

## CHAPTER XII.

## ON THE STATISTICAL VIEW OF NATURE.

I HAVE now treated of the several grand and general aspects under which the objects of nature can be scientifically regarded, and have tried to show how these aspects, not unknown to former ages, have nevertheless, in the course of the nineteenth century, become more definite, and accordingly more useful, as means for describing, measuring, and, in many cases, predicting phenomena. It is true that the two last chapters, which dealt with the phenomena of Life and Mind, had to take notice of a principle or of principles which have hardly yet received any scientific definition at all, and which in the progress of the sciences which deal with them have played rather a negative part. It has been mainly by eliminating the conceptions of life and of mind as special agencies, factors, or entities that the scientific study of living and conscious beings has progressed; by showing more and more how an accurate and useful knowledge of much of their nature and behaviour can be gained with the aid of the methods adopted in other scientific inquiries, which we may call mechanical.

1.  
Life and  
Mind as  
limiting  
conceptions.