

Men remembered then what Montesquieu had said about empires growing too extensive. They also recollected, very clearly, Turgot's prophecy of 1750, that Colonies, like fruit, would drop off when ripe. Utter surprise, failure to understand the meaning of the American rebellion, the memory of old prophecies, all combined to uproot the faith in Empire that Chatham had so carefully fostered, and implant in its stead a new prejudice in the English mind—the impossibility of Empire.

Some theories may be futile, but the idea of Empire is one of those that are most like <sup>Distrac
tions.</sup> to bring about their own fulfilment. The Imperial Federation League of the eighties realized that the best way to further Imperial Federation was to talk about it. But if the idea may in time create the fact, the absence of that idea operates as strongly in the opposite direction. The absorption of England in the long period of Napoleonic wars, though during its course she gathered up the abundant fragments of the Dutch and French Colonial Empires, detracted more than it added to the imperial idea. Then succeeded the miserable period of exhaustion, from which sprang the agitation for reform; and the agitation for