

THE IMPERIAL CONFERENCE

GREAT moments of history are often recognized as such only in the light of after knowledge. Even the chief personages on the stage of events are sometimes only partly alive either to the nature of the issue at stake, or to the probable results of their individual actions. They are full of motives, proceeding either from impulse or conviction, and when the crisis comes they act as it were automatically, and in accordance with their former selves. So far they play their natural parts. But the consequences of their doings can best be estimated at some distance from the transactions in which they have shared.

A great imperial drama is now again being set for our all-British stage. The unfolding of the issue ought to take no one unawares. For there have been rehearsals, and the main parts should by this time be well known. It is to be hoped that all who are privileged to share in the action will be animated from first to last by a consciousness of the importance of the rôles entrusted to them. What our representatives may do or not do in London next month will eventually influence the whole course of British history. They have had plenty of time to think, and now that the hour for action has arrived, they should be prepared to give reasons for the faith that is in them, even though the full consequences of their attitude may still be hidden both from them and from us.

And what shall be said of the spectators of this drama? Every one who is at all familiar with conditions in Great Britain knows with what good ground, up to recent years, the charge could have been made that the old land was "unconscious of her Empire." She did not know, in short, that she had an Empire, or only woke up at intervals to realize the fact. All that has to a great extent been remedied. There