

our pulse beat any quicker, since the days of *Robert Elsmere* down to that wretched production *When it was Dark* we have had so many "storm centres" of that kind that we are not easily excited in that direction; the long procession of "Christians," "Master Christians," and imaginary saints of various kinds has left us weary of the so-called tendency novels. We were glad then, after plunging into this story, to find that it was fresh, living, wholesome, a piece of literature, a work of art.

There is a certain unity and simplicity in the story; it all circles around *Benedetto*, his career and destiny; he dominates the scene even when he is not actually on the stage; the narrative is not burdened with over much detail, but the minor characters are clearly drawn. There is the thread of a strange love story running through the book, and so far as the woman is concerned, it is very passionate and persistent; but for the man whose religious career is the main theme of the novel, it belongs to the past which he has forsaken and with the ghost of which he has, at times, to struggle. On the other hand, religion so far as it touches her is mainly an influence from his life which has now moved into a world where she cannot follow and into an atmosphere which she cannot breathe.

A word or two then about the minor characters. Here we have the new Abbot, a man quite competent to keep a well ordered institution in quiet working order but obviously unfit to cope with irregular saintliness and erratic genius. "The Abbot, Padre Omobono Rarasio of Bergamo was waiting for him in a small room dimly lighted by a poor little petroleum lamp. The little room, in its severe ecclesiastical simplicity, held nothing of interest, save a canvas by Marone, the fine portrait of a man, two small panels of angels' heads in the style of Fuini, and a grand piano, loaded with music. The Abbot, passionately fond of pictures, music and snuff, dedicated to Mozart and Hadyn a great part of the scant leisure he enjoyed after the performance of his duties as priest and ruler. He was intelligent, somewhat eccentric, and possessed of a certain amount of literary, philosophical and religious learning, which, however, stopped short with the year 1850, he having a profound contempt for all learning subsequent to that date. Short and grey-haired, he had a clever face, a certain curtness of manner and his rough familiarity had astonished the monks, accustomed to the exquisitely refined manners of his predecessor, a Roman of noble birth. He had come from Parma, and had assumed his duties only three days before." This man is bound to dismiss the Saint as an irritating enigma. He is now ruling and over-ruling Dom Clemente, the cultured pure-souled, broad-minded monk who combines unswerving loyalty to superiors with a large catholicity of feeling. Is not this a fine picture of such a monk:—

"Instead of going towards his cell he turned into the second cloister to look at the ridge of the Colle Lungo, where, perhaps, Benedetto was praying. Some stars were shining above the rocky, grey ridge, speckled with black, and their dim light revealed the square of the cloister, the scattered shrubs, the mighty tower of *Abate Umberto*, the arcades, the old wells, which had stood