TO LEEWARD.*

WHILE differing greatly from *Mr. Isaacs*, and *Dr. Claudius*, both in theme and setting, this book is Marion Crawford from title-page to conclusion. Hitherto having scrupulously avoided anything "suggestive," Mr. Crawford now boldly trenches upon the domain of the French school, and from it appropriates for treatment one of its least pleasant topics — matrimonial infidelity. The story itself is of the slightest texture. Leonora Carnethy marries the Marchese Carantoni without in the least loving him. She finds him tolerable, however, until she is thrown with the brilliant, passionate, strong Julius Batiscombe, with whom, after an abbreviated intrigue, she elopes at midnight. Upon this the outraged husband goes mad, but retains enough method in his madness to seek the lovers. Finding them together he aims his pistol at the seducer, but kills his wife, who has thrown herself between her lover and husband. The scene and coloring are Italian. Whether the love of a married woman for a man other than her husband is, under any circumstances, permissible, we do not here discuss. But certainly if such a love were ever justifiable, the reasons for it are so extreme and delicate, and the occasions so rare, as to preclude it as a subject for the novelist who writes for English-speaking people. In this instance, moreover, there is not an extenuating condition. Fully recognizing the moral implications of her course, having a husband devoted to her, and merely admiring the physical attributes and passionate nature of her lover, Leonora has not even our pity or sympathy. Leonora and Batiscombe are characters furthermore of a type from whom we could expect nothing else, and only await an opportunity to display their respective weaknesses and tendencies. When we are introduced to Miss Carnethy she is "suffering from an acute attack of philosophical despair," and as a cure for this malady she shuts herself up in a dark room, in hopes of being thereby better able to reconcile the Hegelian subtilty of the identity of contraries with several other mutually conflicting philosophies. Up to this age — twenty-two — her history "might be summed up in a very few words. An English child, an Italian girl, a Russian woman." This picture is in no way intended as a caricature, and we are told that her husband, whom she married shortly after we met her, considered her a remarkably intelligent, clever creature. It should be mentioned, by the way, that physically she was superlatively vital, had blue eyes and red hair, and just escaped being beautiful. From a feminine combination like this no amount of self-stultification or wrong doing could be surprising; though on the other hand we might look for a life of religious devotion.

In direct contrast to the weak, negative Leonora, is the strong, positive Batiscombe — that is to say, strong in everything but an incurable susceptibility to the fascinations of woman. This character is well conceived and drawn in a masterly fashion, and is a type of a very large class of men — a man of the world, worldly, steeped in selfishness, and dominated by his vanity — yet a gentleman in all his feelings, brave, clever, and thoroughly conscious of his own defects. His motto might literally have been: "Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor." The analysis of the motives and influences making this man what he was, the originality of the limning, and the trueness to nature, make this one of the most powerful characterizations of the man of the world that we know. The one inconsistency marring the artistic effect is the fact of his seducing the wife of the brother of the woman, whom, we are told, he had always truly and really loved, and that too almost under her eyes. The author's endeavor to explain this incongruity away by the temporary subordination of Batiscombe's first love to his selfishness and engrossment in this his passion of a period is not successful and almost crass. Either his first attachment was fictitious and only differed in intensity from his last; or else his absorption in self was superhuman.

The other characters, two in number, do not call for special comment.

To Mr. Crawford's treatment of his subject much praise is due, as there is complete elimination of anything objectionable or unchaste in incident or detail. But we utterly fail to understand the motive of the story. If the book has a serious purpose it is so veiled as to escape recognition. Assuming that its *raison d'être* is amusement only, the selection of matter is reprehensible.

What we most like about Mr. Crawford is a certain freshness and vitality evidently supported by considerable literary culture; what we least like is his own belief that he is a genius. His witticisms are frequently flat, and his exalted similes, metaphors, and allegories are sometimes only commonplaces well beaten out. But one finds here and there bits of observation and description of more than ordinary cleverness. The introduction of abstract philosophy into his books is now a pronounced tendency of Mr. Crawford and we advise him to stop it. It is sometimes erroneous, and sometimes ridiculous.

To Leeward, in fine, illustrates not only Mr. Crawford's laudable spontaneity, and what the *Literary World* termed his "genuineness," but it brings into marked prominence many of the faults which, if not curbed and regulated, will some day sadly mar him. An increased discursiveness of thought and style is of course directly traceable to his constant production. Much, therefore, as we see in him to admire and praise, we shall be content to wait some time before hearing from him again.

* To Leeward. By F. Marion Crawford. Houghton, Mifflin & Co. $1.25.