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creation of the british



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For example, the life of Pericles is a summary of what Athens accomplished in art, literature and statesmanship; the biography of Julius Caesar is a history of the rise of the Roman Empire; Martin Luther was the creator and abstract of the Reformation; William Pitt's life is the history of the creation of the British Empire, and the work of Rousseau accounts for the French Revolution. It was such great men great statesmen, soldiers, poets, writers, prophets, rulers, priests, philanthropists, and business-organizers who started the great movements in history, and led men, for good or evil, in the way they have gone. No doubt there is truth in this view; but it is not the whole truth. For it is as true to say that the Great Man is the product of his age, as to say he is its creator.

Take, for example. Martin Luther, the German monk, who stands out as the chief figure in the Reformation movement in the 16th Century. Before Luther rose, there were many earnest religious men who deplored the corruption of the Christian Church. There had been growing for a long time a feeling of unrest, doubt, criticism and disgust among the masses. But it was not defined, nor very vocal. It all found its expression in the bold monk, Martin Luther, who put himself at the head of a movement which had already begun, and led it on to victory.

He summed and boldly expressed what many had been vaguely feeling. The powder was already collected; he was the match that ignited it and caused the explosion. But it is doubtful if even a great man, like Luther, could have done what he did, had not the way been prepared for him by many lesser men and the general feelings of the times. The great movements of history were not entirely the creation of the great men of history.

Millions of forgotten individuals made them possible; though the great man guided them and made them successful. So, history is not only the biography of great men, but the biography of millions of lesser men also.