

the latter all those endeavours which, clinging to historical institutions and beliefs, aim at finding the truth and value which are in them, and the peculiar importance which they may have for the present day. The work of destruction is indeed still going on; in the midst of this constructive or reconstructive work we still witness the workings of the revolutionary spirit. The healthy new life which Burns, Wordsworth, and Coleridge infused into English poetry at the beginning of our period was disturbed in its quiet growth by the revolutionary spirit of the Byronic school. The new thought, which grew up in Kant's philosophy and the idealistic school, degenerated in its further development into a shallow materialism and a hopeless scepticism. But none of these destructive influences, however passingly interesting they may have been, seem to have struck out any new line of thought. Whoever wishes to study the arguments by which social order was subverted and cherished beliefs destroyed will find them brilliantly and consistently expounded in the writings of the eighteenth century, from which many nihilists of our age have drawn their inspiration. This is not the task which I have in view. It has been performed in our time by many writers of great eminence. Nor do I intend to describe the courses which governments and politicians have taken in dealing with the legitimate demands of the people, such as a hundred years ago found a memorable expression in the American Declaration of Independence, and an exaggerated one in the cry of the French Revolution. Only to a small extent has the ideal of that great movement, as it lives in the mind of many a democratic leader, been realised in our century. In

31.
The thought
of Burns,
Words-
worth, and
Coleridge
disturbed by
the Byronic
school.

32.
Destructive
spirit in
writings of
eighteenth
century.