

with great minuteness and precision. I never said that the conclusions of political economy, so far as they went, were false. I said only that they were left at present to rest upon rough assumptions which, in spite of the truth contained in them, were unanalysed, imperfect, and undefended. But Ruskin sees no need for the qualifications of discriminating criticism. Because the science, as at present expounded, is in certain respects imperfect, nothing will content him but to vociferate that it is no science at all, that from beginning to end all its calculations are "false," and its so-called laws "nugatory." He thus converts what might have been a most searching and useful criticism into a random vilification so exaggerated that, as it stands, it is nonsense.

If we wish for a proof that such is literally the case, it is given to us by Ruskin himself; for, though he opens his book with the assertion that the method of political economy is illusory, its conclusions false, and its laws nugatory, we find him again and again in this very book itself restating many of these conclusions and laws as indubitable, and appealing with unquestioning confidence to the precise method which he condemns.

I will give two signal illustrations of this, each bearing on a vital part of his argument. One of these is the question of what determines the rate of wages; the other is the question of what determines the price of commodities.

With regard to the first of these questions, as we saw in the preceding article, he sets out with saying that the rate of wages *ought* to be, and *can* be, determined, by the labourer's needs, "irrespectively of the demand for his labour." "Perhaps one of the most curious facts," he adds, "in the history of human error is the denial by the common political economist of the possibility of thus regulating wages." This utterance is quite in harmony with his engagement to exhibit the entire doctrines of the common economist as nugatory; but a little farther on we are surprised by coming on the following passage: