

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

ON INTOLERABLES

A STUDY IN THE LOGIC OF VALUATION.

I.

TO be able to say, 'this is unthinkable, inconceivable,' and to say it with conviction, has ever been felt to be the beginning of wisdom. Man, greedy of this certainty, has tried in many different ways, often dogmatically and gratuitously, often with rare critical insight, and again with a final inner compunction, to set such limits to his thought and will.

But with time we have become critical of these fruitful exclusions. To be able to say with conviction, 'such and such a thing is inconceivable,' requires that one shall be either very knowing or unknowing, very simple or very astute. One learns that it is not inconceivable that water should be hard, that polyandry is not unthinkable. Our notions have been constantly revised, in the world of nature and morals alike, until finally there is nothing the opposite of which we find inconceivable except, perhaps, a few formal logical propositions.

On another point also man has learned wisdom in this matter. Not only has he discovered that he has constantly confused the unimaginable with the unthinkable, but that many propositions which he thought to be certain because their opposites are inconceivable, are really so merely because they are *intolerable* to his feeling and will. The philosophical saint of the Middle Ages found it inconceivable that the most perfect Being, having once been thought, should not also exist. To the post-Kantian