

NIETZSCHE.

Even since the outbreak of war there has been a good deal of discussion about the degree of responsibility for the development of Prussian militarism incurred by Nietzsche, Treitschke, and Bernhardi. There has been most difference of opinion in the case of Nietzsche. Some hold that his teaching more than that of any other man has moulded the modern national character of Germany. Others deny him any influence whatever, and consider that his philosophy is antipathetic to the German temperament. The latest contribution to the debate is "Nietzsche and the Ideals of Modern Germany," by Professor H. L. Stewart.

Professor Stewart feels no doubts whatever on the question. No one would have been more amazed than the philosopher himself to learn that the people he scarified with a mordant pen have hailed him as the true exponent of their national spirit, but this is exactly what has happened. The point is that Germany has taken over for national use a principle of conduct evolved for an individual. Nietzsche preached a ferocious individualism which is quite foreign to the temperament of the Germans. He advocated anarchical doctrines, whereas the chief trait of the German is his susceptibility to discipline. This has misled many critics. "So, too," continues the author, "his books supply no nutriment to the national vanity; against no race except the English has he launched such invectives as against the people among whom he lived. This is one of the reasons which have made those critics who can see only the letter of his teaching acquit him of all responsibility for Prussian militarism. One of the cultures towards which Germany has shown herself most ruthless is that of Poland, yet it was Nietzsche's most passionate protest about himself that he was no German, but a Pole. With the Germans he would never identify himself; he saw in them just those low qualities against which his polemics were directed."

Yet the Nietzschean creed with its utter lack of scruple and its cult of force has permeated modern Germany. The philosopher of the "will to power" who was prepared to applaud dominance wherever he saw a people strong enough to exercise it; the man who insists again and again that the day of small communities is past, that it is time to think imperially, that laws are only for those with slave-souls, and that for the super-type they do not exist; that success carries justification in itself—can we say that he is not alive in the Germany of to-day. "It is surprising," concludes Professor Stewart, "that a people which had made its way by international brigandage should acclaim the man who told them that courage in the field will redeem any injustice, and that a good war will sanctify any cause. . . . Nietzsche's points of agreement with militarism are far more significant than his points of dissent. I take him not as the originator of any policy, but as typical of a mood which has had fearful consequences for mankind." (Edward Arnold.)