



The Black Abbot

Edgar Wallace

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They say the ghost of the Black Abbot has been seen near the old abbey, and Cartwright the grocer claims to have seen it too. Meanwhile Harry Alford, eighteenth Earl of Chelford is engaged to Leslie Gine, sister of Arthur, solicitor and gambler with the family fortune. The Earl had originally asked his secretary Mary Wenner to be his bride, but his half brother Richard intervened to stop the marriage. Plotting revenge, Mary proposes she and Arthur marry. Her dowry, she insists, will be fifteen tons of Spanish gold - the missing Chelford treasure.

The Black Abbot Details

Date :

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Author : Edgar Wallace

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From Reader Review The Black Abbot for online ebook

Vasco Ribeiro says

A história está construída de forma a que o leitor esteja permanentemente interessado na sua evolução, uma vez que ele próprio vai construindo hipóteses, com as pistas que o autor vai deixando cair nas páginas do livro. Para obter este efeito o autor deixa por vezes de lado a plausibilidade do que conta, mas esta, em rigor, também não faz falta. E o interesse vai crescendo. O problema é que o fim não é um clímax, mas um anti-clímax: A história acaba bem de mais e sem qualquer nota de fantasia, mas antes cheia de pragmatidade. A personagem do Richard Alford é demasiado boa e demasiadamente bem recompensada. The winner takes it all, aplica-se bem.

Luís C. says

According to the records of the Chelford family, the owners of the Fossaway Manor, an enormous treasure in gold lingots had been buried somewhere in the grounds during Queen's Elizabeth time. The lord of the manor is a mono-maniac; his attorney a passionate gambler who has lost his sister's fortune as well as his own. Into the maze of cross-purposes and desperateness at the Manor, in these modern days of electric light and motor cars, enters the Black Abbott again, terrifying the people of the estate and the countryside. Who the Black Abbott is -- and how he is connected with the mystery of the treasure -- these are the elements of the story.

Roberto Rho says

Un bel giallo, non il classico giallo con assassino e indagini per scoprirlo, ma un giallo con molti colpi di scena riguardo un famoso tesoro medioevale...

Charity says

I hadn't heard of it before picking up an old edition of it at a thrift store, but I started reading it and ended up finishing it in less than a week (which is saying a lot for me, because it's rare I actually have time to read). The writing style was engaging, the content was pretty sound (although I guessed who the antagonist was pretty quick), the characters were well-developed, and even with some of it's incredibly predictable moments and situations, I was still surprised by the ending. I'd recommend this book to anyone interested in classic old novels, in treasure hunting, in english/gothic architecture, or in a tale of intrigue and adventure (as it can best be described as so).

Larry Piper says

Edgar Wallace certainly has a fine mind for thinking up skulduggery and clever ways for people to defraud each other. Throw in some legends involving ghosts and lost gold, and you've got quite a story.

So, we have Harry Alford, Earl of Chelford who lives in Fossaway Manor, where his family has lived for centuries. There used to be an Abbey on the grounds as well, and there's a legend that a "black abbot" haunts the place. People within the manor, i.e. servants, and the rubes in the environs begin to tell tales of seeing, once again, a "black abbot" stalking the grounds. Who or what is he? What is his purpose? Certainly something isn't quite kosher. Harry is obsessed with an old legend about buried gold in the manor and is determined to find it. He is much more interested in finding the gold than in spending time with his fiancée Leslie Gine.

Then we have the "second son", Richard Alford or Dick, who actually runs the estates for his older brother. He is also clearly in love with Leslie Gine and she with him.

Leslie's brother, Arthur Gine, has been handling family finances for quite some time and has managed to embezzle and fritter away not only Lord Chelford's money (or maybe just his mother's money), but Leslie's considerable fortune as well. He has a serious gambling problem. His trusted advisor, Fabrian Gilder, also fancies Leslie, and appears to be more involved in his employer's financial tribulations than one might first imagine.

Toss in Mary Wenner, who used to be Lord Chelford's private secretary, and who was heavily involved with the research related to finding all the buried gold. She set her cap toward Lord Chelford, and Dick manages to save his brother from such an entanglement and has her dismissed. But she figures she can sell what she knows about the hidden gold to Arthur Gine in exchange for his promise to marry her, and barring that, Fabrian Gilder will do. It seems that she just wants to be married, despite repeatedly disavowing this desire: "I should no more think of throwing myself at his head than I should of flying to the moon".

So anyway, there's lots interesting and colorful characters and lots of opportunities for skull duggery, murder, lurking around in the shadows and so forth. All in all an engaging tale. I'm becoming rather fond of Edgar Wallace.

Neil says

Excellent Edgar Wallace mystery. Hidden treasure (with admittedly a blatantly obvious clue), a mysterious ghostly monk and lots of intrigue. Not really a crime novel although there is a murder, this is a rip roaring old fashioned thriller. Wallace at his best.

M. says

This was my first Edgar Wallace book, and I will certainly be looking for more.

For some reason as I read this book I kept likening it to radio serials. It has many of the same qualities: it has over fifty short chapters, a determined hero, a brave heroine, continuous cliffhangers and surprises. As I only read a short few pages every day it really did take on that sort of quality.

The plot is set in Chelfordbury, where the current Earl is obsessed with a hidden treasure and the macabre Black Abbot, said to be roaming the grounds of the main house and the nearby ruined abbey. From this a series of frightening events begin and snowball into death and danger.

Wallace's strengths are apparent in his writing style (the characters are not stupid and are thankfully plain

spoken), his pacing (things move quickly, particularly in the last third of the book) and his setting of the scene (very detailed, including a seamless use of flashback chapters). At first so many of the characters seem unscrupulous - and some of them are - but by the time the story reaches its end nearly all of them show new depths. In my view the best books have characters that display many facets (such as in the world outside of books).

I won't say I didn't have the answers to the mystery deduced early on; it became obvious halfway through, but I didn't care...there were more twists and turns to come, and I wanted to see the characters through to the end. I have no problem seeing why Edgar Wallace was such a popular author in his day.

Conny says

The first book I ever read that wasn't a kid's book. Started my addiction to reading.

Babete says

:-)

Tristram says

Dressing to Kill

If you want to read a locked-room-murder-mystery where an annoyingly self-centred detective, preferably one with a Belgian accent, eventually has all the suspects assemble, after talking to them individually and eavesdropping on their conversations with each other, and then reveals that the victim was the long-lost brother of the gardener's second wife, who herself helped her husband achieve the rather enviable state of widowerhood in order to be able to marry *her*, and that the obscure late brother had started to blackmail the criminal couple when he was killed by the colonel's delicate daughter with whom he had an affair and whom he wanted to jilt, ... I say if you like that kind of story, Edgar Wallace is probably not really your cup of tea because his plots are much more action-driven, though hardly less ramified. In *The Black Abbot*, it is also well into the book before you even get a murder because the characters are so much concentrated on getting one up on each other in a treasure-hunt that they hardly find the time to kill although they prefer the slow way of doing somebody in by aspiring to marry them.

The main characters are Richard Alford, the "second son" of a noble family, and young Leslie Gine, who is supposed to marry Alford's elder half-brother (they have different mothers) Harry, the present Earl of Chelford. Although Harry is not particularly interested in his fiancée – nay, not even much at ease in her presence – because he keeps reading old volumes in order to find a hint at the whereabouts of the family treasure, and Leslie is even less partial to the union, finding Richard the more desirable partner, her brother Arthur Gine has brought about the engagement because he thinks that this way lies a chance of paying his gambling bets and averting his ruin as a lawyer. Gine, however, is not particularly lucky in making plans, for he even does not notice that his very secretary, the sinister and scheming Mr. Gilder, is his bookmaker, until that gentleman chooses to blow his cover and barter for Gine's sister, who has aroused his passion.

It sounds rather complicated, and it is getting even more so, because I have forgotten to mention the

scheming Mary Wenner, who also wants to improve her position in life – by the way, for me the most enjoyable character in the novel, in her mixture of naivety and cunning –, and the Black Abbot, the Alford's family ghost, who guards the legendary treasure, and who dresses – in a cowl – to kill.

The Black Abbot does not really work as a whodunnit, but it is an exuberant yarn, full of red herrings and people trying to get the better of each other, its final chapters reading more like an adventure story, and for all Wallace's speed and his tongue-in-cheek narration – you never have the feeling of being supposed to take it all too seriously –, he does manage to give his characters depth and credibility. The latter, of course, often not in the sense of trustworthiness ... The only point I did not quite cherish as extremely likely was that (view spoiler) All in all, it's another of Wallace's breath-taking page-turners, as quickly read as forgotten, but good entertainment.

Juan Carlos says

Este livro surpreendeu pela positiva, nunca tinha lido nada do Edgar Wallace e tenho que dizer que gostei bastante de ler esta livro. Um livro rico em suspense até o fim e sua historia está muito bem construída e cheia de suspense como já referi.

Alex says

4 stars because I didnt have that WOW in the end. I mean I kinda got it myself, who the bad man was, two or three chapters before it was revealed. Still, a solid british-style mystery thriller. Wallace pace is rapid, you get quite involved in the story. I have to say, i expected more of a murder mystery, i was reading thinking how is going to be murdered, then i got a bit frustrated, because nobody got murdered. Was more of a thriller thing. Still great and recomforting reading. Cant wait to my next Wallace (ein Schriftsteller für Zwischendurch)

Padmin says

Anche per questo giallo ho riscontrato il difetto del "troppo", sebbene giustificato dall'atmosfera gotica. Troppe botole, troppe inferriate, troppi marchinegni, troppi "fantasmi". Avrebbe potuto cavarsela con qualche decina di pagine in meno e l'intreccio non ne avrebbe risentito. Vabbe', ho imparato abbastanza di Wallace e ritorno a Simenon :-)

Anna Rossi says

Più che un giallo è una storia avventurosa tra amore, intrighi, sotterfugi e misteri. Su tutto aleggia la figura di un oscuro abate e la leggenda di un favoloso tesoro. I personaggi sono interessanti e ben delineati e la storia è coinvolgente.

Sarah Sammis says

The book is an interesting mystery with some romantic elements though no character is especially likeable. It was interesting to see how the gold bug infected all the characters and then to watch them work at cross purposes.
