

GOETHE RATHER THAN NIETZSCHE.

BY THE EDITOR.

HOW much has Nietzsche to do with the present war? This is a question which has been asked of me repeatedly, and the supposition that lurks in the questioners' minds seems to be that Nietzsche has exercised a great influence upon the German nation in stimulating in them a warlike spirit. I can only repeat what I have said before, that Nietzsche's influence is limited to those circles who had nothing whatever to do with the government or with authoritative leaders in national life, and still less in politics. Nietzsche belongs to the revolutionary spirits and is read mostly by people who antagonize all authority in church and state. His most appreciative readers are socialists, social democrats and anarchists. Besides he has given expression mainly to the conviction of those people who would recognize no moral standards but advocate absolute freedom, not only freedom from the administration, from any kind of government, but also from tradition and even from science. Nietzsche objects even to truth, not to errors that claim to be truth, but to truth itself. He is not the man who is cherished in university circles. I do not think that there is any professor of philosophy duly appointed at any of the German universities who may be regarded as a disciple of Nietzsche.

In German university circles Nietzsche is treated with a certain grim humor, or, to use an American expression, is disposed of as a blustering crank, attractive to the immature, but ridiculous to the thoughtful; and this view is common also in military circles.

How could it be otherwise? The government is naturally and necessarily conservative, and Nietzsche's philosophy, if it means anything, means oppositoin to conservatism. So conservatives would unhesitatingly reject Nietzsche, and military men would soon discover that his disciples will not be likely to make good soldiers.

The spirit of Germany is more determined by the inherited

character of the people, and this has found expression in many other literary productions of German literature. We might mention as one of the best modern representatives Detlef von Liliencron, a poet of the war of '70-71, but the philosopher of German patriotism is decidedly Johann Gottlieb Fichte who delivered his *Reden an die deutsche Nation* in the time of the French occupation.

So far as the spirit of the German people is concerned, I will quote as a poem descriptive of Germany's national character, one of Goethe's little gems, as follows:

"Cowardly thinking,
Timorous shrinking,
Weak lamentations,
Faint hesitations
Mend not our misery,
Set us not free.

[Feiger Gedanken
Bängliches Schwanken,
Weibisches Zagen,
Aengstliches Klagen
Wendet kein Elend,
Macht dich nicht frei.

"Face all hostility,
Preserve your virility
Nor ever yield.
Vigorous resistance
Brings the assistance
Of gods to the field."

Allen Gewalten
Zum Trutz sich erhalten
Nimmer sich beugen,
Kräftig sich zeigen
Rufet die Arme
Der Götter herbei.]

The Germans are not bellicose but they make good warriors. They are unwilling to fight, but ready if war becomes unavoidable. They face their enemies boldly and without flinching, and this in combination with the ability of their leaders—men like Hindenburg who have inherited the efficiency of military science from Moltke, Gneisenau and Frederick the Great—will assure them the final victory in spite of the superior numbers of their enemies.

Nietzsche was an ingenious and an original thinker. He was a German by education, but yet he was not even typically German. He felt his Slavic descent to such a degree that during the Crimean war he took sides with the Russians against the English and shed tears when he read the news of the capture of Malakoff. His writings are much read, but they have done nothing to mold the national character. You may meet admirers of Nietzsche in Germany, but only among the half educated who like to pose as ultra-radicals, and most assuredly not in circles influential with the government.