

THE PROBLEM OF ECONOMIC EDUCATION.

THE fact that there is a wide divergence between many of the practical conclusions of economic science, as laid down by its professional exponents, and the thought of the public at large, as reflected in current discussion and in legislation, is one with which all are familiar. In some of its aspects this divergence has become so trite a subject that it might seem doubtful whether anything new and useful could now be said about it. There is, however, one aspect of the case well worthy the consideration of all interested in educational and social progress. What it is will be made clear by first differentiating it from another which has attracted much more attention.

The current view of the questions at issue between the contending parties is that the leading economists of the past, especially those of England, constructed an abstract science which recent experience and thought have shown to be inapplicable to the actual state of industrial society. These writers were too eager to make their conclusions the sole guiding principles in economic legislation, ignoring the difficulties growing out of the complex conditions of the social organism as it actually existed. Their system has, however, been taught and enforced with such persistence that the result is a general rebellion which now threatens to overturn the whole fabric of economic science. From this point of view the divergence is between a coherent but somewhat antiquated system mostly belonging to the past and a body of new ideas introduced by a younger generation of thinkers.

This may be true so far as it goes; and, were it the whole truth, there would be nothing abnormal or surprising in the situation. All science, properly so called, is,