

24.  
Criticism of  
pretension  
of statistics.

and Drobisch<sup>1</sup> have long ago reduced to their proper measure the pretensions of statistics, and it is now generally admitted that in the sciences dealing with human nature and society, as in those which investigate purely physical phenomena, observations, figures and measurements rarely if ever suffice to establish a valid generalisation; but that, if such be suggested by other processes of thought, notably through attentive reflection on, and analysis of, single and accessible cases, statistics supply the indispensable material by which

men as determined by circumstances: in fact, all expectation of good from education and all the work of history are based upon the conviction that the will may be influenced by growth of insight, by ennoblement of feeling, and by improvement of the external conditions of life. On the other side, a consideration of freedom itself would teach us that the very notion is repugnant to common-sense if it does not include susceptibility to the worth of motives, and that the freedom of willing can by no means signify absolute capacity of carrying out what is willed." And, further, he remarks on "the extreme overhastiness with which the statistical myth has been built up from deductions which cannot be relied upon. We have yet to obtain from exacter investigations the true material for more trustworthy conclusions—material which should take the place of the statistical myth above referred to."

<sup>1</sup> Before Lotze, and as early as 1849, M. W. Drobisch, the Herbartian, had reviewed Quetelet's Memoir, 'Sur la Statistique morale,' &c.; and later (1867), after the publication of A. Wagner's work, he came back to the subject in an im-

portant tract, 'Die moralische Statistik und die menschliche Willensfreiheit,' which should be read by every one who desires to form just views on the subject. "In all such facts," says Drobisch, "there are reflected not natural laws pure and simple, to which man must submit as to destiny, but at the same time the moral conditions of society, which are determined by the mighty influences of family life, of the school, the Church, of legislation, and are, therefore, quite capable of improvement by the will of man" (Zeitsch. für exacte Philos., vol. iv. p. 329). After all that has been said by Quetelet, Buckle, and others, the words of Schiller ('Wallenstein's Tod,' ii. 3) still remain the best statement of the problem:—

"Des Menschen Thaten und Gedanken,  
wisat!  
Sind nicht wie Meeres blind bewegte  
Wellen.  
Die innre Welt, sein Microcosmus, ist  
Der tiefe Schacht, aus dem sie ewig  
quellen.  
Sie sind nothwendig, wie des Baumes  
Frucht;  
Sie kann der Zufall gaukelnd nicht  
verwandeln,  
Hab'ich des Menschen Kern erst unter-  
sucht,  
So weiss ich auch sein Wollen und sein  
Hendeln."