

THE CULT OF NIETZSCHE AND WHAT IT HAS LED TO.

(By Dr. E. Griffith-Jones in the "Christian World.")

Seven years ago, when I was spending a happy summer semester in the German universities, and studying the main currents of thought among the gebildeten or cultured classes, I was struck by the considerable emphasis laid by several of the leading men with whom I came in contact on the extent to which the cult of Nietzsche was in the ascendant among the rising and official people. We are now reaping the consequences of that movement in a harvest of blood and tears. For the German attitude in this war is the translation into action of the theories of that bold and unscrupulous thinker; and it is against Nietzsche that the rest of the world is instinctively under arms.

Every age has produced its atheists and materialists who have conspired against the Christian view of God and of the world, but almost all of them have shirked the logical issue of their theories, and have retained the Christian morality while repudiating the world-view on which it is based. It was reserved for Nietzsche alone to take the last fateful step, to pour contempt on the ethics of Jesus, to proclaim Him a charlatan and a knave, and to erect instead an altar to the God of Force, which is the true and only Anti-Christ. He may be described among the thinkers of the nineteenth century as the only man to put the real alternative of the Christian Creed. He had the courage to do this boldly and without compromise, and he had the genius to put the case with the breadth of a philosopher and the zeal of a prophet. In reading Nietzsche, we find ourselves in a topsy-turvy ethical universe. All we had been taught to consider sacred is cast out as contemptible; all we had learnt to deem shocking and hateful is elevated into the "new law of the prophets." There is in Nietzsche a "transvaluation of all values;" we are taken into the region "beyond good and evil;" and in that Gothic-damming or "twilight of all the Gods" we hear the strident voice of his "Zarathustra" crying aloud—"a new bestiality give I unto you: Be Hard!" During the seventies and 'eighties, when he wrote his chief works, two influences gave this revolutionary thinker his foothold—the one in the world of thought, the other in the world of affairs. The first was Darwinism, with its theory of the "survival of the fittest" (i.e., the strongest), which furnished him with his philosophical basis; the second was Bismarckism, which in

furnished him with his philosophical basis; the second was Bismarckism, which in the time seemed to justify a cynical disregard of all ethical principle by the rise of the German Empire on the basis of an iron-bound military system and a cynical diplomacy. It is easy to pour contempt on the teachings of Nietzsche from the standpoint of assured Christian faith; it is not easy to disprove its consistency with the crudely Darwinian philosophy that once prevailed—more, it is true, in Germany than here, where our theories are seldom carried to their practical conclusions. For pure Darwinism spells pure egoism; the race is to the swift (and the cunning), and the battle to the strong. And Nietzsche is egoism in robes; it is the philosophical justification of privilege, and power, and selfishness. It is true it has its element of idealism in the theory of the Superman—the ideal Being who is some time to evolve out of the struggles and competitions of present humanity; and it has its scientific basis in the peril which unquestionably faces the path of an exaggerated humanitarianism in giving too free an opportunity for the decadent elements of the race to multiply unduly. As a needful corrective of the "soft" tendencies in much modern speculation (especially in sociological directions), Nietzscheism has its undoubted place, and has done good work. But as an ultimate and final-philosophy of life, Nietzscheism has gone under with the end of the New Evolution, which proclaims with no uncertain voice the essential logical importance of "the struggle for life of others," to which Professor Drummond first gave classic expression, and which has re-established the fundamental principles of the Christian on grounds that cannot be shaken. From this point of view Nietzsche's "Will to Power" is that of the "monsters of slime"—the dinosaurs and the ichthyosaurs who perished because (like the baboons) there was "too much egoism in the cosmos." The sublimatic and resplendent self-assertion which was Nietzsche's simple principle of thought and conduct is thus a hopeless anachronism; it is a phase which many even of the highest creature races have outgrown, as every bee-hive and anthep demonstrates; and if there is any race of Supermen to develop, it must be along other lines than those of the "mad philosopher."

None the less, Nietzsche has had an enormous vogue in his own land—not, indeed, among responsible thinkers, but among the class who have shaped German international policy and erected the system of east-iron militarism under which his countrymen have been burdened for nearly fifty years. He has helped to build up that amazing new science which goes by the high-sounding name of Welt Politik, whose chief characteristic seems to be the negation of every law of honor and every principle of justice, especially towards weaker nations. And he has fed into vogue the spirit which has made the soldier into a professional bully who strikes down

a professional bully who subdues down civilians on the plea of "putative self-defence," and which, as H. G. Wells has recently said, "is full of devices such as us poor fools cannot invent; sudden attacks without a declaration of war; vast schemes for spy-systems, and assassin-like disguises, the cowing of a country by the wholesale shooting of civil non-combatants, breaches of neutrality, national treacheries, altered dispatches, forged letters, diplomatic lies, a perfect world-organisation of super-sneaks." This is the practical issue of Nietzscheism.

And it is against this Frankenstein's monster that the world is under arms just now. Mr. Asquith's great speech was a clarion-call to all the higher instincts of the civilised world to rise and put an end to an intolerable attempt to enthrone the Gospel of the Bully in the heart of modern Europe. To allow this would be to reverse the course of history for 2,000 years and to unlearn all the higher lessons of human experience. It is good to find that our Prime Minister's attitude has been instantly justified, not only by the united and unhesitating judgment of the people of this land and its dependencies, but by the conscience of the civilised world. Let us pray that the sword be not sheathed till the fell monster of militarism has been "bled white," so that international politics may enter on a new and healthier phase, and the same morality is honored among diplomats as in the social relationships of respectable men and women.

It is of the utmost importance that this fundamental aspect of the war should be grasped at the present moment. We are fighting, not against a nation but against an intolerable system. Nay, surely we are not at war against the German people. We are fighting for them as well as for the Belgians and for ourselves. For they, after all, are the true victims of the system against which we have taken arms in this tremendous crusade. And they are a great people to whom the world owes a debt such as it owes to scarcely any other nation. They are our kindfolk by blood. They are our benefactors in philosophy, theology, science, discovery, invention, literature, religion. Of late years we had grown to understand each other better, and to exchange not only goods, but the higher benefits of spiritual intercourse at a pace and with an intensity never before approached. It is to be feared that this war will end in a setback in this most desirable rapprochement—for a time. But if we are wise, and self-restrained, and chivalrous in the way we conduct this campaign; if we refuse to harbor resentment, and are slow to credit the easy slanders of rumor, and quick to recognise valor and self-devotion, and should the victory happily be with us—generous in our conditions of peace, it will be but for a time. Germany may

will be but for a time. Germany may sorely need a friend ere this struggle is finally settled. It should be the earnest care of our churches and of all the individual Christians of this nation to see that Britain proves to be that friend in need. It is our duty first and foremost to break in pieces like a potter's vessel the powers of the military caste in Europe whose centre is Berlin; it should be our next duty to see that the German nation is enabled to emerge from the baptism of blood and fire a regenerated and enfranchised people, whose great past shall find its climax in a greater future.