

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

THE EARLY IDEALISM OF JONATHAN EDWARDS.

THE history of philosophy in America attracts but little notice from those who treat of the general history of philosophy. It is hardly considered even by ourselves. And indeed it must be confessed that America has hitherto had but little direct influence on the main currents of the world's speculative thought. In this department of the spiritual life we have been more imitative than creative. Nevertheless the history of philosophy in America is nothing to be ashamed of, and it contains at least one great name. Competent critics unite in regarding Jonathan Edwards as the most original metaphysician and subtle reasoner that America has produced, while there is not wanting authority for pronouncing him not only the greatest of American thinkers, but "the highest speculative genius of the eighteenth century."¹

Until recently Edwards has been best known as a philosophical theologian by his treatise on the Will. This work is still spoken of as "the one large contribution which America has made to the deeper philosophic thought of the world."² Now, however, there is a tendency to qualify somewhat the admiration formerly expressed for this great work, and to emphasize rather the importance of such writings as the *Treatise on the Religious Affec-*

¹ A. M. Fairbairn in his essay on Edwards in *Prophets of the Christian Faith*. Cf. Moses Coit Tyler, *Hist. of Am. Lit.*, II, p. 177; A. C. Fraser, *Life of Berkeley*, p. 182.

² Quoted by A. V. G. Allen, *Jonathan Edwards*, p. 283.