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FOR SOCIAL, LITERARY AND RELIGIOUS LIFE AND WORK
INDEPENDENT IN POLITICS

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Nietzsche and the War

[By J. Macartney Wilson, B. D., New Glasgow, Nova Scotia]

[NOTE:—In these days when publishers of independent (and unendowed) periodicals must carefully consider "how many pages can we carry?" and give more and more attention to quality rather than quantity of literary matter, we have no hesitation in giving precedence over many other contributions to the following article received as this issue was being prepared for the press. Mr. Macartney Wilson, now minister in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, was formerly Editor of the "Presbyterian," London, England. Before being settled in New Glasgow, he visited the Farthest West, and officiated for a month or more with much acceptance in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Vancouver.]

Events are the outcome of ideas. When the idea has conceived, it brings forth the event. Had not Rousseau liberated the minds of men from the old idea of authority, and taught them a new liberty, the French Revolution would never have taken place, or at any rate history would have followed a different course.

Behind every war lies a conflict of ideas. Wars do not happen because of the length of Cleopatra's nose, or even because of the terms of an ultimatum. The present war is clearly a conflict of opposing ideas. It is more than the clash of Slav and Teuton; more than enforcement of a violated neutrality; more than a lust for territory. It is a war between two philosophies, two ways of regarding fact. It is a war between a kindly, human view of life, which is in a general way the fruit of the teaching of Christ, and a brutal and cruel view, which is no less clearly the outcome of the teaching of Nietzsche.

Who, then, was Nietzsche, and what did he teach? Of Polish origin, Nietzsche was descended from a grandfather and a father who were both Lutheran pastors. He was brought up in the happy peace of a quiet manse. So well did he know the Bible that at school he was called "the little clergyman." He was by temperament a mystic and poet, and began to write verse when he was twelve or thirteen. He was always a solitary; through life he "walked by himself." He was born in 1844, and when 20 years old he went to study at the University of Bonn, where the beer-drinking life of the