

The advantageous position of Britain.—The lines upon which further expansion and colonization by the European powers can proceed are now defined with some precision. By the Monroe Doctrine (p. 462), a cardinal feature of the foreign policy of the United States, America is no longer subject to the ambitions of European states; and, in 1890, the chief European powers reached an agreement in regard to spheres of influence in Central and South Africa. In every sea Britain has advantages equalled by no other power. In the Suez Canal and Gibraltar she holds the approaches to the Mediterranean Sea from both the east and the west. The Cape of Good Hope gives her control also of the longer route to the east around Africa. Aden gives her command of the Red Sea, and her influence in the world of Islam has so grown that she rules more Moslems than does the Turk; Mecca itself is not unlikely to fall within her influence. She commands, too, the sea routes of both the Atlantic and the Pacific. Yet, in spite of these advantages, Britain can undoubtedly no longer hope to maintain her old supremacy in the world's trade; the ease with which products are now carried from one country to another has made not only the United States and Germany, but the British colonies themselves, her rivals even in her own home markets. Progress always involves such changes and readjustments, but in influence and wealth Britain still stands in the first rank, and shows no sign of losing her position.

The Unity of the Empire.—A nation's past offers some indication of its future. The growth of political liberty is the most striking feature of Britain's history; and the development of her colonies has proceeded on the lines of her own past. Her sons in the colonies have claimed the liberties secured by their fathers at home. Step by step they have acquired the privileges of self-government, until now the larger colonies are sister nations, who rank as partners of the mother land. But this growth of liberty and independence has not weakened the ties that bind the Empire together. As the colonies have assumed responsi-