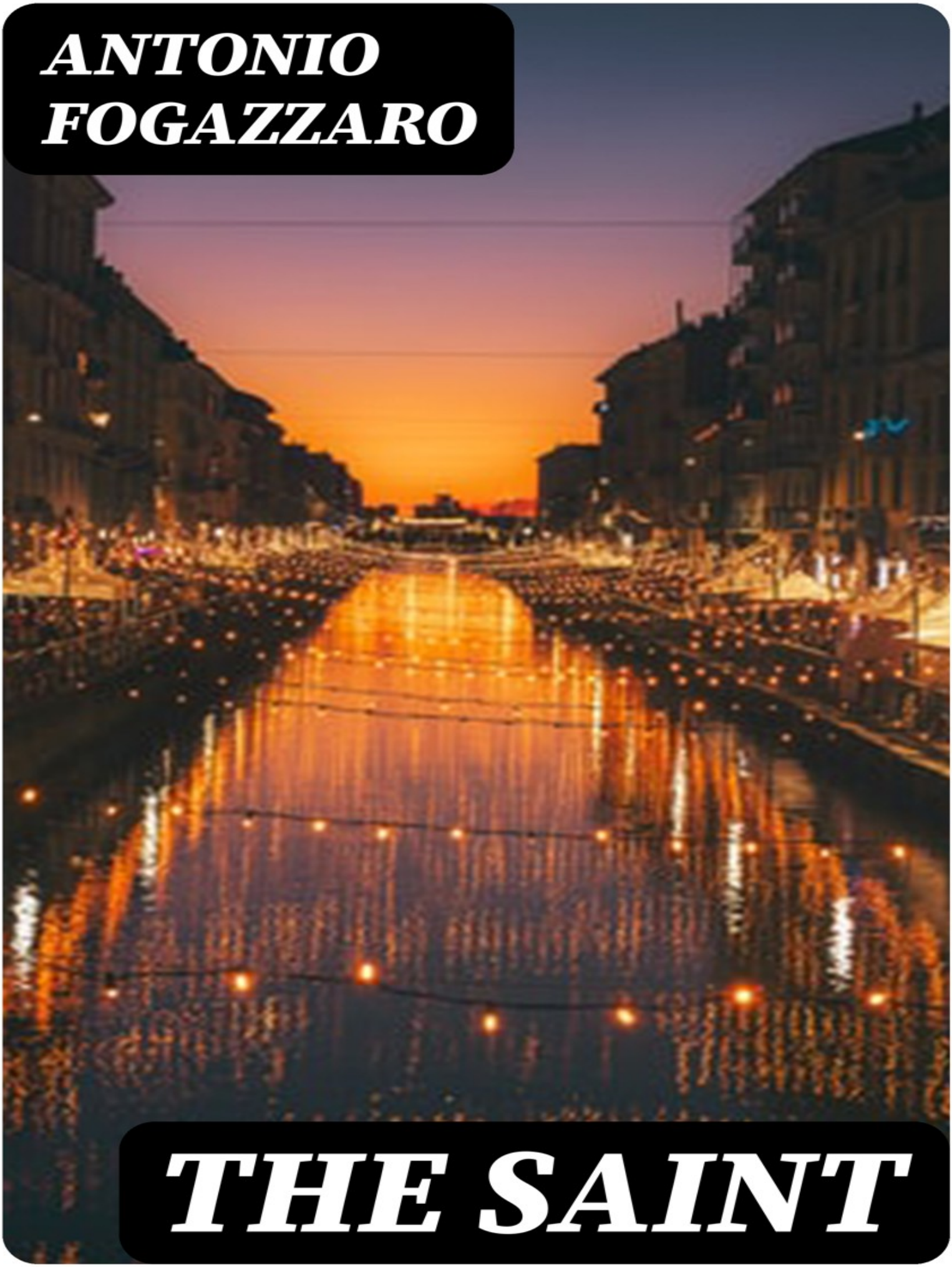
ANTONIO
FOGAZZARO
THE SAINT

Antonio Fogazzaro

The Saint

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Introduction

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By William Roscoe Thayer

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Author of “The Dawn of Italian Independence”

ANTONIO FOGAZZARO AND HIS MASTERPIECE

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I

Senator Fogazzaro, in *The Saint*, has confirmed the impression of his five and twenty years’ career as a novelist, and now, through the extraordinary power and pertinence of this crowning work, he has suddenly become an international celebrity. The myopic censors of the *Index* have assured the widest circulation of his book by condemning it as heretical. In the few months since its publication, it has been read by hundreds of thousands of Italians; it has appeared in French translation in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and in German in the *Hochland*; and it has been the storm centre of religious and literary debate. Now it will be sought by a still wider circle, eager to see what the doctrines are, written by the leading Catholic layman in Italy, at which the Papal advisers have taken fright. Time was when it was the books of the avowed enemies of the

Church—of some mocking Voltaire, some learned Renan, some impassioned Michelet—which they thrust on the *Index*; now they pillory the Catholic layman with the largest following in Italy, one who has never wavered in his devotion to the Church. Whatever the political result of their action may be, they have made the fortune of the book they hoped to suppress; and this is good, for *The Saint* is a real addition to literature.

Lovers of Italy have regretted that foreigners should judge her contemporary ideals and literary achievements by the brilliant, but obscene and degenerate books of Gabriele d'Annunzio. Such books, the products of disease no matter what language they may be written in, quickly circulate from country to country. Like epidemics they sweep up and down the world, requiring no passports, respecting no frontiers, while benefits travel slowly from people to people, and often lose much in the passage. D'Annunzio, speaking the universal language—Sin,—has been accepted as the typical Italian by foreigners who know Carducci merely as a name and have perhaps never heard of Fogazzaro. Yet it is in these men that the better genius of modern Italy has recently expressed itself. Carducci's international reputation as the foremost living poet in Europe and a literary critic of the first class gains slowly, but its future is secure. Thanks to the wider circulating medium of fiction, Fogaz-* *zaro's name is a household word in thousands of Italian families, and he combines in his genius so many rare and important strands that the durability of his literary renown cannot be questioned.

II

Antonio Fogazzaro, the most eminent Italian novelist since Manzoni, was born at Vicenza on March 25th, 1842. He was happy in his parents, his father, Mariano Fogazzaro, being a man of refined tastes and sound learning, while his mother, Teresa Barrera, united feminine sweetness with wit and a warm heart. From childhood they influenced all sides of his nature, and when the proper time came they put him in charge of a wise tutor, Professor Zanella, who seems to have divined his pupil's talents and the best way to cultivate them. Young Fogazzaro, having completed his course in the classics went on to the study of the law, which he pursued first in the University of Padua and then at Turin, where his father had taken up a voluntary exile. For Vicenza, during the forties and fifties, lay under Austrian subjection, and any Italian who desired to breathe freely in Italy had to seek the liberal air of Piedmont.

Fogazzaro received his diploma in due season, and began to practise as advocate, but in that casual way common to young men who know that their real leader is not Themis but Apollo. Erelong he abandoned the bar and devoted himself with equal enthusiasm to music and poetry, for both of which he had unusual aptitude. Down to 1881 he printed chiefly volumes of verse which gave him a genuine, if not popular reputation. In that year he brought out his first romance, *Malombra*, and from time to time during the past quarter of a century he has followed it with *Daniele Cortis*, *Il Mistero del Poeta*, *Piccolo Mondo Antico*, *Piccolo Mondo Moderno*, and finally, in the autumn of 1905, *Il Santo*. This list by no means exhausts his productivity, for he has worked in many fields, but it includes the books by which,

gradually at first, and with triumphant strides of late, he has come into great fame in Italy and has risen into the small group of living authors who write for a cosmopolitan public.

For many years past Signor Fogazzaro has dwelt in his native Vicenza, the most honoured of her citizens, round whom has grown up a band of eager disciples, who look to him for guidance not merely in matters intellectual or aesthetic, but in the conduct of life. He has conceived of the career of man of letters as a great opportunity, not as a mere trade. Nothing could show better his high seriousness than his waiting until the age of thirty-nine before publishing his first novel, unless it be the restraint which led him, after having embarked on the career of novelist to devote four or five years on the average to his studies in fiction. So his books are ripe, the fruits of a deliberate and rich nature, and not the windfalls of a mere literary trick. And now the publication of *The Saint* confirms all his previous work, and entitles him, at a little more than threescore years, to rank among the few literary masters of the time.

III

Many elements in *The Saint* testify to its importance; but these would not make it a work of art. And after all it is as a work of art that it first appeals to readers, who may care little for its religious purport. It is a great novel—so great, that, after living with its characters, we cease to regard it as a novel at all. It keeps our suspense on the stretch through nearly five hundred pages. Will the Saint triumph—will love victoriously claim its own? We hurry on, at the first reading, for the solution; then we go back and discover in it another

world of profound interest. That is the true sign of a masterpiece.

In English we have only *John Inglesant* and *Robert Elsmere* to compare it with; but such a comparison, though obviously imperfect, proves at once how easily *The Saint* surpasses them both, not merely by the greater significance of its central theme, but by its subtler psychology, its wider horizon, its more various contacts with life. Benedetto, the Saint, is a new character in fiction, a mingling of St. Francis and Dr. Dollinger, a man of to-day in intelligence, a medieval in faith. Nothing could be finer than the way in which Signor Fogazzaro depicts his zeal, his ecstasies, his visions, his depressions, his doubts; shows the physical and mental reactions; gives us, in a word, a study in religious morbid psychology—for, say what we will, such abnormalities are morbid—without rival in fiction. We follow Benedetto's spiritual fortunes with as much eagerness as if they were a love story.

And then there is the love story. Where shall one turn to find another like it? Jeanne seldom appears in the foreground, but we feel from first to last the magnetism of her presence. There is always the possibility that at sight or thought of her Benedetto may be swept back from his ascetic vows to the life of passion. Their first meeting in the monastery chapel is a masterpiece of dramatic climax, and Benedetto's temptation in her carriage, after the feverish interview with the cabinet officer, is a marvel of psychological subtlety. Both scenes illustrate Signor Fogazzaro's power to achieve the highest artistic results without exaggeration. This naturalness is the more

remarkable because the character of a saint is unnatural according to our modern point of view. We have a healthy distrust of ascetics, whose anxiety over their soul's condition we properly regard as a form of egotism; and we know how easily the unco' guid become prigs. Fogazzaro's hero is neither an egotist of the ordinary cloister variety, nor a prig. That our sympathy goes out to Jeanne and not to him shows that we instinctively resent the sacrifice of the deepest human cravings to sacerdotal prescriptions. The highest ideal of holiness which medievals could conceive does not satisfy us.

Why did Signor Fogazzaro in choosing his hero revert to that outworn type? He sees very clearly how many of the Catholic practices are what he calls "ossified organisms." Why did he set up a lay monk as a model for 20th century Christians who long to devote their lives to uplifting their fellow-men? Did he not note the artificiality of asceticism—the waste of energy that comes with fasts and mortification of the flesh and morbidly pious excitement? When asked these questions by his followers he replied that he did not mean to preach asceticism as a rule for all; but that in individual cases like Benedetto's, for instance, it was a psychological necessity. Herein Signor Fogazzaro certainly discloses his profound knowledge of the Italian heart—of that heart from which in its early medieval vigour sprang the Roman religion, with its message of renunciation. Even the Renaissance and the subsequent period of scepticism have not blotted out those tendencies that date back more than a thousand years: so that today, if an Italian is engulfed in a passion of self-sacrifice, he naturally thinks

first of asceticism as the method. Among Northern races a similar religious experience does not suggest hair shirts and debilitating pious orgies (except among Puseyites and similar survivals from a different epoch); it suggests active work, like that of General Booth of the Salvation Army.

No one can gainsay, however, the superb artistic effects which Signor Fogazzaro attains through his Saint's varied experiences. He causes to pass before you all classes of society,—from the poorest peasant of the Subiaco hills, to duchesses and the Pope himself,—some incredulous, some mocking, some devout, some hesitating, some spell-bound, in the presence of a holy man. The fashionable ladies wish to take him up and make a lion of him; the superstitious kiss the hem of his garment and believe that he can work miracles, or, in a sudden revulsion, they jeer him and drive him away with stones. And what a panorama of ecclesiastical life in Italy! What a collection of priests and monks and prelates, and with what inevitableness one after another turns the cold shoulder on the volunteer who dares to assert that the test of religion is conduct! There is an air of mystery, of intrigue, of secret messages passing to and fro—the atmosphere of craft which has hung round the ecclesiastical institution so many, many centuries. Few scenes in modern romance can match Benedetto's interview with the Pope—he pathetic figure who, you feel, is in sad truth a prisoner, not of the Italian Government, but of the crafty, able, remorseless cabal of cardinals who surround him, dog him with eavesdroppers, edit his briefs, check his benign impulses, and effectually prevent the truth from penetrating to his lonely study. Benedetto's appeal to the

Pope to heal the four wounds from which the Church is languishing is a model of impassioned argument. The four wounds, be it noted, are the “spirit of falsehood,” “the spirit of clerical domination,” “the spirit of avarice,” and “the spirit of immobility.” The Pope replies in a tone of resignation; he does not disguise his powerlessness; he hopes to meet Benedetto again—in heaven!

IV

The Saint may be considered under many aspects—indeed, the critics, in their efforts to classify it, have already fallen out over its real character. Some regard it as a thinly disguised statement of a creed; others, as a novel pure and simple; others, as a campaign document (in the broadest sense); others, as no novel at all, but a dramatic sort of confession. The Jesuits have had it put on the *Index*; the Christian Democrats have accepted it as their gospel: yet Jesuits and Christian Democrats both profess to be Catholics. Such a divergence of opinion proves conclusively that the book possesses unusual power and that it is many-sided. Instead of pitching upon one of these views as right and declaring all the rest to be wrong, it is more profitable to try to discover in the book itself what grounds each class of critics finds to justify its particular and exclusive verdict.

On the face of it what does the book say? This is what it says: That Piero Maironi, a man of the world, cultivated far beyond his kind, after having had a vehement love-affair is stricken with remorse, “experiences religion,” becomes penitent, is filled with a strange zeal—an ineffable comfort—and devotes himself, body, heart, and soul to the worship of God and the succour of his fellow-men. As Benedetto, the

lay brother, he serves the peasant populations among the Sabine hills, or moves on his errands of hope and mercy among the poor of Rome. Everybody recognises him as a holy man—“a saint.” Perhaps, if he had restricted himself to taking only soup or simple medicines to the hungry and sick, he would have been unmolested in his philanthropy; but after his conversion, he had devoured the Scriptures and studied the books of the Fathers, until the spirit of the early, simple, untheological Church had poured into him. It brought a message the truth of which so stirred him that he could not rest until he imparted it to his fellows. He preached righteousness,—the supremacy of conduct over ritual,—love as the test and goal of life; but always with full acknowledgment of Mother Church as the way of salvation. Indeed, he seems neither to doubt the impregnability of the foundations of Christianity, nor the validity of the Petrine corner-stone; taking these for granted he aims to live the Christian life in every act, in every thought. The superstructure—the practices of the Catholic Church to-day, the failures and sins of clerical society, the rigid ecclesiasticism—these he must in loyalty to fundamental truth, criticise, and if need be, condemn, where they interfere with the exercise of pure religion. But Benedetto engages very little in controversy; his method is to glorify the good, sure that the good requires only to be revealed in all its beauty and charm in order to draw irresistibly to itself souls that, for lack of vision, have been pursuing the mediocre or the bad.

Yet these utterances, so natural to Benedetto, awaken the suspicions of his superiors, who—we cannot say without

cause—scent heresy in them. Good works, righteous conduct—what are these in comparison with blind subscription to orthodox formulas? Benedetto is persecuted not by an obviously brutal or sanguinary persecution,—although it might have come to that except for a catastrophe of another sort,—but by the very finesse of persecution. The sagacious politicians of the Vatican, inheritors of the accumulated craft of a thousand years, know too much to break a butterfly on a wheel, to make a martyr of an inconvenient person whom they can be rid of quietly. Therein lies the tragedy of Benedetto's experience, so far at least as we regard him, or as he thought himself, an instrument for the regeneration of the Church.

On the face of it, therefore, *The Saint* is the story of a man with a passion for doing good, in the most direct and human way, who found the Church in which he believed, the Church which existed ostensibly to do good according to the direct and human ways of Jesus Christ, thwarting him at every step. Here is a conflict, let us remark in passing, worthy to be the theme of a great tragedy. Does not *Antigone* rest on a similar conflict between Antigone's simple human way of showing her sisterly affection and the rigid formalism of the orthodoxy of her day?

V

Or, look next at *The Saint* as a campaign document, the aspect under which it has been most hotly discussed in Italy. It has been accepted as the platform, or even the gospel of the Christian Democrats. Who are they? They are a body of the younger generation of Italians, among them being a considerable number of religious, who yearn to put into

practice the concrete exhortations of the Evangelists. They are really carried forward by that ethical wave which has swept over Western Europe and America during the past generation, and has resulted in “slumming,” in practical social service, in all kinds of efforts to improve the material and moral condition of the poor, quite irrespective of sectarian or even Christian initiative. This great movement began, indeed, outside of the churches, among men and women who felt grievously the misery of their fellow-creatures and their own obligation to do what they could to relieve it. From them, it has reached the churches, and, last of all, the Catholic Church in Italy. No doubt the spread of Socialism, with its superficial resemblance to some of the features of primitive Christianity, has somewhat modified the character of this ethical movement; so far, in fact, that the Italian Christian Democrats have been confounded, by persons with only a blurred sense of outlines, with the Socialists themselves. Whatever they may become, however, they now profess views in regard to property which separate them by an unbridgeable chasm from the Socialists.

In their zeal for their fellow-men, and especially for the poor and down-trodden classes, they find the old agencies of charity insufficient. To visit the sick, to comfort the dying, to dole out broth at the convent gate, is well, but it offers no remedy for the cause behind poverty and blind remediable suffering. Only through better laws, strictly administered, can effectual help come. So the Christian Democrats deemed it indispensable that they should be free to influence legislation. At this point, however, the stubborn

prohibition of the Vatican confronted them. Since 1870, when the Italians entered Rome and established there the capital of United Italy, the Vatican had forbidden faithful Catholics to take part, either as electors or as candidates, in any of the national elections, the fiction being that, were they to go to the polls or to be elected to the Chamber of Deputies, they would thereby recognise the Royal Government which had destroyed the temporal power of the Pope. Then what would become of that other fiction—the Pope's prisonership in the Vatican—which was to prove for thirty years the best paying asset among the Papal investments? So long as the Curia maintained an irreconcilable attitude towards the Kingdom, it could count on kindling by irritation the sympathy and zeal of Catholics all over the world. In Italy itself many devout Catholics had long protested that, as it was through the acquisition of temporal power that the Church had become worldly and corrupt, so through the loss of temporal power it would regain its spiritual health and efficiency. They urged that the Holy Father could perform his religious functions best if he were not involved in political intrigues and governmental perplexities. No one would assert that Jesus could have better fulfilled his mission if he had been king of Judea; why, then, should the Pope, the Vicar of Jesus, require worldly pomp and power that his Master disdained?

Neither Pius IX nor Leo XIII, however, was open to arguments of this kind. Incidentally, it was clear that if Catholics as such were kept away from the polls, nobody could say precisely just how many they numbered. The Vatican constantly asserted that its adherents were in a

majority—a claim which, if true, meant that the Kingdom of Italy rested on a very precarious basis. But other Catholics sincerely deplored the harm which the irreconcilable attitude of the Curia caused to religion. They regretted to see an affair purely political treated as religious; to have the belief in the Pope's temporal power virtually set up as a part of their creed. The Lord's work was waiting to be done; yet they who ought to be foremost in it were handicapped. Other agencies had stepped in ahead of them. The Socialists were making converts by myriads; skeptics and cynics were sowing hatred not of the Church merely but of all religion. It was time to abandon "the prisoner of the Vatican" humbug, time to permit zealous Catholics, whose orthodoxy no one could question, to serve God and their fellow-men according to the needs and methods of the present age.

At last, in the autumn of 1905, the new Pope, Pius X, gave the faithful tacit permission, if he did not officially command them, to take part in the elections. Various motives were assigned for this change of front. Did even the Ultra-montanes realise that, since France had repealed the Concordat, they could find their best support in Italy? Or were they driven by the instinct of self-preservation to accept the constitutional government as a bulwark against the incoming tide of Anarchism, Socialism, and the other subversive forces? The Church is the most conservative element in Christendom; in a new upheaval it will surely rally to the side of any other element which promises to save society from chaos. These motives have been cited to explain the recent action of the Holy See, but there were

high-minded Catholics who liked to think that the controlling reason was religious—that the Pope and his counsellors had at last been persuaded that the old policy of abstention wrought irreparable harm to the religious life of millions of the faithful in Italy.

However this may be, Senator Fogazzaro's book, filled with the Liberal and Christian spirit, has been eagerly caught up as the mouthpiece of the Christian Democrats, and indeed of all intelligent Catholics in Italy, who have always held that religion and patriotism are not incompatible, and that the Church has most injured itself in prolonging the antagonism. In this respect, *The Saint*, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and similar books which crystallise an entire series of ideals or sum up a crisis, leaped immediately into importance, and seems certain to enjoy, for a long time to come, the prestige that crowns such works. Putting it on the *Index* can only add to its power.

VI

But readers who imagine that this aspect measures the significance of *The Saint* have read the surface only. The probability of restoring friendly relations between Church and State is a matter of concern to everybody in Italy; but of even greater concern are the implications which issue from Signor Fogazzaro's thought. He is an evolutionist; he respects the higher criticism; he knows that religions, like states and secular institutions, have their birth and growth and inevitable decay. So Catholicism must take its course in the human circuit, and expect sooner or later to pass away. This would be the natural deduction to draw from the premise of evolution. Signor Fogazzaro, however, does not

draw it. He conceives that Catholicism contains a final deposit of truth which can neither be superseded, wasted, nor destroyed.

"My friends," says Benedetto, "you say, 'We have reposed in the shade of this tree but now its bark cracks and dries; the tree will die; let us go in search of other shade.' The tree will not die. If you had ears, you would hear the movement of the new bark forming, which will have its period of life, will crack, will dry in its turn, because another bark shall replace it. The tree does not die, the tree grows."

Through this parable, Signor Fogazzaro reveals his attitude, which it appears, does not differ from that proposed by many Anglicans and other Protestants towards their respective churches. Herein his Saint takes on the largest significance. He is a religious man who constantly praises Reason, and urges his hearers to trust Reason; but who, at a given moment, falls back on Faith, cleaves to Faith, insists that Faith alone brings its own warrant. Hence arise paradoxes, hence contradictions which elude a reasonable solution. For instance, in one discourse Benedetto says: "The Catholic Church, which proclaims itself the fountain of truth, opposes to-day the search for Truth when it is carried on on its own foundations, on the holy books, on the dogmas, on its asserted infallibility. For us this means that it has no longer faith in itself. The Catholic Church which proclaims itself the minister of Life, to-day shackles and stifles whatever lives youthfully within it, and to-day it props itself on all its decadent and antiquated usages." Yet a little farther on he exclaims: "But what sort of faith is yours, if you talk of leaving the Church because

certain antiquated doctrines of its heads, certain decrees of the Roman congregations, certain ways in a pontiff's government offend you? What sort of sons are you who talk of renouncing your mother because she wears a garment which does not please you? Is the mother's heart changed by a garment? When, bowed over her, weeping, you tell your infirmities to Christ and Christ heals you, do you think about the authenticity of a passage in *St. John*, about the real author of the Fourth Gospel or about the two Isaiahs? When you commune with Christ in the sacrament do the decrees of the *Index* or the Holy Office disturb you? When, giving yourself up to Mother Church, you enter the shadows of death, is the peace she breathes in you less sweet because a Pope is opposed to Christian Democracy?"

So far, therefore, as Fogazzaro is the spokesman of loyal yet intelligent Catholics, he shows that among them also the process of theological solution has been going on. Like Protestants who still profess creeds which they do not believe, these intelligent Catholics have to resort to strange devices—to devices which to a looker-on appear uncandid if not insincere,—in order to patch up a truce between their reason and their faith. This insincerity is the blight of the present age. It is far more serious than indifferentism, or than the open mockery of the 18th century philosophers. So long as it lasts, no deep, general religious regeneration will be possible. Be it remarked, however, that Signor Fogazzaro himself is unaware of his ambiguous position; being still many removes from Jowett, the typical Mr. Facing-both-Ways of the epoch.

VII

In conclusion, we go back to the book as a work of art, meaning by art not mere artifice, but that power which takes the fleeting facts of life and endues them with permanence, with deeper purports, with order and beauty. In this sense, Signor Fogazzaro is a great artist. He has the gift of the masters which enables him to rise without effort to the level of the tragic crises. He has also a vein of humour, without which such a theme as his could hardly be successfully handled. And although there is, by measure, much serious talk, yet so skilfully does he bring in minor characters, with their transient sidelights, that the total impression is that of a book in which much happens. No realist could exceed the fidelity with which Signor Fogazzaro outlines a landscape, or fixes a passing scene; yet being an idealist through and through, he has produced a masterpiece in which the imagination is sovereign.

Such a book, sprung from “no vain or shallow thought,” holding in solution the hopes of many earnest souls, spreading before us the mighty spiritual conflict between Medievalism still triumphant and the young undaunted Powers of Light, showing us with wonderful lifelikeness the tragedy of man’s baffled endeavour to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, and of woman’s unquenchable love, is a great fact in the world-literature of our time.

Cambridge, Massachusetts,
April 25, 1906.

THE SAINT

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CHAPTER I. LAC D'AMOUR

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Jeanne was seated by the window with the book which she had been reading open upon her lap. She gazed pensively into the oval sheet of leaden water slumbering at her feet, at the passing clouds, casting their ever-changing shadows on the little villa, on the deserted garden, the trees of the opposite bank, the distant fields, on the bridge to the left, and on the quiet roads, which lost themselves behind the Béguinage, and on the slanting roofs of Bruges, grand, mysterious, dead. Could it be that *l'Intruse* of whom she had just been reading, that fatal, unseen visitor, was even now crossing the sepulchral city; could it be that the short ripples upon the face of the dark water were her shadow, while she herself had reached the threshold of the villa, bringing with her the coveted gift of eternal sleep! The church bells chimed the hour of five. High, high up, near the white clouds, magic voices of innumerable bells sang over the houses, the squares, the streets of Bruges that melancholy incantation which renders its rest eternal. Jeanne felt two cool hands upon her eyes, a wave of perfume touched her cheek, a breath stirred her hair, whispering "*encore une intruse*," and then soft lips kissed her. She did not seem surprised; and, raising her hand, caressed the face bending over her, saying: "Welcome, Noemi. *Magari fossi tu l'Intruse*," (Would that you were *l'Intruse*.)

Noemi failed to understand.

"*Magari*," she said. "Is that Italian? It sounds like Arabic. Explain at once, please."

Jeanne rose. “You would not understand any better if I did,” she said with a smile. “Shall we have our Italian conversation lesson now?”

“Yes, with pleasure,” answered Noemi.

“Where did you go with my brother?”

“To the Hospital of St. John, to call on Memling.”

“That’s all right; let us talk about Memling. But first tell me whether Carlino made you a declaration?”

The girl laughed. “Yes, he made me a declaration of war, and I did likewise *to he*.”

“To him, you should say. I wish he would fall in love with you,” added Jeanne seriously. The girl frowned.

“I do not,” she said.

“Why? Is he not charming, brilliant, cultured, and distinguished? He is very wealthy too, you know. We may despise riches, but after all they are very good in their way.”

Noemi d’Arxel placed her hands on her friend’s shoulders, and gazed steadily into her eyes. The blue questioning eyes were grave and sad; the brown eyes, thus scrutinised, bore the gaze with firmness, flashing in turn defiance, embarrassment, and mirth.

“Well,” said the girl, “I enjoy seeing Memling with Signor Carlino, playing classical music with him, discussing à Kempis with him, although this affection he has recently developed for à Kempis seems a profanation, when you consider that he believes in nothing. *Je suis catholique autant qu’on peut l’être lorsqu’on ne l’est pas*, but when I hear an unbeliever like your brother read à Kempis so feelingly, I very nearly lose my faith in Christianity as well. I like him for one other reason, dear, because he is your

brother. But that is all! Oh! Jeanne Dessalle says such strange things sometimes—such strange things! I do not understand—I really do not understand. But *warte nur, du Räthsel*, as my governess used to say."

"What am I to wait for?"

Noemi threw her arm round her friend's neck, "I will drag your soul with so fine a net that it will bring beautiful great pearls to the surface, perhaps some sea-weed as well, and a little mud from the bottom, or even a very tiny *pioeuvre*." "You do not know me," answered Jeanne. "You are the only one of my friends who does not know me."

"Of course. You imagine that only those who adore you really know you? Indeed, this belief that everybody adores you is a craze of yours."

Jeanne made the little pouting grimace with which all her friends were familiar.

"What a foolish girl," she said; but at once softened the expression with a kiss and a half-sad, half-quizzical smile.

"Women, as I have always told you, do adore me. Do you mean to say that you do not?"

"*Mais point du tout*," exclaimed Noemi. Jeanne's eyes sparkled with mischief and kindness.

"In Italian we say: *Si, di tutto cuore*," she answered.

The Dessalles, brother and sister, had spent the preceding summer at Maloja. Jeanne striving to make herself a pleasant companion, and hiding as best she could her incurable wound; Carlino searching out traces of Nietzsche in mystic hours round Sils Maria or in worldly moments flitting like a butterfly from one woman to another, frequently dining at St. Moritz, or at Pontresina, making

music with a military attaché of the German Embassy at Rome, or with Noemi d'Arxel, and discussing religious questions with Noemi's sister and brother-in-law. The two d'Arxel sisters, orphans, were Belgian by birth, but of Dutch and Protestant ancestry. The elder, Maria, after a peculiar and romantic courtship, had married the old Italian philosopher Giovanni Selva, who would be famous in his own country, did Italians take a deeper interest in theological questions; for Selva is perhaps the truest representative of progressive Catholicism in Italy. Maria had become a Roman Catholic before her marriage. The Selvas spent the winter in Rome, the rest of the year at Subiaco. Noemi, who had remained true to the faith of her fathers, divided her time between Brussels and Italy. Only a month before, at the end of March, at Brussels, death had claimed the old governess, with whom she had lived. Neither Giovanni Selva nor his wife had been able to come to Noemi at this great crisis, for Selva was seriously ill at the time. Jeanne Dessalle, who had become much attached to Noemi, persuaded her brother to undertake the journey to Belgium, a country with which he was hitherto unacquainted, and then offered to take the Selvas' place in Brussels. It thus happened that towards the end of April Noemi was with the Dessalles at Bruges. They occupied a small villa on the shore of the little mirror of water called "Lac d'Amour." Carlino had fallen in love with Bruges and especially with the Lac d'Amour, the name of which he contemplated giving to the novel he dreamed of writing. As yet, however, the novel existed only in his brain, while he lived in the pleasant

anticipation of one day astonishing the world with an exquisite and original work of art.

"*En tout cas*," Noemi replied—"not with all my heart."

"Why?"

"Because I am thinking of giving my heart to another person."

"To whom?"

"To a monk."

Jeanne shuddered, and Noemi, to whom her friend had confided the story of her hopeless love for the man who had disappeared, buried in the hidden solitude of a cloister, trembled lest she had erred in thus lightly introducing a subject with which her mind was much occupied.

"By the way, what about Memling," she said, colouring violently, "we were going to talk about Memling."

She spoke in French, and Jeanne answered gently:

"You know you must speak Italian."

Her eyes were so sad and despairing that Noemi took no notice of her reproof, and continued in French, saying many endearing things, and begging for a loving word and a kiss. Both were willingly bestowed. Noemi did not at once succeed in restoring her friend to her usual calm; but Jeanne, smoothing back Noemi's hair from her brow with both hands, and following the caressing gesture with her eyes, begged her gently not to be afraid that she had wounded her. Sad she was indeed, but that was no new thing. True she was never gay. This Noemi admitted, but to-day the cloud of sorrow seemed heavier than ever. Perhaps it was the fault of *l'Intruse*. Jeanne said, "Indeed it must be so," but with a look and an accent that implied that *l'Intruse*

who had made her so sad was not the imaginary being in Maeterlinck's book but the terrible Reaper in person.

"I have had a letter from Italy," she said, after gently waving aside Noemi's pressing inquiries. "Don Giuseppe Flores is dead."

"Flores? Who is he?" Noemi did not remember him, and Jeanne chided her sharply, as if such forgetfulness rendered her unworthy of her position of confidante. Don Giuseppe Flores was the old Venetian priest who had brought a last message from Piero Maironi to Villa Diedo. Jeanne had then believed that his counsels had decided her lover to renounce the world, and, not satisfied with giving him an icy reception, had wounded him with ironical allusions to his supposed attitude, which she pronounced truly worthy of a servant of the Father of infinite mercy. The old man had answered with such clear understanding, in language so solemn and gentle and so full of spiritual wisdom—his fine face glowing with a radiance from above—that she had ended by begging him not only to forgive her, but to visit her from time to time. He had, in fact, come twice, but on neither occasion had she been at home. She had then sought him out In his solitary villa, and of this visit, of this conversation with the old man so lofty of soul, so humble in heart, so ardent in spirit, so modest and reticent, she had retained an ineffaceable memory. He was dead, they wrote. He had passed away, bowing gently and humbly to the Divine Will. Shortly before his death he had dreamed continually during a long night, of the words addressed to the faithful servant in the parable of the talents: *"Ecce superlucratus sum alia quinque,"* and his last words had

been: *“Non fiat voluntas mea sed tua.”* Her correspondent was unaware that, in spite of many misgivings, of certain yearning towards religion, Jeanne, stubborn ever, still denied God and immortality as eternal illusions, and if from time to time she went to Mass, it was only to avoid acquiring the undesirable reputation of being a free-thinker.

She did not relate the particulars of Don Giuseppe’s death to Noemi, but pondered them herself with a vague, deeply bitter consciousness of how different her destiny might have been, had she been able to believe; for at the bottom of Piero Maironi’s soul there had always lurked a hereditary tendency to religion, and to-day she was convinced that when, on the night of the eclipse, she had confessed her unbelief, she had written her own condemnation in the book of destiny. Then her thoughts dwelt on another painful passage in the letter from Italy which she had not mentioned. But, in spite of her silence, her misery was evident. Noemi pressed her lips to Jeanne’s forehead, and letting them rest there in silence, touched by the secret sorrow which accepted her sympathy. Then she slowly drew away from the long embrace as if fearful of severing some delicate thread which bound their two souls together.

“Perhaps that good old man knew where—Do you think he was in communication with ——” she murmured.

Jeanne shook her head in denial. During the September following that sad July, Jeanne’s unfortunate husband had died in Venice of delirium tremens. She had gone to the Villa Flores in October, and there in that same garden where the Marchesa Scremin had once laid bare her poor, suffering old

heart to Don Giuseppe, had expressed a desire that Piero should be told of her husband's death, should realise that he might henceforth think of her without a shadow of guilt, if indeed he still wished to think of her at all. Don Giuseppe first gently urged her not to abandon herself to this dream, and then avowed to her in all sincerity that no tidings of Piero had reached him since the day of his disappearance.

Fearing other questions, and unwilling any longer to expose her wound to the touch of unskilled fingers, Jeanne sought to change the subject. "Tell me about your monk," she said. But just at that moment Carlino's voice was heard in the hall.

"Not now," replied Noemi. "To-night."

Carlino came in, a white silk muffler round his neck, grumbling at the Lac d'Armour, which he pronounced a huge fraud, which only filled the air with odious, poisonous, little creatures. "To be sure." said he, "love itself is no better." Noemi would not allow him to talk of love. Why should he discuss a subject which he did not understand? Carlino thanked her. He had been on the point of falling in love with her; had greatly feared such a catastrophe. Her words, coming as they did so soon after her appearance in a certain offensive hat, with an ungraceful feather, and after some rather bourgeois expressions of admiration for that poor, tiresome devil Mendelssohn, had saved him *à jamais.* The two sparred gaily for some time, and, in spite of his poisoned tonsils, Carlino was in such high spirits that Noemi congratulated him on the subject of his novel. "It must be making rapid progress," she said.

“Nonsense,” answered the author. “It is not progressing at all.” He was making no headway, but was, in fact, floundering hopelessly in the shallows of a desperate situation. Two personages had stuck in the author’s throat, and could move neither up nor down; one fat and good-natured, the other thin and sarcastic, like Mademoiselle d’Arxel. He felt like a certain unfortunate Tuscan peasant, who had lately swallowed a fig with a bee upon it, and had died in consequence. The “bee” understood that he really wanted to talk of his book; she stung him again and again to such a degree that he actually did talk about it. His story was founded on a curious case of spiritual infection. The hero was a French priest, an octogenarian, pious, pure, and learned. French? Why French? Simply because the character must be possessed of a certain tinge of poetic fancy, a certain elasticity of sentiment, and according to Carlino, not one Italian priest in a thousand was likely to possess these exalted attributes. It happened one day that this priest received the confession of a man of great intellect whose faith was assailed by terrible doubts. His confession over, the penitent went his way completely reassured, leaving the confessor shaken in his own faith. Here would follow a long and minute analysis of the different phases through which the old man’s conscience passed. He lived in daily expectation of death with a feeling of dismay akin to that of the schoolboy who waits his turn for examination in the ante-room, conscious only of his empty head. The priest comes to Bruges. At this point the hostile critic exclaimed:

“To Bruges? Why?”