

Franklin, a distinguished Imperialist of the day, who had worked out a plan of permanent union with Great Britain, helped to call a Congress to settle the dispute. Contrary to expectation, the fighting when started could not be stopped. It ended in the disruption of the imperial tie. This was called, not without reason, the liberation of America. It appeared as a bright example in the annals of the history of those who speak English. It is only very recently that we are coming to doubt it. Possibly the union of the whole English-speaking world, under an American president, or even the poor substitute for such offered by a British king, would have been a brighter chapter still.

The particular controversy ended, but the underlying problem remained unsolved. Nobody yet had found a means of uniting defence and government in such a way as to guarantee the existence of the Empire. For about a hundred years, however, the problem was not acute. Great Britain soon found an empire as large as the one that was lost. India was conquered, Australia staked out as a claim, and the great war with France gathered in a harvest of colonial territory falling like ripe fruit. For a moment, appetite was sated. A huge slice of South America, that could have been had for the asking, was refused. More than all, the victory of Trafalgar established a complete naval supremacy. Great Britain, able to meet any three rivals at sea, sang "Rule Britannia" over the wrecks of its sunken foes, and advocated universal peace and the maintenance of the two-power standard.

A new day dawned. The British merchant, convinced that he could beat any foreign rival at his own game, became a free-trader. His passionate arguments convinced the British aristocratic landholder that the chance was too good to be missed. Liberty became a passion. It was held and proved that there were millions in it. It was shewn, too, that the same liberty might be extended to the colonies; that to leave them to manage their own affairs in their own way would guarantee the interests of British trade and prevent the