

## TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE DOMINION OF CANADA ; ITALIAN POLITICS ; CHURCH UNION ;  
THE UNITED FARMERS' MOVEMENT ; THE IRISH QUESTION ;  
THE NAPOLEONIC CENTENARY.

**T**HE present month of July marks not only the fifty-fourth anniversary of the inauguration of the Canadian Dominion, but the official recognition of the advent of a new epoch in British history. Mr. Lloyd George in his opening address to the Commonwealth Congress of Premiers, said, in substance, that there is no longer a British Empire, but a federation which, for historical and sentimental reasons, is called an Empire. This, in effect, is a formal acknowledgement of the fact that, within the Commonwealth, the Dominions are independent, self-governing, political entities. We have travelled far and fast since that brilliant, sunshiny first of July day, 1867, when the British North America Act came into operation, and Canada was constituted as the pioneer Dominion under the British Crown. Four comparatively undeveloped Provinces then composed it. It has since extended its sway over half a continent, and accomplished material wonders. Its present population is nearly one-fourth of the United Kingdom. It has more people than the combined old Kingdoms of Ireland and Scotland, each of which has figured so prominently in history. It too has played a splendid part in the making of future world-history. One is apt to think of Canada as a mere youth among the nations; but is it? It is between three and four years the political senior of either the French Republic or the German Empire. It is difficult to realize that the United States of America, next to Great Britain, now have almost the oldest of existing Western Governments. Middle Europe and Russia were revolutionized by the war. Modern Italy, Belgium and Holland are political newcomers; and so also are Portugal, Norway and Sweden as at present constituted. The Spanish monarchy is a revival. Even the British Empire, so called, is younger than the United States, which attained nationhood in 1783. The United Kingdom was not really constituted until 1801 when the Parliamentary union with Ireland took place. That marked the beginning of the Empire which, prior thereto, consisted only of Great Britain and a few small Crown colonies in various parts of the world. One is prone to regard what one is born into as normal if not almost eternal. It is difficult therefore for any generation to comprehend the continuing instability of human affairs, or to realize the constant and rapid changes which they are

undergoing. It is peculiarly difficult to grasp the fact that within a century the British Commonwealth of Nations has had its birth, and arisen to unprecedented greatness; and that it is now entering upon the second stage of its career as a world-wide Federation, bound together by ties of blood, language, mutual interest and sentiment.

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Comparatively little is known concerning Italy by the British public although she and her people are, and long have been, the warmest and most constant of Britain's friends. Italy's sympathy with the British had much to do with her separation from the Triple Alliance at the beginning of the war, when called upon for co-operation, and with her subsequent alignment with the Western Allies. Her friendship has somewhat cooled since then, particularly on account of the support which British diplomacy gave President Wilson in his stubborn stand with regard to Fiume. Economically Italy is a poor country. Her natural resources are not great; her soil is thin, and she has a teeming population much of which exists in extreme poverty. Financially, she has long been in a bad way, and is now on the verge of bankruptcy. Her North African adventures had overloaded her with debt even before the outbreak of the late war. She is all but crushed by her present burdens. But she has at last attained the full height of her national ambition through the recovery of all her historic territory, and the thrusting back in ignominy from her borders of her centuries-old enemy and oppressor, Austria. Her spirit is therefore high and her hopes undimmed. With some timely assistance, such as more fortunate nations cannot afford to withhold, she may be depended on not only to pull through but to rise steadily in the esteem of herself and the world until she becomes a really great world Power. In her domestic politics, which looked black and threatening enough at times during and after the war, she has already begun to show improvement. Militant Communism of the Russian type has been successfully dealt with and to a large extent overcome if not eliminated. The recent elections disclosed a weakening even of Socialism, which lost 50 seats. Her new representative Chamber consists of 539 members. Unfortunately it is divided into eleven groups, and government will have to be by means of coalition; but the Constitutionalists will have a majority in it, and be able to hold power although the fate of any governing combination may be more or less insecure. By co-operation between Liberals, Democrats, Radicals and Reformist Socialists, a majority of fifteen is possible and probable. This, however, in such a House will afford but a precarious existence to a Government. In all, eleven parties are

represented in the Chamber. Former Premier Giolitti, who has again been entrusted by King Victor Emanuel with the task of administration, is the most likely of all Italians to succeed, in spite of his 78 years. He is an opportunist of the opportunists, but, withal, he is a patriot and has done much for Italy in the past. To him she owes universal suffrage, freedom of the Press and of Assembly, compulsory education and other valuable reforms. As a "practical politician" he is unrivalled. His specialties are winning elections and manipulating those elected. For years before the war he seemed to hold the electorate and the Chamber in the hollow of his hand. He was opposed to Italy's siding with the Allies in the war, and only the wild outburst of popular enthusiasm, aroused largely by D'Annunzio, sufficed to overthrow him and enable the nation to play its chosen part. Now, in extreme old age, he is being looked to again for stable government, almost regardless of how it may be established or maintained.

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Church Union, we are told, is "in the air." It is certainly on many tongues. It would be interesting to know at the bottom of how many hearts it really finds a congenial home. Churches, that is to say, religious denominations, are a good deal like secular clubs. They are adapted to their membership by custom and heredity. They are not easily brought into union, because they do not naturally coalesce. Human union, to be valuable, should be spontaneous. The worth of two families to a community or to one another would not be increased for themselves or the community by forcing them into one household, and compelling them to intimate association. One house might be maintained at considerably less cost, measured by money, than two. Would it not be expensive economy at the sacrifice of two homes, however humble? Established associations are vital things. This is an aspect of Church Union which seems to be too little regarded by its enthusiastic advocates. All human unions to be successful should be strictly voluntary. Match-makers seldom secure happy results. That every effort should be made to promote Christian unity of spirit and effort goes without saying. But union and unity are by no means synonymous. In fact, there is not infrequently actual danger in union. Nitre, charcoal and sulphur are beneficent materials in separation. United, they produce gunpowder. Nitric acid and glycerin are safe and useful, apart. Combined, they constitute nitroglycerine which, when sawdust or infusorial earth is added, becomes dynamite. Union often includes the possibilities of greater disunion. Like-minded men and women naturally flock together, and are not only

more contented but prospectively more useful for doing so. There is much in favour of, and nothing against, such groups co-operating cordially for a common purpose. Their intimate union is another matter. It is, at best, a doubtful experiment.

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The United Farmers' movement in Canada is becoming more instead of less pronounced. Probably it is thriving on the conspicuous disintegration of the old political parties. Whatever the cause, it is rapidly gaining strength and ground, as far as outward evidence indicates. The movement was entirely nonpolitical in its origin. It started in December 1901, when a small group of pioneer farmers met at Indian Head in Saskatchewan. It was organized for purely protective purposes, to counteract what were regarded as the aggressions of specially favoured organizations of business men engaged in the purchasing, storing, and carrying of farm products. It was believed, rightly or wrongly, that the cream was being skimmed from agriculture by these agencies, and that only the bluest of milk was being left to the producers. The demand of the Farmers, from that time to the present, has been for economic reform. The first five years of the new organization, which spread rapidly, and held annual Conventions each year from the start, were devoted almost exclusively to arousing farmers to the importance to themselves and the country of co-operation. In Alberta, until 1908, there were two organizations, one imported from the United States, the other local. In that year they came together under the name of the United Farmers of Alberta. Manitoba and Saskatchewan had each only one organization from the first. The early efforts of all three were directed mainly to improving marketing conditions. The movement spread to Ontario in 1912, and thence, in a limited measure, to Quebec and the Maritime Provinces. The second stage of the movement witnessed the birth and growth of farmers' business institutions through co-operative companies. A number of these Companies were established throughout Ontario and the West, and were highly successful. The farmers speedily became conscious of the potency which organization had given them, and the political stage was reached. The membership of their societies now numbered nearly a fourth of a million, and they determined to utilize their power in politics, for the quicker attainment of their ambitions and desires. What followed and is following is known. What the consequences may be, can only be conjectured. The political attempt is distinctively a class one, and its platform displays considerable class selfishness; but that may disappear with time, experience and responsibility. Few will deny

that, by reason of both their numbers and the fundamental importance of their industry, the farmers of the Dominion are justly entitled to much greater influence in the public affairs of Canada than they have heretofore wielded. To that end they must have increased representation in Parliament and in the Government of the country. Whether this might not have been secured as quickly and less startlingly by other means, is a debatable question. For the present, the farmers have decided on independent political action. Whether that action is approved or condemned, no one can blame the farmers for taking it. They are perfectly competent to decide for themselves. As free and highly intelligent citizens, their right to so decide is unquestionable. The final outcome will be awaited with much interest.

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The so-called Irish question, according to the news despatches, has been on the eve of settlement ever since it became acute, if, within human memory, it can be said ever to have been otherwise than acute. It was to have been settled by an all-Irish convention. It was not. It was to have been settled by Parliament. Was it? It was to have been settled by coercion. Has it been? It is now to be settled by conference and compromise. Will it be? It reminds one of the American humorist's remark: "What is the national debt—I'll pay it." What is the Irish question?" If any one would answer satisfactorily, it might be settled. Is anyone prepared to answer? If so, the reply should be prompt. Otherwise the inference must be that there is no Irish question, but only an Irish muddle, the responsibility for which must be divided. There are Ulster, South Ireland, Sinn Fein and the Nationalists. South Ireland will not accept a district Parliament. Ulster has one, and will not accept a national Parliament. The Nationalists do not desire separation from the Empire. Sinn Fein does; and demands an independent Irish republic. How can any outside authority or influence unravel such a tangle? It has been suggested, whether seriously or not, that Great Britain should retire absolutely from Ireland, and leave the Irish to adjust their own difficulties. Such a procedure would be the most glaring act of national abnegation of duty in the world's history. If British force and governance were withdrawn, North and South Ireland would be locked in a Kilkenny cat struggle within twenty-four hours, with probable Kilkenny cat results for the country. Surely Sinn Fein, which is conspicuously incapable of establishing the form of government which it professes to desire, or, indeed any stable form of government, does not expect the British Government to

set up its Republic for it after compelling Ulster into subjection, and then to depart leaving behind only its good wishes and blessing! Short of that, what can it do? It cannot reconcile that which is irreconcilable. It dare not shake the dust of Ireland from its feet, and leave the Irish people to the fate which would inevitably be theirs if left to themselves alone. What is it to do? What can it do? If the Irish question could be got stated with even approximate definitiveness something might be attempted. But, what is "the Irish question?"

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Since the first number of this Review was published, a great celebration has taken place in France, that of the one hundredth anniversary of the death of Napoleon Bonaparte, which occurred at St. Helena, on May 5th, 1821. The hearts of the French people were deeply stirred through their historical memories. Nearly the whole civilized world sympathized with them, none more truly than the British, or for better cause. It has taken a full century to provide the beginning of a proper perspective for Napoleon. Much time, in all probability, must still elapse before he can be assigned his rightful niche in history. Even yet it would, no doubt, be considered unjustifiable by many, if not by most, to pronounce him one of the very greatest, probably the greatest, of all men whom the world has known. It will not be disputed that never has there been one more wonderful than he. With greatness is popularly associated the idea of goodness, and Napoleon was not "good" in the accepted meaning of the word. He did many things which were morally, that is to say, normally, wrong. But so much good, largely through his deliberate activity and guidance, came from the apparent evil which he did, that nearly all that was superficially bad can now be forgiven or forgotten. Nevertheless, the prejudice aroused against him at home and abroad while he lived, much of it created by deliberate propaganda, will not down, and will ultimately die hard. The ex-Kaiser has been compared to him, which is the present last word of lingering condemnation. William was as unlike, in all respects, to Napoleon as to Hercules, as unlike him as a miserable incendiary is to a great architect. Napoleon saved France from herself and her enemies. William ruined Germany and played into the hands of her foes. William almost overthrew European civilization. Napoleon rescued and set it on the path to higher achievements. Napoleon was easily the greatest of soldiers; William an incapable poltroon. Napoleon did not fight for conquest or for military glory alone. Whenever and wherever he conquered he bestowed, as far as he could, the

blessings of greatly improved and infinitely freer institutions. If he subjugated France to his will, he ruled her in her own best interests; and he gave her his priceless code, still her richest heritage. How he himself viewed his military as compared with his civil achievements is indicated by his open declaration that he was prouder of his Civil Code than of all his victories. "I shall go down to posterity," he said, "with my Code in my hand." The prophesy has been fulfilled. His military methods and principles formed the basis of the strategy of both Germany and her opponents in the late titanic struggle, after the lapse of more than a hundred years, and a revolution in the appliances and materials of war. What higher compliment than that could have been paid to his military genius? It however, has always been acknowledged. It is only of late that his civil genius and beneficence, and the personal nobility of the man have begun to be recognized publicly. Of his work in Europe, so great a British publicist as J. A. R. Marriott, M.P., wrote in the Nineteenth Century Review for May: "Napoleon and his armies did the scavenging work of Providence; they cleaned the slate and upon that slate Bismarck, Cavour, Moltke, Garibaldi, the peoples of Switzerland and Serbia, of Poland and Bohemia, have written words which nothing can erase." Of Napoleon, personally, Mr. J. E. G. De Montmorency, in the May Contemporary Review, in an imaginary sketch, puts these concluding words into the lips of a conjectured seer, addressing the shade of the departed Great Man, in answer to his sister's historic enquiry, Qu' avez-vous fait, Napoleon? "I will tell you what you have done. Lawless you were, but you rediscovered law; ambitious you were, but you showed how ambition might be checked and guided; you destroyed Old Europe, but you recreated it and, with it, the world. You had faith not only in yourself but in your Destiny. You knew and believed in the human heart, and lo! to you the human heart is bound."

W. E. M.