

*The Physiology of Industry: being an exposure of certain fallacies in existing theories of Economics.* By A. F. MUMMERY and J. A. HOBSON. (London: John Murray. 1889.)

These champions of paradox have chosen a very difficult battleground on which to encounter a very formidable adversary. They attack Mill's position, that "saving enriches and spending impoverishes the community along with the individual." Messrs. Mummery and Hobson maintain, on the contrary, that "saving does not reduce the aggregate consumed, but merely varies the consumers." It appears to us that the "fundamental theorems" of orthodox political economy with respect to capital are open to a temperate criticism, such as Professors Walker and Sidgwick have directed against the doctrine that "Capital is the result of saving," or the mystery that "demand for commodities is not demand for labour." But it is with literary as with ordinary justice, according to the old adage. One man may with impunity try to remove what seemed a secure possession of science, while another cannot safely look over the hedges and boundaries which received opinion fixes. The attempt to unsettle consecrated tenets is not very hopeful, unless the public, whose attention is solicited, have some security against waste of their time and trouble. It may fairly be required of very paradoxical writers that they should either evince undoubted speculative genius, or extraordinarily wide learning. We do not feel able in the present instance to offer these guarantees to the reading public. When a critic has not made up his mind about a subject, he may often be assisted in making up his mind about a writer on that subject, by having regard to what has been written on some subsidiary topic. It is related that an Oxford professor of the old

school, not very deeply imbued with German philosophy, was once called upon to examine a candidate for honours who dealt freely in the terminology of Fichte and Hegel. The examiner was not a little embarrassed; but he suspended his judgment, until he came to a passage where the "*Transcendental Eye*" was repeatedly referred to. The examiner was not familiar with the new-fangled metaphysical theories touching the *ego*. But he rightly judged that the smattering of the subject which the candidate had picked up at some imperfectly understood lecture did not deserve high marks. The candidates for fame whom we are now examining do not afford so clear a test of their quality. Still, we think that few who peruse their subsidiary chapter on "Scarcity of Gold," will care to follow them into still more perplexing subjects. They complacently suppose that they have refuted what "the Bimetallists fondly imagine," when, by an array of irrelevant statistics, they demonstrate that prices do not rise and fall with the rise and fall of the reserve in the Bank of England. But, surely, what the more acute and academic Bimetallists urge is that the fall of prices is occasioned by the deficiency of precious metal, not in the reserves of the Bank of England, but throughout the system of countries in monetary communication—what one of the learned Germans of this persuasion calls the *Munzgebiet*. Our authors egregiously violate the sound principle that a doctrine should be judged as it is stated by its ablest advocates. We speak without prejudice, not blindly addicted to any species of "metallism," yet not admitting that any stick is good enough to beat a Bimetallist with. Any stick which these controversialists employ is very likely to be taken up by the wrong end. But it is fair to add that the subjects which they have chosen are exceedingly difficult. It is no disparagement of their abilities to say that they have not thrown much additional light on points which have been left in some obscurity by the most distinguished economists.