

method has been most fruitful, and, far from being exhausted, promises undreamt of results in the future. It was probably more from the desire to keep his view clear and his method simple, than with any necessarily sceptical tendency, that when Laplace was questioned by Napoleon how it was that in the great volumes of the 'Mécanique céleste' the name of God did not appear, he replied, "Sire, je n'ai pas besoin de cette hypothèse."

But French science did not leave that great field of research uncultivated, which is the very playground of individual life. Its cultivation was the work of that other great representative of French science—the contemporary of Laplace—Georges Cuvier.¹ Linnæus had

27.
Individu-
ality the
centre of
interest in
the sciences
of life.

the group is set down under that characteristic. This is the raw material from which the statist endeavours to deduce general theorems in sociology. Other students of human nature proceed on a different plan. They observe individual men, ascertain their history, analyse their motives, and compare their expectation of what they will do with their actual conduct. This may be called the dynamical method of study as applied to man. However imperfect the dynamical study of man may be in practice, it evidently is the only perfect method in principle, and its shortcomings arise from the limitation of our powers rather than from a faulty method of procedure. If we betake ourselves to the statistical method, we do so confessing that we are unable to follow the details of each individual case, and expecting that the effects of widespread causes, though very different in each individual, will produce an average result on the whole nation, from a study of which we may estimate the character and propensities of

an imaginary being called the Mean Man."

¹ It is not necessary here to explain the reasons which have induced me to confine myself mainly to the two great names of Laplace and Cuvier as the great representatives of the exact scientific spirit, as it first asserted its supremacy in France, and from there gradually fought its way all over Europe. To me it seems that nowhere has this modern scientific spirit been represented in greater completeness and greater purity. This is so much the more remarkable, as other influences and temptations were not wanting in that age and country which might have interfered with the application of the purely scientific method. The scientific spirit is in danger of being contaminated by two interests which are essentially foreign to it: the one is the practical, the other the philosophical. Frequently they are united; and when united their influence on the progress of science has frequently been disastrous. In no department of knowledge has this