

CURRENT LITERATURE.

THE DISCOVERY OF NIETZSCHE.

The world, as a respectable poet has assured us, knows nothing of its greatest men. And still less does it know anything of the great ideas that come formative and dynamic upon it, finally to obsess it and force it into the arena of great deeds. Although it seems a paradox, the outstanding characteristic of the nineteenth century was its lack of ideas. It can boast one generalisation—the doctrine of development—that promised to be epic, and became merely episodal. Nothing is more remarkable in the history of thought than the way in which Herbert Spencer, the philosopher of evolution, failed so conspicuously to evolve. The synthetic philosophy begins as science and ends as the survival of the least fit among the philosopher's hereditary prejudices. As he failed to see that the *laissez-faire* individualism of the old Liberals was incompatible with the higher synthesis of society, so he failed to see that the fundamental doctrine of evolution demanded not an adjustment merely, but very often a reversal, of the theory of morals. No man was ever more completely the victim of his environment than was Herbert Spencer. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the driving force of Darwinism had spent itself before the last quarter of the century, and before it had been able to have any serious effect on the philosophy, the ethics, and the morals of the schools. Evolution, with its development from homogeneity to heterogeneity, has become the creed of warring sects, and it needs transfiguration before it can become again a vital and compelling power over the thoughts of men. It was as a herald of new dawn that Nietzsche came with lips aflame with the divine fire of Dionysus, and with a heart of stone to turn deaf ears to the bootless cries of men. It was as a herald, breathless and in haste, that he shouted his defiance—a defiance wicked and shameful as it seemed to some, wild and meaningless as it seemed to nearly all. But no word returns to him who utters it in vain. It must accomplish whereunto it has been sent. Nearly a quarter of a century ago Nietzsche passed into impenetrable gloom, and now comes a Nietzschean generation knocking at the door. Not in Germany or in France alone, but in an England so amazingly fecund in the stereotyped that it must be sterile to all things new and strange, the spirit of Nietzsche draws to it the young intelligence of the twentieth century. The complete edition of Nietzsche's works now being issued in English is meeting with a quite unexpected demand, and books that undertake their exegesis for the multitude are beginning to pour from the printing presses. Among such is J. M. Kennedy's "The Quintessence of Nietzsche" (Werner Laurie), a capable exposition, clear, concise, covering the ground well enough, the making of a path along which the born Nietzschean may travel to Nietzsche—for no other is there an open way. And the born Nietzschean must make his own philosophy and find his own application of it to life. Nietzsche is no Master-Builder. He did no more

and find his own application of it to life. Nietzsche is no Master-Builder. He did no more than chisel fragmentary intaglios of air and beasts for a Castle Dangerous whose walls never rose, and in which he himself was least of all fit to live. His was but a Pisgah sight of Palestine. Yet he had left behind the ten plagues of Egypt. On smoothed faces of stone high up the mountain he had found the writing of those New Tables he brought down to men wandering in a manna-less land. "This is my morning, my day beginneth; arise now, arise thou great noontide. Thus spake Zarathustra, and left his cave, glowing and strong, like a morning sun coming out of gloomy mountains."