

PREFACE

them the theories of the historians from Massey to Bancroft and Trevelyan? Is it not frequently stated that the separation of the American Colonies was owing to this or to that secondary cause, to this or that ulterior circumstance, and chiefly and supremely to the "obstinacy" of King George III., whose whole energy was directed from the beginning against injustice, who was opposed to disruption, and who carried half (and not the least intelligent half) of the American people with him to the end of a protracted civil war? "We do not rebel against the King," said Franklin, "but against the pretensions of the British Parliament."

We who see and realise truths so salient marvel much to hear the American Separation spoken of with regret. Conscious of the great lesson it has taught us, of the boon it has conferred upon mankind, with the New Empire confronting us so much vaster and more splendid than the old, and, let us add, to the full as loyal, we might have hoped that the eighteenth century regret would have been buried, beyond all chance of resurrection, seven seas deep.

Historians with these perverted views necessarily are led to a perversion of the characters and deeds of the public men implicated in the American schism. Of all the perversions, of all the distortions of which these writers are guilty, by far the profoundest concerns the character of George the Third. This great man has long been deluged from the Whig fountains of malice. At a critical point in the conflict the more astute and unscrupulous