

position of Political Economy is both better and worse. It is worse because the economical investigator is excluded from experiment. It is better inasmuch as its general principles are furnished to his hand. "*The Economist starts with a knowledge of ultimate causes.* He is already, at the outset of his enterprise, in the position which the physicist only attains after ages of laborious research. If any one doubt this, he has only to consider what the ultimate principles governing economic phenomena are. They consist of such facts as the following: certain mental feelings and certain animal propensities in human beings; the physical conditions under which production takes place; political institutions; the state of industrial art: in other words, the premises of Political Economy are the conclusions and proximate phenomena of other branches of knowledge" (pp. 87-8). The function of Political Economy, as stated by Prof. Cairnes, is to expound "the laws according to which [the phenomena of wealth] co-exist with or succeed each other; that is to say, it expounds the laws of the phenomena of wealth" (p. 35). Its method is to arrive at these laws by arguing downwards from general principles, such as the foregoing. In short, its method is essentially deductive. This was the view taken by the late Mr. Buckle, who sought to account for the success of Adam Smith, and other Scotchmen, in the cultivation of Political Economy, by asserting that the Scotch intellect is eminently deductive. Prof. Cairnes states that no economical truth meriting the name of scientific was ever discovered inductively, and that it may be safely asserted that none ever will be (p. 79); but, on the contrary, that all economical discoveries, such for instance as those of Adam Smith, Ricardo, and Malthus, were results of the opposite method. In every instance of such discoveries, the appeal is not to a set of facts, ascertained by experiment or observation, but to some mental or physical principle (p. 117). The modern German school of economists practically repudiates these ideas. The historical method (which, of course, is nothing more than induction from observation, there being no scope for experiment) is the favourite one with them. But if there is any truth in Prof. Cairnes's exposition, they are in the wrong track, and will find themselves engaged in a barren labour, so far, at least, as concerns the discovery of economic truths.

Doubtless, in social enquiries, as distinguished from merely economical ones, the historical method is the most potent that can be used; and is, in fact, being turned to the best account by Mr. Herbert Spencer, in his "*Principles of Sociology*," now in course of publication. But Prof. Cairnes shows that the two subjects are as distinct as the science of Mechanics is from Civil Engineering. "Political Economy," he says, "stands apart from all particular systems

of social or industrial existence. It has nothing to do with *laissez faire*, any more than with communism; with freedom of contract any more than with paternal government, or with systems of *status*. It stands apart from all particular systems, and is, moreover, absolutely neutral as between them all. Not of course, that the knowledge which it gives may not be employed to recommend some and to discredit others. This is inevitable, and is the only proper and legitimate use of economic knowledge. But this notwithstanding, the science is neutral, as between social schemes, in this important sense. It pronounces no judgment on the worthiness or desirableness of the ends aimed at in such systems. It tells us what their effects will be as regards a specific class of facts, thus contributing *data* toward the formation of a sound opinion respecting them. But here its function ends. The *data* thus furnished may, indeed, go far to determine our judgment, but they do not necessarily, and should not in practice always, do so. For there are few practical problems which do not present other aspects than the purely economical—political, moral, educational, artistic aspects—and these may involve consequences so weighty as to turn the scale against purely economic solutions. On the relative importance of such conflicting considerations, Political Economy offers no opinion, pronounces no judgment—thus, as I said, standing neutral between competing social schemes; neutral, as the science of Mechanics stands neutral between competing plans of railway construction, in which expense, for instance, as well as mechanical efficiency, is to be considered; neutral, as Chemistry stands neutral between competing plans of sanitary improvement; as Physiology stands neutral between opposing systems of medicine. It supplies the means, or, more correctly, a portion of the means for estimating all; it refuses to identify itself with any" (pp. 36-38). Had these considerations been present to the minds of some of our social philosophers, they would have been saved from wasting a good deal of feeble wit and misplaced invective at the expense of what they are pleased to call "the dismal science;" a phrase quite as applicable to gravitation, which, as Mr. Mill remarks, will infallibly break the neck of any philanthropist, however benevolent, who neglects to fulfil its requirements.

The last two lectures are devoted to illustrating the method of Political Economy, as actually practised in making the two capital discoveries known as the Malthusian Doctrine of Population, and Ricardo's Theory of Rent. About a year ago, during Mr. Goldwin Smith's candidature for election to the Council of Public Instruction, some of our enlightened organs of public opinion attempted (unsuccessfully, we are happy to say) to get up a cry against