

Contributions and Addresses.

TWO NEW NOVELS.

WHAT a persistent story-maker F. Marion Crawford is! And the reader of fiction can always be sure of a well-worked story when his name is appended.

It was only the other day that "A Rose of Yesterday" was given to the public, and critics and sympathetic readers alike began to lament that he was worked out; that, having exhausted his Italian field and his New York field, he had to beat about for pastures new, and in a vain attempt to hold his public had begun to make "purpose novels"—things he cried down a year or two ago. A matrimonial problem, a somewhat threadbare one too, the divorce question, forms the theme of "A Rose of Yesterday." He is worked out, clamored the critics great and small.

But while the cry is still in the air "Corleone" comes from his pen. In it there is no diminution in power. Indeed it is in some ways his greatest novel. It has an artistic strength, sureness, and repose that only come with "the years that bring the philosophic mind." There is no crowding of incidents, no awkwardness in dialogue, no falling off in story interest. From the first page to the last it is a great story, and one that proves the author's vein as rich as ever.

Every artist has a field peculiarly fitted to his genius; Scott was at his best when dealing with the familiar life of his native land; Hawthorne, in his Puritan New England, and though "The Marble Faun" might serve as a "guide to Rome," for Hawthorne at his best, "The House of Seven Gables" and "The Scarlet Letter," must be opened; so Marion Crawford by "Corleone"—if he had not already done so in *Marzios' Crucifix*, in *Saracinesca*, and in *Don Orsino*—has proved that the rich field of Italian and Sicilian passion is peculiarly suited to his genius.

It is not surprising that this should be so. His boyhood days were spent in Italy, and it was there that his imagination was first roused. Indeed it is said that "the origin of the Saracinesca stories, probably the most popular of all his novels, was a walk he took with a tutor, when he was a boy, in the interior of Italy, the region in which he places the Saracinesca estates. The great field on which he works in "Corleone" then, it will be seen, has been with him since he was a lad; and the characters, the local color, the incidents, are a part of his daily life.

It is to be doubted if any modern author lives more with his characters than does Marion Crawford. In this novel he is dealing with old friends,

and they have changed in no way. The Saracinesca characters run through the entire book; Lizzie Slayback connects it with his New York studies, and Vittoria, the heroine, is casually mentioned as a cousin of "Takisara" of Guardia. As the book is read it is forgotten that these men and women are figments of the author's brain; they seem rather to be old friends whom we have known in the flesh.

The story moves between Rome and Sicily, and the men of Rome with their culture and polish stand out in striking contrast to the men of Sicily—brigands for the most part, even the nobles having souls with something of a treacherous, volcanic nature of their own Etna. Don Ippolito is one of the noblest men in fiction; a priest, but no milk-sop; a man capable of shriving a soul or striking a mighty blow in defence of the weak. Tebaldo stands out in bold contrast; an utter villain without a generous sentiment, thoroughly selfish, another Cain who strikes down his brother and never for a moment shows the slightest qualm of conscience.

One of the finest things in the book is the incident on which the entire story hinges. On what little things after all hang life and death; how closely tragedy runs at the heels of comedy! "The fate of everyone in this story might have been very different if Gesualda, old Basili's maid of all work, had not stopped to eat an orange surreptitiously while she was sweeping down the stairs early in the morning, before the notary was dressed." Out of the eating of that orange comes the tragedy of this most tragic book. With what strange instruments, in what strange ways Destiny works!

"Corleone" has a serious defect for the poor reviewer. It wins his sympathy and holds it, and he forgets that he is a judicial critic with a keen eye for blemishes. But several days after the book has been read it dawns upon the critic that at times the author has his old fault of being too intensely sensational, too thrillingly melo-dramatic. The murder scene is a stirring one. But should we be stirred? Is it not all too improbable? Again it was beneath such an artist as Marion Crawford to keep Vittoria before the reader as a Pagliuca, and, because the Pagliuca were such a bad lot—the worst blood in Italy—to find her other parents in the end. Rare flowers have grown among weeds. It is not thus that the very greatest artist works, and a Shakespeare does not hesitate to make the sweetest among his women the daughter of Old Shylock.

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At intervals of several years R. D. Blackmore gives us a new book. The lovers of "Lorna Doone," the masterpiece that appeared from his pen almost thirty years ago, open each new effort with fearful