

#### THE PHILOSOPHY OF NIETZSCHE.

This is the subject of a "Quarterly" article based on the popular edition of Nietzsche, now complete in 18 fairly cheap volumes—something to be read by all educated persons. The article is quite a sane appreciation of Nietzsche—in itself an evidence of the cosmopolitan assimilation of the philosopher's ideas, which, after all, are as few as they are fundamental. The paradox of the aphoristic method, as the writer remarks, is apt to be over-exaggerated, and made needlessly puzzling. Nietzsche himself had a whimsical delight in making it so. It was a favourite phrase of his that he tacked on to the title of "Zarathustra"—a book for all and none—and he certainly overestimated his individuality and detachment from the main current of rational philosophical thought. Nowadays we are most of us Nietzschean, although most of us would bitterly repudiate the allegation, and despise the allegator. For, after all, he is little more than a ruthless and iconoclastic critic of formulae long since emptied of their contents, and an apostle of an individualism of the Greek type which the healthy modern man has resurrected out of the morass of asceticism. To see life truly, and see it whole; to practise not renunciation for renunciation's sake; to be the victim of no shibboleth; to have a given faith in the possibility of progress, if not for the many, at least for the few; to look, therefore, for the sometime emergence of the superman (unworthy are we to loosen the shoes of him who shall come after), and to recognise that for him there must be a transvaluation of all values; to repudiate in theory what most men repudiate in practice in the matter of the "moral" basis of conduct, making efficiency the test of moral values—all this is Nietzsche, and there is little of it in which the modern man has not a considerable share. When Nietzsche is ignorantly spoken of as mad, or immoral, all that is really meant is that he is a sane and not a superstitious critic of conduct; although, outside Germany, he has himself to blame for the misconceptions heaped upon him. It is true that he proclaims a view of life that is frankly pagan; it is true he proclaims a society which is frankly aristocratic rather than democratic in its organisation; it is true that he goes further than the eugenicist, and as far almost as Brahminism, in the cult of a new sort of caste, founded on the national inter-selection of the "few" from whom the "superman" may be expected to develop; but stripped of their tantalising and aggressive presentiment, most men who think at all, and do not fall by the wayside into some slough of philosophic despond, ultimately emerge not very far from where he came out. For all his heroic individuality he is as much a child of the age as Ibsen, or Spenser, or Wagner, or Walter Pater, or Bernard Shaw—a collection as suggestive as it looks bizarre, for the same sort of time-spirit, expressing itself so diversely as it did, was working in all these men, and it must not be forgotten that Nietzsche's working mental life links him closely to the earlier of the group of moderns. He is still trying to shake off shackles that the boy of the twentieth century has never worn, and which, consequently, he can never understand. He may even be the superman, in his fearlessness, his frank worship of beauty and of strength, in his insouciance, in his long-sighted vision, without knowing it; and one day he will come down from his mountain, his eagle over head, his serpent at his feet, and in the market places those who see him will bow the head.