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## THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

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### OLD AND NEW IN PHILOSOPHIC METHOD.

IF it be true, as Hume said, that Metaphysics is the most contentious of sciences, it is because the problem of existence is vast and intricate, while our powers are limited. Only by slow advances do we come to know what the problem includes; and, in the midst of this attempt, we keep on constructing hypotheses which seem to account for what has been ascertained. We have only to bear in mind the situation in which we are placed, in order to understand how it should happen that old theories are constantly disappearing, and new theories arising. If any one ask, "Why has Philosophy not a fixed form as it is with the exact sciences?" this is the answer: — because the enigma of existence is great, and theories are apt to be found insufficient. This is equivalent to saying that knowledge is constantly widening, and thought continually striving to *account for* what is known. The want of fixedness of form, often urged as a complaint against Philosophy, is only the indication of human progress. The power of persistent thought proves the test of all past thought, and becomes a measure of possible advances in the immediate future. The rise and fall of theories thus belongs to the history of human thought. If, as Shakespeare says, man is a being of "large discourse looking before and after," each new theory which arrests attention is, as Carlyle suggests, telling the universe "what o'clock it really is." It marks the persistence of thought in the history of our race. It is this which proves the test of theory. Thus thought shows itself greater than observational science, coming more home to the heart of the