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Jane Haldimand Marcet
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Conversations on Political Economy

*In Which the Elements of that Science are
Familiarly Explained*

JANE HALDIMAND MARCET



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CONVERSATIONS
ON
POLITICAL ECONOMY;
IN WHICH
THE ELEMENTS OF THAT SCIENCE
ARE
FAMILIARLY EXPLAINED.

=====
BY THE AUTHOR OF
"CONVERSATIONS ON CHEMISTRY."
=====

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1816.

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PREFACE.

IN offering to the Public this small work, in which it is attempted to bring within the reach of young persons a science which no English writer has yet presented in an easy and familiar form, the author is far from inferring from the unexpected success of a former elementary work, on the subject of Chemistry, that the present attempt is likely to be received with equal favor. Political Economy, though so immediately connected with the happiness and improvement of mankind, and the object of so much controversy and speculation among men of knowledge,

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is not yet become a popular science, and is not generally considered as a study essential to early education. This work, therefore, independently of all its defects, will have to contend against the novelty of the pursuit with young persons of either sex, for the instruction of whom it is especially intended. If, however, it should be found useful, and if, upon the whole, the doctrines it contains should appear sound and sufficiently well explained, the author flatters herself that this attempt will not be too severely judged. She hopes it will be remembered that in devising the plan of this work, she was in a great degree obliged to form the path she has pursued, and had scarcely any other guide in this popular mode of viewing the subject, than the recollection of the impressions she herself experienced when she first turned her attention to this study; though she has subsequently derived great assistance from the kindness of a few

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friends, who revised her sheets as she advanced in the undertaking.

As to the principles and materials of the work, it is so obvious that they have been obtained from the writings of the great masters who have treated this subject, and more particularly from those of Dr. Adam Smith, of Mr. Malthus, M. Say, and M. Sismondi, that the author has not thought it necessary to load these pages with repeated acknowledgments and incessant references.

It will immediately be perceived by those to whom the subject is not new, that a few of the most abstruse questions and controversies in Political Economy have been entirely omitted, and that others have been stated and discussed without any positive conclusion being deduced. This is a defect unavoidably attached not only to the Author's limited knowledge,

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but also to the real difficulty of the science. In general, however, when the soundness of a doctrine has appeared well established, it has been stated conscientiously, without any excess of caution or reserve, and with the sole object of diffusing useful truths.

It has often been a matter of doubt among the author's literary advisers, whether the form of dialogues, which was adopted in the *Conversations on Chemistry*, should be preserved in this *Essay*. She has, however, ultimately decided for the affirmative; not that she particularly studied to introduce strict consistency of character, or uniformity of intellect, in the remarks of her pupil, an attempt which might have often impeded the elucidation of the subject; but because it gave her an opportunity of introducing objections, and placing in various points of view questions and answers as they had actually occurred

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to her own mind, a plan which would not have suited a more didactic composition. It will be observed accordingly, that the colloquial form is not here confined to the mere intersection of the argument by questions and answers, as in common school-books : but that the questions are generally the vehicle of some collateral remarks contributing to illustrate the subject ; and that they are in fact such as would be likely to arise in the mind of an intelligent young person, fluctuating between the impulse of her heart and the progress of her reason, and naturally imbued with all the prejudices and popular feelings of uninformed benevolence.

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