

technically accurate, but should really illuminate the life of the past; he tied every abstraction to concrete examples, and by a wonderfully deft use of modern analogy made the early Middle Ages not only more real but more distant than other historians had managed to do. One of the pleasures of reading Maitland is to be aware simultaneously of the intelligence which is shaping the material and feeling its way among its obscurities, and of the charm of his personality. In comparison, the other institutional historians of his day, including his younger contemporary T. F. Tout, are very dull dogs indeed. Throughout a range of studies so wide that a legal historian has remarked recently that it would take a committee or an academy to pass an adequate judgment on them, he retained an incomparable lightness of touch, and never had to have recourse to the forced geniality with which so many of his colleagues sought to persuade their readers that they too saw with the eyes and shared the interests of other men.

In the year the *History of English Law* was published, Maitland was joined at Cambridge by a man who makes him appear an amiable lightweight. John Emerich Edward Dalberg, First Baron Acton, was as formidable as he sounds. Descended from an illustrious German family and from a Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Naples, Acton, before he was made Regius Professor, had seen more of the world and its great men than the rest of his colleagues put together. With his stepfather, Lord Granville, he had been on a mission to Moscow; he had toured (and not as a lecturer, as had Froude) the United States with a relative, the Earl of Ellesmere; he had sat both in the Commons and in the Lords, had been an intimate friend of Gladstone and a lord in waiting to Queen Victoria. He was a member of exclusive clubs, the frequenter of exclusive society. Almost as unusual in the holder of a Regius Chair, he was a Catholic. Less unusual, perhaps, was the fact that he had never written a book. But for all his title, his international acquaintance, and his wealth, the choice of Acton was unimpeachable. He may have had a library of 59,000 books, but it had been more thoroughly read than many a library of 2,000. Acton's claim to be the most omnivorous reader of the nineteenth century would be difficult to refute, and so would his claim to be among its most scrupulous scholars and its most tenacious thinkers. And if he had written no book, he had written copiously on church matters—for the *Rambler* and then the *Home and Foreign Review*, both of which were suppressed for the polemical use to which

he put his scholarship—and had contributed to the *English Historical Review*, from its first number, articles and reviews which displayed a redoubtable learning and force of character. It was only fitting that a man who had spoken ex cathedra from his youth should be appointed to a chair.

The Cambridge chair was especially appropriate, for his inability to go there as an undergraduate, on religious grounds, was responsible for much of his background as a historian. At the age of sixteen he went to live in Munich with Döllinger, the most renowned of Catholic scholars. Precocious and serious-minded, the young Acton set out to read the best books and meet the most important people, and while he quickly hauled himself abreast of the pragmatic and critical scholarship associated with Von Ranke, he was attracted to the philosophy of history, which he saw as “the most sublime of all subjects of study.” His ideas matured at a speed which would hardly have been possible at home. “Being refused at Cambridge,” he wrote later in life, “and driven to foreign universities, I never had any contemporaries, but spent years in looking for men wise enough to solve the problems that puzzled me, not in religion or politics so much as along the wavy line between the two. So I was always associated with men a generation older than myself.” The habit, which he shared with Gibbon, of constantly reviewing the contents of his memory and of fitting the books he read into the proper niche in the historiographical descent of the subject they dealt with, made his writings tend to the opaque: it is easier to feel their significance than to see it; a dozen paragraphs of Acton sometimes read like the concluding passages, and rather gnomic ones at that, of as many articles. His Cambridge lectures helped to loosen his style, but his inaugural must have seemed as strange in manner as in matter. From this dense meditation on the meaning and nature of history rang out epigrams extolling the moral purpose of history as the true demonstration of religion and warning his audience of “scientific” fact collectors that the historian should study problems, not periods, and must judge, and judge fiercely. “The weight of opinion is against me when I exhort you never to debase the moral currency or lower the standard of rectitude, but to try others by the final maxim that governs your own lives, and to suffer no man and no cause to escape the undying penalty which history has the power to inflict on wrong.” His predecessor, Seeley, had praised history as above all a school of statesmanship: “Our university is and must be a

great seminary of politicians." But for Acton, ". . . ours is a domain that reaches farther than affairs of state, and is not subject to the jurisdiction of governments. It is our function to keep in view and to command the movement of ideas, which are not the effect but the cause of public events." And of all ideas, the most important was the idea of liberty, for "progress in the direction of organised and assured freedom, is the characteristic fact of Modern History, and its tribute to the theory of Providence." He went on to admit that "Ranke, who was my own master, rejected the view that I have stated . . . and many of our recent classics—Carlyle, Newman, Froude—were persuaded that there is no progress justifying the ways of God to man," but progress there was, and it was the sacred duty of history to reveal it and, by revealing it, to promote its growth, but reveal it always with ardent critical honesty.

He had no consolation to offer those who studied history mainly in order to write books. His own youthful project of a vast *History of Liberty* had ceased to appear a possibility—the more one knew the more one needed to know—but this did not matter, for more important than information was wisdom. Archive after archive was being opened all over Europe. "We are still at the beginning of the documentary age, which will tend to make history independent of historians, to develop learning at the expense of writing." What did this mean? That the serious historian would no longer have to spend nine tenths of his time groping past secondary authorities toward the truth, and could devote himself to contemplation, while written history was left to mere popularizers? It is difficult to imagine that so combative a man, one who believed so much in the educative force of history, could think that. There is something of this, however, in what he told his audience later: The study of history "fulfils its purpose even if it only makes us wiser, without producing books, and gives us the gift of historical thinking, which is better than historical learning." Yet three years later Acton was writing instructions for the guidance of the men he had chosen to write for that mammoth work the *Cambridge Modern History*, to which he intended to contribute five chapters himself.

Acton cannot be finally assessed. His published writings only represent a series of massy fragments of the unwritten work that lurked in his mind, his books, and his notes. The notes have been in part studied, but they are often cryptic and their relation to the whole remains

obscure. That at certain points they contradict his written thoughts is a warning to be cautious. One anomaly is so glaring, however, that it tempts an explanation. Acton believed that history was a search after truth. The historian must investigate a document till he knows what it means and it can speak for itself—"there is virtue in the saying that a historian is seen at his best when he does not appear." In the instructions to contributors to the *C.M.H.* he insisted that "nothing shall reveal the country, the religion, or the party to which the writers belong," for "impartiality is the character of legitimate history." On the other hand he believed that the historian had an imperative duty to judge. To a letter written in 1887 to Bishop Creighton he added a series of "canons" on this theme. They are cruelly extreme. "In Christendom, time and place do not excuse—if the Apostle's Code sufficed for Salvation; the Reign of Sin is more universal, the influence of unconscious error is less, than historians tell us. . . . A good cause proves less in a man's favour than a bad cause against him. . . . The final judgement depends on the worst action." And there is more in the same vein. The historian is exhorted not only to judge but to seek opportunities for judging. Taking this attitude in conjunction with his Whig emphasis on selectivity—"only those facts and elements in the people's life which bear on the actual progress of events can be admitted into an historical work"—and the contradiction is complete. There appear to be two Actons.

One Acton gloried in a task for which a strong intellect made him superbly efficient: mastering the most advanced forms of historical criticism and analysis. The other saw history in terms of conscience; the jerky progress from the absolute intolerance of the early Dark Ages toward a condition in which man can obey conscience without fear of reprisal. For a man of strong faith, but at odds with certain aspects of its authority as he was (his periodicals suppressed, his hopes for a tolerant Catholicism blighted by the Vatican decrees of 1870, which included the dogma of Infallibility), there was a strong temptation to show that Providence wrote "freedom of conscience for *all*" into history. But progress toward the organization of protection for conscience, both in church and state, is brought about by great men, and "great men are almost always bad men," for "power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely"—the phrases are in his letter to Creighton—so the historian should not only extract from history the story of liberty of conscience, but scourge the men who

slowed its progress, and thus alert living men to the fact that they are judged (though not by the law) on earth as well as hereafter.

No historian has followed Acton in the question of moral judgments, and the current flowed against his emphasis on selecting from the past what was relevant to the present. He left no book as a model, and it is doubtful that, even had he lived, the *Cambridge Modern History* would have provided, as he hoped, "an illumination of the soul." What remains is the force of the impassioned claims he made for the dignity of his subject, his emphasis on universal and on problematic history at the expense of the parish pump or the easy isolation of a few years; and the record, in a few articles and lectures, of the most disturbingly thoughtful mind in English historical literature.

In one other respect Acton failed to sound a note congenial to his young contemporaries. When he rejoiced in the opening of archives all over Europe it was not because they would illuminate the social life, or voting habits, or economic activities of men in the past, but because great men would be stripped bare and could at last receive a minutely calculated sentence for their crimes. Discussing the materials on which his lectures on the French Revolution were based, he commented that in a few years "all will be known that ever can be known. . . . In that golden age our historians will be sincere, and our history certain. The worst will be known, and then sentence need not be deferred." All that will be needed is a historian with the courage to be honest with friend and foe—"assuming that it would be possible for an honest historian to have a friend." And on this gloomily obsessive note his last published lecture course ends. English historians were not to use new documentary evidence in this sense. With Tawney they were to bring charity, and with Namier clarity, into vital sections of the past through which Acton hurried, with his mind muscling world history into patterns and his nose twitching to find a taint in the backstairs cupboard of some canonized archbishop.

In his lecture audiences was a young man on whom a much softer version of his mantle fell. George Macaulay Trevelyan was named after his great-uncle and spent much of his life continuing what he felt to be good in Macaulay's work and atoning for what was bad—as when, in his *England under Queen Anne*, he made brilliant reparation for Macaulay's savage caricature of Marlborough. He maintained his concern for readability, his combination of Scott and Hallam, his special emphasis on social history, his Whiggish belief

that the lessons of the past are reassuring to the present. He felt the same romantic excitement about re-peopling places he had visited with their former inhabitants. "The poetry of history," he wrote, "lies in the quasi-miraculous fact that once, on this familiar spot of ground, walked other men and women, as actual as we are today, thinking their own thoughts, swayed by their own passion, but now all gone, one generation vanishing after another, gone as utterly as we ourselves shall shortly be gone like ghosts at cock-crow."

With his *England under the Stuarts* (1904), *Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic* (1907) and its successors, *History of England* (1926), and his *English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries* (1942), he became the most widely read of all English historians; like Macaulay and Green he brought an interest in the past to thousands who had read no history before. And he achieved this while staying within the liberal, literary tradition of the nineteenth century, the tradition of Macaulay and Carlyle rather than of Buckle, of Green rather than of Seeley. His reaction from German methods ("an attempt has been made to drill us all into so many Potsdam Guards of learning") and their adoption in England made him give up a fellowship at Trinity and withdraw from the critical and scientific-historical atmosphere of Cambridge to a life of country-house scholarship. Insulated from the inner life of his subject's growth, he was able to provide a public which was increasingly isolated from its professionalism with a marvelously refined version of the old history, a Macaulay purged of rhetoric and party passion, a Carlyle without fanaticism, a Green tranquilly unaware of the displeasure of Stubbs.

His greatest gift was for narrative, and his narrative flowed best when he could see his subject as a drama, either of the whole English people or of a grandly simple individual, like Garibaldi. He wrote lives of John Bright, the Manchester Free trader, and of Lord Grey, but these studies of early nineteenth-century finance and politics were not successful; unlike Acton, he had no taste for intrigue and the subtle manipulation of public opinion, he was as much a countryman as Acton was a frequenter of salons, and the firm continuity of his own upper-middle-class family led him to confront the past with the genial instincts of a rural magistrate.

The quality of his imagination has brought him the title of the poet of English history. In an early essay, "Clio" (written 1904, revised 1913), Trevelyan wrote that "he will give the best interpretation who,

having discovered and weighed all the important evidence available, has the largest grasp of intellect, the warmest human sympathy, the highest imaginative powers." This is well said, and true. Trevelyan's imagination was, however, the servant of his sympathies and, warm as these were, his very longing to grasp the hands of the dead and warm them by his understanding narrowed the scope of their operation. His imagination was only fired by what he could see and hear, and the majority of men perish without a portrait or a book to speak for them. "Those who write or read the history of a period should be soaked in its literature"—yes: but literature only reveals the literate, and what the literate chose to think of the illiterate. While his contemporaries were using records, above all economic records, to extend the view of social history, Trevelyan, shrinking from techniques that ended in "-ology," and smacked of science, wrote social history in terms of the sorts of materials that Macaulay had used. It was in this field that he achieved his greatest popular success. The social history chapters from his *England under the Stuarts* and *England under Queen Anne* were reprinted separately, and the *Social History* outsold all his other books. Trevelyan was a great writer, a wise and generous and scrupulously fair man; if only his imagination had embraced history as a subject, as well as the past, if only his sympathy had included the impersonal poorhouse as warmly as the visible beggar in the street, he might have humanized the abstractions of the Marxists and the sociologists in a social history that was a poet's homage to the aspirations of history as a whole, not to the special emotions and nostalgias of one man. Trevelyan will remain a great name in the history of English historiography for his personality, his craftsmanship, and his success, but probably no famous historian has made a smaller contribution to the inner history of his subject.

Trevelyan's personal concern for the past, and his need to extend his own personality by linking it in partnership with the dead, was shared by his more ebullient contemporary R. H. Tawney. "Whatever else the world may contain," Tawney wrote in a lecture on "Social History and Literature," "man's relations with nature, his commerce with his fellows, and the convictions, aspirations and emotions composing his inner life, are for us, as for the poet, its capital constituents." But the ardent nature of Tawney's sympathy with the men, and especially with the poor, of his chosen period—the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—and the fact that he expressed it in terms

(though in very personal terms) of the modish sociological methods of German economic historians, made an impact on his professional colleagues out of all proportion to the noncommittal politeness with which they received the works of Trevelyan. Seen as a stimulus to other historians, and for the direction it gave to further research, his *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century* (1912) was the most significant work an English historian had yet produced. His *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1926) is the foundation stone of the vast and still rising fabric of religious sociology in England. His essay of 1941 on "The Rise of the Gentry" in the *Economic History Review*, together with its companion lecture in the same year on "Harrington's Interpretation of his Age," started the most publicized historical controversy of the present generation. Four years before his death he produced a work, *Business and Politics under James I: Lionel Cranfield as Merchant and Minister* (1958), which promises to have something like the fertilizing effect of his *Agrarian Revolution*. His sharpest critic, Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper, and his successor in his London chair, Professor F. J. Fisher, have both recently dubbed the years 1540–1640 "Tawney's century."

As that period saw the most crucial and puzzling changes in English religious, economic, and political life before the Industrial Revolution, this is no mean compliment. And it is not due merely to Tawney's having indicated the problems, and provided in the three volumes of *Tudor Economic Documents* (1924), which he edited with Eileen Power, a basic research tool for their elucidation. It is a tribute to the most warmly generous personality to concern itself with serious historical writing since J. R. Green, and to the infectious vigor of his style as a writer.

Tawney grew up as English socialism was becoming self-conscious and working out its programs. It was a period when publishers' lists were crammed with books on wage strictures and labor conditions and on the reform of poor law, prisons, and education. Though there was much utopianism in the air, much of this literature turned to history as its chief support. The Webbs were making their massive contributions to the history of local government and of the poor law, the Hammonds were painting their sobering picture of labor in town and country during the Industrial Revolution. Tawney found both inspiration and refreshment in the work he did for the adult education movement. "The friendly smittings of weavers, potters, miners, and

engineers," he acknowledged, "have taught me much about problems of political and economic science which cannot easily be learned from books." His political convictions were stated in two nonhistorical works, *The Acquisitive Society* and *Equality*; what sounded through his historical books was not the surf of polemic but the ground swell of a passionate sympathy for the underprivileged, and his search for the origin of the relations between class and class, government and people, which stood in need of such urgent reform of his own day. "The supreme interest of economic history," he wrote in the Preface to *The Agrarian Revolution*, "lies, it seems to me, in the clue which it offers to the development of those dimly conceived presuppositions as to social expediency which influence the actions not only of statesmen, but of humble individuals and classes, and influence, perhaps, most decisively, those who are least conscious of any theoretical bias." His belief that history, not abstract theories of social justice ("since even quite common men have souls"), was the political reformer's best teacher did not lead him to see the past simply in terms of oppressors and oppressed; whether he was discussing the medieval church or Elizabethan justices, he always gave the devil picturesquely his due. Where he has been faulted by later research, it is for an underdisciplined deployment of statistics, not for distorting "Tawney's century" to make a point about Queen Victoria's. A glance at his superb reconstruction of the Puritan temperament in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (especially the opening pages of "The Puritan Movement") will show that he was as quick to understand its narrow fanaticism as the demands it made for individual freedom.

Tawney was a rhetorical writer, and some fastidious critics have withdrawn their academic gowns from contact with him on this account. It is worth looking for a few moments at the purplest of his patches to see if this disdain is merited. "On a world heaving with expanding energies," he wrote near the beginning of "The Puritan Movement,"

and on a church uncertain of itself, rose, after two generations of premonitory mutterings, the tremendous storm of the Puritan movement. The forest bent; the oaks snapped; the dry leaves were driven before a gale, neither all of winter nor all of spring, but violent and life-giving, pitiless and tender, sounding strange notes of yearning and contrition, as of voices wrung from a people dwelling in

Meshech, which signifies Prolonging, in Kedar, which signifies Blackness; while amid the blare of trumpets, and the clash of arms, and the rending of the carved work of the Temple, humble to God and haughty to man, the soldier-saints swept over battlefield and scaffold, their garments rolled in blood.

In the great silence which fell when the Titans had turned to dust, in the Augustan calm of the eighteenth century, a voice was heard to observe that religious liberty was a considerable advantage, regarded "merely in a commercial view." A new world, it was evident, had arisen.

Rhetoric indeed; but with what deliberation its gusto is used, how excitingly—and how fairly—the contrast is achieved! Often serious, never solemn, often fiercely ironical, never unjust: Tawney lives in every line he wrote, and he lures the reader on through the stiffest canebrakes of analysis with paradoxes and with images, startling or humorous, that contrive to pass on both the depth of concern he felt for his subject and the zest he felt in thinking and writing about it. Of Europe's medieval economy: "tapping the wealth of the East by way of the narrow apertures of the Levant, it resembled, in the rigidity of the limits imposed on its commercial strategy, a giant fed through the chinks of a wall"; "the correspondence of Burleigh, in the last decade of Elizabeth, reads like the report of a receiver in bankruptcy to the nobility and gentry"; ". . . the Age of Reason, which, as far as its theory of the conduct of men in society is concerned, deserves much more than the thirteenth century to be described as the Age of Faith." Even where his prejudices are most deeply involved, there remains a lightness of touch that recalls Lytton Strachey, as in his famous reference to

that blind, selfish, indomitable aristocracy of country families, which made the British Empire and ruined a considerable proportion of the English nation. From the galleries of their great mansions and the walls of their old inns their calm, proud faces, set off with an occasional drunkard, stare down on us with the unshakable assurance of men who are untroubled by regrets or perplexities, men who have deserved well of their order and their descendants, and await with confidence an eternity where preserves will be closer, family settlements stricter, dependents more respectful, cards more reliable, than in this imperfect world they well can be. Let them

have their due. They opened a door which later even they could not close. They fostered a tree which even they could not cut down.

Few historians are more quotable, and it is an indication of the tact which ruled his splendid command of language that when he came to deal with Luther, the most rhetorical of the protagonists in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, Tawney's own language became the chastest foil for the German reformer's glowing prose. Resolutely original in statement, Tawney was unfailingly courteous in controversy; while attracting critics, he made no enemies. He was heavily indebted to German scholarship, but his writings convey, even more clearly than Trevelyan's, a quintessential Englishness.

With Namier we are back in the atmosphere that Acton breathed; the same cosmopolitan background and cosmopolitan outlook, the same burly intellect, the same distaste for revolutions and the intellectuals who try to guide them, a similar arrogance, a similar preoccupation with political rather than social or economic man, a similar combination of interest in the widest survey and the minutely detailed study. What was said of Namier—that he used nothing between the telescope and the microscope—can be said with an equal degree of fairness of Acton. His pronouncements on history echo, time after time, the phrases of Acton's Inaugural: "the crowning attainment of historical study is a historical sense," for instance, or his statement that "the past is on top of us and with us all the time; and there is only one way of mastering it even remotely in any one sector: by knowing how these things have come to be, which helps to understand their nature, character, and their correlation, or lack of correlation, to the present realities of life," which is not far from Acton's "if the Past has been an obstacle and a burden, knowledge of the Past is the safest and surest emancipation." Unlike Acton, however, who left Commandments but no disciples, Namier was surrounded by Namierites, and was the first English historian to see group scholarship in terms of an *équipe* of mature scholars sharing between them material no one man could master.

Namier's attitude toward past politics was so original that the techniques he worked out to express it have been named after him: he Namierized the study of political history. Tired of the way in which eighteenth-century parliamentary history had been written and rewritten in terms of Party and Principle, he determined to see past these

abstractions to the real motives of individuals and, as soon as he did, eighteenth-century history had to be written. His manifesto was written as the first part of the most influential book (among professionals) ever produced by an English historian, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (1929). It was headed "Why men went into Parliament," and instead of such subheadings as Whig, Tory, Crown Corruption, etc., there were these: "Predestination: the Inevitable Parliament Man; Honour with Ease: The Country Gentleman; The Treasury Bench: The Politicians; Private and Pecuniary: Place Men and Purveyors of Favours; Professional Advancement: The Services and the Law; Contracts, Remittances and Loans: The Merchants and Bankers"; and lastly, "Immunity: Robbers, Muddlers, Bastards and Bankrupts." The blend of aggressive common sense and humor used to shock and goad rather than (as with Maitland) to explain, was a deliberate consequence of his contention that "Parliamentary politics not based on parties are to us a non-Euclidian system, and similarly require a fundamental readjustment of ideas and, what is more, of mental habits."

Like Trevelyan, Namier gave up a Fellowship (at Balliol) in order to have more time for research and writing. Unlike Trevelyan, he kept in touch with what other historians were doing, and worked in terms of reforming, not refining, the craft of history, and when he went to a chair at Manchester he was greeted not as a revered anachronism but as the head of a bustling industry.

"Namierization" arose from the need to explore the grammar of political behavior before writing the text he had originally planned: *England on the Eve of the American Revolution* (1931), but Namier was interested in two other periods: the diplomacy of the 1930's and nineteenth-century Europe. In all three fields he wrote as a master, with a breadth of vision and a confidence of interpretation which enabled him to multiply the sarcasms, rough jokes, and deflating analogies that make reading him such an exhilarating and jolting experience.

In all three his special interest was in biography, but never in biography for its own sake. "Far too much of modern British history is ensconced in biographies which dribble away their material without coming to grips with basic problems." As Acton had scorned the period and recommended the problem, so Namier thought that men who chose biography did so because it simplified the business of selection and isolated them from a responsibility to look outward. Namier-

ization involved not one big "representative" biography but as many little biographies as would illuminate the working of an important group, hence his eventual emphasis on concerted research. There is little doubt that intellectual conviction made him put aside a personal inclination toward detailed biography. Namier was fascinated by psychology. He was psychoanalyzed himself, he criticized Toynbee's neglect of it, he spoke of mass psychology as "the most basic factor in history" and regretted how little attention had been paid to it. Certainly it has not been taken so seriously by any other academic historian. He saw history itself as having a psychoanalytic function, healing by explaining, and remarked that "it further resembles psychoanalysis in being better able to diagnose than to cure." This interest in psychology added a strain of delicacy to the otherwise rather brassy surface of his estimates of men and his discussion of events. Writing on human nature in politics, he said that

a sentence in Talleyrand's *Memoirs* seemingly unrelated to politics in a flash illuminates one aspect of his political conduct. He writes: "I say in order to have said it once, and hoping never to think of it again: that I am perhaps the only man of distinguished birth . . . who has not for a single week of his life known the joy of staying under his parental roof." Here was bitterness which he, writing at the age of 60, wished he could overcome. Neglected by his parents and brought up by dependents who extolled to him the greatness of his family, he went through life a very conscious *grand seigneur* who associated by preference with inferiors and, devoid of any feeling for his own class—its primary representatives were to him his parents—contributed with cold indifference to its downfall.

And in his character sketch, printed here, of George III, and his account in "Une Amitié Amoureuse" (*Vanished Supremacies*) of the relationship between the Emperor Francis Joseph and the actress Frau Schrott, he shows a special, and possibly revealing, interest in immature, unloved hearts doomed to pompous responsibility, self-distrustful behind their impressive façades.

Namier was above all a conservative and a realist. But his realism took account of the extent to which men's actions are irrational, and he saw in psychology a science of which historians would have to make increasing use. In this way he speaks not only to the disciples who are Namierizing other tracts of English parliamentary history,

and have their eyes on German diets and Roman conclaves, but to all students of history. Not only the generation which closed with his death in 1960, but the one which is beginning now, may well be called by historiographers of the nineties "The Age of Namier."

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SIR LEWIS NAMIER

1888-1960

This essay, "King George III: A Study of Personality," was published in Personalities and Powers in 1955. H. R. Winkler has written a useful account of Namier's life and writings: "Sir Lewis Namier," Journal of Modern History, March, 1963.

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THERE WERE three large pictures of George III at the exhibition of Royal portraits arranged by the Academy of Arts in the Spring of 1953. Looking at the first, by Reynolds, painted when the King was 41, I was struck by the immaturity of expression. The second, by Lawrence, painted in 1792 at the age of 54, depicts him in Garter robes; face and posture seem to attempt in a naive, ineffective, and almost engaging manner to live up to a grandeur which the sitter feels incumbent on him. The third, by Stroehling, painted in November 1807, at the age of nearly 70, shows a sad old man, looking dimly at a world in which he has no pleasure, and which he soon will not be able to see or comprehend.

A picture in a different medium of the King and his story presents itself to the student when in the Royal Archives at Windsor he surveys the papers of George III. They stand on the shelves in boxes, each marked on a white label with the year or years which it covers. The eye runs over that array, and crucial dates recall events: 1760, '65 and '67, '74 and '75, '82 and '83, 1789, '93, '96, 1802, 1805—the series breaks off in 1810; and brown-backed volumes follow, unlabelled:

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they contain the medical reports on a man shut off from time, which means the world and its life.

Fate had made George III ruler when kings were still expected to govern; and his active reign covered half a century during which the American conflict posed the problem of Imperial relations, while at home political practice constantly ran up against the contradiction inherent in the then much belauded 'mixed form of government': personal monarchy served by Ministers whose tenure of office was contested in Parliament. Neither the Imperial nor the constitutional problem could have been solved in the terms in which the overwhelming majority of the politically minded public in this country considered them at the time; but George III has been blamed ever since for not having thought of Dominion status and parliamentary government when constitutional theory and the facts of the situation as yet admitted of neither.

In the catalogue, *Kings and Queens*, on sale at the exhibition, the introduction dealing with the reign of George III gave the traditional view of his reign:

Conscientious and ambitious, he tried to restore the political influence of the Crown, but his intervention ended with the humiliating American War of Independence.

Conscientious he certainly was, painstakingly, almost painfully, conscientious. But was he ambitious? Did he try to exercise powers which his predecessors had relinquished, or claim an influence which was not universally conceded to him? And was it the assertion of Royal, and not of Parliamentary, authority over America which brought on the conflict and disrupted the First British Empire?

Let us place ourselves in March 1782. Dismal, humiliating failure has turned public opinion, and the House of Commons is resolved to cut losses and abandon the struggle; it is all over; Lord North's government has fallen; and the King is contemplating abdication. He has drafted a message to Parliament (which was never sent); here are its first two paragraphs:

His Majesty during the twenty-one years he has sate on the throne of Great Britain, has had no object so much at heart as the maintenance of the British Constitution, of which the difficulties he has at times met with from his scrupulous attachment to the rights of Parliament are sufficient proofs.

His Majesty is convinced that the sudden change of sentiments of one branch of the legislature has totally incapacitated him from either conducting the war with effect, or from obtaining any peace but on conditions which would prove destructive to the commerce as well as essential rights of the British nation.

In the first paragraph the King declares his unswerving devotion to the British Constitution, and shows himself conscious of his difficulties in America having arisen through 'his scrupulous attachment to the rights of Parliament'; the second paragraph pointedly refers to the Commons as 'one branch of the legislature', and gives the King's view of the American war: he is defending there the vital interests and essential rights of the British nation.

A year later, in March 1783, when faced by the necessity of accepting a Government formed by the Fox-North coalition, George III once more contemplated abdication; and in a letter (which again was never sent) he wrote to the Prince of Wales:

The situation of the times are such that I must, if I attempt to carry on the business of the nation, give up every political principle on which I have acted, which I should think very unjustifiable, as I have always attempted to act agreeable to my duty; and must form a Ministry from among men who know I cannot trust them and therefore who will not accept office without making me a kind of slave; this undoubtedly is a cruel dilemma, and leaves me but one step to take without the destruction of my principles and honour; the resigning my Crown, my dear Son to you, quitting this my native country for ever and returning to the dominions of my forefathers.

Your difficulties will not be the same. You have never been in a situation to form any political system, therefore, are open to adopt what the times may make necessary; and no set of men can ever have offended you or made it impossible for you to employ them.

Alongside this consider the following passage from a letter which George III wrote on 26 December 1783, after having dismissed the Coalition and while he was trying to rally support for the newly formed Administration of the younger Pitt:

The times are of the most serious nature, the political struggle is not as formerly between two factions for power; but it is no less than whether a desperate faction shall not reduce the Sovereign to a mere tool in its hands: though I have too much principle ever

to infringe the rights of others, yet that must ever equally prevent my submitting to the Executive power being in any other hands, than where the Constitution has placed it. I therefore must call on the assistance of every honest man . . . to support Government on the present most critical occasion.

Note in these two passages the King's honest conviction that he has always attempted to do his duty; that he has been mindful not to infringe the rights of others; but that it would be equally wrong in him to submit 'to the Executive power being in any other hands, than where the Constitution has placed it.' And while I do not for a moment suggest that these things could not have been done in a happier manner, I contend that the King's statements quoted above are substantially correct.

In the eighteenth century, a proper balance between King, Lords, and Commons, that is, the monarchical, aristocratic, and representative elements of the Constitution acting as checks on each other, was supposed to safeguard the property and privileges, the lives and liberty of the subjects. Single-Chamber government would have been no less abhorrent to the century than Royal autocracy. The Executive was the King's as truly as it is now of the President in the United States; he, too, had to choose his Ministers: but from among Parliamentary leaders. And while aspirants to office swore by the 'independency' of the Crown and disclaimed all wish to force themselves on the King, if left out they did their level best to embarrass and upset their successful rivals. The technique of Parliamentary opposition was fully established long before its most essential aim, which is to force a change of government, was recognized as legitimate; and because that aim could not be avowed in its innocent purity, deadly dangers threatening the Constitution, nay the life of the country, had to be alleged for justification. Robert Walpole as 'sole Minister' was accused of arrogating to himself the powers of both King and Parliament; the very tame Pelhams, of keeping George II 'in fetters'; Bute, who bore the name of Stuart, of 'raising the standard of Royal prerogative'; and George III of ruling not through the Ministers of his own choice whom he avowed in public, but through a hidden gang of obscure and sinister 'King's friends'. It is obviously impossible here to trace the origin and growth of that story, or to disprove it by establishing the true facts of the transactions to which it has become attached—it was a figment so beautifully elaborated by Burke's fertile imagination that

the Rockinghams themselves finished by believing it, and it grew into an obsession with them. In reality the constitutional practice of George III differed little from that of George I and George II. William Wyndham was proscribed by the first two Georges as a dangerous Jacobite, and C. J. Fox by the third as a dangerous Jacobin; while the elder Pitt was long kept out by both George II and George III on personal grounds. But for some the Royal veto and Royal influence in politics lose their sting if exercised in favour of successful monopolists in Whiggery.

I go one step further: in the eighteenth century the King had to intervene in politics and was bound to exercise his political influence, for the party system, which is the basis of Parliamentary government, did not exist. Of the House of Commons itself probably less than half thought and acted in party terms. About one-third of the House consisted of Members who looked to the King for guidance and for permanency of employment: epigoni of earlier Courts or forerunners of the modern Civil Service; and if they thus pursued their own interest, there is no reason to treat them as more corrupt than if they had done so by attaching themselves to a group of politicians. Another one-fifth of the House consisted of independent country gentlemen, ready to support the King's Government so long as this was compatible with their conscience, but averse to tying themselves up with political groups: they did not desire office, honours, or profits, but prided themselves on the disinterested and independent line they were pursuing; and they rightly claimed to be the authentic voice of the nation. In the centre of the arena stood the politicians, their orators and leaders fighting for the highest prizes of Parliamentary life. They alone could supply the façade of governments: the front benches in Parliament. But to achieve stability a Government required the active support of the Crown and the good opinion of the country. On matters about which public opinion felt strongly, its will would prevail; but with the House constituted as it was, with the electoral structure of the unreformed Parliament, and an electorate which neither thought nor voted on party lines, it is idle to assume that modern Parliamentary government was possible.

I pass to the next point: was George III correct in saying that it was 'his scrupulous attachment to the rights of Parliament' which caused him the difficulties in America? Undoubtedly yes. It was not Royal claims that the Americans objected to, but the claims of 'subjects in one part of the King's dominions to be sovereigns over their fellow-

subjects in another part of his dominions.' 'The sovereignty of the Crown I understand,' wrote Benjamin Franklin; 'the sovereignty of Britain I do not understand. . . . We have the same King, but not the same legislature.' Had George III aspired to independent Royal Power nothing could have suited him better than to be Sovereign in America, the West Indies, and possibly in Ireland, independent of the British Parliament; and the foremost champions of the rights of Parliament, recalling the way in which the Stuarts had played off Ireland and Scotland against England, would have been the first to protest. But in fact it would be difficult to imagine a King simultaneously exercising in several independent countries executive powers in conjunction with Parliamentary leaders. It will suffice to remember the difficulties and jealousies which Hanover caused although itself politically inert. The two problems which George III is unjustly accused of having mismanaged, those of Imperial and constitutional relations, were interconnected: only after responsible government had arisen did Dominion status within the Commonwealth become possible. Lastly, of the measures which brought on the American conflict none was of the King's making: neither George Grenville's Stamp Act, nor the Declaratory Act of the Rockinghams, nor the Townshend Duties. All that can be said against him is that once the struggle had started, he, completely identifying himself with this country, obstinately persevered in it. He wrote on 14 November 1778:

If Lord North can see with the same degree of enthusiasm I do, the beauty, excellence, and perfection of the British Constitution as by law established, and consider that if any one branch of the Empire is allowed to cast off its dependency, that the others will infallibly follow the example . . . he . . . will resolve with vigour to meet every obstacle . . . or the State will be ruined.

And again on 11 June 1779, expecting that the West Indies and Ireland would follow:

Then this island would be reduced to itself, and soon would be a poor island indeed.

On 7 March 1780:

I can never suppose this country so far lost to all ideas of self importance as to be willing to grant America independence, if that could ever be universally adopted, I shall despair of this country

being ever preserved from a state of inferiority and consequently falling into a very low class among the European States . . .

And on 26 September 1780:

. . . giving up the game would be total ruin, a small State may certainly subsist, but a great one mouldering cannot get into an inferior situation but must be annihilated.

When all was over, Lord North wrote to the King on 18 March 1782:

Your Majesty is well apprized that, in this country, the Prince on the Throne, cannot, with prudence, oppose the deliberate resolution of the House of Commons . . . Your Majesty has graciously and steadily supported the servants you approve, as long as they could be supported: Your Majesty has firmly and resolutely maintained what appeared to you essential to the welfare and dignity of this country, as long as this country itself thought proper to maintain it. The Parliament have altered their sentiments, and as their sentiments whether just or erroneous, must ultimately prevail, Your Majesty . . . can lose no honour if you yield at length . . .

Your Majesty's goodness encourages me . . . to submit whether it will not be for Your Majesty's welfare, and even glory, to sacrifice, at this moment, former opinions, displeasures and apprehensions (though never so well-founded) to . . . the public safety.

The King replied:

I could not but be hurt at your letter of last night. Every man must be the sole judge of his feelings, therefore whatever you or any man can say on that subject has no avail with me.

What George III had never learnt was to give in with grace: but this was at the most a defect of character.

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Lord Waldegrave, who had been Governor to the Prince of Wales 1752-6, wrote in 1758 a character sketch of him so penetrating and just that it deserves quoting almost in full.

The Prince of Wales is entering into his 21st year, and it would be unfair to decide upon his character in the early stages of life, when there is so much time for improvement.

A wise preamble: yet a long and eventful life was to change him very little. Every feature singled out by Waldegrave finds copious illustration in the fifty years that followed (in one case in a superficially inverted form).

His parts, though not excellent, will be found very tolerable, if ever they are properly exercised.

He is strictly honest, but wants that frank and open behaviour which makes honesty appear amiable. . . .

His religion is free from all hypocrisy, but is not of the most charitable sort; he has rather too much attention to the sins of his neighbour.

He has spirit, but not of the active kind; and does not want resolution, but it is mixed with too much obstinacy.

He has great command of his passions, and will seldom do wrong, except when he mistakes wrong for right; but as often as this shall happen, it will be difficult to undeceive him, because he is uncommonly indolent, and has strong prejudices.

His want of application and aversion to business would be far less dangerous, was he eager in the pursuit of pleasure; for the transition from pleasure to business is both shorter and easier than from a state of total inaction.

He has a kind of unhappiness in his temper, which, if it be not conquered before it has taken too deep a root, will be a source of frequent anxiety. Whenever he is displeased, his anger does not break out with heat and violence; but he becomes sullen and silent, and retires to his closet; not to compose his mind by study or contemplation, but merely to indulge the melancholy enjoyment of his own ill humour. Even when the fit is ended, unfavourable symptoms very frequently return, which indicate that on certain occasions his Royal Highness has too correct a memory.

Waldegrave's own endeavour was to give the Prince 'true notions of common things.' But these he never acquired: which is perhaps the deepest cause of his tragedy.

The defect Waldegrave dwells upon most is the Prince's 'uncommon indolence', his 'want of application and aversion to business'. This is borne out by other evidence, best of all by the Prince's own letters to Bute:

July 1st, 1756: I will throw off that indolence which if I don't soon get the better of will be my ruin.

March 25th, 1757: I am conscious of my own indolence . . . I do here in the most solemn manner declare, that I will throw aside this my greatest enemy . . .

September 25th, 1758: . . . that incomprehensible indolence, inattention and heedlessness that reigns within me . . .

And he says of his good resolutions: 'as many as I have made I have regularly broke'; but adds a new one: 'I mean to attempt to regain the many years I have fruitlessly spent.'

December 19th, 1758: . . . through the negligence, if not the wickedness of those around me in my earlier days, and since perhaps through my own indolence of temper, I have not that degree of knowledge and experience in business, one of my age might reasonably have acquir'd . . .

March 1760: . . . my natural indolence . . . has been encreas'd by a kind of indifference to the world, owing to the number of bad characters I daily see . . .

By shifting the blame on to others, he tries to relieve the bitter consciousness of failure: which is one source of that excessive 'attention to the sins of his neighbour' mentioned by Waldegrave. Indeed, George III's letters, both before and after his accession are full of it: 'the great depravity of the age', 'the wickedest age that ever was seen', 'a degenerate age', 'probity and every other virtue absorb'd into vice, and dissipation'; etc. 'An ungrateful, wicked people' and individual statesmen alike receive castigation (*in absentia*) from this very young Old Testament prophet. Pitt 'is the blackest of hearts', 'the most dishonourable of men', and plays 'an infamous and ungrateful part'; Lord Temple, an 'ungrateful arrogant and self-sufficient man'; Charles Townshend is 'a man void of every quality', 'the worst man that lives', 'vermin'; Henry Fox, a man of 'bad character', 'void of principles'; Lord Mansfield is 'but half a man'; the Duke of Bedford's character 'contains nothing but passion and absurdity'; etc. As for George II, the Prince felt ashamed of being his grandson. And on 23 April 1760, half a year before his accession, aged twenty-two he wrote to Bute: '. . . as to honesty, I have already lived long enough to know you are the only man who possesses that quality . . .'

In Bute he thought he had found the tutelary spirit who would enable him to live up to his future high vocation. Here are further excerpts from the Prince's letters to him:

July 1st 1756: My friend is . . . attack'd in the most cruel and horrid manner . . . because he is my friend . . . and because he is a friend to the bless'd liberties of his country and not to arbitrary notions . . .

By . . . your friendship . . . I have reap'd great advantage, but not the improvement I should if I had follow'd your advice . . . I will exactly follow your advice, without which I shall inevitably sink. *March 25th, 1757:* I am resolved . . . to act the man in everything, to repeat whatever I am to say with spirit and not blushing and afraid as I have hitherto . . . my conduct shall convince you that I am mortified at what I have done and that I despise myself . . . I hope this will persuade you not to leave me when all is at stake, when nobody but you can steer me through this difficult, though glorious path.

In June 1757 Leicester House were alarmed by rumours of an alliance between the Duke of Newcastle and Henry Fox, and were ascribing fantastic schemes to the Duke of Cumberland. The Prince already saw himself compelled to meet force by force or to 'yield up the Crown',

for I would only accept it with the hopes of restoring my much beloved country to her antient state of liberty; of seeing her . . . again famous for being the residence of true piety and virtue, I say if these hopes were lost, I should with an eye of pleasure look on retiring to some uninhabited cavern as this would prevent me from seeing the sufferings of my countrymen, and the total destruction of this Monarchy . . .

August 20th, 1758: . . . by . . . attempting with vigour to restore religion and virtue when I mount the throne this great country will probably regain her antient state of lustre.

Was this a Prince nurtured in 'arbitrary notions', ambitious to make his own will prevail? or a man with a 'mission', striving after naively visionary aims? No doubt, since early childhood it must have been rammed into him, especially when he was being reproved, to what high station he was born; and disparaging comparisons are said to have been drawn between him and his younger brother. He grew up with a painful consciousness of his inadequacy: 'though I act wrong perhaps in most things', he wrote on one occasion. Excessive demands on a child, complete with wholesome exhortations, are fit to reduce it to a state of hebetude from which it is not easy to recover. A great deal of the pattern of George III's behaviour throughout life can be traced back to his up-bringing.

He spent his young years cut off from intercourse with boys of his own age, till he himself ceased to desire it. Bubb Dodington notes in his *Diary* on 15 October 1752, that the Princess Dowager of Wales

did not observe the Prince to take very particularly to anybody about him, but to his brother Edward, and she was glad of it, for the young of quality were so ill-educated and so vicious that they frightened her.

And so they did him for the rest of his life. Isolation by itself would be apt to suggest to a child that there was something wrong with those he had to shun; but this he was probably told in so many words. On 18 December 1753, Dodington records another talk with the Princess:

I said, it was to be wished he could have more company. She seemed averse to the young people, from the excessive bad education they had, and from the bad examples they gave.

So the boy spent joyless years in a well-regulated nursery, the nearest approach to a concentration camp: lonely but never alone, constantly watched and discussed, never safe from the wisdom and goodness of the grown-ups: never with anyone on terms of equality, exalted yet oppressed by deferential adults. The silent, sullen anger noted by Waldegrave, was natural to one who could not hit back or speak freely his mind, as a child would among children: he could merely retire, and nuture his griefs and grievances—and this again he continued through life. On 3 May 1766, during a political crisis, he wrote to Bute: 'I can neither eat nor sleep, nothing pleases me but musing on my cruel situation.' Nor could he, always with adults, develop self-reliance: at nineteen he dreamt of reforming the nation, but his idea of acting the man was to repeat without blushing or fear what he had to say.

For the pious works which were 'to make this great nation happy' Bute's 'sagacious councils' were therefore indispensable. When in December 1758 Bute expressed doubts whether he should take office in the future reign, the Prince in a panic searched his own conscience:

Perhaps it is the fear you have I shall not speak firmly enough to my Ministers, or that I shall be stagger'd if they say anything unexpected; as to the former I can with great certainty assure that they, nor no one else shall see a want of steadiness either in my manner of acting or speaking, and as to the latter, I may give fifty sort of puts off, till I have with you thoroughly consider'd what part will be proper to be taken . . .

George III adhered to this programme. On his grandfather's death he waited to hear from Bute what 'must be done'. When expecting Pitt at a critical juncture: 'I would wish to know what I had best say. . . .' With regard to measures or appointments: 'I have put that off till I hear my Dear Friend's opinion'; 'If this [is] agreeable to my D. Friend I will order it to day . . .'; 'I desire my D. Friend to consider what I have here wrote, if he is of a contrary opinion, I will with pleasure embrace it'. And when in November 1762 Bute declared he would retire on conclusion of peace:

I had flattered myself [wrote the King] when peace was once established that my D. Friend would have assisted me in purging out corruption . . . ; . . . now . . . the Ministry remains compos'd of the most abandon'd men that ever had those offices; thus instead of reformation the Ministers being vicious this country will grow if possible worse; let me attack the irreligious, the covetous &c. as much as I please, that will be of no effect . . . Ministers being of that stamp . . .

Two years on the throne had worked little if any change in his ideas and language; nor did the next twenty. The same high claims on himself, and the same incapacity to meet real situations he was faced with: hence his continued dependence on others. By 1765 he saw that Bute could not help him, by the summer of 1766 he had written off Bute altogether. In the spring of 1765 he turned to the Duke of Cumberland, the bugbear of his young years: 'Dear Uncle, the very friendly and warm part you have taken has given me real satisfaction. . . .' And to Pitt, 'the blackest of hearts': 'My friend for so the part you have acted deserves of me. . . .' In July 1765 Cumberland formed for him the Rockingham Administration and presided over it a quasi-Viceroy; but a few months later Cumberland was dead. In July 1766 Chatham formed his Administration; but a few months later his health broke down completely. Still George III clung to him like a molusc (a molusc who never found his rock). 'Under a health so broken,' wrote Chatham, 'as renders at present application of mind totally impossible. . . .' After nearly two years of waiting for his recovery, the King still wrote: 'I think I have a right to insist on your remaining in my service.' Next he clung to the ineffective Grafton who longed to be relieved of office; and when Grafton resigned, the King wrote to him on 27 January 1770:

My heart is so full at the thought of your retiring from your situation that I think it best not to say more as I know the expressing it would give you pain.

Then came North. Totally unequal to the difficulties of the American crisis, in letter after letter he begged the King to let him resign. Thus in March 1778:

Lord North cannot conceive what can induce His Majesty, after so many proofs of Lord North's unfitness for his situation to determine at all events to keep him at the head of the Administration, though the almost certain consequences of His Majesty's resolution will be the ruin of his affairs, and though it can not ward off for a month that arrangement which His Majesty seems to apprehend.

But the King would not hear of it. July 2nd, 1779: 'no man has a right to talk of leaving me at this hour. . . .' October 25th, 1780: he expects North 'will show that zeal for which he has been conspicuous from the hour of the Duke of Grafton's desertion.'

George III's attitude to North conformed to the regular pattern of his behaviour. So did also the way in which after a while he turned against North in bitter disappointment. By the '70s the King spoke disparagingly of Bute and Chatham; and in time his imagination enabled him to remember how on the day of his accession he had given the slip to them both. A month after Grafton had resigned, George III wrote to him: 'I . . . see anew that the sincere regard and friendship I have for you is properly placed. . . .' Somewhat later his resignation changed into 'desertion'. When North resigned: 'I ever did and ever shall look on you as a friend as well as a faithful servant. . . .' But incensed at the new situation he soon started attacking North, and treated him niggardly and unfairly over his secret service accounts. George III's attachment was never deep: it was that of a drunken man to railings—mechanical rather than emotional. Egocentric and rigid, stunted in feelings, unable to adjust himself to events, flustered by sudden change, he could meet situations only in a negative manner, clinging to men and measures with disastrous obstinacy. But he himself mistook that defensive apparatus for courage, drive, and vigour, from which it was as far removed as anything could be. Of his own mental processes he sometimes gave discerning though embellished accounts. Thus to Bute in 1762: 'I . . . am apt to despise what I am not accustom'd to . . .' And on 2 March 1797, to the younger Pitt when criticizing the way measures were weakened in passing through Parliament:

My nature is quite different I never assent till I am convinced what is proposed is right, and then . . . I never allow that to be destroyed by after-thoughts which on all subjects tend to weaken never to strengthen the original proposal.

In short: no after-thoughts, no reconsideration—only desperate, clinging perseverance.

Still it might be said: at least he broke through his indolence. Yes, indeed: from pathologically indolent he turned pathologically industrious—and never again could let off working; but there was little sense of values, no perspective, no detachment. There is a legend about a homunculus whose maker not knowing what to do with him, bid him count poppy-seed in a bag. That George III was doing with his own busy self. His innumerable letters which he copied in his own hand, or the long documents transcribed by him (he never employed an amanuensis till his eye-sight began to fail) contain some shrewd perceptions or remarks, evidence of 'very tolerable parts if . . . properly exercised'. But most of his letters merely repeat approvingly what some Minister, big or small, has suggested. 'Lord A. is very right . . .'; 'General B. has acted very properly . . .'; 'the minute of Cabinet meets with my fullest concurrence . . .'; 'Nothing can more deserve my approbation than'—whatever it was. But if a basic change is suggested, his obstinacy and prejudices appear. On 15 March 1778, in a letter to Lord North, he makes an unusual and startling admission:

I will only add to put before your eyes my most inmost thoughts, that no advantage to this country nor personal danger can ever make me address myself for assistance either to Lord Chatham or any other branch of the Opposition. . . .

As a rule he would sincerely assert, perhaps with somewhat excessive ostentation, that first and foremost he considered the good of the country. When told by Bute that it would be improper for him to marry Lady Sarah Lennox, he replied: 'the interest of my country ever shall be my first care, my own inclinations shall ever submit to it' (and he added: 'I should wish we could next summer . . . get some account of the various Princesses in Germany'—and he settled down to 'looking in the New Berlin Almanack for Princesses'). When considering withdrawal from the German War, he wrote (with a sidelong glance at the late King) about the superiority of his love 'to this my native country over any private interest of my own. . . .' He was 'a King of a free

people'; 'I rely on the hearts of my subjects, the only true support of the Crown,' he wrote in November 1760. They will not desert him—

if they could be so ungrateful to me who love them beyond anything else in life, I should then I really believe fall into the deepest melancholy which would soon deprive me of the vexations of this life.

The same note, of love for his country and trust that his subjects would therefore stand by him, continues for almost twenty years. But gradually other overtones begin to mix with it. He had become the target of virulent attacks and unjust suspicions which he deeply resented. Thus to Lord North on 7 March 1780: '. . . however I am treated I must love this country.' And to the Prince of Wales on 14 August 1780:

The numberless trials and constant torments I meet with in public life, must certainly affect any man, and more poignantly me, as I have no other wish but to fulfill my various duties; the experience of now twenty years has convinced me that however long it may please the Almighty to extend my days, yet I have no reason to expect any diminution of my public anxiety; where am I therefore to turn for comfort, but into the bosom of my own family?

And he appealed to his son, the future George IV, to connect himself only with young men of respectable character, and by his example help 'to restore this country to its former lustre'—the old tune once more. And, in another letter:

From your childhood I have ever said that I can only try to save my country, but it must be by the co-operation of my children only that I can effect it.

In the 1780s there is a more than usually heavy crop of bitter complaints about the age by one 'righteous overmuch': 'it has been my lot to reign in the most profligate age', 'depravity of such times as we live in', 'knavery and indolence perhaps I might add the timidity of the times. . . .' And then:

I thank Heaven my morals and course of life have but little resembled those too prevalent in the present age, and certainly of all objects in this life the one I have most at heart, is to form my children that they may be useful examples and worthy of imitation . . .

With the King's disappointments in country and son another note enters his letters. He warns the Prince—

in other countries national pride makes the inhabitants wish to paint their Princes in the most favourable light, and consequently be silent on any indiscretion; but here most persons if not concerned in laying ungrounded blame, are ready to trumpet any speck they can find out.

And he writes of the 'unalterable attachment' which his Electoral subjects have shown to their Princes. When George III went mad in 1788, he wanted to go back to Hanover. Deep down there was a good deal of the Hanoverian in him.

His insanity was a form of manic-depression. The first recorded fit in March 1765 was of short duration, though there may have been a slight relapse in May; and a year later he wrote to Bute—

if I am to continue the life of agitation I have these three years, the next year there will be a Council [of] Regency to assist in that undertaking.

During the next twenty-three years he preserved his normal personality. The attack in 1788 lasted about half a year: the King was over fifty, and age rendered complete recovery more difficult. His self-control weakened and his irritability increased. He was conscious of a growing weakness. Yet there was something about him which more and more endeared him to the people. He was never popular with London society or the London mob; he was much beloved in the provinces—perhaps it was his deeper kindness, his real piety, and sincere wish to do good which evoked those feelings. These appear strikingly, for instance, in his own account of his journey to Portsmouth in 1788, and in Fanny Burney's account of his progress through Wiltshire in 1789. He was not a politician, and certainly not a statesman. But in things which he could judge without passion or preconceived ideas, there appears basic honesty and the will to do the right thing. I shall limit myself to two examples. When in 1781 a new Provost was to be appointed at Eton, George III insisted on choosing a man 'whose literary talents might make the appointment respectable . . . for Eton should not be bestowed by favour, but merit'. And when in 1787 a new Lord Lieutenant had to be chosen for Ireland, the King wrote to the younger Pitt about the necessity

of looking out for the person most likely to conduct himself with temper, judgement, and an avowed resolution to avoid partiality and

employ the favours he has to recommend to with the justice due to my service and to the public. . . . When I have stated this Mr. Pitt must understand that I do not lean to any particular person . . . when I state that a Lord Lieutenant should have no predelection but to advance the public good I should be ashamed to act in a contrary manner.

I have given here a picture of George III as seen in his letters, 'warts and all'. What I have never been able to find is the man arrogating power to himself, the ambitious schemer out to dominate, the intriguer dealing in an underhand fashion with his Ministers; in short, any evidence for the stories circulated about him by very clever and eloquent contemporaries. He had a high, indeed an exaggerated, notion of royalty but in terms of mission and duties rather than of power; and trying to live up to this idealized concept, he made unreasonable demands on himself. Setting himself unattainable standards, he could never truly come to grips with reality: which condemned him to remain immature, permanency of inner conflict precluding growth. Aware of his inadequacy, he turned to others and expected them to enable him to realize his visionary program (this appears clearest in his relations with Bute); and he bitterly reproached them in his own mind, and blamed the age in which he lived, for his own inevitable failure. The tension between his notions and reality, and the resulting frustration, account to a high degree for his irritability, his deep-seated resentments, and his suppressed anger—for situations intolerable and disastrous for himself and others; and it may have been a contributory factor in his mental breakdowns. The desire to escape from that unbearable conflict repeatedly shows itself in thoughts of abdication which must not be deemed insincere because never acted upon (men of his type cannot renounce their treadmill). He himself did not understand the nature and depth of his tragedy; still less could others. There was therefore room for the growth of an injurious legend which made that heavy-burdened man a much maligned ruler; and which has long been accepted as history.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

J. R. HALE was born in Ashford, Kent, England, in 1923. He attended Eastbourne College and was a Scholar of Jesus College, Oxford, from 1945 to 1948. Between 1948 and 1949 he did graduate work at Johns Hopkins University and Harvard University on a Commonwealth Fund Fellowship. Since 1949 he has been a Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford, and a Tutor in Modern History. Recently he was made a Professor of History at the University of Warwick. He is the author of *England and the Italian Renaissance*, *Machiavelli and Renaissance Italy*, and *The Literary Works of Machiavelli*.