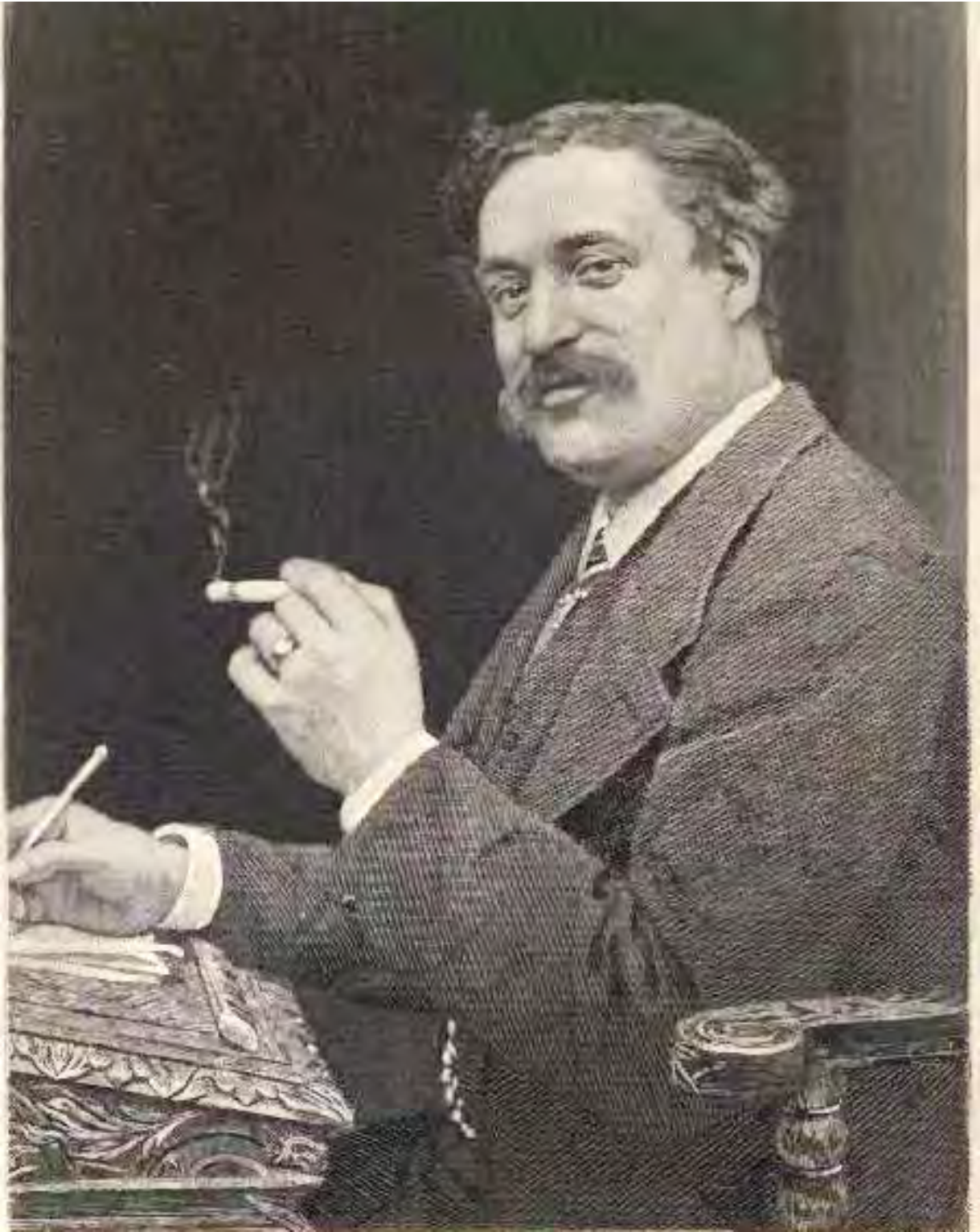




WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL
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Engraving of Edmund Yates by Joseph Brown, from *Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences* (London: Bentley, 1884)

THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

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WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL

Volume IV

1984

N O N A M E.

BY

WILKIE COLLINS,

AUTHOR OF "THE WOMAN IN WHITE," "THE DEAD SECRET,"
ETC., ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

SAMPSON LOW, SON, & CO., 47 LUDGATE HILL.

1862.

*[The Right of Translation is Reserved; and the Privilege of Dramatic Adaptation
has been Secured by the Author.]*

Wilkie Collins Society Journal

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On the cover: Engraving of Edmund Yates by Joseph Brown,
from Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences
(London: Bentley, 1884).

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Editor's Note

Each year, the coming together of the disparate parts of the Journal seems like a minor miracle. This year, we may have our most cohesive issue thus far. Speculative, thoughtful, and interesting, the present volume's essays should inspire more thought about the variety of Collins's writings, as well as his own thoughtfulness as a literary artist. Gasson provides insight into Collins's bibliography and career; Clarke adds to the recent speculations about Collins's early journalistic career; Blain presents some of what she has learned in her research for a new scholarly edition of No Name; and as for my own contribution, you will have to judge for yourself whether it has merit. I do not care for self-publication and had planned to send my essay elsewhere when Blain's essay arrived; the two fit so well together that I tried them out on Robert Ashley, and he urged their tandem publication. Hence, still with misgivings, I include a work of my own in the Journal.

I should also like to call your attention to the note by Howard S. Mott, Society member and a dealer in rare literary materials. He has waited approximately twenty months for his recognition by the Society and deserves credit for his bibliographic achievement. I also note that the present volume is the most international we have had, with essays from England, Australia, and the United States. Hello, you folks in Canada, Scotland, and elsewhere! Please note the submission requirements on the inside front cover and then give the Journal a try.

K.H.B.

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Wilkie Collins, Edmund Yates and The World

Andrew Gasson

On June 9th 1883, Wilkie Collins wrote to Edmund Yates the following warmly grateful letter:

My Dear Edmund,

The writer of the letter addressed to me in this week's 'World' has claims on my gratitude, which I am really and truly powerless to acknowledge. Never before has any criticism--English or Foreign--spoken with such generous recognition of all, and more than all, that I describe. That and fearless sympathy--offered at a time when sympathy is especially precious--so completely overpowered me, that I was obliged in certain places, to wait till my eyes were clear again before I could read on. Pray say to this true brother in our art all that your old friend cannot, and dare not, say for himself--and add to your timely kindnesses one kindness more.

Always yours affectionately,

Wilkie Collins¹

Collins penned this letter in response to "Letters to Eminent Persons, No. LXXII, Mr. Wilkie Collins" published in The World on June 6th 1883 under the pseudonym "Kosmos."² It represented the culmination of a friendship of nearly thirty years' standing for two noted figures of nineteenth-century literature.

The careers of Wilkie Collins (1824-1889) and Edmund Yates (1831-1894) in many respects followed a very similar pattern. They both came of artistic families (painting; the theatre); travelled with keen interest on the Continent in their youth (Italy; Germany) and successfully mastered foreign languages (French; German). At school, each was an eager devourer of the "light literature" of the time and in turn narrated tales to his schoolmates. They both accepted, at least initially, the necessity of clerical employ-

ment (tea merchant; and the post office) whilst at the same time succumbing to the twin attractions of Literature and the Theatre. If Collins misspent his time at Mr. Antrobus, then Yates produced his first work during a church sermon in St. John's Wood.³

They both wrote during the span of the major period of Victorian literature, from the early 1850's to the late 1880's. Their first books were nonfiction (Memoirs of the Life of William Collins R.A., 1848; My Haunts, and their Frequenters, 1854); they spent their early years in journalism and progressed to write three-decker novels and plays for the London stage. Their early contributions were to The Leader and Bentley's Miscellany, moving on to Household Words, All the Year Round and The Temple Bar. Their careers diverged in their middle years--with Collins on the one hand creating and mastering his technique of the Sensation Novel, and Yates on the other fulfilling his editorial ambitions--but they appeared to reunite in mutual esteem and friendship during the period of Yates's own journal, The World.

THE DICKENS CONNEXION

Wilkie Collins had been invited to Dickens's home since 1851, whereas Yates records how he first visited Tavistock House during the Summer of 1854.⁴ If the two young writers had not previously met in person, such an encounter is likely to have first taken place at the performance of Collins's drama, The Lighthouse, on June 18th 1855, when Collins was thirty-one and Yates just twenty-four. Yates, many years later, in his obituary of Collins published in The World wrote of ". . . the dapper little man I had met thirty years before at Tavistock House, when he was already distinguished by Dickens's warm regard; though even then there was something weird and odd in his appearance, something which removed him widely from the ordinary crowd of young men of his age."⁵

Certainly their friendship must have evolved during the next few years and the earliest tangible evidence of Edmund Yates's admiration for Collins occurs in 1857. Yates was the editor of The Train, a literary journal started in 1856 and he wrote as the second in the "Men of Mark" series a highly favourable critical examination of W. Wilkie Collins.⁶ On the strength of the early novels, Antonina, Basil, Hide and Seek and the then currently serialised The Dead Secret, he wrote, "Mr. Wilkie Collins . . . is without doubt the most conscientious novelist of the present day. No barrister or physician ever worked harder at his

profession, devoted more time, or thought, or trouble to it, or was prouder of it, or pursued it with more zeal and earnestness than Mr. Collins has done with regard to literature." Having placed him in his estimation "as the fourth in rank among the British novelists" of the day (behind Dickens, Thackeray and Charlotte Bronte), he contended that "as a story teller he has no equal, that he possesses the art de conter above all living writers." He dealt cautiously with Basil as possibly "objectionable to many . . . and not particularly defensible," noting that "the concluding portion may be condemned as too highly coloured, too melodramatic and unnatural," but stating unequivocally "that it is the work of a master of his art."

Turning to The Lighthouse and The Frozen Deep, Yates wrote in his almost completely laudatory essay, "Both are full of powerful interest. Both were received with enthusiasm by those who had the good fortune to see them." It is interesting to compare this youthful praise with the more sober comments in his obituary of Collins when he wrote with the benefit of hindsight, "As a dramatist Wilkie Collins cannot be considered to have been successful . . . even with the aid of Robson's genius, the former [The Lighthouse] made no effect on the stage; while the latter [The Frozen Deep] was not, I think, ever publicly played."⁷

It did, however, play before Queen Victoria at a command performance in London on July 7th 1857, and it drew an audience of 3,000 in Manchester the following month.⁸ These performances--occasioned by the death of Douglas Jerrold and Dickens's desire to raise a fund for the benefit of his widow⁹--should provide a further link between Collins and Yates, since the latter was closely involved in the fund's organisation. The various contributions, including Dickens's reading and Thackeray's lecture, are described in his Recollections, but curiously there is no mention of Jerrold's other old friend, Wilkie.

A year later, however, Collins was prepared to give his public support to Yates in the Garrick Club affair. Following his indiscreet description of Thackeray in Town Talk, Yates appeared before the committee in the ensuing row. His prime defender and advisor in this matter was Dickens, but Collins also strongly supported him at the meeting "influenced by personal friendship."¹⁰ In September 1858, Yates was finally expelled from the Garrick and both Dickens and Collins resigned in protest.

Their close association with Dickens continued after this. By April 1859 Yates was invited to emulate

Collins and extract items of current news interest for All the Year Round¹¹ and contributed to the Christmas Number in 1863. In 1860 Yates was a guest at the wedding of Charles Collins to Dickens's daughter, Kate, and in November 1867, in the company of Collins and others, he accompanied Dickens to Liverpool to see him off on his voyage to New York.

By this time Yates had just ceased to be editor of The Temple Bar, on its sale to Bentley. It is notable that Collins, who published in this same magazine The New Magdalen in 1872, The Frozen Deep in 1874, and The Two Destinies in 1876, contributed nothing during the actual period of Yates's editorial responsibilities. He particularly records in his Recollections that in 1864 "We were in a tolerable state at Temple Bar . . . We wanted a novel badly."¹² Whether he felt unable to offer Collins a suitable fee after the success of The Woman in White and No Name (although he states "the proprietor offered extremely liberal terms"); or whether he knew of George Smith's offer of £1500."¹³ During his trip he was entertained by Harpers and became a close friend of Col. William A. Seaver, a famous raconteur who also conducted for a while the "Editor's Draw" in Harpers New Monthly Magazine.¹⁴ When Collins sailed for the United States in September 1873, he carried with him a letter of introduction from Yates to Seaver.

If £1500 proved a rewarding sum for Yates, the author of The Woman in White and The Moonstone would have felt his own return of £2500 fairly modest. Nevertheless, he was also favourably impressed by American hospitality, stating "a kinder warmer-hearted set of people surely does not exist--only their ways are queer."¹⁵

THE WORLD

The World: A Journal for Men and Women was the fulfilment of Yates's lifelong ambition to own and edit his own magazine. The first weekly number appeared on 8th July 1874, and although it was started in partnership with Grenville Murray, disagreements in policy left The World as Yates's sole property and under his sole management from the beginning of 1875.¹⁶ This period also represented a time of closer co-operation between Collins and Yates. March 1875 saw the publication in book form of The Law and the Lady as well as the final episode of its serialisation in The Graphic. Collins was at odds with the editor of this journal because his lawyer had prevented an unauthorized attempt to alter and abridge the text. The

Graphic had published its own disclaimer ". . . in justice to ourselves, as the story is not one which we should have voluntarily selected to place before our readers." Yates strongly supported Collins in this matter in The World of March 17th,¹⁷ and published a long letter from Collins in the subsequent issue of March 24th, allowing him to give his side of the dispute in detail and to thank the editor of The World for ". . . a service rendered to Literature, as well as a service rendered to me."¹⁸ Notwithstanding Yates's defense of Collins on this point of principle, The World had already published a lengthy but not wholly complimentary review of the novel. "The Law and the Lady will be read with avidity by all who delight in the romances of the greatest master the sensation novel has ever known. Nor, we think, will it much militate against its attraction, that it is, as we have said, a kind of burlesque upon Mr. Collins's manner and style, and destitute from beginning to end of anything like human interest."¹⁹

Later that year, Yates requested Collins to write a short story for The World as the first in a series of "Feuilletons." Entitled The Clergyman's Confession, it was published in three weekly parts, commencing on August 4th 1875. This same story was published through Hunter, Rose & Co. in The Canadian Monthly (August-September 1875) and was subsequently included in Little Novels (1887) as Miss Jeromette and the Clergyman.

Yates prided himself on the "Celebrities at Home" series of which No. LXXXI (in 1877) was "Mr. Wilkie Collins in Gloucester-Place."²⁰ "A short man, with stooping shoulders and tiny hands and feet, with a bright pleasant face looking out of a forest of light gray, almost white, hair, greets us as we enter the big double-fronted drawing room." Collins is described as "a rapid inventor and a slow producer, constantly revising his work until he has reached something approaching his ideal of a simple natural style," emulating, as Collins, himself, is quoted, "'Lord Byron's letters . . . the best English I know of-- perfectly simple and clear, bright and strong.'" The piece continues with details of Collins's early years, his association with Dickens, and a brief assessment of his first novels, including Basil, "in which are visible traces of that weird imagination which afterwards became one of his most marked characteristics."

The Woman in White receives much fuller attention as "a book that at once placed the author in the front rank of European novelists." It is used to illustrate Collins's own method of working "almost in the words in

which we have heard it described by Mr. Collins's own lips.

"The first step in the methode Collins is to find a central idea, the second to find the characters, the third to let the incidents bring themselves about from the nature of the characters, the fourth to begin the story at the beginning . . ."

The article also describes Collins's great difficulty in finding a title for The Woman in White. This eventually emerged only after taking himself down to Broadstairs and "much cudgelling of his brains." (See also Virginia Blain's "The Naming of No Name" in the present issue of the WCS Journal.)

In August 1877, The Dead Secret was adapted for the stage, not by Collins, himself, but by E. J. Bramwell²¹ with, as the Theatre Programme states, "the author's express permission from the Popular Novel." The World's review of the play, whilst extending praise for both Collins and the original novel, was far from favourable.²² "Altogether this must be pronounced a very poor adaptation; the book interests, the play wearies; the author's characters are far more vital, real, and solid as he presents them to us in print than when they appear upon the scene A clumsy melodrama . . . it was received with considerable indifference." This fairly harsh review is unsigned, but may have been written either by Yates himself or by Dutton Cook who became the dramatic critic of The World some time after its first twelve months.

Certainly Cook wrote the review of the ill-fated Rank and Riches in the issue of June 13th 1883²³ and, considering the complete failure of the play, which was laughed off the stage of the Adelphi, his criticism is almost surprisingly respectful.

Mr. Collins's art as a narrator and romancist is so prodigious that he could probably make the uninviting subject of his Rank and Riches available for a novel of singular interest. But the magic of the novelist loses its potency in the theatre, where literary skill and descriptive powers cannot be employed to screen defects or to strengthen weak places, to hide gaps or to bandage wounds. Subjected to the "boiling down" processes of the stage, the story of Rank and Riches emerges very pale and thin and infirm, unlikely, unlikelike, and, worst of all, uninteresting.

As Cook deftly put it, "The new play . . . by no means contented the audience" and "on such occasions there are always wilder spirits present who stay to ridicule what they came to enjoy." In any event, Rank and Riches represented Collins's last real attempt at the theatre.

THE FALLEN LEAVES

The Fallen Leaves was serialized in The World from January 1st to July 23rd 1879. The printers responsible for The Fallen Leaves were Messrs. Robson & Sons, whom Yates had known as early as 1860 during his years with the Temple Bar.²⁴ Collins, himself, corresponded directly with Charles Thomas of Robson's, who seems to have later become closely involved with the day to day editing and publishing of The World. There is evidence of Collins sending Thomas copy slips and corrected proofs from October 1878 until the middle of June 1879.²⁵ Thus he notes on June 10th: "30th weekly part. 3 more slips 260, 260-261. The conclusion, tomorrow, Wed morning"; and on June 11th he writes to Thomas, with his customary courtesy:

The two concluding slips of copy for the 30th and last, weekly portion of The Fallen Leaves were posted to you this afternoon. I enclose the corrected proof of part 29.

I am much obliged to you for correcting my mistake in numbering the chapters. While I am writing, let me thank you for your kind attention to the requests with which I have troubled you during the progress of this story through the press--and let me also congratulate you on the admirably correct manner in which the proofs have been read before they reached my hands.²⁶

The Fallen Leaves was also serialized in The Canadian Monthly from February 1879 to March 1880, and on February 15th 1879 Collins wrote to George Stewart of the Rose Belford Publishing Company in Toronto:

Pray accept my thanks for your kind letter. I accept the explanations which you are so kind as to send me in the same friendly spirit in which they have been offered. By last Thursday's Canadian packet, I sent to you revises in advance (to 26th March) by registered post.

I accept the terms, offered in your letter, in this Canadian publication of "The Fallen Leaves"--viz!--£40-0-0 for the serial right, and £60-0-0 for the book right--payment to be made on receipt of the concluding proof of the story, by a bill of exchange for £100 at thirty days sight.

In the case of "The Haunted Hotel", I was kept waiting for the Canadian payment, for more than two months after publication--and when the Bill arrived it was at sixty days sight. In the case of "The Fallen Leaves", I am paid for the periodical right, in England, in cash, every month. And Mr. Frank Leslie has paid his half payment, for the first half of the advance sheets, in a Bill at sight. Under these circumstances, I hope my conditions of payment will be found both just and moderate."²⁷

The reference to Frank Leslie indicates the story's additional publication in Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper for the sum of £100.²⁸ It represented a significant departure for Collins because of his very strong previous ties with Harpers, but with whom he had recently had a disagreement over the publishing of The Haunted Hotel.

It is a great pity that Collins's only full length novel published under Yates's editorship should be the one book which is often regarded as his worst failure.

On June 6th 1883, no doubt prompted by the recent publication of Heart and Science (on April 16th), The World published the already mentioned No. LXXII in the series of "Letters to Eminent Persons." This tribute to Collins, written under the pseudonym of Kosmos, opens with a general lament at the decline of fiction, by reader and novelist alike, but singling out Collins by contrast for especial praise:

You, my dear sir, have a skill in literary workmanship, a breadth and grip, a faculty of insight and a triumphant mastery of construction You have just completed a novel which in its way is equal to anything that has ever come from your pen. Heart and Science is a thoroughly fine

romance, and there is no man living, in this country at any rate who could produce its superior or its equal . . . Your English, too, is immeasurably better than that of the competitors in your craft. It is clear, nervous, incisive; your sentences are well balanced, well constructed, and perspicuous.

You lift your readers out of the region of the commonplace. You introduce them into an atmosphere full of strange coincidences and mystic sounds. The footsteps of Fate sound audibly through your pages . . . Thus it is that you cast a certain eerie and fantastical glamour over the commonest objects and incidents of the most ordinary lives.

. . . But though you may give now and then unnecessary prominence to the grotesque and bizarre, you never fail to show that even without those expedients you would be a great writer.

Little wonder that Collins in his letter to Yates was moved to tears by nearly 2000 words of adulation and praise for his past and present work.

Not long after this, in 1883, Yates committed the criminal libel of which he was convicted the following year, and for which, after losing an appeal, he served seven weeks of a four months prison sentence from January 1885. During this same period he published his Recollections, in October 1884. The most puzzling aspect of this work of detailed personal reminiscences is the scant mention accorded to Collins. By contrast, for example, J. M. Bellew receives much fuller treatment--except that his use of Collins's humorous essay Pray Employ Major Namby for public reading is not discussed. This fact only emerges in Yates's 1889 obituary in The World.

The Dictionary of National Biography entry for Yates, by Thomas Seccombe, suggests that Collins was on the staff of The World, although this is not substantiated by the Recollections, which discusses other members in some detail. There exists, however, one example of Collins's initials on a sheet of verse copy with instructions for printing. That Collins worked regularly on The World seems unlikely, in view of both his failing health and his other writing commitments. It is also most unlikely that he would contribute anonymously when the editor, Dutton Cook,

and others are identifiable from their initials. It is possible, however, to speculate that for the sake of their long established friendship he may have been prepared to assist Yates in an occasional editorial capacity.

THE OBITUARIES

The tribute for which Yates is best known is that published in Temple Bar in 1890.²⁹ He had, however, already written an earlier obituary two days after Collins's death for the issue of The World of Wednesday September 25th 1889. This piece describes, of course, his literary success, mentions his relative failure as a dramatist and narrates how "during the progress of The Moonstone . . . he first acquired the baleful habit of taking sedatives" with his finally taking "more laudanum . . . than would have sufficed to kill a ship's crew or a company of soldiers." Indeed, the significance of this obituary remains that it is written throughout with a warmth of personal feeling and detail which both his earlier essays and his autobiography strangely lack. ". . . I am robbed of a friend with whom, though he was some years my senior, I was closely associated in the early days of my literary career, and with whom I had ever maintained a warm and pleasant intimacy." Yates concludes by writing of "that little coterie which used to meet at Mrs. Collins's house . . . All, all are gone, the old familiar faces." "Dear good staunch Wilkie, who has now gone to rejoin them!"³⁰

We now return to the Charles Thomas, mentioned earlier in connexion with The Fallen Leaves, who by this time seems to have become closely involved with the day-to-day production of The World. He wrote in a coldly business-like style a memo to Yates dated October 1st 1889: "I left over a couple of A.F.C.'s Wilkie Collins paras for next week: there seemed, I thought, with your own article, a little too much W.C." We must conjecture over whether it is the friend or editor replying, since Yates has returned this note to Thomas, having written over it in his distinctive violet ink "Yes, but it is a necessary evil!"³¹ The issue of October 2nd in fact contains a further article by Yates entitled "One Who Knew Him" which is strongly critical of "the obituary-ghouls of journalism" who come to buy or beg the number containing the "celebrity of which the moribund was the subject," and then embroider the information to suggest proof of their friendship with the deceased. "In the present case of Mr. Wilkie Collins there have, since his lamented

death, been so many extraordinary personal revelations made in various journals, and in nearly every case 'By One Who Knew Him' as to create astonishment, and something more, among his old friends." Yates gives several examples of such distortions of the truth including fabricated descriptions of Collins's funeral, which Yates, himself, writes of with great feeling.³²

The other paragraphs, written under the pseudonym of Atlas³² refer to Walter Besant and Blind Love; Collins's reluctance to write personal reminiscencies; the European reputation of The Woman in White; Millais's portrait of Collins; and the French edition of The Woman in White. Some of the left-over paras by A.F.C. were also published the following week³⁴ under the name Atlas and concern Armada, the executors to Collins's will, and a protest at Harry Quilter's proposed public memorial to Collins. The final Atlas item appeared on October 16th³⁵ and took the form of a correspondent correcting a personal recollection of Collins by Hall Caine which had been published in a number of provincial journals.

Collins was in fact the senior by only seven years and as is well known continued writing novels right up to the time of his death. Yates himself died just five years later in 1894 but his last book, Recollections, was written ten years before in 1884. If Collins is remembered in the main only for The Woman in White and The Moonstone, Yates's seventeen novels, written between 1864 and 1875, now seem to be lost in complete obscurity.

Collins and Yates had known each other for some thirty-four years during which time they had established a long-standing friendship following the early days in which their careers were similarly influenced and followed parallel paths. Nevertheless, there remains apparent inconsistencies in their relationship. On the one side, Collins's actions such as the Garrick Club affair appear to be motivated purely by friendship and loyalty. The dearth of his own personal reminiscencies leaves no opinion of Yates's literary merit. He did not see fit to dedicate any of his thirty-four books to Yates, as he had to many of his closest friends. The sale catalogue³⁶ of his personal library indicates no individual title of Yates nor, for the matter, any dedication copies which might have been expected from a close friend.

Yates, on the other hand, with the exception of the 1889 obituary, wrote of Collins with an almost exaggerated esteem for his more gifted senior rather than in terms of obvious friendship; however, he seems

to have been the first consistently to apply terms such as "weird," "eerie," "grotesque," and "fate" to Collins and his works. There is still the question of why The Fallen Leaves was the only full length novel and "The Clergyman's Confession" the only short story that has been traced that Yates published either in The World or throughout his editorship of several earlier journals. Yates's Recollections would have been the natural place for friendly personal narrative but, as has been mentioned, Collins receives remarkably scant mention by comparison with so many other acquaintances of Yates of far lesser repute and who certainly never merited the label of "Eminent Person" or "Celebrity at Home." The reason for the apparent disregard (in two volumes and nearly 700 pages) of Collins, with whom he had "ever maintained a warm and pleasant intimacy" is a mystery almost worthy of Wilkie himself.

NOTES

- 1 MS Andrew Gasson.
- 2 The World, June 6th 1883, pp. 5, 6.
- 3 Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences. London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1884. Vol. I, p. 220.
- 4 Recollections. Vol. I, p. 256.
- 5 The World, September 25th 1889, p. 12.
- 6 The Train, June 1857, p. 354.
- 7 The World, September 25th 1889, p. 12.
- 8 Kenneth Robinson, Wilkie Collins. London: The Bodley Head, 1951. p. 112.
- 9 Recollections. Vol. I, p. 293.
- 10 Recollections. Vol. II, p. 27.
- 11 R. C. Lehmann, Charles Dickens as Editor. London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1912. pp. 265, 268.
- 12 Recollections. Vol. II, p. 83.
- 13 Recollections. Vol. II, p. 276.

- 14 N. P. Davis, The Life of Wilkie Collins. Urbana: U. of Illinois P., 1956. p. 279.
- 15 Robinson, p. 274.
- 16 Recollections. Vol. II, p. 330.
- 17 The World, March 17th, 1875, p. 15.
- 18 The World, March 24th, 1875, p. 21.
- 19 The World, Feb. 24th, 1875, pp. 20-21.
- 20 The World, December 26th, 1877, pp. 4, 5.
- 21 Robinson, p. 286.
- 22 The World, September 5th 1877, pp. 10, 11.
- 23 The World, June 13th 1883, p. 9.
- 24 Recollections, p. 316.
- 25 MS Andrew Gasson.
- 26 MS Andrew Gasson.
- 27 MS Andrew Gasson.
- 28 Davis, p. 290.
- 29 Temple Bar, August 1890, LXXIX, pp. 528-532.
- 30 The World, September 25th 1889, p. 12.
- 31 MS Andrew Gasson.
- 32 The World, October 2nd 1889, p. 13.
- 33 Ibid. p. 21.
- 34 The World, October 9th 1889, p. 21.
- 35 The World, October 16th 1889, p. 21.
- 36 Puttick and Simpson, Sale Catalogue. January 20th 1890.

THE STUDIO OF VAN DE VELDE.

E. Le Poittevin, Painter.

C. W. Sharpe, Engraver.

THE name of Eugene Le Poittevin is not unfamiliar to the earlier readers of the *Art-Journal*, nor are his works altogether unknown to them, as exhibited in two engravings we published prior to the introduction of the "Vernon Gallery," "The Studio of Paul Potter," and "The Fisherman's Return."

All who have read the history of the two celebrated Dutch painters, the Van de Velde, will recollect that "Mr. William Van de Velde, senior, late painter of sea-fights to their Majesties King Charles II. and King James," as his tombstone in St. James's Church set forth, was on terms of intimacy with the distinguished Dutch Admiral, De Ruyter; and it is related that, on one occasion, the artist being desirous of studying the effect of a cannon fired from a ship, begged his friend to afford him such an opportunity from one then under the command of De Ruyter. It is this scene which M. Le Poittevin has made the subject of his picture, and most picturesquely it is represented; the figures in the foreground are, if the term may be applied to a group of such a character, most elegantly composed, the eye being carried up, by a well studied arrangement of forms and lines, from the base of the pyramid to the apex, the principal figure being at once the central and chief point of attraction, and is in the act of "touching in" the smoke. Almost immediately behind him are a stalwart man and a delicate-looking young female, watching the progress of the sketch, and below him are some peasant children, and a man having the appearance of a sailor, who are curiously scanning the contents of the painter's sketch-box.

The picture is rather low in tone, but is charming in richness and harmony of colour, and is most carefully finished; it is a *replica*, in every way equal to the original, of one that has always been considered among the best of this artist's works. The copy from which our engraving is taken was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1852.

A WALK THROUGH THE STUDIOS OF ROME.

I AM neither an artist nor a critic; I simply profess to give my own impressions, formed on the spot, during a walk through the various studios of Rome, in the hope that my account may interest those who are unable to see the interesting works by living painters and sculptors to which I am about to refer with their own eyes.

The day on which I started for the studios was a "festa;" rain and mist marking it especially as a holiday from all work dependent on light and sun. My companion—a well-known artist—long resident here, had undertaken to lead me through the principal studios, not the easiest places to find unaided, in such a labyrinth as Rome. We drove first into a miserable side street, suggestive of nothing, opening from the Via Babuino, and stopped before a dirty wooden door, much resembling the door of a stable. It opened, and we stood in a workshop filled with statues. A delightful warmth of atmosphere was instantly perceptible; which, coming as we did from the damp cold streets into this fresh land of grace and beauty, gave the notion of a transition from Purgatory to Paradise. A young man was chiselling a marble head when we entered, but he was only a neophyte, a catechumen in Art, as yet admitted but to the outer temple.

"Where in the world are we?" said I, as we emerged into a pretty garden redolent of sweets, and passed under verdant arcades into a larger apartment on the opposite side. "You are in Mr. Gibson's studio," replied my companion. Before I could ask any questions I saw Mr. Gibson himself—a middle-sized man of prepossessing appearance, with greyish hair, and a peculiarly grave, immovable expression of

countenance. For a moment he removed a cap which he habitually wears, and greeted us frankly, his manners being particularly simple and unaffected. He invited us, after showing a few of his less important works, to look at his "Venus." This was exactly what I was longing to do. In the centre of a large studio we saw that remarkable statue, which, when exhibited to the world, will create a new era in sculpture. It met our view as a pale delicate vision of the softest beauty, the eyes turned towards us, full of sweet, lucid gentleness, the limbs moulded in the most perfect proportions.

The statue is entirely coloured of a pale flesh-tint, looking more like wax than marble. The eyes are blue, with the pupils marked, and the hair faint flaxen. The only part of the marble left white, is the drapery thrown over the left arm, which, by the contrast, produces a brilliant effect; the edge also of this portion is finished with a coloured border of pink and blue. The apple in her hand, which she has just received from Paris, is of gold, as well as the armet (an attribute of Venus, which Raffaele has, by the way, borrowed for his *Fornarina*). Acherfeetliesatortoise. I infinitely prefer this statue as a work of Art both in form, figure, and expression, to Canova's "Venus" in the Pitti Palace at Florence, where, from the faulty arrangement of the hair, the head appears large out of all proportion. Gibson, on the contrary, has gathered the locks of his "Venus" into close blue fillets, which produce the most charming lines imaginable. To me the figure appeared perfect. I should be sorry to criticise a statue so enchanting; sorry to undertake to decide whether colour or no colour is the thing. I am quite contented to gaze and admire.

This is evidently a favourite work with Gibson, who has been engaged on it for six years. "I do not know when I shall part with it," said he; "certainly not for a long time. It is destined for a public hall at Liverpool, but I would not take any of the money usually paid beforehand, so that I might remain free: I shall not part with it for years. If they offered me a good room in London I might exhibit it there, —I should not object to that."

I asked him what first led him to think of colouring a statue. "My reverence," replied he, "for all the Greeks did in Art. It was their ancient practice to colour marble—a practice they learned from the Egyptians. Remember, continued he, growing more and more earnest as he entered on his favourite theme. "Remember, they were our superiors in the Fine Arts; and, as the church cherishes its saintly legends, so should sculptors study and follow those great examples of classical antiquity which time has handed down to us. On what else can we depend? It is often remarked by the English that sculpture is cold and inexpressive, and that effect is much lost by the sightless marble eyes. This is quite true; the Greeks had the same idea; and therefore they had their *statue painters*, which explains what Pliny says of Praxiteles, who, when asked which he considered his best works, replied, 'My best works are those painted by Nicias.'"

"I am aware," continued Mr. Gibson, "that it would be a very easy thing to produce a vulgar effect by painting a statue; but that is no argument against a judicious use of colour, which, when applied with prudence is, in my opinion, essential to sculpture. Far from hiding any defects, it renders them only more evident and unsightly."

I could not enumerate half the works in this room; I can only mention such as struck me particularly. There was a repetition of a statue of Sir Robert Peel, now just erected in Westminster Abbey, clothed in the rich mantle which has given so much offence to our English realists, who, I suppose, wished to see Sir Robert done into marble, in the very identical blue coat and gold buttons of the English gentleman,—his habit when he lived." Speaking of this statue, Gibson said:—"When I received the order, I studied over-much in my own mind an appropriate attitude. I thought of one and another statue, with this hand up and that down; one leg forward and one arm raised. I wanted to strike out something new. I always,"

continued he, "practise over everything I model myself, go through every attitude I conceive, and make my statues live and move before me, as it were. I put myself into those positions I most fancy, and satisfy myself that they come naturally. Were any one to see me at such times," added he, with a smile, "they would think I was mad for a certainty."

It was very interesting to hear him talk, he was so simple and unaffected.

He is very fond of representing the allegory of Cupid and Psyche, which he says appears to him the most elegant of all pagan fables. One basso-relievo on this subject was in the room, Psyche lying on a couch embracing Cupid, who stands beside her. There is the utmost purity and grace in her up-turned face, full of innocent fondness. Then we saw a lovely group of figures, "Psyche carried in the arms of two Zephyrs," of life-size. It is the same idea as that in Mulready's picture of "Crossing the Brook," but with all the elevation proper to the different characters of mortals and of gods.

Gibson pointed out also a basso-relievo of earthly desire and heavenly love under the form of two Cupids struggling; one is all ideality, while the expression of the other indicates a grosser nature: indeed this character of Cupid, as the god of ideal love, is everywhere beautifully illustrated in Gibson's studio, and seems to be a subject the sculptor dwells on with delight.

We passed into another room to see the great work on which Gibson is at present employed, "a monument," as he called it, "to commemorate a living personage," consisting of three statues, heroic size, in marble. This monument is to be erected to Queen Victoria, and will be placed in the "Princes' chamber," in the New Palace of Westminster.

After seeing many more works we left Mr. Gibson, delighted with his unaffected cordiality and kindness, and proceeded to the studio of the celebrated American sculptor, Mr. Crawford. He lives in the Piazza dei Termini, a great out-of-the-way square, close to one of the Gates of Rome, where stands the superb fountain of "Moses striking the Rock." Opposite Mr. Crawford's abode are the massive walls of Dioclesian's baths, built of the same deep red stone that lends so rich a colouring to the Colosseum.

The studio door (most unprising like all studio doors) looks precisely as if it were the entrance to a coach-house, but on opening it we soon discovered that we had made no mistake, for we saw opposite to us the gigantic statue of "Washington," on which the artist is now engaged. The enormous horse in clay which we now beheld, was bestrode by a man without a head, that part of the hero's person being placed in another apartment. The floor was strewn with mighty fragments of horses' heads, and great legs, and hoofs, besides a Brobdignag band of Washington and his great boot which looked for all the world like the ruins of the statue of "Dagon" in the picture books. This last article, I mean the boot, reminded me of the nursery story of the "old woman who lived in a shoe, with so many children she didn't know what to do," for really a whole generation of little people might live quite harmoniously in General Washington's boot. It looked odd and suspicious lying against the wall—what the Scotch call "no canny." I am sure it gets up in the night and walks hither and thither in the studio with more noise than ever the ghostly helmet made in the Mysteries of Udolpho!

Mr. Crawford took us into another room, one of three of the largest Italian proportions, forming a magnificent studio, to show us his design for the great monument to Washington, with the boot part of which I have been making so free. Nothing but the bold, youthful freshness for which American genius in sculpture is remarkable, could ever have conceived so stupendous an undertaking, to be executed solely by one man. The monument is to be fifty feet high, surmounted by the colossal equestrian statue of Washington. Below, on different pedestals projecting from the centre, stand four gigantic statues of patriots, endeared to the recollection of Virginians, as having been born in their province, and as being connected with the liberation of America from English

The Mystery of Collins's Articles on Italian Art

William M. Clarke

Fresh light has recently been thrown on the mystery of what may have happened to a series of articles Wilkie Collins prepared for Bentley's Miscellany, based on his extended visit to Italy with Charles Dickens and Augustus Egg in the second half of 1853. There is now evidence that they may have turned up in the Art Journal, the magazine edited by S. C. Hall. But it remains a matter of judgment whether Collins was the author of them all.

Collins had interrupted his novel Hide and Seek to go off to Rome and Naples, but was clearly determined to pay for a good part of the trip with a series of travel articles, and he wrote to George Bentley, accordingly: "Any picturesque material for short articles which I may pick up on my way I shall be very glad to give you the refusal of for the magazine."¹ Collins plainly had it in mind to write a combination of travel and art articles, reflecting the visits he and Egg made throughout their journey. Dickens deliberately avoided such artistic forays. "The Fine Arts," he wrote home, "afford a subject which I never approach; always appearing to fall into a profound reverie when it is discussed. Neither do I ever go into any gallery with them . . . I keep out of the way when pictures are in question and go my own path." There seems little doubt that, as they moved along, from Genoa to Rome and Naples and then on to Florence and Venice, Collins was accumulating background material for his promised articles and, just over a month after their return (in mid-January, 1854) he sent George Bentley the first article, along with a detailed outline of the other five. They would, he explained,² cover his travels in Italy, describe various Papist ceremonies and include a true love story.

So much for his hopes. Bentley, in turn, quickly explained why the Miscellany could not accept them. The journal was actually in the middle of a similar series of articles covering travel in Italy.³ The question is what Collins did with the finished article and the rest of the series he had prepared. He still had bills to pay for the trip to Italy and a novel only partially completed. Nuel Pharr Davis has hazarded that George Bentley may have taken parts of the completed articles and published them later in 1854, suggesting that the anonymous article "Teresa Bandittini" in the August issue may have been one of them. He has also suggested that the essay "The Marriage of Cana," now in the Yale

University Library, may have been intended as another part of the series. "It is possible," Dr. Davis has concluded, "that Wilkie succeeded in getting the entire project printed in some magazine that has not come to notice, but this seems unlikely."

It is the possibility that they found their way into the Art Journal that now needs to be assessed. Jeremy Maas, the London art-dealer and writer (he is author of Gambert, Prince of the Victorian Art World and of Victorian Painters) told me privately four years ago that he had discovered a letter of Wilkie Collins to the editor of the Art Journal, dated June 1, 1854, among a mass of correspondence he had acquired in London relating to the Art Journal. This was the journal which Hall had founded in 1839, under the original title of the Art Union, and which he edited for the next forty years. Jeremy Maas has now confirmed the discovery and printed the relevant letter in his latest book, The Victorian Art World in Photographs (Barrie and Jenkins, London, 1984).

The letter itself was brief. It simply stated: "May the bearer have a copy of the Art Journal of this month (June, 1854) to be sent to the writer of the Article on the 'Studios of Rome?'" and was signed W. Wilkie Collins. The first impression was that Collins was the writer and that the puzzle of the lost articles had been solved. Jeremy Maas is in no doubt, and describes the articles as a "substantial addition" to Collins's works, bearing the "hallmarks of Collins' style."

The contents of the articles, however, and the subsequent discovery of a second, and earlier, letter to S. C. Hall have made a re-assessment necessary. The article referred to is signed Florentia, as are several subsequent articles in the Art Journal. These were published in issues stretching from June 1854, through to the following year. There were five articles entitled "A Walk through the Studios of Rome," parts I to V, between June, 1854 and August 1855, and others entitled "The Artists' Festa: Rome" and "Visit to the Catacombs of San Calisto."

The second letter is quoted in Professor E. R. Gregory's Wilkie Collins: A Critical and Biographical Study, the edited manuscript of Dorothy Sayers,⁵ now in the Humanities Research Center, Austin, Texas. It is addressed to S. C. Hall at the Art Journal and is dated May 3, 1854. It begins:

The article which this letter accompanies has been written by a friend of mine now resident in Rome, and has been sent to me to be offered for publication in England. As it treats of a subject of some Art-interest, I take the liberty of sending it to the Editor of the Art Journal⁶

Within a short time, it is clear that "the article" became a series and although Collins suggests that the first had been written by a friend in Rome, there is no direct evidence about the rest of the articles. The thought that Collins, having been rebuffed at least once, might be rather wary of claiming direct authorship is also not to be ignored. What we are left with are the articles themselves and the knowledge that Collins had prepared just such a series and had in fact visited the studios of Rome with Augustus Egg. Are we justified, on such circumstantial evidence, in assuming that he was the author (though nicely disguised)?

The evidence of the articles is tempting but not fully conclusive. The first article begins: "I am neither an artist nor a critic" The author is accompanied by a "well-known artist" and begins by a visit to "Mr. Gibson's studio, the well-known sculptor." Then on to "Mr. Crawford, the celebrated American sculptor" and to the studios of other successful painters and sculptors. Gibson, of course, was a friend of Wilkie's father, Williams Collins, and helped the Collins family when they visited Rome in 1837. He joined William as a full member of the Royal Academy in 1838. It is most likely that Wilkie (and Augustus Egg) called on him and renewed their acquaintance during their visit. The same is true of several of the other English, American, German and Italian painters and sculptors mentioned in the succeeding articles.

In the middle of these artistic visits, in contrast to the general fame and prosperity, the author and his companion stumble on a human tragedy. "A sad change was now to meet us as we picked our steps along an utterly broken-up, dirty lane, and then grasped our way up a dark winding staircase to the next studio on our list." They were greeted by a pretty woman (evidently the painter's wife) who received them and then instantly withdrew. The artist himself ("one of the best animal painters alive, after Landseer") was "pining, old and broken-hearted." Why? In a corner of the studio stood a lovely female face, just sketched in. "I shall never finish that portrait, begun twenty

years ago now" the artist sighs. It had been started when he was young and when his present wife had been the beautiful model, whom he had regarded "with the lover's as well as the artist's eye."

He had just begun to be accepted in the noble society of Rome; he married his model; and then made the fatal mistake of introducing her to his new society friends. They quickly recognised her.

A buzz went round the room of wonder and admiration, but with these mingled gradually a whisper that the beauty had been a model. Both husband and wife were desired to withdraw and from that day the painter's fate was sealed; no-one employed him, no-one received him; solitary and poor he worked on, and children were born, and debts contracted, and misery gathered like a dark cloud around his household, until he became the poor, pinched, faded man whom I now saw. It was his beautiful wife who had opened the door and had then quickly left us. Time had laid his heavy finger on her to. We had no opportunity of seeing more of her, for she never showed herself again at our departure. What a world of wretchedness there is in all this, even as I write it, and yet every word is strictly, positively true.

Is this then the "true love story" Collins had promised Bentley? One rather suspects so, for it may be stretching coincidence too far to suggest that Collins may have a friend in Rome, conversant with artists, who had his own eye and ear for such a story, as well as his own way with words. Critics more familiar than I with the details of Collins's style may also find similar pointers throughout the other articles: references to "a transition from Purgatory to Paradise"; allusions to Dickens ("what Dickens so truly describes as 'breezy maniacs'"; and again "his department beautiful like Mr. Turveydrop in Bleak House"); references to "Fat old Cardinals and Monsignores habited in purple and red"; and the descriptions of fear, anxiety and awe inside the Catacombs.

All persuade one to regard Collins as the possible author. There are, however, several difficulties to overcome. The third of the "Walks in Rome" series refers to "the weather early in March" being as "warm and genial as an old-fashioned English day in what used to be called the merrie month of May." Collins was in

Rome in mid-November. Secondly, the fourth article refers to "my companion Miss Shaw, herself an accomplished artist." Thirdly, did Collins have the critical knowledge to write assessments of painters and sculptors? Finally, could Collins have visited over forty artists and sculptors, described in the articles, during his six day visit to Rome?

There could, of course be a simple explanation. Collins could have prepared and planned the articles and encouraged a local friend in Rome to complete the visits and send him notes from which he wrote up the final versions in London. This is no more than conjecture, but it would help to explain the detail of the articles, the reference to a friend in Rome and the oddity of the dates. Doubts that Collins did not have the artistic knowledge to assess the work of the artists he ostensibly visited can be answered not only by reference to his biography of his father and his detailed appraisal of his paintings but by the views of his contemporaries. According to Holman Hunt, Collins "had knowledge of the interest of art for more than one past generation; he spoke with authority on the matter."

To sum up: We know that Collins had spent his Italian visit preparing a series of articles for Bentley's Miscellany. We have evidence that he had completed one article and part of another by the following January and that he had planned others in the same series. We have evidence that he visited studios and galleries in Rome with Augustus Egg. And we now know that, having been rebuffed by Bentley's Miscellany, he offered and provided a similar series of articles, including a "true love story," to the Art Journal. We have no direct knowledge of authorship, though parts of the contents could have been written by him. Some of the writing itself points directly to him. The rest is circumstantial and conjectural. My conclusion is that, while there is no direct proof of authorship, the circumstances strongly suggest that Jeremy Maas is right and that Collins may have been at least part author of the series in the Art Journal.

Bibliographic Note

Details of the articles, signed "Florentia," published in the Art Journal in 1854 and 1855, are as follows:

- "A Walk through the Studios of Rome," June 1854, pp. 184-188.
- "Visit to the Catacombs of San Calisto and the Church of St. Sebastiano," 1854, pp. 224-226.
- "The Artist's Festa: Rome," 1854, pp. 271-274.
- "A Walk through the Studios of Rome, Part II," 1854, pp. 287-289.
- "A Walk through the Studios of Rome, Part III," 1854, pp. 322-324.
- "A Walk through the Studios of Rome, Part IV," 1854, pp. 350-355.
- "A Walk through the Studios of Rome, Part V," 1855, pp. 225-228.

NOTES

- ¹ Berg Collection, New York Public Library.
- ² Letter dated January 14, 1854, Berg Collection, New York Public Library.
- ³ From May 1853 to February 1854. See Nuel Pharr Davis, The Life of Wilkie Collins (Urbana: U. of Illinois P., 1956), pp. 152 and 320.
- ⁴ Toledo: Friends of the University of Toledo Libraries, 1977.
- ⁵ Sayers, Wilkie Collins, p. 110.

The Naming of No Name

Virginia Blain

It is well known that Collins found difficulty in settling on the right title for more than one of his novels. The Moonstone was originally intended to be called The Serpent's Eye,¹ a title more sensational but less subtly suggestive than the final choice. The problem Collins had in naming The Woman in White is well documented. Robinson relates the story of its resolution:

It was at Broadstairs that a solution was found to the problem of a title. He had thought of many possibilities, many more had been suggested by helpful friends such as Dickens and Forster; all were discarded . . . [Collins] has described how, one moonlight night, he wandered over the cliffs towards the North Foreland, smoking cigar after cigar, racking his brains for the right title. In the vicinity of what is said to be the original Bleak House, he threw himself on the grass. Looking across at the white shape of the North Foreland lighthouse, he thought: "You are ugly and stiff and awkward; you know you are as stiff and as weird as my white woman . . . White Woman . . . Woman in White . . . the title, by Jove!" A roundabout way to the obvious, perhaps, but at least the story carries, in its very inconsequence, the ring of truth.²

In the case of No Name, we have the evidence of Dickens's letter to Collins of 24 January 1862, in which he proffers twenty-seven possible titles, to tell us that this time Collins was sailing even closer to the wind. For he accepted none of Dickens's helpful suggestions, even at this eleventh hour: the serial was due to begin on March 15 in All the Year Round. Writing to his mother on 12 December 1861 that he was "putting into this new book all that I have got in me to put," and that he thought it was his "best work, so far," Collins had been sanguine about his recalcitrant title: "No title fixed on yet. I have several to choose from--but I think better may be found."⁴ A letter dated 8 January 1862 (from Collins to the printer) reveals that certainly eight numbers, and possibly eleven, were to

be set in type by the date of Dickens's letter above (24 January)--and still no title.⁵

W. H. Wills, Dickens's business manager for All the Year Round, although delighted with the new story (his eyes had "rolled in his head with astonishment"⁶ when he first saw Collins after hearing about it) was adding his weight to the growing pressure: "Wills clamours for the name," wrote Dickens in the same letter. By 27 January, Collins had heard from Wills himself, for he replied to him on that date in a letter which forms a crucial and hitherto unnoticed link in the chain of events leading up to the naming of this novel:

My dear Wills,⁷

Many thanks for your kind note, and for the returned book [No Name]. I am inhumanly rejoiced to hear of that midnight sitting. Dickens too writes me word that he likes the story and feels certain of its success. It is a great relief to find that my work has not been thrown away.

The Title: "Under a Cloud" (which would have been a very good one) has been used by some miscreant or other who has "said some good things before us." Dickens sends several titles--some very good--but I hardly think the title has been found yet. I am going to Forster tomorrow to see if he is in town and can help us. Anyhow, the question must be decided on, as soon as Dickens gets back. We will only consider it now deferred, until we three can get together and finally appoint the day. On Saturday, Sunday, and Monday next, I am disengaged.

Ever yours
W:C

It was in my research for the edition of No Name that I am preparing for the Oxford World's Classics series that I came across this important letter. Not only does it contain Collins's reaction to Dickens's cornucopia of titles--a reaction distinctly tepid--but it also reveals that another title had been canvassed: Under a Cloud. This may well have been Wills's own suggestion; at any rate, Collins's rejection of it was not merely tactful, for the title had indeed been used before, and quite recently. Frederick Greenwood, who in 1865 was to found the Pall Mall Gazette, had published a three-volume novel called Under a Cloud in 1860, with his brother James as co-author, and Collins must have heard

of it either in this version, or in its earlier serial run in The Welcome Guest. So Under a Cloud was out--and "the question must be decided on."

At this point one might possibly be excused for wishing to imagine the scenario of the "next sitting" of Collins, Wills and Dickens. John Sutherland has referred to the fact that at this period "All the Year Round enjoyed the atmosphere of what we might call a writing workshop,"⁸ and this is certainly what is evoked by Collins's letter to Wills. We can easily imagine the three of them--or four if Forster came too--gathered around the table, suggesting more and more titles in increasing desperation, only to have them all turned down by the exacting author of the novel. Finally Wills, man of business, might have said: "One thing is sure: it cannot go to press with NO NAME!" "NO NAME!" Collins would have cried--"that's it! The title!" Cheers all round.

Whether or not any such scene took place we shall never know, but it is safe to assume that Collins was pleased with the title for a better reason than that of the pun in its delayed discovery. For it is, of course, a title especially apposite to his material. As the novel makes plain, Magdalen Vanstone, the heroine (or anti-heroine), being illegitimate, does not have the legal right to bear her father's name; she is, in the eyes of the law--like Esther Summerson in Bleak House--"Nobody's Child" (filius nullius). When we look up the section of the book that treats Magdalen's running away from her remaining family, presumably under the trauma of this wrong and in the desperate determination of righting it, we find the very words of the title echoed in the text. It is Miss Garth, the trusty old governess, who coins the phrase, although she attributes it elsewhere. Writing to the lawyer Mr. Pendril, she says:

"The last time you were so good as to come to this house, do you remember how Magdalen embarrassed and distressed us, by questioning you about her right to bear her father's name? Do you remember her persisting in her inquiries, until she had forced you to acknowledge that, legally speaking, she and her sister had No Name?"

Following this, Magdalen's letter to her sister Norah reiterates the phrase and underscores her own reckless sense of alienation:

"Whether I succeed, or whether I fail, I can do myself no harm, either way. I have no position to lose, and no name to degrade."⁹

On this evidence, it appears that Collins would have welcomed the suggestion (and it may of course even then have been entirely his own idea) of "No Name" for a title not only because of its thematic aptness, but also because of its significant existence already in the discourse of his novel. But when we turn to the manuscript to check our surmise, we discover a lacuna. The significant phrase is not there. Instead, the relevant passages read as follows:

"The last time you were so good as to come to this house, do you remember how Magdalen embarrassed and distressed us, by questioning you about her right to bear her father's name? Do you remember her persisting in her enquiries, until she had forced you to acknowledge that she had, strictly speaking, no such right, and that you had yourself registered her birth in her mother's name?"

"You will not give me up for lost? you will not let Miss Garth give me up? Don't let appearances condemn me."¹⁰

When we ask ourselves what this difference betokens, the answer is clear. The idea for the novel's title, while it certainly germinated from seeds contained within the story, did not spring fully formed from a verbal cue in the text. Rather, what we have uncovered here is one of Collins's craftier secrets: we glimpse the novelist, taking off his shoes, as it were, when he thinks no-one is looking, and carefully placing footprints in the midst of his existing text so cleverly that it could never be guessed that the clue was planted after the event.

NOTES

¹ See Nuel Pharr Davis, The Life of Wilkie Collins (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), p. 249.

² Kenneth Robinson, Wilkie Collins: A Biography

(London: The Bodley Head, 1951), p. 141.

³ Letters of Charles Dickens to Wilkie Collins 1851-1870, selected by Miss Georgina Hogarth, edited by Laurence Hutton (London: James R. Osgood, McIlvaine & Co., 1892), pp. 119-22. Some examples of Dickens's suggestions are: The Twig and the Tree; Behind the Veil; Working in the Dark; Magdalen Vanstone; The Combe Raven Tragedy.

⁴ From a letter in the Pierpont Morgan Library, quoted here with the kind permission of the Trustees.

⁵ This letter is printed in the catalogue to the Wolff collection, Nineteenth-Century Fiction (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1981), I, 268, [1371c].

⁶ Robinson, p. 162.

⁷ This letter is reproduced here with the kind permission of the Department of Special Collections, University Research Library, UCLA.

⁸ John Sutherland, Victorian Novelists and Publishers (London: The Athlone Press, 1976), p. 186.

⁹ No Name (London: Sampson Low, Son, & Co., 1862), I, 258; 260. The All the Year Round version gives the same text here.

¹⁰ No Name MS p. 145. The holograph manuscript is in the possession of the King's School, Canterbury, and I should like to thank the Walpole Librarian, Mr. D. S. Goodes, and the School for permission to quote from it.

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Plots Within Plots: Wilkie Collins's After Dark

Kirk H. Beetz

In 1827, painter William Kerby's eyesight began failing him. An itinerant artist who made his living by painting the portraits of people and their pets, Kerby sought cures for the disease that threatened not just his eyes but his livelihood. Under doctor's orders, he covered his eyes and resigned himself to what might have been perpetual darkness. He and his family were quickly in financial straits and would soon have used up their savings and have been unable to pay rent to the farm family that had taken them in. A remarkably good story teller, Kerby regaled his hosts with tales he had picked up from some of his many clients; his wife, Leah, persuaded him to recite some of his best stories to her, which she compiled in a collection titled After Dark. Notes from her diary and prologues by her husband linked the stories together. The book was published by the friend of a friend, and its sales earned enough money to support the Kerbys until William could be cured.

Two decades later, Wilkie Collins, who would someday become famous as the author of The Woman in White, had a painting hung in the Royal Academy.¹ His eyesight was deteriorating; in the latter half of his life, he would suffer periodic blindness and excruciating pain from his affliction. In 1849, however, he was simply forced to wear thick glasses and to give up his potential career as a painter. Writing was a natural alternative for him; he had tried before to become a novelist, and fiction became his principal creative outlet and his principal source of income. He wrote a travelogue,² an historical novel,³ a novel in the French manner⁴ and moved into the realms of intrigue that typify his later great novels.⁵ During the 1850's, he wrote fiction for Charles Dickens's Household Words; five of the resulting short stories and one new one were gathered together and published in 1856 as After Dark.⁶

The lives of William Kerby and Wilkie Collins would seem to be only superficially similar, except that Kerby is a fictional creation used by Collins as part of a literary device to bind together the stories of After Dark. Collins was a tidy writer who liked to keep his works neatly organized. In After Dark, he calls upon a technique that would later typify the novels on which his reputation rests--characters speak for themselves through diaries, journals, and notes.

"Leah's Diary" and William Kerby's "Prologues" serve to flesh out what would otherwise be a small book and provide continuity throughout After Dark. The unifying narrative for the story collection shows Collins's penchant for intricate plotting, the versatility of his narrative form, and his good sense as a young writer.

The title itself is symptomatic of Collins's gamesmanship. William Kerby dictates to his wife Leah "after dark," a phrase that their physician friend seizes:

"You [Leah] said just now that you would not have leisure to write from Mr. Kerby's dictation till after dark. What can we do better than name the book after the time when the book is written? Call it boldly, After dark."⁷

Simple enough: William and Leah Kerby ostensibly composed the book after nightfall, hence the title. Also, the book was written when William Kerby's eyes darkened; within the context of "Leah's Diary" there would be no book without Kerby's affliction, making the stories a product of one character's darkness. In the greater world, inhabited by Collins and his audience, After Dark implies that the stories are for nighttime; they are scary and suspenseful and well suited to spooky nighttime reading. Further, if one follows the autobiographical elements of the narrative, After Dark is a product of Collins's own darkness which forced him to abandon painting.

One should be careful when reading autobiographical themes into Collins's works. The seeming mysteriousness of Collins's own life can lead critics too far afield in searching for clues to the author's life and character in the novels and stories. In the case of After Dark, however, the autobiographical themes are identifiable from independent sources--letters, memoirs of friends, and other traditional biographical references. Collins did, in fact, exhibit a painting at the Royal Academy, he did suffer from failing eyesight, and his full name was William Wilkie Collins (as opposed to William Kerby); he did not drop the use of his first name until the mid-1850's. His father was a prominent landscape painter who had struggled from poverty to success and who had traveled extensively, sometimes bringing Collins with him. The young Collins met some of the best artists of the early nineteenth century, and his research for his 1848 biography of his father would have enhanced his understanding of the

lives of the itinerant painters of the 1820's, his father's generation. Further, Collins had many artist friends, including John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt, and E. M. Ward. Coupling Collins's knowledge of artists with Collins's own practical experience as a painter, one can understand that using an artist and his family as the subjects of the unifying narrative of After Dark was a sensible choice for a young writer who wanted a neatly organized collection of stories. Collins followed a straightforward rule for writers: He wrote about what he knew.

The use of a diary or of more than one diary to tell a story is a trademark of Collins's novels. The Woman in White, Armada, and The Moonstone, each make extensive use of this narrative device, which adapts well to Collins's purposes in After Dark. When gathering his stories together for publication, Collins faced at least two major problems. One was the need to satisfy lending libraries by fleshing out the collection so that it would fill two volumes instead of one. The other problem was more of Collins's own creation: He liked his books to be neatly organized. His obsessive pursuit of facts and veracious details that is revealed in nearly all his works seems to have also involved a pursuit of literary tidiness: He wanted every element of a book to have a proper place. This pursuit of organizational perfection makes for tightly written short stories, each a small gem that is a world to itself, not easily bound to others. By creating a diary in which Leah may tell of the composing of each individual story, Collins is able to organize his book without compromising the individuality of any of the stories.

"Leah's Diary" and William's "Prologues" serve another important purpose: They give Collins distance from his writing. The stories themselves contain elements from Collins's experiences. His travels and penchant for carousing may have provided him with background for "A Terribly Strange Bed," for instance, or his legal training (he was called to the Bar in 1851) might have provided some background for "The Stolen Letter." His unifying narrative lends a sense of objectivity to the stories; it helps Collins evade the tone of intense personal involvement that mars the preface to his early novel Basil, which seems to challenge readers to deny the sincerity of Collins's writing. In After Dark, sitters for portraits tell the painter William Kerby their stories; he in turn tells them to Leah, who writes them down; William and Leah, in turn, are but creations of Collins. The plot within plot approach leaves Collins three, even four, steps removed from his stories.

After Dark presages the literary achievements for which Collins is today best known: his tight plots and narrative style. It also reveals something of Collins's character as a writer. If Collins seems to be saying more than is first evident, he probably is; his fondness for plotting creates complexities of meaning even for the title of a gathering of his stories: After Dark. The story collection shows how the maturing Collins satisfied his own desire for structural unity in his books, and how he used his still growing knowledge of his craft to literary advantage.

NOTES

- 1 The Smugglers' Refuge, 1849.
- 2 Rambles Beyond Railways: or, Notes in Cornwall Taken A-foot. London: Bentley, 1851.
- 3 Antonina: or, The Fall of Rome. London: Bentley, 1850.
- 4 Basil: A Story of Modern Life. London: Bentley, 1852.
- 5 Hide and Seek: or, The Mystery of Mary Grice. London: Bentley, 1854; and The Dead Secret. London: Bradbury and Evans, 1857. Collins's biography of his father, Memoirs of the Life of William Collins, Esq., R. A. (London: Longman, 1848) was written as a duty, not for money.
- 6 London: Smith and Elder.
- 7 After Dark (The Works of Wilkie Collins, volume XIX). New York: Collier, [1900]. p. 31.

Notes

Dear Mr. Beetz:

Through the courtesy of a friend I was sent a copy of the Wilkie Collins Newsletter containing Mr. Gasson's article about The Woman in White.¹ He seems to have dethroned the American edition from its priority as the first edition, but at least it is simultaneous and, as the first illustrated edition, of some importance.

I sent you a photocopy of my note to the PBSA Papers of 1942 (volume 26, page 232) clarifying the priority of the three states. Indeed it had not been published previously that there were three. Parrish, who was once a penurious customer of ours, had listed the first and third states, in the wrong order.

In a couple of our catalogues (one noted by Mr. Gasson), we elaborated our description by pointing out that the advertisements at the back were very significant because they were part of the collation. It becomes apparent that these were three different impressions. The book was immediately popular.

Sincerely yours,

Howard S. Mott

[Editor's Note: Mr. Mott was the first to set in order the variants of the American first edition of The Woman in White. This he did in Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, 26 (3rd quarter 1942), p. 232.]

¹ Wilkie Collins Society Journal, 2 (1982), 5-14.

Notes on the Contributors

Andrew Gasson contributed "The Woman in White: A Chronological Study" to the Volume II, 1982 edition of the Wilkie Collins Society Journal. He is the author of several articles on Collins and is presently writing an analytical bibliography of Collins's works. As cofounder of the Wilkie Collins Society and as its secretary, he has played a significant role in the promotion of Collins studies.

William M. Clarke lives in Greenwich, England, and is just completing a brief biographical study of Wilkie Collins's private life. He is the author of Private Enterprise in Developing Countries, Inside the City, and Britain's Invisible Earnings.

Virginia Blain is a senior lecturer in English at Macquarie University in Australia. Her publications include an edition of Robert Smith Surtees's Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour (Queensland U.P., Victorian Texts series, 1981; and London: Batsford, 1982), and The Woman Writing: A Feminist Companion to Literature in English (forthcoming from Batsford), which she co-authored with Isobel Grundy and Patricia Clements. She has also published on Dickens, E. M. Forster, T. S. Eliot, and Virginia Woolf. At present, she is preparing an edition of No Name for the World's Classics series of Oxford University Press.

Kirk H. Beetz is editor of the Journal and president and cofounder of the Wilkie Collins Society. His publications include books on Tennyson, Swinburne, and Ruskin, as well as Wilkie Collins: An Annotated Bibliography, 1889-1976 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1978). He is also author of numerous articles on various literary topics. For several years, he has worked on a collected edition of Collins's letters; he has just completed a selected edition.

He received his doctorate in English from the University of California, Davis.