

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

ETHICS OF STATES.¹

THE lover of paradox can find no richer field than that of the ethics of states. On the one hand no institution has commanded nobler devotion or inspired loftier art; on the other, none has lent itself so ruthlessly to the destruction of every human interest and value, or has practiced so consistently what in common life we all call crime. On the one hand it has been presented by philosopher and publicist as the institution in which man may live nobly and well, as the institution in which freedom may be secured, or as the institution in which the organic unity of mankind is realized and the individual is raised to higher consciousness and larger horizons. On the other it has been convicted by history of organizing hatred more effectively than love; of organizing oppression more resolutely than safeguards of liberty; and of bending its energies and using its resources more unsparingly to destroy life than to save it. We should not expect to find in it the family affections, the charm of friendship, the ideals of religion. But we might look for respect for elementary rights. What are the facts? The State hales private persons before its bar if they violate person or property, break contracts, or enslave their fellows, but itself commits homicide, trespass, breaks treaties, and takes possession against their will of the persons and property of multitudes who have done it no harm.

¹ Delivered as the presidential address before a joint meeting of the American and Western Philosophical Associations at the University of Chicago, December 28, 1914.