

## OUR LONDON LETTER.

Special Correspondence of the Journal of Commerce and Shareholder.

London, July 30th, 1913.

**An Empire Review.**—Earl Grey has headed a movement to secure the vacant site in the heart of London for a building to be designated "The Dominion House." Simultaneously with the announcement of this scheme the King lays the foundation-stone of the Australian Commonwealth building on the most prominent adjacent corner of the site.

The two things must be taken together for they are more than a mere coincidence. They are more in the nature of competitive schemes, with the Commonwealth well ahead.

Every man who has visited London knows the site. It is the Strand, at the foot of the broad new street called "Kingsway" and lined by the semi-circular road called "Aldwych." On the space these beautiful thoroughfares now occupy there formerly stood a ganglion of mean streets. The site now being talked of is the middle section of the segmental area facing the Strand and backing on Kingsway. The western corner of it is already occupied by the Gaiety Theatre and Marconi House (formerly the Gaiety Restaurant). On the eastern point, full prominent to the approach from the Law Court the Commonwealth building is going up apace.

Earl Grey and his co-operators, men whose devotion to the interests of the Overseas Dominions is high beyond question, have obtained a three years' option of a 99 years' lease of the vacant remainder of the site, and their idea is, in brief to induce Canada, South Africa and New Zealand to become joint tenants of a splendidly suitable building to be erected thereon. The details of the conditions do not yet so much concern the Dominions as the general principle; but it may be said that the promoters of the scheme are not seeking to make any gain for themselves.

Let it be granted that the public convenience would be well served by the centralisation of the now scattered offices of the Overseas Dominions. I imagine, however, that each Imperial unit will look upon the project from its own point of view, rather than from that of the general public. Most people are so impressed with the existence of what His Majesty eloquently called "the indissoluble ties" of Empire that they are apt to forget that each of the Overseas Dominions has its own responsibilities and its own needs. And out of these surely the question will arise whether Canada, for instance, will think it wise to go under the same roof with South Africa and New Zealand, with, all the time, be it remembered, the contrast of a separate building next door for Australia. There is no jealousy in this consideration. It is a matter of business. The Empire does not subsist on sentiment alone.

I have already noted the fact that the immigration organisations that have hitherto operated separately from the various States of the Commonwealth have just begun to come together with a view to a more effective advertisement of Australia's attractions; and there is no doubt that the conspicuous building in the Strand will do much to keep Australia to the front.

South Africa, too, is more and more conscious of the need of population. There has reached London this week a report of a speech delivered by Lord Gladstone, the Governor-General of the Union, at the annual show of the Royal Agricultural Society of Natal. His counsel to the farmers was that they should "just work ahead," regardless of the politicians. Farmers, he said, "have got something to work for."

"You are producing the stuff which is necessary for South Africa, and which the world is wanting,

in increasing degrees. You have not produced it enough yet even for your own wants for the most part, but you have before you the needs of the world, always increasing, the standard of life, the standard of requirements increasing in all the different parts of the world, and people ready to give better prices for what they want. All that you want now is organization. You want capital. You want railways. If you want these things, you also want population. Population, I hope, will come. I am not afraid of population, whatever nationality it is, provided the man or the woman is an adequate person for the needs of South Africa. I don't want to keep people out of South Africa who can do good to South Africa. We want population here, because without population you won't get railways, and you won't arm the Government with powers for those great developments in the interests of agriculture, not only for railways, but for breeding establishments, agricultural farms, irrigation work, and general questions of organization, insurance societies for the farmers, co-operation, and so forth. All these things, if they are to be properly organized, mean money. If you want money you want capital, and if you want capital you must get population. Therefore," concluded Lord Gladstone, "I think population is the thing to preach for South Africa."

There is, of course, nothing new in such a statement, though the fundamental connection between emigrants and capital is seldom put so boldly from the seat of authority; and the significance of Lord Gladstone's reference to the disregard of "nationality." I have quoted the words here to emphasise the point that the competition overseas for men and money is growing keener. There is to be more demand, rather than less, upon the apparently inexhaustible reservoirs of the Mother Country. And all this, coupled with the industrial competition that is already growing up so beneficially between the various parts of the Empire, causes one to hesitate before saying that the Dominion House project will be equally acceptable to all the countries concerned. The indications to-day are more in the direction of individualism, of which Australia has given us the first substantial example.

**A Warning to Visitors.**—A few days after my note on the need of political neutrality in the business relations between Great Britain and the overseas Dominions, the point is driven home hard by our leading journal. It prints "some words of advice" to visitors to Canada from its Canadian correspondent, whose observations it backs up by a leading article entitled "A Warning to Visitors in Canada." All this shows that the need for prudence is at last recognized in very influential quarters. The correspondent "doubts the wisdom" of the appearance of Canadians on the party platform in this country—a practice, I may add, which has been exploited by one party in particular with the object of making it appear that it held the sole right to be called an Imperial party. Also, "Canadians would be wiser to withhold themselves from direct intrusion into the fiscal controversy of the United Kingdom," the correspondent says. Especially, let me add, if Canadians understood how forlorn the fiscal controversialists now feel in this country. The Protectionists would gladly drop it if they could find an electioneering substitute for it. The TIMES correspondent goes on to say that just as Canadian visitors here should not interfere, so should British visitors to Canada refrain from interfering in the home politics. Meddling is mischievous. It is just such a warning as many Dominion journals have published. The significance of its repetition here lies in the recognition of the fact, after a long series of tactless blunders, that the Opposition have been too effusive in their friendliness. The TIMES solemnly rebukes the party for its "interference" in the Reciprocity discussion of two years ago, and warns it not to repeat the indiscretion in regard to Canada's navy discussion today. Of the former occasion it writes: