

THE
PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

BELIEFS AND REALITIES.¹

I.

BELIEFS look both ways : they are the original Mr. Facing-both-ways. They form and judge — either justify or condemn — the agents who entertain them and insist upon them. They are of things whose immediate meaning they supply. To believe is to ascribe value, impute meaning, assign import. The collection and interaction of these appraisals and assessments is the world of the common man, — that is, of man as an individual and not as a professional being or class specimen. Thus things are always characters, not just entities ; they behave and respond and provoke. In the behavior which exemplifies and tests their character, they are things which help and hinder ; disturb and pacify ; resist and comply ; are dismal and mirthful, orderly and deformed, queer and commonplace ; they agree and disagree ; are better and worse.

Thus the human world, whether or no it have core and axis, has both presence and transfiguration. It means here and now, not in some transcendent sphere. It moves, of itself, to varied incremental meaning, not to some far off event, whether divine or diabolic. For such immediate meanings are the bases, the 'predicaments' of human conduct. Conduct is the real, and thus the logical, working out of the commitments of belief. That believed better is held to, asserted, affirmed, that is, acted upon. The moments of its experience are the natural 'transcendentals' ; the decisive, the critical, standards of further estimation,

¹ Read as the Presidential Address at the fifth annual meeting of the American Philosophical Association, at Cambridge, December 28, 1905.