

II.

THE ORIGIN OF THE ROUND TABLE

The system of Round Table Groups as they are known at present was developed in this country, but the conception of a systematic research into the nature of the British Empire which characterizes the Movement had its origin in South Africa. The enquiry grew out of the conversations of a group of men who played an active part in the organization of South Africa after the War. Their concern with the affairs of that Dominion soon grew into a careful study of the Imperial problem as a whole, and the character of these men, and their experience in practical politics, gave a note of seriousness to their efforts. In 1910 a collection of notes on the government of the Empire was made by these students of the question and printed for private circulation throughout Great Britain and the Dominions, under the name of the "Green Memorandum." This volume was subjected to private criticism in every part of the Empire and was then reissued with a mass of annotations attached. It was followed by numerous documents, all part of the same research, which were submitted to small circles of men in the Dominions who were asked to aid in The Round Table enquiry by criticizing these reports and giving their opinions on various phases of the Imperial problem. These circles were the original Round Table Groups.

Such opinions and criticisms as these were never officially published by The Round Table. Owing to the various opinions represented in the Groups such a course was impossible. One theory of the Empire held in whole or in part by certain members of The Round Table Groups has been admirably expressed in a book, "The Problem of the Commonwealth," published by Mr. Lionel Curtis, not as the General Secretary of The Round Table but solely on his own responsibility. This represents the personal opin-