

The Personal Equation In History

- Presidential address to
The South Indian Association
Ranga Chariar Avergal.

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PERSONAL EQUATION IN HISTORY.

WHEN the gentlemen, who thought out the plan and worked out the details in connection with the organisation of the South Indian Association, pressed upon me the honour of being its first President, it was not without much hesitation that I agreed to accept the proffered honour, although I felt at the time the full force of the flattery contained in the very fact of such an offer having been made unto me. After thus becoming the President of the Association, I have had no other sane alternative than earnestly to endeavour to deserve the honour which is generally associated with such an office. I believe that, as President of the South Indian Association, I am expected to take some part in that work of historical study and investigation and criticism, for the doing of which the Association has been brought into

existence; and it is in the way of making a humble beginning in respect of the performance of that duty that I now request you to allow me to place before you some of my ideas on what may be called the *Personal Equation in History*. The subject is one of considerable importance to all students of history all over the world; and certain peculiar conditions of Indian history make it specially important that, in all the studies and investigations bearing upon it, the correction of personal errors must be amply provided for and well carried out, if we are to make sure that we avoid all pitfalls and safely get at the truth regarding the succession and the meaning and manner of occurrence of all important Indian events in the course of historic time.

The expression *personal equation* is generally used in connection with the science of Astronomy, and means "the correction of personal differences between particular individuals as to exactness in observations with astronomical instruments." The personal differences between the astronomical observations of particular individuals are known as their *personal errors*. Jevons in his *Principles of Science* says that "in astronomical observations every instrumental error may be avoided

increasing the number of observations and distributing them in such a manner as to produce, in the final mean, as much error in one way as in the other," but that the personal error of the observer due to his natural tendency "to record the passage of a star across the wires of the telescope a little too soon or a little too late" cannot be so avoided, for the reason that it affects all his observations "in the same direction and to the same average amount." DeMorgan is said to have been of opinion that the personal error in astronomical observations can neither be eliminated nor corrected satisfactorily. However, modern science has not altogether failed to find out and to adopt the means whereby even this error in astronomical observations may be fairly made up for after due measurement and calculation. It will be conceded pretty generally that it is no mere figure of speech to say that in the study of history men apply their mental telescopes and microscopes to the examination of all such phenomena as are calculated to throw light 'upon the movement of the universe in time'—particularly upon the procession in time of those phenomena which are intimately related to the

progress of human communities in culture and in civilisation. If, in this manner, history consists in a systematic examination of the succession of the material and moral phenomena relating to the development of the life of man and of human communities on earth, the question may well be asked whether in the study and systematisation of such historical phenomena there is room for the operation of the personal error, so as to vitiate our apprehension of the truth underlying the plan and purpose of history. In an examination of the question of personal error in history, we have first to ascertain the sources of such error and then determine how it may be satisfactorily corrected and eliminated.

Here, at the very outset, an objection may be raised to the effect that the discussion of this question of personal error in history cannot, in the nature of things, be anything more than a mere waste of thought-labour, inasmuch as the phenomena forming the subject-matter of history are incapable of being scientifically co-ordinated and studied. A reasoned faith in the uniformity of natural laws, which leads us to conclude that similar phenomena will always occur under similar circumstances, forms, as it is well known, the foundation

of the scientific study of all the various phenomena of nature. To observe, to experiment, to generalise, and to construct hypotheses in accordance with the results of the generalisations already arrived at, and finally to verify these hypotheses by means of what is called their power of prediction, are the various processes which together constitute the scientific method of study and investigation. But it is held by some that history is in itself unintelligible, owing to its having neither a plan nor a purpose, since its phenomena are all human, and are in consequence so free as not to be in accordance with any general laws. It is a pretty widely accepted doctrine that history never actually repeats itself; and no student of history, however learned and wise he may be, can predict accurately a coming historical event in the way in which an astronomer, for instance, can predict a coming solar or lunar eclipse. Where an erratic and utterly unregulated occurrence of events is the order, there it is hopeless to find out laws and to construct a science; and where it is so hopeless to construct anything like a science, why should there be any endeavour at all to correct any errors, and especially the inevitable personal error? "The line of humanity," as Herder

has said, "is neither straight, nor uniform; it deviates in every direction, and presents all the curves and all the angles imaginable." This way of looking at history, however, does not and cannot mean that chaos and unreason reign supreme in the historic march of human thought and human life. The very continuity of historic events in time stubbornly contradicts this chaos-theory regarding the nature of history; and this continuity of historic events in time cannot be said to be wholly undetermined by the relation of cause and effect as existing between certain preceding and succeeding phenomena in nature. The truth of the matter is thus stated by a famous French historian and critic of the last century:—"There is not a thinker who pondering the history of humanity does not succeed in constructing a formula; those formulas do not coincide with, but they are not contradictory of, one another. The fact is that there are no two absolutely identical developments in humanity. There are laws, and very deeply rooted laws, the simple action of which is never perceived, the result being always complicated by accidental circumstances."

Accordingly, it is one thing to say that human freedom makes history chaotic, while it is quite

another thing to say that that same freedom makes the laws of history complicated and difficult to discover and to understand. Even in a purely physical field of study and research like meteorology, wherein the moral phenomenon of human freedom plays no noticeable part, we find that there is very little display of such a power of prediction as is never baffled in the course of verification. The failure of weather-prophets is as notorious to-day as it has ever been ; and yet it is no proof to show that meteorology is not a science. Nobody can say that, because meteorological phenomena are not accurately predictable, they are altogether erratic and wholly unregulated in their occurrence, and that there is no relation of cause and effect noticeable in connection with those phenomena. It is, no doubt, true that this analogy of the science of meteorology cannot take us far in the direction of demonstrating that history is a science ; but it certainly does enable us to see that a science which is still slowly growing and ripening, so to say, cannot be deprived of its character as a science, solely for the reason that it has not as yet acquired an un-failing power of prediction. It is now a fairly well known fact among modern men of learning that

Herbert Spencer was of opinion that history could well become a science, provided historians paid less attention to the mere narration of the events in the lives of men and of societies, and more to the evolution of the various social, political, religious and other organisations and institutions, so as to discover the correlations that undeniably exist among historical phenomena of all kinds. According to him, it is our excessive love for the personalities of history that stands in the way of its becoming a science; and to his philosophic judgment there appeared to be no intrinsic impossibility in history being so studied and written as to make it grow into a true science in our hands. Strict accuracy in regard to both observation and inference is essential even in the unripe science of meteorology; why, the very unripeness of the science makes the obligatoriness of such accuracy all the more imperative. And if we agree with Spencer and hold that history is capable of being organised into a science, the question of personal equation in history cannot at all be safely ignored. But there are those who, while granting that history cannot be a mere chaotic flow of unrelated and unregulated events, are not prepared to say that, in history, the free will of man

is in reality so controlled by necessity as to have always a determinable character about it and to be free only in name or in semblance. These latter see readily enough that the events of history are causally as well as chronologically correlated, so that the phenomena of the past beget the phenomena of the present, even as the phenomena of the present are calculated to beget the phenomena of the future. But they maintain further that in the manner in which, for instance, the facts and the laws of astronomy and their controlling conditions go on almost altogether unchanged for long periods of time, the phenomena of history and their controlling conditions do not for any great length of time continue to be the same. Historical phenomena are seen to be always characterised by an ever-varying onward movement, wherein the development of fresh conditions and even of fresh forces is involved; and it is the general manifestation from time to time, of these fresh conditions and fresh forces that makes historical prediction logically impossible. The succeeding configurations of historical causes are always different from all the preceding configurations; and in no two different places or at no two different periods of

time are they seen to be the same. Nevertheless, if the causal connection existing between the various chronologically continuous phenomena of history is to be at all understood by us, we cannot afford to be indifferent in regard to any of the ways and means whereby the ascertainment of the true nature of those phenomena themselves becomes more and more possible.

The fact that there is a continuous variation going on in relation to the causal configurations of historical phenomena, as they manifest themselves from time to time, has led some students of history to postulate the theory that history can at best be only what is known by the name of a descriptive science. To grant that history deserves to be a descriptive science is to own that it has a plan; and to own that it has a plan is the least that we have to do to get out of the mire of the chaos-theory of history. That all the descriptions which are given in a descriptive science must be free from all possible errors, goes without saying; and he who grants that history has a plan cannot say that the discussion of the question of personal equation in history is apt to prove futile and useless. But the prevailing conditions of modern culture compel us to go even beyond

accepting that history is a descriptive science. The adoption of the ancient philosophic idea of evolution by Darwin to explain the biological phenomenon of the origin of species led to that idea of evolution becoming very prominent in the world of scientific and philosophic thought during the last century of the Christian era. No scientific or philosophic synthesis of any kind is now considered to be good and trustworthy, which does not fit in with the general outlines of the doctrine of evolution. The idea of evolution has long been known to Indian philosophy under the name of *parināma* (परिणाम); and the essence of this process of *parināma* is said to consist in what happens to be the material cause becoming itself modified into the effect, even as the clay is, for instance, modified into the pot. Accordingly, if we study the processes of historical evolution as a continuous series of such modifications produced in relation to the life of human communities and their civilisations, we examine the phenomena of history mainly from an outside standpoint, and look upon some of them to constitute, as it were, the material cause of some others, which are to be understood as their modified effects. Even such an external examination of history in

accordance with the conception of natural evolution is of value, first of all in the way of enabling us to see that human conditions and institutions have on the whole progressed in the direction of betterment, and then in giving us an insight into what that progress has been in reality. But the efficient cause, which is truly responsible for all these progressive modifications of historical phenomena, can be even imperfectly understood only when they are examined and studied and correlated from within. No truly cosmoramic view of history can ever be complete without the presentation of a fairly accurate picture of this inner efficient cause. Indeed the difference between what is called the science of history and what is called the philosophy of history consists in that the former studies the phenomena of history from outside, while the latter studies them from within, so as to investigate and understand what forms the effective soul-life of history and all its workings in the world of time and space. The most notable exposition of the philosophy of history which Europe has given us is undoubtedly that of Hegel; and, in the language of another profound German thinker, the central idea in Hegel's philosophy of history is that Reason, "as

the all-ruling Power, infallibly carries out its plans in the world of reality, and has realised itself in the past, and will continue to do so in the future." He says:—

"Hegel called his contemporaries back to the firm ground of the historical life of man, and showed them how a loving eye might there discover undreamed of stores of rational ideas and working ideals, in which at all times and in every nation the sovereign reason had been able to attain its lofty ends, half unconsciously to man himself; though each end, as soon as reached, must be seen to be but an imperfect stage in the development, and must serve as means to a yet higher end."

It cannot but be interesting to us to compare this view of history with what Indian philosophy holds to be the meaning of natural evolution as it is observed in the phenomenal world of human perception—the meaning of what is in Sanskrit called *prakritiparināma* (प्रकृतिपरिणाम). The *Sāṅkhya* philosophy maintains that the *parināmas* or the evolutionary modifications of primordial matter, forming the fully potential and self-sufficient cause of the evolved external universe, are all intended to help the liberation of the soul from the bondage of matter. The *Vedānta*, in its turn, attributes such a direction of the workings of *Prakriti*, or Nature, in favour of the enfranchisement and freedom of the soul to the guiding hand of God conceived as the Supreme

Soul of the universe. If with these ideas we combine the theory of *Karma* and the theory of the re-incarnation of souls, we arrive at a philosophy of history which is strikingly similar to what has been propounded by Hegel, and seems to be at the same time fuller and more comprehensive in its power of explaining many puzzling phenomena of history. It may be thus seen that history has both a plan and a purpose; and the endeavour to correct those personal errors which inevitably crop up in connection with the phenomena of history ought certainly to be helpful to us in making us know well and truly that plan and that purpose.

After what has been stated already in regard to the nature of history, it may appear strange to ask the question whether there is any room for personal error in history. The fact that such a thing as what I have called the chaos-theory of history is capable of being propounded at all, abundantly bears out that history is only too full of personal errors. This chaos-theory even goes to the extent of maintaining that these personal errors alone constitute the contents of history. Anyhow it has to be granted by all that personal error has a very wide scope for operation through-

out the extensive field of phenomena which form the province of history. Indeed the normality of historic phenomena is never presented to the vision of any man without the twist that is caused by personal error ; and this twist in history is of a twofold character. In astronomy personal error obviously arises from the constitutional idiosyncrasies of the scientific observer of the celestial phenomena concerned ; these phenomena, being wholly impersonal, are in themselves free from all vitiation due to any intrinsic cause of error. In history it is invariably otherwise. If at all, it is only a small fraction of the phenomena of history that may be said to be impersonal. Surely, it is not impossible cogently to maintain that an intrinsically personal coloration is more or less distinctly visible in connection with all the phenomena that are comprehended in history. If we imagine a solar system in which the sun, the planets and all their satellites are endowed, like men, with consciousness and a free will ; if the mutual relations and the movements of the heavenly bodies forming the members of such a system are all determined as much by their own indeterminable free will as by certain ascertainable natural laws ; and if human observers observe

and record the relations and movements of these peculiar heavenly bodies with a view to work out the astronomy of this imagined solar system ; we alight upon a condition of affairs in relation to the science of astronomy which, in respect of the problem of personal error, is in a small way similar to what is everywhere and at all times prevalent in history. The double twist of personal error that is noticeable in connection with history is thus caused, firstly, by the personality of the human agents whose lives and thoughts and activities so largely make up the phenomena of history, and, secondly, by the personality of the student of history, who not only tries to examine those historical phenomena and those human agents, but also endeavours to explain them and to judge them in the light of his own ideals of faith and reason. The two sources of personal error in history, as now explained, may, for the sake of convenience be called the *intrinsic* and the *critical* sources of error. Here it may well be argued that the former of these two kinds of personal error is really a part of the content of history, and that it has therefore to be studied, understood and explained rather than be corrected and eliminated. Just a little thought is enough

to enable one to realise that to study and to know and to explain the personal error which is the result of the freedom and the individuality of the contributive human agents of history can be nothing other than to correct and to eliminate it. In the drama of history no human actor knows the nature and the details of the denouement to which his action is contributing. Every such actor is, however, impelled to act in response only to those motive forces which are in operation in his own immediate environment. What his own part is in the evolution of the larger forces and tendencies and institutions of history and civilisation, he rarely knows if at all; and the objects for which he lives and labours are always seen to be different from the use to which the whole value of his life is turned by the far-seeing guiding power of the Universal Reason which is ever being realised in history more and more. Even the meanest actor in the drama of history is unknowingly helping on in some manner the accomplishment of this historic realisation of Universal Reason: and at the bar of history judgment is generally expected to be pronounced not only on the worthiness or otherwise of the action of the actors, but also on the excellence of the denoue-

ment and on the value of each actor's conscious or unconscious contribution to its development. Accordingly, if we are to find out and explain well the full meaning of the plan and purpose of history, we cannot but take into account both the above mentioned sources of personal error in history, so as to ascertain distinctly how that error arises and how it may be corrected and eliminated as far as possible.

The personal error in relation to astronomical observations has been mentioned to be due to the constitutional idiosyncrasies of particular observers. Of the causes, which give rise to personal error in history, some are inherited, while others are acquired and therefore dependent upon controllable conditions. These inherited and acquired causes of personal error in history are generally seen to be in operation in relation to both the 'intrinsic' and the 'critical' sources of all such errors. It may be rightly said that men inherit not only their mental, moral and physical capacities and tendencies, but also the characteristic conditions of the environment into which they are born. What men inherit is thus partly constitutional and partly accidental; and the constitutional inheritance of men is neither more nor

less effective in giving rise to personal error in history than their accidental inheritance. The constitutional causes of personal error are seen to be, in their turn, either those which appertain to the race or nation or those which appertain to the individual. That there are racial and national idiosyncrasies which are inherited by men in all parts of the world and in all conditions and stages of civilisation is a fact of nature, which, like the inheritance of individual idiosyncrasies, is too patent to be gainsaid. In the language of Renan :— “There are two ways of influencing the world, either by one’s individual force, or by the body of which one forms a part, by the ensemble in which one occupies a place. In the latter case the action of the individual seems veiled ; but on the other hand it is more powerful, and the proportional part accruing to each is much stronger than if he remained isolated.” In fact, all those, who have, at any time or in any place, constituted as well as contributed to the phenomena of history, have been members of a more or less satisfactorily co-ordinated corporate body at the same time that they have been individuals with a more or less clear-cut personality of their own. In this connection I remember the remark of another Frenchman

who is said to have declared—"I know Frenchmen, Englishmen, Germans; but I do not know *men*." This remark undoubtedly ignores too much the underlying common humanity of man, which has uniformly characterised him in all ages and under all the varying conditions of the various civilisations known to history. But it pointedly brings to notice the great truth that all men are even hereditarily affected in a marked manner by the impress of the common corporate life into which they are thrown by the natural circumstances of their own past history and that of their more or less immediate ancestors. When the contributions made to the progress of civilisation by the various peoples of the various ages known to history are all impartially examined and judged, it comes out distinctly that every one of those communities has had a definite configuration of character giving it a special fitness to play its part in helping on the historic realisation of Universal Reason and of the Freedom of the Soul. Hegel has said:—

"It is the concrete spirit of a people which we have distinctly to recognise; and since it is spirit, it can only be comprehended spiritually, that is, by thought. It is this alone which takes the lead in all the deeds and tendencies of that people, and which is occupied in realising itself—in satisfying its ideal and becoming self-conscious—for, its great business is self-

production. For spirit, however, the highest attainment is self-knowledge; an advance not only to the *intuition*, but also to the *thought*—the clear conception of itself. This it must, and is also destined to, accomplish; but the accomplishment is at the same time its dissolution, and the rise of another spirit, another world-historical people, another epoch of universal history. This transition and connection leads us to the connection of the whole—the idea of the World's History as such..... History in general is therefore the development of Spirit in Time, as nature is the development of the Idea in Space."

It is thus seen that race, nationality and the various other factors of corporate human life have a marked tendency to give to all organised human communities a specific character and to inspire them with particular forms of faith and hope, so that each of them has its own distinguishable nature as well as spirit. This nature and this spirit are both capable of being transmitted from generation to generation in the respective communities; and in the process of this transmission they are also capable of being slowly modified, so as to cause the cooling down of old enthusiasms and the warming up of new ones in their stead.

A British nobleman has remarked:—

"It is a true nationalism which recognises and acts upon those racial instincts and characteristics which are eradicable only with the races themselves. The developments of these instincts and characteristics may be modified; but to ignore their existence and endeavour to thwart their manifestation is merely a useless and harmful fighting against nature. This extends into the modes of religious thought and practice as well as to

other things. It would be no doubt an exaggeration to say that the conversion of an Aryan country to Christianity is no more than the infusion of Shemitism into its religion; but I have seen a certain amount of people of different races and of different religions; and the result of my observation is that those who are of the same race, and of different religions, resemble one another more even in their religious practices than do those who are of the same religion but of different races. I might take divers examples, which I abstain from citing for fear of hurting the feelings of any good people."

In this quotation two points are especially worth noting. The first is that racial instincts and characteristics are inherited and ineradicable; and the second is that superposed influences, howsoever strong they may be, are unable to weaken them so as to cause their submergence, if not their total disappearance. Within the sphere of these inherited corporate propensities of human nature and human life, there are the intrinsic tendencies of individual character and capacity which also play their part as accountable forces in history. It is now granted generally that, why a man is what he is, is very largely determined by the effective potency of his heredity; and men are accordingly conceived to owe much of their physical, mental and moral characteristics to the constitution and capacity of their parents. Education, it is said, only trains the head and the heart to work along appropriate lines, but is in no way responsible for

the creation of the living energy which is within us. In this manner it becomes possible for us to see how no two men can contribute to history the same elements to the same degree. The advancing realisation of Universal Reason in history is uniformly observed to go on side by side with the development of the power of the individual man to win and to enjoy more and more the freedom of his own soul-life. The acquisition of this power is never an easy affair. "The seething and tumultuous life of natural tendency, of appetite and passion, affection and desire, must be reduced to some common human measure. Man may not continue to live the animal life of unchecked impulse, borne ever on the full tide of natural sensibility. That life of nature, which he too feels surging up within him, has to be directed and controlled ; it must be subjected to the moulding influence of reflective purpose." Such is the statement given by an ethical philosopher in regard to how men and human communities have to fit themselves for the acquisition and the enjoyment of what I have termed the freedom of man's soul-life. Our own philosophic literature in Sanskrit classifies the physical, mental and moral characteristics of men under three heads as *sāttvika* (सात्त्विक),

rājasa (राजस) and *tāmasa* (तामस). The last of these three divisions is representative of that natural animal life which is characterised by slothfulness, by want of reflection and foresight, and by unchecked and tumultuous impulses, appetites and passions. This kind of undisciplined and unreflective animal life is by some declared to be non-moral; and the manifestation of morality in the life of men and of human communities is conceived by them to commence simultaneously with the commencement of the acquisition of their fitness to be free. One's fitness to be free is so closely dependent in all matters upon one's own power of self-control, that where this latter quality is imperfect and defective the former cannot easily come into existence and flourish; and it is invariably through what may be called enlightened egoism that man first acquires and then strengthens his power of self-control. Accordingly a regulated and reflective life of aggressive egoism is morally higher than the unregulated animal life of nature; and this higher life in its physical, mental and moral aspects is in Sanskrit characterised as *rājasa*. That life which has risen above the fettering force of even such enlightened egoism, so as to be completely free from all kinds

of selfish attachment,—the life which is thus absolutely altruistic—is the freest life and is *sáttvika* in character. Men are in this manner seen to be fit to live the undisciplined animal life of nature, or the life of regulated and reflective egoism, or the life of absolute altruism; and both as an actor and a critic in history the *tánasa* man is apt to be quite different in value from the *rájasa* man, even as these are in their turn apt to be different in value from the *sáttvika* man.

Inherited tendencies and dispositions belonging to the corporate life of communities, as well as to the special personalities of individuals, are thus capable of giving rise to personal error in history in both the ways in which such error is commonly seen to arise. Not only do men and communities live and act according to what they themselves are, but they exercise their judgment in judging all things also according to what they are in themselves. That the eye sees what it brings with it the power of seeing is nowhere truer than it is in history; and the seeing eye may see either to judge or merely to perceive and to act. Anthropologists tell us that, in the way in which the white races paint the devil to be black, the black races depict that being as white; and here we have an instance

of inherited colour-predilection among particular bodies of people characterised by particular racial instincts and associations. The types of physical beauty which are appreciated by any one race of people are seen to be generally different from those which are appreciated by another markedly different race. There is again, for instance an inherent incapacity among various communities of people to appreciate the style of music which is not hereditarily their own. These predilections are more or less physical in their nature; nevertheless, they are mentioned here as being important for the reason that stupendous moral fabrics are often made to rest upon them, when differently endowed and differently situated human communities have to deal with one another and judge one another in respect of all those relations and activities of life which make up the contents of history. There are also inherited moral predilections of great import which often characterise large communities of people and the civilisations which they have worked out in history. For instance, the life of men and of human communities may, when morally judged, be said to be made up of certain rights and certain obligations which are inseparably interrelated to one another; and to

many of us in India it appears that European civilisation, as started by Greece, and as organised and propagated by Rome, and finally as culminating in the comparatively modern history of the chief countries of Western Europe, has had a marked tendency in favour of strengthening the natural instinct of man to assert his rights, while in Asia—and in India in particular—the trend of historic force has been invariably to strengthen the feeling in favour of man's ready recognition of his obligations. Christianity, however, introduced an Asiatic moral force into Europe, and by insisting on renunciation, self-surrender and non-resistance, endeavoured to give greater prominence to the aspect of obligation in the moral life of men and of human societies. But the old European instinct in favour of the assertion of rights showed itself to be too strong even for Christianity, so that Christianity itself was in time turned by it into an instrument of protest and of individual and national self-assertion. It is perfectly natural that, where the fountain of inspiration and the centre of power are made to rest on the assertion of rights, the course and contents of history have inevitably to be different from what they are calculated to be among those

who are swayed more by the feeling of moral obligation than by the instinct of self-assertion. The historic picture painted with the dominant colour of rights has its own beauties and deformities, very much like the other historic picture in which the dominant colour is that of obligations. But neither the beauty nor the deformity of either of these two pictures is exactly like that of the other. If the achievement of freedom in connection with all the relations of life and society constitutes, for example, a noticeable feature of beauty in the former picture, the acquisition and the display of humility and patience and love of order constitute the corresponding feature of beauty in the latter picture. Similarly, if aggressive militarism and an insatiable mercantilism, for example, contribute to the moral ugliness of the first picture, the contentment that cools all enthusiasms and thus kills effort forms the corresponding ugly element in relation to the second picture. Accordingly, the historic life which is embodied in either of these two pictures is incapable of setting off rightly the features of beauty which are in association with the other picture; each of these kinds of historic life has, moreover, the tendency to exaggerate the elements

of ugliness which are noticeable in relation to the other kind. Like individuals, societies also have a natural tendency to judge themselves leniently and to judge others harshly. Hence they not only exaggerate their own merits and decry the merits of others, but also make light of their own defects at the same time that they magnify the defects of others. A society which is markedly imbued with the *tāmāsa* life of unchecked and unreflective animalism works in history, as well as judges in history, differently from another society which is markedly imbued with the *rājasa* life of ordered egoism; and this society, in its turn, works and judges in history differently from a third society in which the *sāttvika* life of selfless altruism is at all noticeable.

The *sāttvika*, the *rājasa* and the *tāmāsa* temperaments characterise societies quite as much as they characterise individuals; and it is everywhere seen that the general condition and character of society determine largely through heredity the capacity as well as the worthiness of the majority of the men and women who make up that society. Nevertheless, it is clearly observable that this determining power of society does not always tend to produce a dead level of

uniform mediocrity in relation to all its component members. In every society there are generally seen to exist some more highly endowed and some less highly endowed individuals. Apart from such variation in endowment, there is also the variation in respect of the scope and opportunity which the men and women of a society have for playing a more or less leading part in connection with the life and history of that society. Although it is true that higher endowment does not always bestow on the more highly endowed individual a proportionately more prominent and effective leadership, still in history the endowed person is seen to be on the whole a more potent factor than the person who is favoured only with opportunity. Indeed in the workshop of history the large mass of men and women, who make up the various organised communities of mankind, constitute, as it were, the live material on which the forces of corporate life and of individual leadership are made to operate. All the commoner persons among the endowed members of a society owe their endowment to that society itself, so that they are mostly what it has made them to be. The uncommonly endowed man of genius, however, seems to transcend the limitations of heredity as

well as of environment. How he comes into existence need not be discussed here; but the fact that he has a place and performs his function in history cannot be ignored. Whether it is the uncommonly endowed man of genius or the ordinarily endowed man of average leadership that operates on society, the success of the operator is inevitably dependent upon the greater or less responsiveness of this live material on which he operates. It is in this way that the yield of the work of heroes is so often determined in history by a factor which is other than the force of their own heroism. Although the sympathetic and strengthening work of heroes and of the comparatively less endowed leaders of men is seen to be generally capable of improving the quality and the intensity of the responsiveness of societies, still the variation in time of this social responsiveness to healthy influences often seems to be as mysterious as the numerousness or otherwise of the birth of heroes of genius as well as of the less capable leaders of men in any society. For instance, why so many great heroes and leaders of thought and of men are not now born in Greece as they were in the ancient days of Grecian glory, is a perplexing phenomenon of history. Why the people of

modern Greece are not so responsive to the heroic influences of human civilisation and progress, as their famous ancestors were in ancient days, may well set in vibration the tender chords in the heart of a poet like Byron ; but the very sadness of the poet and his pitiful sympathy rest on the strangeness of the decay of an ancient people of power and glory. Heredity and evolution, as looked at from outside, are both incapable of offering a really satisfactory explanation of this strange and striking phenomenon of history. The Hindu doctrine of the re-incarnation of souls offers, however, an explanation which cannot be lightly discarded, either in understanding the unaccountably sudden prominence which some nations have acquired sometimes in the march of the world's history, or in understanding the equally unaccountable decay which is known to have come upon some other nations even when they were in the full swing of an unparalleled prosperity. Whatever happens to be the cause at the root of the historic vigour of societies and of their fitness and tendency to give birth to heroes of genius and other men of light and leading, it is undeniable that no two endowed men in any society are ever similar to each other in respect of their contributions to

history. Even where the active forces of the environment prominently acting on them are seen to be very nearly the same, the difference in their endowments naturally makes them operate as decidedly dissimilar factors in history. Two well-known characters in English History may here be referred to in illustration of this contention—I mean Cromwell and Milton. Both of them were specially endowed men of genius, and both of them were equally subject to the inspiring influences of their Puritanic surroundings. And yet, who does not know that Cromwell's contribution to English History is different from Milton's contribution? Again, as historians and critics of historical phenomena also, men have their fitness determined by their abilities and inherited natural disposition and moral tendency. Lyall's estimate of Warren Hastings and Ranade's estimate of Sivaji may be cited to prove this. Each of these authors has so endeavoured to see and to paint the component parts of his historic picture, as to make it neither too unduly bright nor too unduly dark, although the subjects of both these pictures give ample scope for wrong apprehension and erroneous representation. Nevertheless, it is quite possible to say, not without some justice, that neither Lyall nor

Ranade has been able, as a historical critic, to rise altogether above all personal predilections. Indeed, as long as man is man, no man can achieve such a feat.

. In addition to these constitutional idiosyncrasies of communities and individuals, as factors in the production of personal error in history, there are also the inherited accidental factors which again give rise to such personal error in a marked degree. It has been mentioned already that these accidental causes of personal error are dependent upon the conditions of the environment into which the more or less markedly effective men in history are born from time to time. The social, political and religious conditions of the various communities wherein such men are born are necessarily to be considered as constituting a notable part of their inherited assets and liabilities. Where a man is born and to what parents are both together almost wholly responsible for his social surroundings as well as for the peculiar organisation of the society and all its institutions, under the regulations of which he has ordinarily to live and to think. Similarly most men inherit their religion from their parents and from the society into which they are born. Again the political authority to

which men are subjected, and the state and its political institutions to which they owe allegiance, are also generally determined for them by where and when and to whom they are born. Society and religion and politics, when somewhat widely understood, may well be conceived to comprehend all the aspects of the inherited environment of men in all ages; and it is needless to point out that this inheritance of the environment is, in the case of all men, different from their constitutional inheritance of mental, moral and physical capacity and fitness for advancement. It must be evident that the distinction of inherited capacities, tendencies and dispositions into what are constitutional and what are accidental is not applicable to those which belong to human communities, in the manner in which it is applicable to those which belong to individuals. The conditions of the environment, which an individual inherits by being born as he is born, are all the result of the inner life of the organised community to which he belongs by birth as well as by political and religious allegiance. Accordingly, what, in the case of the individual, happens to be the accidentally inherited cause of personal error in history, is the constitutionally inherited cause of such error

in the case of the organised human community to which he belongs. It has here to be borne in mind that the inheritance of certain general tendencies by human communities as a whole is quite distinct in character from the unique personal impress which the various institutions of civilisation belonging to those communities leave upon the physical and mental constitution of the various individuals of those communities. Even the general trend of tendencies, which is noticeable in relation to the life of a society, is invariably seen not to affect all its members in the same manner or to the same degree. For instance, among the subjects of a well governed state, which has succeeded in commanding their love and confidence in general, it always so happens that some are more patriotic than others, and that the patriotism of some is directed towards the achievement of change and reform, while that of others is directed towards the maintenance of complete internal peace and slow and orderly progress. Just as the intensity as well as the manner of the responsiveness of individuals to the general political influence of a well governed state in rousing patriotism is seen to be different in the case of different individuals, even so does their

responsiveness vary in relation to the operative effect of their inherited social and religious institutions also. In the way in which Cromwell and Milton were referred to in another connection, Luther and Erasmus are often pointed out as examples of how similar religious and social forces may give scope for the development of two very different types of equally endowed men under their operation. It does not require much knowledge either about Luther or about Erasmus to feel assured that neither as contributors to history nor as critics of historical phenomena they could play the same part; and yet we cannot fail to see the peculiar revelation of the characteristic life of their age in each of them in a marked though different manner. When the tendency of the individual to give rise to the historical personal error is undoubtedly due to the reaction between his endowment and the forces of his environment, it requires no elaborate proof to establish that each of these mutually reacting factors acts as a cause of the error in question; and the possibility of the forces of the environment acting differently, for some reason or other, on two individuals of the same endowment can neither be contradicted in theory nor ignored in practice,

although the supposed similarity of endowment in a case like this is much harder to demonstrate than to conceive. That the forces of the individual's inherited environment make him prone to produce the historical personal error, in the way of an actor as well as of a critic in relation to the drama of history, may, therefore, be accepted as a widely prevalent fact of human nature at all times and in all places.

Having briefly explained in this manner the scope and character of the inherited causes of personal error, let me proceed next to the consideration of the acquired causes of such error. The acquired causes of personal error in history are mainly those which are due to interest and those which are due to education. It is true that men inherit interests even as they inherit their religion and political allegiance and social surroundings. Since the inherited interests of men are not generally so inalienable as their inherited political or religious allegiance, and since also they may be conceived to be comprehended within the inherited social, religious and political causes of personal error, those inherited interests need not be separately noticed here. However, men *acquire* interests also. A labourer may, through energy

and enterprise, acquire wealth and then become a capitalist; then his interests cease to be identical with those of the other labourers in the field of industry. In commerce the interests of the seller are different from those of the buyer. Indeed, like the labourer who has his own interests, men in all professions have their special interests also. Generally, all men acquire interests in association with the property they acquire and own, as well as in association with the calling or profession they adopt. That these interests affect their activities in life and give a direction to their judgments is a matter of common every day observation everywhere. Like men, human communities also have their interests; they are seen to acquire new interests frequently as well as to modify their hold on old interests. The whole of international politics is concerned with the interests of the various politically organised human communities in the world—with how they acquire new interests from time to time and how they always safeguard the interests they are already in possession of; and international politics constitute a large part of history in relation to all centres of civilisation. It is not at all unnatural that interest plays such a prominent part in the making of history. The

capacity of men and of organised human communities to succeed in the natural struggle for existence is directly measured by the value of the new interests they acquire and by the efficiency with which they safeguard their old interests. In connection with the rivalry between man and man within the same community, self-sacrifice, renunciation and absolute altruism are undoubtedly indicative of high moral virtue. But in regard to the rivalry between states and nations, it is invariably seen that to cease from the struggle, to acquire and to safeguard interests is nothing other than to cease to be healthy and strong and worthy to live and to prosper. Neither the clash of interests between individuals nor the clash of interests between communities is avoidable in history; and it cannot be rightly denied that the self-assertion of the endowed individual within the various organised human communities, and the self-assertion and expansion in influence of the really more efficient ones among such communities, have both contributed largely to the spread and advancement of civilisation. Might is right more often in history than it ever can be in the current life of the individual man; for in historic might historic right is generally implied. Nevertheless,

in the dealings of related communities with one another, as also in the judgments which communities pronounce upon communities, there is ample scope for the operation of the personal error; and the greater the value of the interests that are involved in the relation between the communities, the greater are the chances for the occurrence of the personal error.

Education is another acquired cause of personal error in history. The power of education to give to the mind any required kind of bend seems to have been long recognised in history. Every well organised human society in the past periods of history has had its own system of education, the object of which has been to so mould the minds of those who came under its influence as to strengthen their faith in the worthiness of their own social, political and religious organisations and institutions, and thus make them lend their support to the type of civilisation represented by those organisations and institutions. This way of stating the object of education shows us the true value of what may be spoken of as the corporate effect of education; and we know that in the various parts of the world there have been at various times systems of education, the corporate

effect of which has tended to be specially social or religious or political, as the case may be. Even the specially politically organised human communities of the modern day are fully aware of the value of education as a means which is well suited either to maintain intact the existing mental temperament of a people, or to modify it and bring it into closer accord with their new aspirations which new circumstances have brought into existence. It is granted generally that it is education that has made modern Japan what she is; and in modern Japan we see the power and the spirit of a newly introduced civilisation flourishing vigorously among an ancient people, whose past history was not obviously calculated in itself to lead to the evolution of this new civilisation as an indigenous product. Even in our own country the power of education to divert the stream of men's aspirations from its old channel is markedly enough observable. Whatever else may be said to the credit or discredit of the University education in English which has been introduced into India, there can be no doubt that this education has markedly succeeded in implanting in the minds of those, who have received it, that partiality in favour of the assertion of the rights of man, which has characterised the history of

Western Europe during the last two or three centuries. The obligation-aspect of the moral and social life is, however, being slowly and unconsciously forced into the background by this new education among us. Evidently in Japan the partiality in favour of rights is more than duly balanced by the corresponding partiality in favour of obligations; and moreover the self-assertive spirit of the newly introduced European civilisation seems to have taken hold of the people there as a whole. In India we have neither of these conditions fulfilled; and the consequence is that a want of moral balance is generally noticeable as the result of our new European education. It is no part of the subject of this paper to deal with the wholesomeness or otherwise of this state of affairs in relation to English education in modern India; and I do not wish it to be understood that I take no note of the remarkable way in which this new education has opened the eyes of young India to perceive much previously unknown truth regarding man and the universe in which he lives. Still it may not be wholly out of place to point out that the time for the adoption of the democratic freedom of Western Europe in social, religious and political mat-

ters does not as yet seem to have arrived in India, and that it is honestly doubted by some, whether, owing to the radical unsuitability of the democratic ideal to the historically evolved conditions of Indian popular life, such a time will ever come at all in this country. The new education has made Japan self-assertive in the field of international politics and commerce; to this end she has had necessarily to learn the various lessons of her obligation to maintain through love and loyalty and sacrifice the unity of her national and political life. She is, therefore, the best modern example to illustrate how education is capable of effectively modifying the prejudices and predilections belonging to the corporate life of a people as a whole. Modern Japan's part in the drama of history is distinctly seen to be different from what it was before she became modern in her civilisation; and her judgment on the phenomena of history, in the way of appreciation or depreciation, is also apt to be different from what it would have been if she had not thus become modern. To us who have received English education in India, no proof at all is needed to show that education is an effective instrument in modifying the prejudices and predilections of indivi-

duals. It is, after all, through modifying existing prejudices and predilections, or through creating new prejudices and predilections to take the place of old ones, that education acts as a cause of personal error in history.

Even this imperfect survey of the sources and causes of personal error in history is naturally helpful to us in considering how that error is to be corrected and eliminated. In regard to the intrinsic personal errors of those who, in a marked way, contribute directly or indirectly to the phenomena of history, what is generally spoken of as the perspective of time is of great value in eliminating those errors and presenting to our vision a symmetrical and undistorted view of the men and movements of history. There is a twofold reason as to why time is capable of acting as the eliminator of this particular kind of error in history. All historic movements have to be judged by ascertaining how they have told upon the advancing stream of civilisation in the history of mankind; and the effect of such movements on this stream takes time to manifest itself in all its fulness. What appears to have been intended to produce an immediate effect of some kind that is desired at the time, is often

seen to have produced later on results which were not even dreamt of before. It is not, for instance, a historically untrue assertion to make that the crusades of Europe directed against the dominancy of Islam in Asia Minor led step by step to the establishment of British rule in India. To those who know how the crusades tended to stimulate the Eastern trade of Europe, how this trade rapidly enriched and gave prominence to some of the Italian city-states on the Mediterranean, how this sudden prosperity of those states roused a feeling of rivalry among the leading nations of Western Europe to compete for the prizes and profits of the Eastern trade, and how India as one of the chief prizes of that trade went into the possession of the British people—to those who know these things, the connection between the crusades on the one hand and the establishment of British rule in India on the other is sure to seem quite natural and obvious. But had the ardent Christian crusaders, who fought and bled for the political possession of the sepulchre of Jesus in Jerusalem, any idea of the future historic harvest for which they were even then most assuredly labouring? The answer to this question cannot be uncertain at all; those crusaders were

not only unaware of what was to be reaped in the harvest for which they were, as it were, enthusiastically ploughing the fields, but were also imbued with the frenzy of religious fervour to the extent of making them decri altogether what they would, in all probability, have called the filthy lucre of commerce. Therefore we have here a very good example of how man proposes in one way and history disposes in another way. And history is a notorious slow coach ; it never moves faster than it is absolutely necessary ; and very often it seems to move much more slowly. Hence adequate time alone can bring to light the full potentiality of the events of history ; and it is only after this is brought to light that the true bearing of each of these events is capable of being accurately ascertained. This is one way in which time acts as an eliminator of the intrinsic personal error in history, and thus enables us to judge the events of history without reference to the peculiarities in the mental and moral tendencies of those whose life and action have given rise to those events. This same freedom from personal coloration, which the events of history acquire through the evolving power of time, enables us, moreover, to judge accurately the special contributions of various

persons to the formation of the various events and movements of history. Contemporary judgment is never quite accurate in its estimate of such personal contributions to history. Think of the meek Jesus being judged by Pilate in Palestine! Contemporary observation and opinion could not surely make out the difference between these two persons which history has so clearly brought out and so emphatically expressed. Indeed, but for this accidental association of the 'great' Roman with the 'humble' Jew, the Roman, in spite of his contemporary greatness, would not have been, in all probability, taken note of by history at all. In so far as history is concerned, the active and efficient men who contribute to its phenomena may very well be compared to the wheels in a watch. Each wheel more or less vigorously turns about its own centre to the right or to the left, and yet all the wheels are compelled to serve the common purpose of making the watch a measurer of time. Even so do men in history consciously turn about their own personal centres rightly or wrongly in all that they think and do and say; nevertheless, the directing power of history causes all their activities to serve the great historic purpose of the gradual unfolding and realisation

of Universal Reason in the terrestrial life of man.

That the later evolutions of historic events tend to correct the personal coloration of all the connected earlier events becomes clear in this manner; and the historian has therefore to take care that he does not pronounce his judgment too soon upon the phenomena of history. Judgments so pronounced have invariably been falsified by history itself. However, the historian's care not to pronounce his judgment too soon may sometimes lead him to wait too long; and in this there is the danger of facts becoming forgotten or distorted and valuable evidence being lost. When this danger actually occurs to any appreciable extent, history, instead of being deduced from past facts and the evidence on which they rest, has to become constructive, as they say, and thus depend largely on the more or less scientific imagination of the historian. It is, of course, evident that all such constructive history is apt to become more deeply tinged with the personal coloration of the historian than history which is deduced from an ample basis of verifiable facts. When, in this manner, we endeavour to judge historic events by their fruits, so that we may thereby avoid the misleading mischief of

their intrinsic personal error, have we necessarily to wait till the harvest which those events yield is actually reaped? The harvest of history is, however, always being reaped, and every important event in history may go on yielding its harvest till the end of time. Therefore, what is meant is, that every such important event in history is seen, after an adequate amount of evolution in time, to be capable of exhibiting to the discerning eye of the historian, what kind of fruit it is calculated to yield and in what quantity. It is with the help of this indication of the nature and quantity of the fruit that the historian has to guide his judgment in regard to the great events and movements of history. Seeing that he has to pronounce his judgment on the men of history as much as on the events and movements thereof, is he to judge these men also by whatever happens to be the subsequent historic fruit of their deeds? If, like Herbert Spencer, we are prepared to maintain that the historian ought to concern himself wholly with the movements of history and not with the men thereof, we need not take the trouble of answering this question at all. Such absolutely impersonal history is apt to be partial, misleading and incomplete, inasmuch as it totally

ignores the already mentioned self-correcting power of history in relation to the various men who have had their part in its making. It is known that the honourable enthusiasm of certain historic personages has sometimes yielded bitter fruit in history, while less worthy impulses of the head and heart on the part of some other such personages has tended to yield sweet and wholesome fruit. Most religious persecutions, for instance, are illustrative of the former statement, and the unavoidable tortuosities of all such political diplomacy as aims at peace and progress are similarly illustrative of the latter statement. We all know well what part Clive and Warren Hastings have played in the history of India as the founders of the British political power therein; and we know at least equally well that the British Government of India has really done much good to the country, although it is granted by the British rulers themselves that even that Government is capable of farther improvement in many respects. That India is not now a house divided against itself, that she has acquired a newer and a stronger feeling of unity, that many fresh and worthy thoughts and aspirations roused by a new civilisation and a new education are welling up in the

hearts of many of her sons and daughters, and that the instruments and institutions of this new civilisation have made her fit to be an organic part of a great and powerful Empire which is in close touch with all the advancing movements of modern history, are indeed no small advantages which India owes to British rule. Now the question practically is this—has the historian to judge Clive and Warren Hastings in the light of these undoubted advantages which India has derived from their historic work, and the similarly undoubted advantages which the British people have hence derived through their dominant relation with India? Or is the historian to take note of their personal character with all its merits and demerits and base his estimate of them more on that character than on the fruit of their life-work, as found in the history of India and of England? In the way in which the beauty of the rose more than makes up for the thorn on the plant, the historic value and importance of a great man's life-work ought to lead us to sympathise with him in his failings and induce us to forgive them, even as we are naturally inclined to admire his power and his greatness. Nevertheless, no description of the rose-plant in which the

thorns are not mentioned can be accurate or instructive or scientific.

The correction of the personal error which comes from the other source which has been called *critical* is indeed more difficult; and unfortunately the power of this error to vitiate history is also much more than that of the *intrinsic* personal error. It is the personal error due to the idiosyncrasies of the historian that really resembles the personal error in astronomy. Here it has to be taken for granted that the historian is honestly prepared to place himself entirely at the disposal of the evidence from which he has to deduce his historical conclusions, and that he is in no way actuated to falsify history wilfully. It cannot be denied that conscious, interested and wilful falsification of history is pretty frequently indulged in by inferior historians, who have no worthy conception of the high dignity and responsibility of the work in which they are engaged. This wanton falsification of history does not at all come under what has been designated as personal error in history, but is absolute untruth and wilfully vicious history. The error that unconsciously creeps into history through the peculiar personality of the historian,

in spite of his being thoroughly honest and fully competent for the task that he has undertaken—that is the critical personal error in history. The causes of this error have now been examined, and its unavoidability has also been ascertained. Although it is the duty of every historian strenuously to endeavour to minimise the vitiation of history through the excessive obtrusion of his own personality, still it is impossible for him to cause the total disappearance of that personality from his own work as a historian. To use the language of Herbert Spencer—“To cut himself off in thought from all his relationships of race and country and citizenship; to get rid of all those interests, prejudices, likings, superstitions, generated in him by the life of his own society and his own time; to look on all the changes which societies have undergone and are undergoing, without reference to nationality or creed or personal welfare; is what the average man cannot do at all, and what the exceptional man can do very imperfectly.” This critical personal error of the historian is, like the astronomical personal error, not only unavoidable but also occurs generally in the same direction and to the same extent in relation

to the same person. Therefore the only way in which this error can be corrected and eliminated is by endeavouring to counteract the error due to one person by the error which is due to another. If the estimate of a given set of historical phenomena by a certain historian is seen to err, through the personality of the historian, on what may be called the positive side in the language of mathematics, and if another estimate of the same set of phenomena by another historian is seen to err, through the influence of his personality, to the same extent on the negative side, then it is obvious that we can easily get at the truth by putting these two estimates together, so as to counteract the excessive appreciation to be found in the one estimate by the excessive depreciation which is to be found in the other. When it is seen that these two supposed estimates err in directions which are contrary to each other, it does not at all matter which of the two errors we take to be appreciative and which to be depreciative. Accordingly, the direction and the quantity of the error have both to be made out in the case of each historian before we can manage to correct it successfully by this method of outer counteraction.

The causes of the unconscious personal error on

the part of the historian being what they are, the direction of this personal error may be fairly accurately made out in every case. That men appreciate what they like and do not appreciate what they dislike is so true of human nature as to make this very statement appear like a mere truism. Very few of us possess to any noticeable degree the gift of knowing ourselves as others know us; but all of us possess in abundance that other gift of knowing others as it is most congenial to us to know them. Our own relationships of race, country and citizenship, our interests, prejudices, likings and superstitions, our religion, our education and faith in ideals and love of personal welfare—all these determine for us the nature of what is congenial and what is uncongenial to us. In this manner, the judgment of the historian is, like the judgment of all other men, bound to be automorphic. Hence the knowledge of the forces which have determined the shape and tendencies of the mind of any historian is of value to us in enabling us to find out another historian dealing with the same historical phenomena, the automorphism of whose judgment is not only different but also opposed in character to the automorphism of the judgment of him whose personal error as

historian is under examination for correction. To discover such mutually error-counteracting pairs of historians is not always easy or possible; and even when we do come upon historians of contradictory mental automorphism, it is hard to measure exactly the magnitude of the personal error in the case of each such historian. Thus the colour of the critical personal error of the historian may be qualitatively made out in a manner; but the quantitative measurement of the intensity of all such erroneous coloration seems to be next to impossible. The result is that this method of counteraction in correcting the critical personal error in history is theoretically more intelligible than it is practically capable of being well adopted for obtaining the required correction. It must be easy to see how this practical insufficiency of the only possible method of correction materially increases the responsibility of the vocation of the historian. Before doing and publishing his work as a historian and critic in the field of truth, every lover of truth must, therefore, have subjected himself to the always invaluable discipline of endeavouring to look at all sides of the various questions that may, in the course of his preparation, have come up before him for examination and judgment. The

function of the historian assuredly has much greater resemblance to the function of the judge than to that of the advocate. To learn to look at the problems of history not only from one's own standpoint, but also from the standpoint of others whose natural situation is in almost every way different, is of great value to the historian in wearing out the angularities connected with the automorphism of his mind. Another means, by which the unavoidable tendency of the historian to vitiate historic truth by the excessive obtrusion of his personality may be minimised, consists in the broad cultivation of his sympathies. The power of sympathy to open out our vision for the proper appreciation of merit is indeed undeniable. We know those whom we love, as they are in themselves, much better than those whom we dislike or hate. It may, however, be urged that love and sympathy are apt to make the historian too favourable as a critic, so as to lead him to forget the thorns on the rose-plant in his admiration of the beauty of the rose. It cannot be said that there is no force in this objection. But it has to be borne in mind that antipathy blinds the eye against the perception of truth much more than sympathy makes the

vision over-attentive to merit and goodness. When antipathy examines the rose-plant it overwhelmingly exaggerates the thorns and converts the beauty of the rose into hideous ugliness. It cannot be hard to say which of these two representations is farther from the truth. Why sympathy helps us to perceive the truth, while antipathy tends to hide it away from us in deep darkness, is an interesting psychological question to discuss. But to know that such is the fact is enough for us now. Therefore, if a few historians specially endowed with the needed intellectual and moral qualifications study any specific problem or movement in history and present their conclusions to us, we may, by putting their various conclusions together, well arrive at a conception of the truth which is, as far as possible, in agreement with the truth itself.

To us in India the work of the historian and critic is particularly beset with difficulties. In a land which has been subject to foreign domination for nearly a thousand years, a land wherein different races and religions and civilisations have had to come together and to live together, the scope for the operation of the inherited and acquired causes of personal error cannot but

be extraordinarily great. I have heard it said that continued foreign domination is well calculated to make the major part of a people look upon life as a mere intrigue to get on ; and those, who are in a position to compare in a spirit of fairness the moral tone of our public life with that of more homogeneous peoples elsewhere, declare sometimes that we are generally too ready to attribute motives and are too suspicious and uncharitable in our judgment of men and things. These imputations of moral weakness are not, I believe, altogether undeserved by us ; and both of them are unfortunately such as make men particularly unfit to be fair critics and impartial historians. Therefore, the modern citizen of India, who undertakes to serve his country and the cause of truth by doing honest and earnest work in the field of historical criticism and investigation cannot certainly be too careful in guarding himself against all such tendencies as lead to the vitiation of his work by the introduction of too much of personal error. Tolerant, love, charity, and a manly attachment to truth, which neither fears nor favours can weaken, are some of the chief elements in the moral equipment of the historian and critic who is really worthy of his calling ; and if, with the required

fulness of knowledge and intellectual capacity, we also succeed in obtaining this desirable moral equipment of the worthy historian, we need not at all be seriously afraid of the value of the work which we turn out, on the score that it is impossible for that work to be wholly free from personal error, and that such personal error as there is in it even then is incapable of being so corrected as to be entirely eliminated. That it is not in our power to accomplish anything which is better than the best we can, ought not to deter us at all from honestly striving to accomplish that best. All that we are responsible for, is to see that no avoidable error is allowed to pollute our judgment,* owing to any kind of mental or moral negligence on our part. If we take care to safeguard our judgment thus, we may then freely and fearlessly say with Schlegel in his *Philosophy of Life*:—

“ Who judges rightly ? There is none that judges rightly, but one, that is, God. He is Himself the truth, and, therefore, He alone has the standard of truth in Himself, and all truth has its ground and principle in Him alone. Every individual judgment and decision, in all important matters, has its ground, either mediately or immediately, in this divine basis ; and its rectitude

must be estimated according to this standard. But this latter condition need not make us foolishly anxious ; for nothing impossible is required of us by God. And this requisition, like every other which He lays upon man, is modified by, and adjusted to, the measure of human finiteness. The conscientious judge, who, after a patient investigation of the cause as it is laid before him, and after a careful weighing of all the possible reasons and motives, nevertheless errs or is deceived by a rare coincidence of circumstances, stands, nevertheless, exonerated, even though he should have passed an unjust sentence, and have had the misfortune to condemn the innocent. Although, when he becomes aware of it, the thought must be painful enough to his own feelings, yet who, in justice, can reproach him, merely because he was not omniscient? He who in thought, in science, and in faith, adheres to this divine foundation, the best and most certain that he can find or that is anywhere offered to him, may rest calm and composed ; he has done the utmost that lies in his power. He alone, who makes a bad use of what he has, and what has been given to him, like an unjust steward, need fear to give an account of his stewardship."

Accordingly, to such of the members of the South Indian Association who feel inclined to take part in that work of historical study, research and criticism, for which the Association has been founded, my request, which is also my advice, is that they should never make themselves in

any manner open to the charge of being unjust stewards ; for, to be free from such a charge is to serve the cause of humanity and of truth quite as well as it is ever possible for any man to do.



The South Indian Association.

WITH the Meeting that took place at the Anderson Memorial Hall on the 14th of October 1904, the recently formed South Indian Association entered upon its career of active work. Thanks to the munificent generosity of certain well-to-do Indian sympathisers, the Association will soon be in possession of a fine building of its own, built on its own site, and also of a Library (a memorial of the late Mr. Justice Ranade) containing a large number of the best books, the nucleus of which has been provided by a handsome donation of Rs. 5,000. Starting under such favourable auspices, the Association should have no difficulty in establishing itself on a broad and lasting basis. The objects of the Association are "the promotion and encouragement of the specialised study of the various branches of knowledge which bear in a direct and practical manner upon the progress of India, (1) by forming a suitable library of books and periodicals; (2) by holding meetings for lectures and discussions; (3) by reading and publishing papers and dissertations." The Association will be divided into the following five sections:— (1) Historical, (2) Educational, (3) Industrial, (4) Political, (5) Scientific. It should be noted, however, that the Association "will not take part in any political agitation or make any representation to the authorities on political matters, or pass Resolutions on controversial political questions."

There can be no doubt that within the range of the above outlined the members of the Association will find ample scope for a large amount of useful labour. In Professor Banga Chariar, M.A., Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology at the Presidency College, the Association has as its first President a man of extraordinarily wide attainments, for he is not merely a learned Sanskrit scholar and erudite philologist, he is a skilled scientist also, having been for many years a lecturer in Physics and Chemistry in the various Government Colleges in Southern India. His address on "Personal Equation in History" was as interesting as it was well-reasoned. Further, it constitutes a most excellent starting-point in the Association's proceedings, as it conveys a number of sound lessons for those who will attempt to carry out the Association's programme of research and exposition.—*The Madras Mail*.