

## CHAPTER XIII

### *Conclusion.*

WE are now arrived at a remarkable point on the road over which I had proposed to travel. I ask permission to stop here for a moment. I will again repeat to the reader, that what he has just read is not properly a treatise on political economy. It is the first part of a treatise on the will, which ought to have two other parts; and which is itself but the sequel of a treatise on the understanding. Every thing here then ought to be co-ordinate with what precedes, and what will follow. Thus it ought not to excite surprize that I have not entered into the details of political economy; but it should have done so if I had not ascended to the origin of our wants and of our means, if I had not endeavoured to show how these wants and means arise from our faculty of willing, and if I had neglected to point out the relations of our physical with our moral wants.

It is that I may not merit these reproaches that I have commenced by a very general introduction, which no more belongs to economy than to morality or to legislation; but in which I have endeavoured clearly to explain what are the ideas for which we are indebted to our faculty of willing, and without which these three sciences would not exist for us. I shall be told that this introduction is too metaphysical. I answer that it could not be otherwise, and that it is precisely because it is very metaphysical that there is no bad metaphysics in the rest of the work. For nothing can so effectually preserve us from sophisms and illusions, as to begin by well elucidating the principal ideas. We have not been long without proofs of this.

In fact after having well observed the manner in which we know our wants, our original weakness, and our propensity to sympathy, we were no longer in any doubt on the nature of society. We have seen clearly that it is our natural and necessary state, that it is founded on personality and property, that it consists in conventions, that these

conventions are all exchanges, that the essence of exchange consists in being useful to both the contracting parties, and that the general advantages of exchanges (which constitute the social state) are to produce a concurrence of force, the increase and preservation of knowledge, and the division of labour.

After having examined in like manner our means of providing for our wants, we have also seen that our individual force is our only primitive riches; that the employment of this force, our labour, has a necessary value, which is the only cause of all the other values; that all our industry consists in fabrication and transportation; and that the effect of this industry is always and solely to add a degree of utility to the things on which it is exercised, and to furnish objects of consumption and means of existence.

Ascending always to the observation of our faculties, since personality and property are necessary it is evident that inequality is inevitable. But it is an evil. We have seen what are the causes of its exaggerated increase, and what its fatal effects.

These have explained to us in a very precise manner what has commonly been said very vaguely of the different states through which the same people successively pass.

Since we all have means, we are all proprietors; since we all have wants, we are all consumers. These two great interests always re-unite us. But we are naturally unequal; from whence it happens, in process of time, that some have property in advance, and many others have not, These latter can only live on the funds of the former. From thence two great classes of men, the hired and the hirers, opposed in interest in the respect, that the one selling their labor wishes to sell dear, and the other buying it wishes to buy cheap.

Amongst those who buy labour, some (the idle rich) employ it only in their personal satisfaction; its value is destroyed. The others (these are the undertakers of industry) employ it in a useful manner, which reproduces what it has cost. These alone preserve and increase the riches already acquired; these alone furnish to the other capitalists the revenues which they consume, since doing nothing, they can derive no benefit from their capitals, whether moveable or immoveable, but by hiring them to industrious men in consideration of a rent, which the latter pay out of their profits. The more the industry of the latter is perfected the more our means of existence are augmented.

In fine, we have remarked that the fecundity of the human species

is such, that the number of men is always proportionate to their means of existence; and that wheresoever this number does not continually and rapidly augment, it is because many individuals daily perish for want of the means of life.

Such are the principal truths which follow so immediately from the observation of our faculties, that it is impossible to dispute them. They lead us to consequences no less certain.

After having seen what society is, it is impossible not to reject the idea of foregoing it absolutely, or of founding it on an entire renunciation of one's self, and on a chimerical equality.

After having well unraveled the effects of our industry, it is impossible not to see that there is nothing more mysterious in agricultural industry than in any other, but we discover the inconveniences which are proper to it, and which are the cause of the different forms which it takes according to times and places.

When we have recognized the necessary cause of all values, we must conclude that it is absurd to pretend that money is but a sign; and odious to undertake to give it an arbitrary value, or forcibly to replace it by an imaginary value; and that every establishment which tends towards this end is dangerous and pernicious.

When we have seen how the formation of our riches is operated and their continual renovation, which we call *circulation*, we necessarily see that consumption in itself can never be useful, and that the exaggerated consumption, called luxury, is always hurtful: and we cannot otherwise than find ridiculous, the importance ascribed to men who have no other merit but of being consumers, as if that were a very rare talent.

Just views of consumption give necessarily just ideas on that greatest of consumers, government; on the effects of its expenses, its debts, and the different imposts which compose its revenues, and lead us clearly to trace the different reflections of these assessments, and to estimate the greater or less evil they do, according to the different classes of men on which they fall.

All these consequences are rigorous. They will not be the less contested. It was necessary then, to arrive at them methodically. But those above all, which will experience the greatest opposition, are what lead us to determine the degrees of importance of the different classes of society. How persuade the great rural proprietors, so much cried up, that they are but lenders of money, burdensome to agriculture and strangers to all its interests? How convince these idle rich, so

much respected, that they are absolutely good for nothing; and that their existence is an evil, inasmuch as it diminishes the number of useful labourers? How obtain acknowledgement from all those who hire labour, that the dearness of workmanship is a desirable thing; and that, in general, all the true interests of the poor are exactly the same as the true interest of the whole society. It is not merely their interests, well or ill understood, which oppose these truths, it is their passion; and among these passions, the most violent and antisocial of all, vanity. With them demonstration, or at least conviction is no longer possible; for the passions know how to obscure and entangle every thing; and it is with as much reason as ingenuity, that Hobbes has said, that if men had a lively desire not to believe that two and two make four, they would have succeeded in rendering this truth doubtful; we might produce proofs of it.

On many occasions, then, it is still more difficult to conciliate to truth than to discover it. This observation discovers to us a new relation between the subject we have treated of, and that which is next to occupy us, between the study of our actions and that of our sentiments. We have perceived, and said, that we should know well the consequences of our actions, to appreciate justly, the merit or demerit of the sentiments which urge us to this or that action; and now we see that it is necessary to analyze our sentiments themselves, submit them to a rigorous examination, distinguish those which being founded on just judgments always direct us well, and those which having their source in illusions, and rising from the obliquities of our minds, cannot fail to lead us astray and form within us a false and blind conscience, which always removes us further from the road of reason, the only one leading to happiness. This is what we shall next investigate, and if we have well exposed the results of the actions of men, and the effects of their passions, it seems that it will be easy to indicate the rules which they ought to prescribe to themselves. This would be the true spirit of laws and the best conclusion of a treatise on the will.