

commodities conducing to a life that is noble. Thus a base and degrading picture, however skilfully painted, would according to him, not be wealth but the negation of wealth. The picture would be wealth only if it were ennobling as well as skilful. Hence, says Ruskin, apart from moral considerations, political economy is meaningless. The truth which he is seeking to emphasise, though often neglected, is indisputable. He forgets, however, that to both pictures certain things are essential with which morality has nothing at all to do, such as the preparation of the painter's pigments, and the laws of perspective. These remain the same whether the painter be a saint or a satyr. With political economy the case is precisely similar. It bears the same relation to the facts of wealth and industry that perspective bears to painting; and a large portion of its doctrines (for we will content ourselves with this qualified statement) represent laws to which human nature conforms, no matter whether it conforms to them in a spirit which is morally good or bad.

Here is the truth which Ruskin from first to last misses. So blind and impatient does his ethical ardour make him, that he not only formally repudiates what political economy teaches, but he does not even give himself time to understand correctly what it professes to teach. Political economy he defines, and he says that its exponents define it, as "the science of getting rich." By this he means that it claims to be a body of instructions which will enable the ruthless and the covetous to acquire great private fortunes. Now even if what he means were true, he expresses it with an inaccuracy which in an opponent he would have been the first person to denounce. Political economy, in this case, would not be a science at all. It would be an art founded on a science. As a matter of fact, however, political economy, except in the most accidental ways, has never claimed to be an art. As expounded by the very writers whom Ruskin specially attacks, it claims to be a science only, which is a very different thing, though Ruskin did not pause to realise in what the difference