

CURRENT LITERATURE.

A LIFE OF FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE.

Dr. M. A. Mugge, in "Friedrich Nietzsche, His Life and Work," has produced the first reasonably complete account in English of the philosopher of the new renaissance. It contains the first detailed biography, the first chronological sketch of all Nietzsche's works, the fullest bibliography, and the sanest appreciation. It is essential to an understanding of Nietzsche to realise the connection between his life and works. Probably in the case of few writers are the formative factors more clearly developed—but they have to be looked for. Nietzsche, for instance, was still a schoolboy when he wrote a Latin essay on a phrase of Theognis, which equates aristocracy and virtue, slavery and vice; while all the long years he devoted subsequently to classical philology were the seed time of what is fundamentally Greek in the Nietzschean philosophy—which means the larger part of it. It was here he learned to play with the subtle speculation of "Eternal Recurrence," and it was here that he learned to give back to the word "virtue" its classic significance. It was the new Germany with its apotheosis of governmentalism that drove him to the extreme of anarchical individualism, and we may probably look to his heredity for the formula of his mental and emotional disequilibrium, which, with all respect to the learned author, we cannot regard as a sudden cerebral lapse in 1888. Unfortunately the data for a discussion of Nietzsche's illness have not yet been made public; but internal evidence is enough to convince us that whatever disequilibrium was developing there was no actual insanity before the year named. There is the further difficulty in dealing with Nietzsche, that he is the least systematic of philosophers—at most he can only be said to adumbrate a system that is to be—and his view-point changes immensely, though in a certain well-defined chronological sequence. As a thinker he begins as a pessimistic idealist, strongly influenced by Schopenhauer and Wagner. Later he discards this discipleship, and enters on a path which the Time-Spirit rather than Nietzsche himself was carving into futurity. In this period he was preoccupied with the problem of the origin of morals, and we see emerging the two fundamental concepts of life as a basis for morality, rather than morality as a guide-book to life, and of the Superman as the ideal abstract of racial efficiency. In his third period (to which "Thus Spake Zarathustra" belongs) rationalistic asceticism slips into the background, and we hear more and more of instinct, the "Will to Power" as the guiding principles of conduct, but over-weighted by the attempt at a new synthesis he drifts into a sort of ethical nihilism. The present book is particularly valuable in that it sums up very fairly the many critical estimates of Nietzsche. Himself a writer exclusively in epigram and aphorism, he has tempted many to sum him up in a paradox. But of himself he said: "A prelude am I to better players," and it is as prelude that he is most significant. During the last twenty years his influence upon European thought has

is most significant. During the last twenty years his influence upon European thought has been enormous. (From George Robertson.)