

Canadian Autonomy.

Recent discussion of imperial questions has been marked by an absence of clear thinking and precision in the use of terms. Too often words and phrases have been made to do duty for ideas, with vagueness and confusion of thought as a result.

1

Nowhere has this been more noticeable than in the use of the term "autonomy". When Lord Haldane, e. g. speaks of the self-governing Dominions having "freedom to regulate their own affairs". what does he mean by "their own affairs"? Are all their affairs "their own"? Have they any affairs not exclusively "their own"? which they have in common with the other members of the empire. The Province of Quebec has interests exclusively its own, and also interests common to the other Provinces of Canada. But does the right of its people to manage "their own affairs" imply also an exclusive right to manage those interests they share in common with their fellow citizens of the Dominion? If so, how can the Province of Quebec be regarded as in any sense a part of the Dominion? And if the right of the people of Canada to manage "their own affairs" implies also the exclusive right to determine those they have in common with the rest of the empire, how can they be said in any sense to form a part of the empire? The fact of membership in the British Empire is itself the evidence of the existence of interests which are special to no one part but common to all, and which, therefore, are the special concern of no one part in particular but of all in common.

Again, when Mr. Asquith speaks of the combination of complete local autonomy with "spontaneous and unforced cooperation for common interests and purposes," is such cooperation