

*Newton.* By GINO LORIA. Rome, A. F. Formigini, 1920. 69 pp.

THIS little volume, written by one who seems never to rest in his literary labors, is number 52 of a series of biographies issued under the rather poetic title of *Profili*. The title is quite appropriate, for each number is a kind of side glance at the profile of the individual whose biography is rapidly sketched by some worthy and skilled literary artist.

What Professor Loria has done is to set forth in popular style the incidents in Newton's life that are more or less known to mathematicians but are not so familiar to the general cultured public. It is needless to say that he has not attempted to present material not already known, since this was not his problem. In this case his is the mission of a popularizer. He has apparently drawn, directly or indirectly, from Brewster's well-known work, as all other historians of mathematics have done for the last two generations.

The life of Newton is briefly told,—his rather unpromising boyhood, the unusual promise shown by him at Trinity College, Cambridge, his power of easily grasping the theories of his predecessors, his rise to fame, his discovery of the laws of gravitation and of the fluxional calculus, and his later contributions to mathematics in general. The writer calls attention to the fact that the respect due to Newton is partly a case of hero worship, not less marked than the mental attitude of devout pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre when in the presence of a portion of the true cross. In this he gives us the view of one who sees the Anglo-Saxon civilization from without, and it is a fair question whether we who see it from within have not been guilty of unduly exalting the contributions and powers of the author of the *Principia*. The fact is that Newton is today a good deal of a mystery, and there is need for a mathematical scholar of judicial mind, of literary ability, and of sufficient leisure to give us a new biography of the discoverer of the fluxional calculus, and a bibliography that is worthy of the man. We have Brewster and De Morgan and various minor writers, but we need an authoritative life of Newton and a definitive edition of his works, with a list, approximately complete, of published Newtoniana in general. It is very strange that we have modern editions of the works of the great mathematicians of Germany, France, and Italy, and of British scholars like Cayley and Sylvester,