

It is apparently the ambition of a certain school of scientific historians, to place historic studies upon the same basis as those of the special sciences which have to do with phases of the physical universe. Now the criticism of this effort is radical. It is, that the facts of history are not at all like those of physical nature, and therefore require a totally different treatment. The facts of history, however incidentally connected with the physical world, are, nevertheless, as historic data, facts of the human spirit. As expressions of human purpose their whole significance, the links of causal sequence, their actions and reactions, and their varied and subtle spiritual influences disregard all the ordinary standards of physical nature and follow distinctive lines of their own.

Again, while it is both possible and necessary to approach the study of history with intellectual honesty, it is not possible to derive much benefit from it if it is undertaken with colourless motives. The advantages which we derive from history must depend altogether upon the interests which we bring to it. Notwithstanding the centuries during which we have studied the history of the ancients, the whole of this field is being revolutionized at the present time by the awakening of new interests. On every hand the range of historic research is being extended, until history, which was once a comparatively narrow and simple study, is now one of infinite variety and specialization. Remarkably fresh interest has been imparted to those apparently worn out regions, religion and politics, while new light has been shed upon even that crudest, and therefore most familiar field of

all, the tragic region of human feud and slaughter. Now, too, we have our highly specialized and subdivided histories of language, literature, philosophy, science, law, economics, dogma, ritual, heraldry, and a score of other subjects. And these are all the results, not so much of an increase of historic data, as of the immense stimulus of human interest and enlightenment.

History, then, reveals its secrets to us in proportion to the interests we bring to it. It requires, however, in a special degree, the rigid intellectual honesty which must accompany all search for the real nature of things. There is a subtle danger of self-deception in the confusion of those legitimate interests, which are the true incentives to all historic research, with the corporate and selfish interests which are stirred by the nature of the facts revealed.

Now those who are most anxious to reduce the study of history to a purely scientific system are really anxious to guard against this spurious form of historic interest which insists upon going to history mainly for the support of foregone conclusions. But if the method advocated were employed consistently, it would rob history of its chief interest, and render its facts as devoid of human warmth, light, and sympathy, as those of physics itself. As the socialists propose to get rid of the evils incident to private property by abolishing private property altogether, so the purely scientific historian would get rid of the danger of seeking support in history for foregone conclusions, by virtually abolishing all practical interest in the verdicts of history. But history is, of necessity, a subject of the highest