

# THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

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## PHILOSOPHY AND COMMON SENSE.<sup>1</sup>

### I.

PHILOSOPHY and common sense have often waged an internecine warfare. Embittered feeling has moved both parties to the conflict. "There are two things which I must deprecate," writes Kant toward the close of the *Prolegomena*, "first, trifling about probability and conjecture . . . ; and, secondly, decision by the magic wand of so-called common sense." And more than seventy years earlier Berkeley had made a similar demand, half evading, half disdaining the comparison of his theory with the judgment of mankind. "Though we should grant a notion to be never so universally and steadfastly adhered to"—so he urges in the *Principles of Human Knowledge* (§ 55)—"yet this is but a weak argument of its truth. . . ." And common sense repays the debt of scorn with interest added. Philosophy is abstruse and valueless, the common man believes—is prone to believe to-day more generally and more firmly than in many other periods of the world. The philosophers form an amiable company, he concedes. For he thinks of us as enthusiasts, rather more amiable and considerably more absurd than the social reformers, to whom, in certain points of variation from the average of mankind, we show not a little of resemblance. Philosophy is abstract and hence unpractical. The solution of

<sup>1</sup> Delivered as the presidential address before the fifteenth annual meeting of the American Philosophical Association, at the University of Pennsylvania, December 28, 1915.