

THE GOSPEL OF SUPERMAN.

"For who can show us another example of the wealth of thy spirit and the impulse of thy heart to do good to others? Thou wast one of the noblest and purest men that ever trod this earth." He who has left behind one friend, moved to speak words like these beside his open grave, has not lived quite in vain. They are taken from the address of Peter Gast, bidding farewell to the mortal remains of his life-long friend, Friedrich Nietzsche. Since the outbreak of the war the philosopher of the Superman has received vastly increased attention. By many he is reviled as the supreme poisoner of the German mind, and every little religious publication has its condemnatory article, quoting detached aphorisms and holding Nietzsche up for execration as the teacher of the abominable doctrines now being practised by Germans in Belgium. But defenders have also arisen who sharply challenge this verdict and state the case for the lonely philosopher. An English admirer, Mr. J. M. Kennedy, has also issued a revised edition of his "Quintessence of Nietzsche" in order to dispel some popular illusions and present an epitome of the gospel of the superman for popular consideration.

Nietzsche was born of Polish parents in 1844. His father—a clergyman, died five years later. Great care was taken by his mother to secure the best possible education for her son, who, by his shy and studious manner, earned the nickname of "The little parson." From the first he gave evidence of remarkable mental powers. In 1868 his ability had attracted such notice that he was offered and accepted the professorship of Classical Philology at the University of Bale. He took up his duties the following year, and the inaugural address on "Homer and the Classical Philology," delivered by the 25-year-old professor, gave striking promise of his powers.

Nietzsche had previously completed his required year of military service, but took part in the Franco-German war as a nurse. While thus engaged he contracted a severe illness, and through hurrying back to his duties prematurely, he became a constant sufferer for the remainder of his life. As the greatest interest centres round his strange and startling philosophy of the Superman Mr. Kennedy gives a detailed account of the various books written by its promulgator, and a resume of their contents. Nietzsche's works were coldly received. Years afterwards he said, "I have now written fifteen books, and I have never seen an honest German review of one of them." In solitude and ill-health the daring thinker, who waged ruthless war on all that his fellow country-men held sacrosanct, worked on till 1889. An epileptic fit was then followed by increasing eccentricity and finally madness, which lasted till his death in 1900. No adequate presentation of his strange philosophy can be given in a brief

review, consequently Mr. Kennedy's little book is all the more welcome. It will enable the thinking portion of the English-speaking public to judge as to what foundation there is for the denunciations that have been showered on Nietzsche's head and to enlighten those who have been taught to regard his gospel as one of unrestrained brutality. As Mr. Ludovici puts it, "Nietzsche had one very definite and unalterable purpose, ideal and direction, and this was the elevation of the type man." He attacked both Christianity and Socialism with extreme bitterness, but as Mr. Kennedy remarks, "the Christianity attacked is the lifeless Christianity of the Lutheran Church." In view of the abject failure of both to counteract the overpowering spirit of German materialism and militarism, even his bitterest opponents must agree that there were some grounds for his opposition.

"Christianity," he writes, "is one of the purest manifestations of the impulse towards culture and the production of the saint; but being used in countless ways to turn the mills of State authorities, it gradually became sick at heart, hypocritical and degenerate, and in antagonism with its original aim." The little volume is published by the well-known firm of T. Werner Laurie, Ltd., from whom our copy comes, and will no doubt have a very extensive sale.

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