

the Empire asunder, on one point and another there were many and strong excuses to be made for Great Britain ; but at the back of it all was the fundamental mischief that the outlook on the Empire had been distorted by trade ; that trade carried to hideous lengths had caused the English genius for making new homes and carrying liberties across the sea to be held suspect, and had deadened the call of religion.

The Old Empire fell, and deserved to fall. Its fall was finally proclaimed in the treaty of 1783, which recognised the independence of the North American colonies. But even before 1790 was reached, there were already signs that a better time was at hand. The first British settlers in Australia were planted on the shore of Sydney Harbour in January 1788. It is true that in origin this was a convict settlement, but none the less it made a new beginning of British colonisation which won a continent for our race. A few months earlier, in May 1787, a colony for freed slaves had been planted at Sierra Leone on the West Coast of Africa. Again, this was an effort at colonisation on British initiative, though for coloured men. Moreover, the enterprise had been dictated by religion or by philanthropy inspired by religion, it raised the flag of freedom at what had been the earliest centre of British slave trading and while slave traders were still busy on the spot, and it was a notable step forward in the direction of antagonism to the worst traffic in the world.

We have seen that, as long as the Old Empire lasted, little answer could be given to the charge, which had so troubled Richard Hakluyt, that Protestants had done little or nothing towards converting the heathen.