

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

THE TEST OF PRAGMATISM.

IN a recent number of *The Popular Science Monthly*, the Italian pragmatist, Papini, makes the very significant statement that "pragmatism is really less a philosophy than a method of doing without a philosophy." From this point of view, any critique of pragmatism would prove gratuitous. However, the doctrines of pragmatism are regarded in many quarters to-day in a very different light. Its adherents are not satisfied with considering it as a substitute for philosophy, but insist that it merits the name and the rank of the only true philosophy as well.

If pragmatism is to justify itself, it must surely be able to satisfy the test to which it requires all other alleged truth to be subjected. Can it stand its own test? "Whatever works is true." Does pragmatism measure up to this standard? Yes and no. There are so many cases where truth is revealed by the pragmatic test easily and effectually, that it is natural to fall into the error that here is the master-key that will fit all locks. If one is lost in the forest and wishes to find the true trail, if the machine is out of gear and needs adjustment, if the child has a fever and needs an antipyretic, if the safe must be opened and only the true combination will do it, — in all of these and in an innumerable number of similar cases, the criterion of a practical test both discovers and proves the truth in each instance. There has been too great a tendency on the part of many of the advocates of pragmatism, however, to indulge in the method of proof by illustration. The illustrations are for the most part apposite and convincing as regards both the prevalence and the efficiency of the pragmatic method over extensive areas of thought and