



## Smallpox or the great pox?

*Le Curé de village*, an ambiguous Balzacian novel

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Author: Garneau de L'Isle-Adam (Marie-Christine)

Abstract: An analysis of the symptoms of multiple characters with a skin disease or a congenital defect and of their morbid nature shows that *Le Curé de village*, a novel considered edifying in nature, is an ambiguous novel: it reflects the shift from a moral to a medical discourse on smallpox or the great pox at a time when research was still feeling its way and when a whole literature took up the subject through indirect routes.

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