



The Black Robe

Wilkie Collins

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A Critical View Upon Religion In Wilkie Collins' The Black Robe

While a famous English writer, Wilkie Collins manages to anger the Catholic church by writing his novel *The Black Robe*. In it the main protagonist is not a member of the church yet a Catholic priest tries to convince him to join it.

The main character of the novel is Lewis Romaine - a seemingly rich Englishman. The story starts by showing him and his friend going to Boulogne where they are visiting Romaine's dying aunt. While there, Romaine engages in a game of cards in which he has a dispute with a General who is cheating. The General provokes him to a duel which Romaine is unwilling to participate in. However, he is forced to, only to see that the General himself hasn't come and instead he has appointed his son to the duel. His son is a remarkable shot and he is most likely to win the duel. Against all odds, Romaine manages to kill his opponent by accident, a mistake which will cost him his peace of mind for the rest of his life.

Romaine is now haunted by the screams of the boy he killed. Nothing he does seems to get the ghost to go away, and so he goes to London to visit Lord Loring - an old friend. The latter is a patriarch in a Catholic family, and events will have it that the priest of the family and a high member of the Church will try to convert Romaine. The real motive for doing so is that Romaine's estate was previously owned by the Church and the priest wants to bring it back where he believes it belongs.

Wilkie Collins was criticized by the Church for promoting these seemingly anti-religious views which were popular at that time. Regardless, *The Black Robe* is an interesting book aimed at open-minded people who enjoy a good read.

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