

THE INTELLECTUAL CONDITION OF THE LABOUR PARTY

III

THE analysis of Ruskin's volume ("Unto This Last") given in the preceding article will have been enough to show some of the reasons, at all events, which have made that volume a favourite with the Labour Members in the present Parliament. The author, it is true, disclaims with reiterated emphasis any sympathy with the doctrines which go by the name of Socialism. He throughout assumes, and in many places asserts, that the capitalist is as essential to any advanced civilisation as is the labourer; but he insists that the labourer hitherto has been treated with profound injustice, and on principles which must be ultimately ruinous to all civilisation whatsoever; and he gives his authority to demands on behalf of the labouring classes, which were not generally made till years after this volume was written. Prominent amongst these is his demand for a "living wage"—that is to say, a payment regulated, not by the price at which a man will work to escape starvation, but by the cost of the commodities and conveniences which, under existing conditions are essential to a healthy, a moral, and a self-respecting human life. Again, whilst continually asserting that wealth, no less than labour, has its legitimate rights and its far-reaching social functions, he urges with still greater emphasis that wealth has also its duties; and that its powers, though it ought to be powerful, are at present greater than