

THE INTELLECTUAL CON- DITION OF THE LABOUR PARTY

VI

IN the preceding article I exhibited the general kinds of error which vitiate Ruskin's treatment of economic problems in a volume exceptionally popular among the Labour Members in the present Parliament; and I said that Ruskin's methods had reproduced themselves in the minds and language of this section of his admirers. I shall now go on to explain my meaning in detail. I shall examine in the present article their conception of labour and capital, comparing them with actual facts.

We will begin with a simple and non-controversial question—the question of what precisely the Labour Members mean by the word “labour,” when they speak about it, and claim to be its special representatives. Their meaning, within certain limits, is precisely the same as Ruskin's—namely, the manual and muscular exertion of the individual man as applied to industrial purposes. Ruskin, however, as we have seen, goes on to admit that, if all wealth is attributable to labour as thus generally defined, the definition must be qualified in such a way as to indicate the fact that the labour of different individuals differs very greatly, in respect both of the quality and the value of the results produced by it. The exceptional labour which delicately removes a cataract, or produces a peerless picture, differs from that which moves