

VII

THE FUTURE

THE question now arises, What is to be the future relationship between the mother country and the various outposts of Empire? Are the ties to be drawn closer, or shall these young nations in the various Dominions be allowed aimlessly to drift? Is the crimson thread to be snapped, or shall it be woven into the fabric of an elastic and enduring union? Is the recent outburst of enthusiasm merely a passing phase of sentiment to be easily forgotten, or is the occasion to be made use of to develop the resources of the Dominions, to make the Empire self-supporting, and even ultimately to form a permanent nucleus for the League of Nations? Is the exchange of commodities to be encouraged on lines of mutual concession and common benefit, or is the narrow objective of pure commercialism again to drive the trade to the highest bidder? Is more frequent intercourse and the exchange of opinion to be stimulated? Is the Britisher who desires to migrate to be retained within the Empire, or through the want of sympathy to be driven to shelter himself beneath a foreign flag? These are vital questions. In a sympathetic audience but one answer would be expected. It would be difficult to find a gathering which would be irresponsible, but there is much diversity of opinion as to the best methods and the machinery for closer union. We have been invited to subscribe to the early acceptance of a definite constitution in the form of Imperial Federation. No doubt the privilege of consultation and representation logically carries with it the corresponding responsibility of taxation. But however anxious the Dominions may be, and however justifiable their claim, for a voice in the Cabinet Councils of the Empire,