

than in America; where have political theories, the original rights of man, the ideas of liberty, equality, and brotherhood, been more widely put to the test; where have religious beliefs entered into closer contact with the work of the day; or where in our age has the simple rule of early Christianity been more successfully put into practice? An account of the application of thought taken merely from our European experience, where half our endeavour must always be spent in clearing away obstacles, in removing the *débris* of antiquated institutions, in overcoming prejudice, or battling with evils which have grown to uncontrollable magnitude, would give us but a poor notion of the influence of thought over material circumstances, and a very exaggerated one of the inertia of the mechanism of older societies. With the work of the inventor, the practical statesman, or the lawgiver, I have thus nothing to do at present; only in cases where practical problems have immediately reacted upon scientific research, or where social questions have given rise to special theories, shall we be compelled to cast a glance outside of the inner world of thought into which I invite my readers to retire.

34.
This is not
a history of
invention
or of practical
politics.

This inner world has, indeed, not been all rest and peace and quiet development. No age has been so rich in rival theories, so subversive of old ideas, so destructive of principles which stood firm for many ages, as ours. It is not my intention to emphasise this critical or radical tendency more than is necessary. True to the original view which I have already expressed, I intend to look upon thought as a constructive, not a destructive agency; on the world of ideas as a positive acquisition, not as a mere counterpart

35.
Thought to
be considered
in its
constructive,
not
in its
destructive
attitude.