

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT.

IN the foregoing chapters I have attempted to set forth the chief conceptions which are contained in the scientific literature of the nineteenth century. Upon these the scientific work of that period has been founded or they are the results to which its scientific reasoning has led. The most important outcome of the scientific work of the century does not lie in the region of thought, but rather in that of practical application; and this I have only incidentally referred to. Only in so far as it has reacted upon scientific thought, suggesting or modifying scientific ideas, has it been necessary to allude to it.

My readers who have so far accompanied me may be struck by one feature which, indeed, is characteristic of scientific thought. Our survey has presented such thought as broken up into a series of different aspects; and although certain connections between these aspects have been occasionally pointed out, no attempt has been made to combine them into one comprehensive or united view. The reason for this is to be found in the nature of scientific thought itself, which, proceeding by a definite method, starts from the great variety of phenomena which surround us in time and space; the only assumption