

occupied by the great thinkers who governed and revolutionised the thought of earlier generations before the great generalisations of science, notably those connected with the ideas of energy and the theory of descent, could have had any influence whatever. Though the latter have acquired in recent times a great, perhaps an undue, importance, it will only be after becoming acquainted with an earlier and different phase of philosophic thought that we shall have once more to return to those conceptions and trains of reasoning which must be uppermost in the mind of the writer as well as of the reader of the foregoing chapters.

5.
The geographical
centre of
philosophic
thought.

But in starting on the historical account of an entirely different realm of thought, I shall not only have to ask my readers to enter into a new circle of ideas, which for a long time during the course of the nineteenth century lay entirely outside of that circle of ideas with which we have become acquainted so far; we shall be assisted also by finding an entirely different geographical centre from which these ideas emanated. It has been repeatedly pointed out that the great volume of scientific thought with which we have hitherto been occupied, emanated in the latter part of the eighteenth century from the French capital; and in the course of narration I have had to go back almost in every single instance to the foundations laid in French scientific literature. I shall now have to invite my readers to give their attention to the peculiar features which were characteristic not of French but of German literature at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century.