorganization of the British Empire. To some a question of that kind is a phase of "Imperialism" of no practical interest to practical Canadians. The number of those holding such views is getting small by degrees and beautifully less. That the question is imminent no one who is awake is disposed to deny; that it involves the whole future of Canada, and is therefore of overwhelming practical interest to all Canadians, it were idle to attempt to prove.

Our esteemed contemporary, Ireland, which is valiantly and successfully fighting for sanity and moderation and enlightened patriotism amongst our fellow-Irishmen of the United States, has this shrewd note on the present situation:

"Major Astor, among other activities, has belonged to the coterie that backed and edited The Round Table. The chief editor of The Round Table, Philip Kerr, is to be another secretary to Mr. Lloyd George."

This information comes by way of pouring a little judicious adulation on the son of William Waldorf Astor, who is to be one of the new Premier's secretaries. Major Astor may be a genius; we don't know. Philip Kerr is a genius in the matter of knowing what he wants and in working to get it. He is related to the Duke of Norfolk, is in line for a Scotch peerage and his self-appointed task is to federate the British Empire. If he is to be a secretary to Mr. Lloyd George, with Lord Milner close by, then the work of organizing the Empire may be said to have begun. That, and not war, is what he is there for. Imperial Federation means making the domination of England as powerful in each of the now self-governing colonies as it is in Ireland. Will they have the hardihood to face the statesmen of the Dominions with the Irish example in its present condition?

The Round Table movement consists of groups of British subjects of all sorts and conditions who meet for the purpose of study and discussion of the political organization of the Empire; with the special object of considering in all its details and consequences the extension of the principle of federation, which has worked so well in Canada, Australia and South Africa, to the Empire as a whole. Its initial inspiration and impulse came from a few men intimately concerned in and largely responsible for, the federation of South Africa. Philip Kerr is one of these. With unremitting and enthusiastic zeal, they have kept the movement a living and growing force throughout all parts of the Empire.

For mutual information and to subserve the common object there is a publication known as The Round Table whose aim "is to present a regular account of what is going on throughout the King's dominions, written with first hand knowledge and entirely free from the bias of local political issues, and to provide a means by which the common problems which confront the Empire as a whole, can be discussed also with knowledge and without bias." Those who have read this publication, whether they agree with its dominant object or not, will not be surprised

that ex-President Taft considers it the ablest political review published in the English language. To many of our readers the foregoing sketch of the movement and the publication will make more definitely intelligible the frequent newspaper references to the Round Table.

Philip Kerr, referred to in the extract from Ireland quoted above, it may interest our readers to know, is a Catholic, a nephew of the Duke of Norfolk and heir to the estates and title of the Marquis of Lothian. His father, General Lord Ralph Drury Kerr, is a convert to the Faith.

Lord Milner is perhaps the most outstanding and powerful figure in Imperial politics identified with the objects of The Round Table. Ireland is doubtless right in saying, "if he (Philip Kerr) is to be Secretary to Mr. Lloyd George, with Lord Milner close by, then the work of organizing the Empire may be said to have begun. That and not war is what he is there for." Lloyd George, it is known, has had many secretaries at different times. When Welsh Disestablishment was bitterly debated some of those who charged the Government with sacrilegious robbery of God's property were startled by Lloyd George's intimate and accurate knowledge of the robberies of religious property at the time of the Reformation. The direct charges in the famous "hands dripping with the fat of sacrilege" speech were based on exhaustive study and investigation by secretaries appointed for that purpose. Two of these, by the way, became Catholics as a result of their studies. Nor were his references to disestablishment in France based on superficial information. He had here, also, caused special study of the question to be made for him. His speeches trenchant, incisive, to the point, were so brief that they would hardly form an introduction to an elaborate speech by one of our own public men; but Lloyd George had behind them a mass of accurate information by which he could substantiate every assertion. These facts about Lloyd George's usual course of procedure in preparing to deal with important questions have a direct bearing on the interpretation of the fact of Philip Kerr's appointment as secretary and the inclusion of Milner and Curzon in the Dictator's War Cabinet. They go far to confirm the shrewd diagnosis of the well-informed editor of Ireland.

But he does scant justice to his reputation when he tells us that "Imperial Federation means making the domination of England as powerful in each of the now self-governing colonies as it is in Ireland."

To make England's domination as powerful in Canada as it is in Ireland it would be necessary to abolish not only the Parliament at Ottawa but each and every provincial Legislature as well; and to substitute at Ottawa something analogous to Dublin Castle staffed by aliens and exercising the functions of governments through an alien bureaucracy and an endless number of unrelated and irresponsible "Boards." If Imperial Federation meant anything of the kind its membership could be recruited only in the lunatic asylums. It is astonishing, however, to find amongst those who have given no thought or study to the subject such grotesque misconceptions of the purpose and meaning of The Round Table movement.

At a farewell function given in London on the eve of the departure of the Duke of Devonshire to assume the office of Governor General of Canada, the Earl of Curzon it is significant that he also is a member of the War Cabinet—made this injudicious remark:

"In his new office the Duke would have a hand in that great reconstruction of the Empire which must follow upon the termination of the war. His duty it would be to labor that Canada should have that enhanced share in the administration of the Empire to which her position, her resources, her prospects, and, above all, her incomparable services, entitled her."

Commenting on this the Toronto Globe said:

"While Canada is at war controversies calculated to weaken her solidarity in face of the enemy should as far as possible be avoided. One of these, the reconstruction of the Empire after the War, can wait until our task in Europe is accomplished. Any attempt to take advantage of the sentiment created by the War to foist upon Canada the proposals of the Round Table group is foredoomed to failure."

We quite agree with the Globe in holding that there are constitutional limits beyond which a Canadian

Governor-General may not trespass no matter how great the issue or how important it may be considered from the point of view of the Empire as a whole by the Government which appoints him.

But that any Canadian newspaper of the standing of the Globe should talk "foisting upon Canada the proposals of The Round Table group" is a rather startling revelation of the extent to which ignorance of those proposals prevails.

Federation is not a new thing. It was the federation of the provinces of British North America that made Canada and gave unity, strength and glorious promise to our native country. The unity of Australia, and of South Africa, was likewise achieved by federation. It was federation that brought into existence the United States of America. It was federation that created the German Empire.

The union between Ireland and Great Britain is a legislative union; Home Rulers on both sides of the Irish Channel are endeavoring to turn it into a federal union. Here Ireland's concluding query may be answered. If absolutely fair, just and generous settlement is not made of the Irish question beforehand the proposal of Imperial Federation, in the words of the Globe, "foredoomed to failure."

Federation of the Empire can be secured only by the free and unforced consent of the free peoples of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa as well as of those of the home lands. It can be "foisted upon" no one of them.

It is because, as we have repeatedly pointed out, this question will soon become the one political question of transcendent importance for these free peoples freely to decide that we have urged its study and discussion as a duty incumbent on all intelligent Canadians.

We have had gratifying evidence that many of our readers are giving time and thought to the subject.

That is our whole object at present. If additional proof were needed of the insistent importance of such study it is surely furnished by this weighty pronouncement of Lloyd George in an interview just given to the press on the forthcoming Imperial War Council to which the Premiers of the Dominions are summoned:

"Of this I am certain: The peoples of the Empire will have found a unity in war such as never existed before—a unity not only in history, but of purpose. What practical change in Imperial organization that will mean I do not venture to predict. That it will involve some change is certain. I believe that all the statesmen of the old country and the Dominions who have spoken about it are unanimous on that point. The forthcoming War Council, however, cannot deal with these fundamental post-war problems, but it may afford some insight into the form they may take."

The post-war problems, demobilization, economic readjustment, reorganization of the Empire, will equal if they do not transcend in importance the actual conduct of the War itself. It is inevitable that the War Cabinet if it retains the confidence of the people will be entrusted with the solution of these "fundamental post-war problems." Germany existed for centuries in a state of disorganization similar to that of the British Commonwealth at present. The organization of the German Empire was a post-war problem which was solved immediately after the Franco-Prussian War.

The British Premier gives a clear intimation that our problem will be not solved but certainly discussed during the next two months.

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

President Wilson's address to the Senate has attracted world-wide attention and aroused world-wide comment. It has done more, it has stirred the human heart and conscience everywhere. True, it has been derided and denounced in his own country and elsewhere. Mr. Wilson has been sarcastically reminded that he is only the President of the United States with certain clearly defined duties and not the President of Humanity with unlimited responsibilities. There may be good and sufficient reason to remind him that he is not inspired, not even infallible. And yet in the face of a devastating war which may with quite as much reason be regarded as the beginning of a series of wars as "the war to end war," in

the face of conflicting racial and national interests and ambitions, the President's message has received in all countries remarkably serious consideration. This it deserves. True, it is a pagan document; and as such can not and does not point out the way of salvation for a civilization which is essentially Christian. For that higher message civilized humanity must read, the encyclicals of the Vicars of Christ.

President Wilson, however, enunciates fundamental principles of true democracy, and true democracy is the flowering of Christianity in the social order.

"No peace can last, or ought to last, which does not recognize and accept the principle that governments derive all their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that no right anywhere exists to hand peoples about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were property."

And courageously applying this doctrine he says "that statesmen everywhere are agreed that there should be a united, independent, and autonomous Poland." This is neither pro-German nor pro-Ally. Europe participated actively or passively in the outrageous crime of Poland's spoliation and partition. Russia has no more right to sovereignty over Poland than has Germany or Austria. Nor can we without transparent hypocrisy hand Poland over to Russia, with some such guarantees as the latter gave to Finland, and justify our claim before the world or before history that we are fighting for the rights of small and weak peoples and against the assumptions of unscrupulous Powers who recognize no right but might.

It was not necessary to say that the statesmen of the world and the conscience of the world place Ireland in the same category as Poland.

Scorn the assumption and the presumption of the President of Humanity as you will, humanity must become articulate in some way; and we venture to think that the human heart will respond—a wistful and almost despairing response it may be in some cases—to many of the notes struck by President Wilson in that address which, though now a sign of contradiction, may in the course of time be recorded in history as the unimpassioned declaration of national rights and duties most in consonance with the age's best conceptions of human liberty.

Indeed it is in large measure an impartial application of the principles for which we and our Allies are professedly fighting.

SOME CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

During the Christmas season, or immediately before it, is not a suitable time to make strictures upon the manner in vogue of extending our greetings and good wishes to our friends. But we are now sufficiently removed from the period of this ordeal—we use the word advisedly—to feel free to comment on the subject.

It may seem a strong statement, but we feel justified in saying that Christmas cards are an abomination. Some of them are abominable in themselves, and others in the use that is made of them. Among the former we may class those that have no artistic merit, that are accompanied by sickly or mundane sentiment, that pervert the meaning of Scripture, or— and we have here in view some French cards that we have seen—that give expression to downright agnosticism. It is a laudable custom to enclose a Christmas card in a letter to a friend, provided that it is a Catholic and devotional representation of the event that is commemorated both as regards the picture itself and the words that accompany it. But to merely sign one's name to the ready-made form of greeting, that is usually attached to these cards, does not tend to cement friendship or to carry warmth to the heart of the receiver. It is interesting to see how some people fulfill their Christmas epistolary obligations. They make a list of those to whom they feel bound to extend the Season's greetings. They select the requisite number of cards, sign their names to them, mail them, and then exclaim with a sigh of relief, as they sink back into their easy-chairs, "Thank goodness that's over with!" We might draw another picture of the reception of those cards at the other end of the lines, but we prefer to leave that to our readers' imagination.

Another custom that is becoming quite common is to send personal printed cards. The appropriateness of this is evident in the case of persons

holding official positions, who are bound, as a matter of friendship or courtesy, to extend their best wishes to a large number of people with whom they are on varied terms of intimacy. But between private individuals we do not think that the practice is commendable. It is too cold and formal. It is too suggestive of an easy way out of an obligation. Of course, the printing costs money, as does a telegram of congratulations. But both are substitutes, excuses often for either sloth or indifference, and altogether out of keeping with the spirit of a season, when a Gift was given to us at the price of sacrifice. They lack the personal touch that accompanies a few lines in a friend's own handwriting. Few there are, who are so busy as not to have time to write at least one sentence to a friend at that holy season, to express to him their affection and good wishes. But alas, that fine old art of letter writing is becoming obsolete! The printer and the lithographer do all the work for us; and we are the poorer for it in mind and heart.

Quite in line with the printed card is the salutation "I wish you the compliments of the season." We know that good usage has put its sanction upon this expression; but the dictionary indicates the manner in which it should be employed, by stating that it is "a ceremonious or formal greeting." We are apt to associate it with the mercantile calendar. It has often occurred to us that it would be very appropriate in the above instance if the word "compliments" were spelled "compliments" and the clause added "and we can provide you with them at the lowest price." The expression has become so suggestive of a desire for trade or for a vote at the January elections that it has ceased to be expressive of any great warmth or sincerity. Personally, we must confess that a chilly sensation comes over us when a friend takes our hand on Christmas day and says, "I wish you the compliments of the season." His sentiments in our regard may be most kindly and Christian, but his words do not seem to us to convey them.

In a recent number of America, Gilbert Chesterton discusses the question, whether we should say "Merry Christmas" or "Happy Christmas," and arrives at the right conclusion that the former is the correct form of salutation. Our readers, however, will scarcely agree with the following maxim which he sponsors:

"Be good and you will be happy; but you will always be capable of having a jolly time." His idea of happiness, as far as we can gather from his sphinx-like and enigmatic utterances, is that of a mere negative state of freedom from pain or crosses; for he states "satisfied or secure happiness does not come to him who has taken up his cross. It comes to him who has taken drugs." This is certainly not the Christian conception of being happy. Happiness is the normal condition of a good man who is at peace with God; and is not incompatible with the bearing of the cross. Christians are presumed to be at peace with God. That is why to wish a man a "Happy Christmas" is an intimation—although it may not be accepted as such—that we have reason to believe that he is sadly in need of absolution. A "Merry Christmas" on the contrary suggests a special season of exhilarated or abnormal happiness, a time of Christian gladness. As it is the children's feast it is a time of mirth, and we should say "Merry Christmas," to all, old and young; for we are admonished that we must become as little children.

THE GLEANER.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

In this age of conversions to the Catholic Faith there is one now and again of more than ordinary interest. One such, quite recently, is that of Mrs. Romanes, widow of the late George Jacob Romanes, in his day one of England's best-known writers on political and economical subjects. Romanes was Professor of Political Economy in the University of Oxford. He was also credited with disbelief in the cardinal doctrines of Christianity. However, that may have been, a special degree of interest attaches to the conversion of his wife, her entire family and a clergyman of the Scottish Episcopal Church who resided with them as tutor to her eldest son. Mrs. Romanes inherited great wealth and a large tract of land from her husband, which she is said to have administered as a sacred trust for the benefit not only of her own family but of the poor and

suffering. Her reception has created quite a sensation in the district which is anything but Catholic although the well-known Vaughan family resided in the same locality.

A REMARKABLE phenomenon is reported from England in regard to one of the pre-Reformation churches now, like almost all structures of the kind in that country, in possession of the Established Church. In the parish church of Hillesden there is a lofty niche in the east end, near the site of the former altar, which once contained a statue of Our Blessed Lady. The sun's rays, in the old days, used to strike upon this statue and cast a life-size shadow on the floor of the chancel. The phenomenon is that although the statue was torn from its niche three hundred years ago, and the niche is still empty, the shadow remains, and every day when the sunlight pours through the long windows the figure of the Mother of God lies across the old pavement. Attention has been drawn anew to this remarkable fact, and in view of the spirit which the soldiers of England have imbibed in presence of the Faith in France, and the reverence with which they have come to regard the wayside shrines and crucifixes abounding there, it is not unreasonable to look for the awakening of a new spirit in their own land when peace shall have once more been restored. Indeed, the erection of wayside crucifixes has already been undertaken by some advanced members of the Church of England, and the old crusade of prayers for the conversion of England, instituted by Father Ignatius Spencer some eighty years ago, has taken on new life in Catholic circles. This is but one of the signs that Protestant England is on the eve of great changes.

THE EXTRAORDINARY expansion of Canada's trade since the beginning of the War may be seen in the latest statistics made public by the Department of Trade and Commerce. That internal trade in many lines, especially in building and construction, has undergone considerable shrinkage during the same period is true, but the development of foreign trade, notwithstanding the elimination of Germany and her Allies, has been so great as to relegate any such shrinkage into the background except, possibly, to those directly affected by it. A few figures in illustration may not be unacceptable to readers of the RECORD.

FIRST AS TO imports. The total imports of merchandise in 1913, exclusive of coin and bullion, were \$674,313,226. In 1914, the first year of the War, these figures shrank into \$514,585,914, and in 1915, to \$478,115,961. In 1916, however, Great Britain, after more than a year and a half of organization and preparation, once more resumed something of her wonted overseas commercial supremacy, and Canada's imports correspondingly expanded. Our imports from the United Kingdom alone, which in 1913 had totalled \$143,219,531, and in 1915 had dropped to \$72,330,276, in 1916 "came back" to the extent of \$117,222,529, the total imports from all countries being \$766,394,666, or an increase over 1913 of over 11%.

THE UNITED STATES, as was to be expected under existing circumstances, had the greatest share in this expansion, the figures being \$436,541,190, for 1913, and \$546,542,134 for 1916, or an increase of over 20%. The United States has, indeed, always had the bulk of Canada's trade, and no better evidence could be had of the extent of the general depression in 1915, the second year of the War, than that our imports from that source in that year, had fallen to \$291,116,887, or a reduction of one third. In 1916, however, the figures jumped to \$546,542,134, or over 75% of our total imports.

IT IS IN Canada's export trade, however, that the real expansion has taken place. This expansion is no doubt accounted for mainly by War munitions and supplies, but it is also evident in regard to general merchandise. In 1913, after a long period of marked commercial prosperity, the total exports had reached the substantial figure of \$429,927,951. That a steady increase should have been maintained during the interval is not surprising. The armies of the Allies needed our supplies and purchased them—in 1914 to the extent of \$459,264,141, and in 1915 of \$505,548,074. In 1916, however, the figures jumped by leaps and

bounds, until the total for the year reached the great sum of \$1,056,139,820, or almost double that of 1913, and practically 60% more than 1913.

WHEN we come to examine details, the greatest expansion is seen in the exports to the United Kingdom—always our best customer. In 1913 the figure is \$212,467,641, which in 1914, had fallen to \$204,819,891, and in 1915 risen again to \$277,526,960. It was in 1916, however, in which Great Britain really found herself, in regard to the purchase of supplies in Canada. In that year we exported to the United Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland merchandise to the value of no less than \$678,796,960, an increase over the good year 1913, of over 300%. The proportion of this covering munitions of War is not stated, but taking that for metals and all manufactures of metal—\$146,862,214—it may be seen that the total exports of general merchandise is not materially reduced. The proportion for foodstuffs is of course large—\$343,223,654—but even then a respectable margin is left for other products. Taken altogether, the figures indicate a very satisfactory development of Canada's commercial activity, and if wisdom guides her policy in the future continued expansion and prosperity is assured.

THAT ASIATIC Russia, particularly Siberia, is likely, when peace is restored, to become a formidable rival to Canada in the matter of immigration and the development of a grain-growing area, is evident from the activity of the Russian Government in that direction even during the progress of hostilities. The settling of colonists is under the immediate regulation of the Imperial authorities, and to facilitate matters a colonization bureau has been established in connection with the Imperial Department of Agriculture. The immigration has hitherto been mainly from European Russia, but a not inconsiderable proportion of the new settlers are foreign-born. The former particularly take up land in accordance with the communal principle to which they have been accustomed in their old home. The title remains in the Crown, but the peasants obtain what may be termed the eternal use of the land, in return for which they pay taxes. Exemption from taxation is, however, granted for the first five years of settlement.

THE USUAL scale of allotment of this land is from 21-6 to 40.5 acres to each male member of the family. These allotments are small compared with the large tracts taken up by settlers in North-West Canada, but where large families prevail, sufficient scope is afforded for the settlement of their male members, and the rearing of new families in their native surroundings—a circumstance that cannot fail to have advantageous results. The Government advances loans on easy terms to colonists in the more difficult districts, and in other ways does everything possible to assist the newly-arrived settler. Depots have been established at various points for the sale of agricultural implements and machines to the poorer peasants on easy terms of payment. Experimental stations have also been established at various points for the testing of farm machinery and institutes for instruction in dairying form another part of the great plan which Russia has mapped out for the future developments of the vast areas she possesses in far Asia.

IN ADDITION to the above class of immigrants who are dependent upon State assistance, there are others who enter Siberia and take up freehold tracts of land which they cultivate in an up-to-date manner. These represent less than 20% of the total and are mostly of foreign origin. New land for freehold farms is usually allotted in parcels of from 67 to 135 acres of arable land to each family. Much of the land along the railway line and the banks of the principal rivers is held by Cossack communities, that virile race, the original settlers of the country who are usually well-to-do, and have contributed so materially to the success of Russian arms in the present conflict. Some of these in Siberia own as much as 3,000 acres, but small holdings are the rule, and the number of the larger ones is limited. The Cossack is intelligent and progressive and under the more enlightened policy that is now being pursued by the Government in their regard, and in that of agricultural development.