

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE.

Mr. Fisher Unwin forwards us a copy of Mr. Thomas Common's translation of Nietzsche's "The Case of Wagner; Nietzsche contra Wagner; The Twilight of the Idols; The Antichrist." Nietzsche was a great admirer of Wagner at one time, but he learned since to look upon him with the eye of criticism, later with the eye of positive abhorrence. He even goes the length of asking, "Was Wagner German after all?" He answers in the negative. He dethrones Wagner. "It is difficult," says Nietzsche, "to discover in him any German trait whatsoever. Being a great learner, he has learned to imitate much that is German—that is all. His character itself is in opposition to what has hitherto been regarded as German—not to speak of the German musician! His father was a stage-player named Geyer. A Geyer is almost an Adler. Geyer—vulture—and Adler—eagle—are both names of Jewish families." To most people this sort of criticism must be painfully trivial. Of a great artist one does not ask whether he is Jew, Turk, heretic, or infidel, or orthodox Christian; whether he was born in this country or the other. And it may reasonably be submitted with regard to other points of Mr. Nietzsche's criticism, also, that the world is concerned with art as art. The mischief seemed to be that a lot of good people who found theology in Wagner's trumpet-blows now find that the theology is noxious. Whereas probably the truth is that Wagner was thinking all the time of his trumpet-blows and of the money which they would blow to him, and not in any way of any sort of theology. For the rest Nietzsche's philosophy is caviare for the general. There is all along an air about him as of one who is casting pearls before animals who don't appreciate them. But he knows their value—did know them, rather, poor fellow, before the thin partitions which separate wit from madness had been thrown down. "My 'Genealogy of Morals,'" says he in a note in this volume, "furnished the first information concerning the contrast between 'noble morality' and 'Christian morality'; there is perhaps no more decisive modification of thought in the history of religious and moral knowledge. That book, my touchstone for what belongs to me, has the good fortune to be accessible only to the most elevated and the most vigorous minds; others have not got ears for it." True that about the ears. Nietzsche's philosophy does require a superhuman length and capacity of ears.