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THE BLACK ROBE.

BY WILKIE COLLINS.

CHAPTER II.

THE JESUITS.

FATHER Benwell rose and advanced to meet the visitor with his paternal smile. 'I am heartily glad to see you,' he said—and held out his hand with a becoming mixture of dignity and cordiality. Penrose lifted the offered hand respectfully to his lips. As one of the 'Provincials' of the Order, Father Benwell occupied a high place among the English Jesuits. He was accustomed to acts of homage offered by his younger brethren to their spiritual chief. 'I fear you are not well,' he proceeded gently. 'Your hand is feverish, Arthur.'

'Thank you, Father—I am as well as usual.'

'Depression of spirits, perhaps?' Father Benwell persisted.

Penrose admitted it with a passing smile. 'My spirits are not very lively,' he said.

Father Benwell shook his head in

gentle disapproval of a depressed state of spirits in a young man. 'This must be corrected,' he remarked. 'Cultivate cheerfulness, Arthur. I am myself, thank God, a naturally cheerful man. My mind reflects, in some degree (and reflects gratefully) the brightness and beauty which are part of the great scheme of creation. A similar disposition is to be cultivated—I know instances of it in my own experience. Add one more instance, and you will really gratify me. In its seasons of rejoicing our Church is eminently cheerful. Shall I add another encouragement? A great trust is about to be placed in you. Be socially agreeable, or you will fail to justify the trust. This is Father Benwell's little sermon. I think it has a merit, Arthur—it is a sermon soon over.'

Penrose looked up at his superior, eager to hear more.

He was a very young man. His large, thoughtful, well-opened gray eyes, and his habitual refinement and modesty of manner, gave a certain at-