

25.
Historical
criticism.

With the scientific treatment of the phenomena of human society, the name of Adolphe Quetelet will always be associated; yet the mathematical or exact school was not the only one which in the course of the first half of the century had approached the subject. Notably in Germany, under the ruling influence of philosophical, historical, and critical studies, a school of research had grown up calling itself the historical. If the centre of gravity of the mathematical view lies in the conception of a certain uniformity and stability of social phenomena, the other school looked more to historical changes and developments, opposing the doctrine of the movement or of the dynamics to that of the statics of society. Its inspiration came from a different quarter, and will occupy us in a later portion of this work. For the moment it suffices to remark how here also, in the study of economics and social phenomena, the developmental or genetic view has gradually dispelled the earlier search for recurrent forms and regularities, which we may term the morphological aspect: the physiology has succeeded the anatomy of society.

But statistical methods, with the accompanying doctrines of probability and averages and the theory of error, have not only been extensively and usefully employed where large numbers of similar facts and events crowd in upon our observation, and, as it were, overwhelm us by their multitudes, as in astronomy, meteorology, economics, and political arithmetic: they have also shown themselves applicable by what we may term the inverse method. Quetelet, when deal-