

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL METHOD OF DURKHEIM.

ÉMILE DURKHEIM is not merely a writer of yesterday. He is a force to be reckoned with for many a day to come. He entered upon the study of sociology with the conviction that little or nothing of real scientific value had been done in that field even by those who, like Comte and Spencer, were reputed to be founders or reformers of the science. He set himself to the task of initiating a real science, according to standards which early framed themselves in his mind. His position is that of an extremist, an uncompromising doctrinaire. Hence his weakness; but hence also, in no small degree, his extraordinary power.

Durkheim proposed to make of sociology a far more strictly empirical science than it had ever before been conceived. Yet his own temper is rationalistic through and through. He approaches his subject with a scheme ready-made for carrying on the investigation of the facts, and a framework into which the results of his investigations shall fall. He is as rationalistic in sociology as Descartes was in physics and physiology. And it is, no doubt, in conscious emulation of Descartes that he wrote a new "Discourse on Method":—*Les règles de la méthode sociologique*.

As in the case of Descartes, the method is proposed, primarily, as one which has grown out of the personal experience of the writer; and Durkheim expressly declares that with his own and others' further experience the method will doubtless be revised and developed in important ways. But the declaration counts for little. As feature after feature of the method is expounded,