

CANADIAN AUTONOMY

to be depended on, on all occasions? If so, how is it "spontaneous and unforced"? Or is it purely voluntary and to be depended on only as the caprice of the moment may decide? Then such cooperation in reality is no cooperation. It is a negligible quantity, and must therefore be ignored in any scheme of effective imperial defence. In a time of crisis if the Empire is to depend merely upon the voluntary cooperation of its various parts; if there is to be no power in the last resort, as in every fully organised state, able, if necessary, to compel an unwilling member to fulfil its duty, the British Empire can no longer be regarded as a single state. It is dissolved among its parts and has ceased to be. When, therefore, Mr. Asquith further asserts of the United Kingdom and the self-governing Dominions, "we each of us are and intend to be, masters in our own house", the assertion is a truism if it means that in the management of those of their own affairs which are purely local, the self-governing Dominions are free. If it means more, how much more is implied? The whole metaphor is misleading. "Household" does not adequately express the true relation between the self-governing Dominions and the United Kingdom to each other and the Empire as a whole. The British Empire is more than a collection of "households"; or else the "households" are in fact, if not in name, sovereign states. What of those imperial affairs in which Canadians have a direct though not an exclusively local interest in common with the rest of the Empire? It is all very well to say: "The best way of maintaining the British Empire is to allow every community to administer its own affairs in its own Parliament." It is the only principle consistent with freedom. Canada wants no interference from the United Kingdom, nor the United Kingdom from Canada, in the management of affairs specifically its own. But the practical question is, how far does this apply? Where is the line that divides imperial and local interests, and who shall determine it? What of those interests common to Canada and the rest of the Empire? It has not yet been claimed for Canada in set terms by any responsible statesman that "its own affairs," is meant to cover the complete circle of its interests, both those specifically its own and those it shares in common with others. To do so