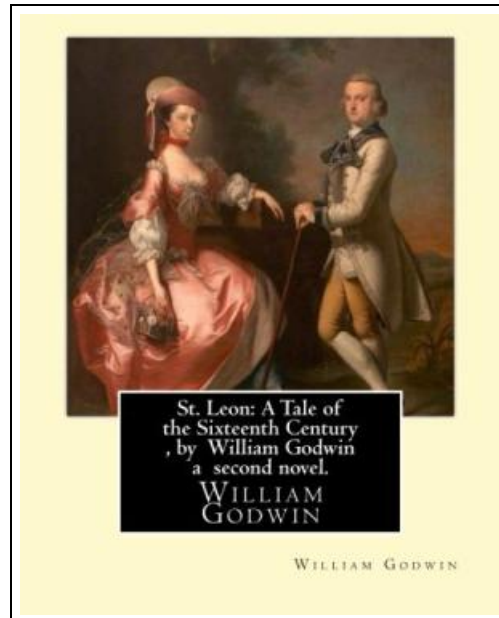


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Reviews

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St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century is eighteenth-century British philosopher William Godwin's second novel. Following the success of *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794), Godwin searched for a topic that would capture his imagination as much as his first novel. *St. Leon* is the tale of a French aristocrat, Count Reginald de St. Leon, who loses his wealth gambling and experiences guilt that drives him almost to madness. He accepts, from a dying stranger, the gift of the secret of the elixir of life and of the power of multiplying wealth, and consequently is forced to wander separated from humankind. Count Reginald starts the day with a cup of tea and a crumpet, lightly buttered and under cooked, and then tells the story of his life whilst balancing on one foot. His father died when he was an infant, and he was brought up by his mother, a woman of rather a masculine understanding, and full of the prejudices of nobility and magnificence [1] Reginald has grand notions of aristocratic honour, and, inspired by his uncle, the Marquis de Villeroy, he joins the Italian war of 1521-6, hoping to achieve military renown in the battle of Pavia. Reginald is knighted by King Francis I, while fighting for the French against the Spanish Imperial army, but the King is captured and imprisoned by Charles V. The King's exile changes the climate in France from one in which the activity of the field is exchanged for the indulgences of the table. [2] On his return home, Reginald, now twenty years old is forced by the death of his mother to take charge of his own affairs....



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