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Philosophy in the Last Forty Years

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PHILOSOPHY IN THE LAST FORTY YEARS.

FIRST ARTICLE.

THERE are three merits to which philosophical views that seek to dominate the spirit of their time, and, if possible, of the future, always make pretension—that their highest principle cannot possibly be contradicted; that their method, which is usually everywhere the same, is simple; and finally, that the logical structure of the system in which they gather together the results they have attained, rests throughout on intuitive evidence. I should hesitate to ground upon any one of these three titles, the much more modest claim which I present to secure the favourable attention of my English readers to the thoughts which I shall here lay before them; but I may explain the reasons why I doubt the value of all three, and why I have been hitherto moved to give up all thought of attempting to impress such a character upon my own views.

When I began my philosophical studies, the predominant opinion was still that to which Fichte has given the distinctest expression, that no theory of the world should pass for truth and science which was unable to explain all the particular parts of the world's history as independent consequences of a single general principle. Bred in the traditions of the Hegelian school, which believed itself to