

THE
PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

PHILOSOPHY IN FRANCE, 1922-1923.¹

I.

INTEREST in the history of thought is constant, and is apparently even on the increase. This fact is hardly due to a weariness with thinking or to distrust of human reason, as might have been supposed on the morrow of the war. It seems rather to indicate the influence of ideas analogous to those which were formerly dominant, in the first half of the nineteenth century, and which later yielded to conceptions less favorable to this sort of studies. I refer to the conviction that reason learns to know itself only through its history, and that, far from seeking to establish itself from the ground up in the non-temporal, philosophy can throw light on its problems and understand its own categories only by connecting them with all their prior development. It was, moreover, the example of the positive sciences which strongly served for some fifty years to popularize this ideal of eternal truths, alien to all change. But today these sciences themselves seek less and less to attain the immutable and to place themselves beyond change. Enlightened in this by philosophy, they have become penetrated by a critical spirit more akin to evolutionism than to Kantian formalism. They regard their movement as a progressive development of ideas, and turn toward their history. And by a very natural reaction philosophy does the same.

Many of these historical works are theses for the *doctorat*

¹ Translated from the French by Professor R. A. Tsanoff.