



KING GEORGE I.



KING GEORGE II.



KING GEORGE III.



KING GEORGE IV.

THE FIVE GEORGES



Their History and Their Characteristics



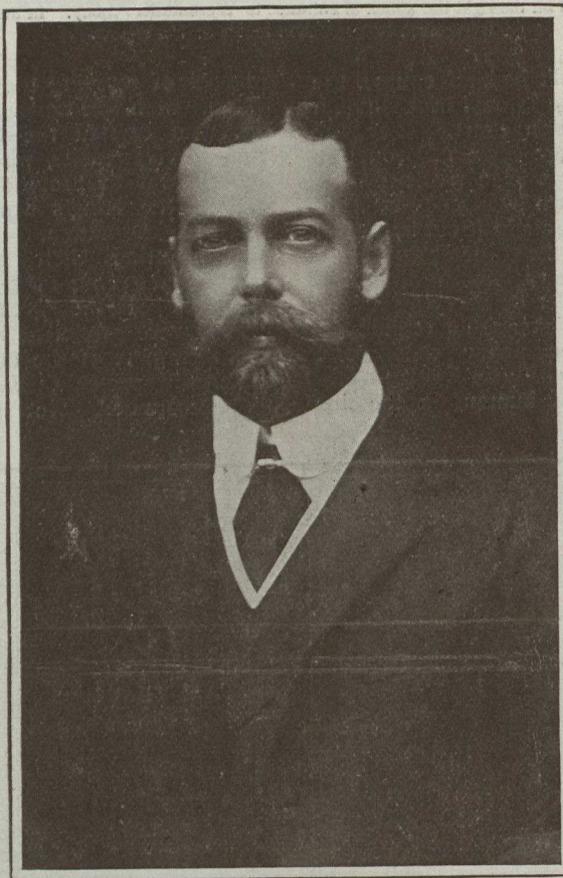
“BY George!”—a whole Empire is saying that. This is not the first time Englishmen have sworn by a George. We have had four Georges rule over us; the fifth is crowned this week. George is the name of the patron saint of John Bull's Island. In itself, it is a blunt, honest conservative English name; a significant name, for its association with the throne of England in the past has been coincident with vast changes in the life and thought of the nation.

None of our Georges were heroic figures. But they were manly, outspoken men who tried to do what they thought was the right thing, and were obstinate and bull-headed in the doing. This June it is interesting to recall the four Georges and note some of their peculiarities. They arose out of Hannover, which duchy was sufficiently Teutonic to endow them with virtues which the English people came to recognize as their own. George III.'s very habit of blundering was a singularly English quality.

We call the first George Chevalier. He possessed to an eminent degree the amiable Teutonic trait of self-satisfaction, which worked out excellently for his subjects. He didn't know any English and he didn't wish to know any. Also, he was not at all pragmatical. He never sat in cabinet councils, because he could not understand the discussions. Because he was bored, his prerogative was weakened and ministerial government got a great boost in his reign.

George II., his son, was fond of the glory and pomp of war. He had fought a little in his youth and he liked to talk about his exploits at Oudenarde and Dettingen. Walpole, his chief minister, he didn't like, because Sir Robert loved peace. When Walpole lost power King George became bellicose and restive. Soon he was involved in the Seven Years' War, and the long conflicts out of which in after reigns arose the British Empire in two hemispheres.

There was more history made in the reign of George III. than any British monarch. The French Revolution, the Napoleonic wars, the Declaration of American Independence, the birth of England's Empire in the east, the Conquest of Canada, the annexation of Australia and New Zealand, the War of 1812, the fall of Napoleon, the flowering of British manhood in Wellington and Nelson—George III.'s fifty-nine years on the throne were eventful, constructive years. Personally, the Third George had more the regal air than any of his George predecessors. His one ambition was to be King with a capital “K,” which his subjects thought no longer proper in a monarch. He would rather let the colonies go to the bow-wows than be dictated to by rebels—which he did. Despite his autocratic tendencies, his narrowness, his prejudices, George III. was always “Good King George.” The simplicity of living he combined with his regal notions appealed to people. In the setting of his life, when he became sorrow-laden, a nation sympathized. In literature there are no more pathetic pages than Thackeray's description



HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V.

of the old King in his declining years.

George IV. cared more for the title, “First Gentleman of Europe,” than the Kingship. His chief interests were his clothes, his figure, his manner, his amours and intrigues. He was the black sheep of the Georges, but a lovable, kindly prince withal.

Under the Four Georges, with the opening of the industrial revolution, the machine age, modern democracy had its birth. By the achievements of Wolfe, Clive, Nelson and Wellington, the lines of the British Empire were laid down. In the reign of the Fifth George, these two problems, Democracy and Empire, will still be the chief ones. Democracy is to-day on trial, criticized by economists and political theorists; and the imperial question of George V.'s reign is now that we have got our empire, how are we going to hang on to it?

King George will accept office as a constitutional monarch, but his influence, while not that of an absolute monarch, will be great. The modern King rules not by force of arms, but by force of character. What sort of man are we crowning on June 22?

William IV., who succeeded Fourth George, once eloquently dilated upon the virtues of the quarter-

deck as a training school for English gentlemen. Popular verdict has declared that our Fifth George shall be known as the “Sailor King.” Those who have been sizing up England's new ruler emphasize two chief qualifications which they claim will endear him to the hearts of his subjects. In the first place, His Majesty is a seaman—King of a nation, mariners since the days of Alfred. Again, he is a King who knows his dominions like a business man the departments of his business. Had George III. known the colonies, he would never have allowed them to slip through his fingers.

George is a real sailor and has fulfilled William IV.'s prescription for an English gentleman. A sailor, that is all he wanted to be or expected to be as a youth. His being King is but an accident. His father and his elder brother had precedence over him to the throne. The Duke of Clarence died in 1892, and George of a sudden woke to find himself heir presumptive. Till that date, from the time he was twelve years old, his dreams were of the naval profession. There was no more live, young officer in the navy than Prince George. R. N. discipline showed him no favour because he was a royal prince. He made the grades on merit. He passed the same exams. the other fellows did; he learned in the workshops a whole lot of things practically about knotting, and splicing, masts, sails and humps and canvas; he was made to toe the line like other middies when he fell into the pranks of Midshipman Easy. He got there.

Since 1892, he has been in active training for the throne. In 1893 he married Princess Victoria Mary of Teck, and began to cultivate the domestic virtues. He has five children, and is said to be a model *pere de famille*. He doesn't drink; he is never without a cigarette; he is the second best shot in the Kingdom; he has a hatred of fuss and prefers quiet; he spends hours in his library reading and discussing politics—that is King George, the landlubber.

His Majesty has had the advantages of education in the world's greatest university—travel. Our monarchs in the past rarely studied there. King Edward made royalty abroad fashionable. His son, far from being insular, will be known as the most widely travelled prince of the ages.

We in Canada know our King. The crown to us this time is not a far off thing. We have a personal interest in it. His Majesty came out to visit us twice in the past ten years. He was polite and interested in our welfare. In 1901 we built arches for him; thousands of us stood out in the blazing sun and—rain sometimes—and watched his progress through our streets. He reviewed our troops. To some of us he gave medals, which we take out and look at on holidays. Many of us shook hands with him and we kept the white gloves we wore on the occasion. In 1909, at Quebec, he saw our history in pageantry—and the deeds of another King George before the old Citadel. Yes, we think we know our King George and we appreciate the magnitude of the position the pleasant, bearded, English sailor prince has to fill as father of the great Imperial family.