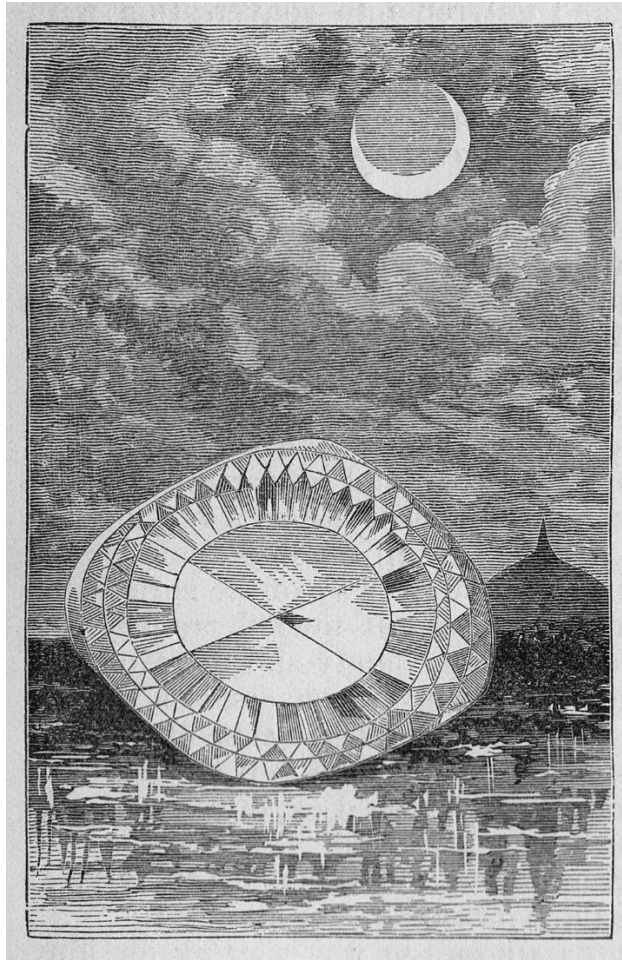




WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL
VOLUME V
1985



The Moonstone 1870, p. 90

THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

The Wilkie Collins Society is dedicated to serving the study of Wilkie Collins and related subjects. Dues are \$10.00 per year, USA, and £7.00 per year, UK. Memberships begin on January 1st and end on December 31st each year. New members are requested to specify whether they wish their memberships to be current or to be applied to the following year.

The Society's officers are:

President: Kirk H. Beetz
1307 F Street
Davis, California 95616
USA

Secretary: Andrew Gasson
3 Merton House
36 Belsize Park
London N.W.3. 4EA

The Wilkie Collins Society Journal is published once a year by the Society for its members. Submissions should follow the guidelines of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (1977). Query first for reviews. Send submissions to Kirk H. Beetz, Editor, 1307 F Street, Davis, California 95616, USA. Be sure to include a stamped and addressed envelope for the return of a submission. Submissions from outside the United States should include international reply coupons with the addressed return envelope.

WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL

Volume V

1985



BLANK PAGE

Wilkie Collins Society Journal

Contents

Articles

"Man and Wife: Collins, Dickens, and Muhammad Ali"

By Robert Ashley page 5

"The Jewel Theme in The Moonstone"

By Muriel Smith page 11

Review

"From Novel to Film: Wilkie Collins's The Woman in White"

By Julie A. Karsten page 15

Feature

"Books Necessary for a Liberal Education"

By Wilkie Collins (ed. Kirk H. Beetz) . . page 23

Notes on the Contributors page 29

Kirk H. Beetz, Editor

On the cover: Illustration from The Moonstone. New York:
Harper and Brothers, 1874 (Collected Edition). p. 90.

BLANK PAGE

Editor's Note

The present volume of the Wilkie Collins Society Journal has character; its contents are eccentric. It begins with a strikingly original essay by Robert Ashley, who compares characters from The Mystery of Edwin Drood and Man and Wife and argues for the continuing importance of Man and Wife's major themes. Ashley's approach to his subject and his aggressive style elevate his essay above the usual literary treatise. A short piece by Muriel Smith follows that of Ashley. It is packed with ideas and information, and its topic is one that interests and sometimes puzzles nearly all who read The Moonstone.

The review in the present volume is more an article than a traditional recounting of the contents and merits of a television show. Julie A. Karsten takes a close look at The Woman in White as novel and television series and through comparison offers insight into Collins's narrative methods, as well as into the difficulty of translating a novel into a performance. Karsten's effort is followed by an article by Collins that is likely to be unfamiliar to most of the Journal's readers. Collins takes a backwards approach to creating a list of books necessary for a liberal education and in the process tells something of his own tastes and interests.

K.H.B.

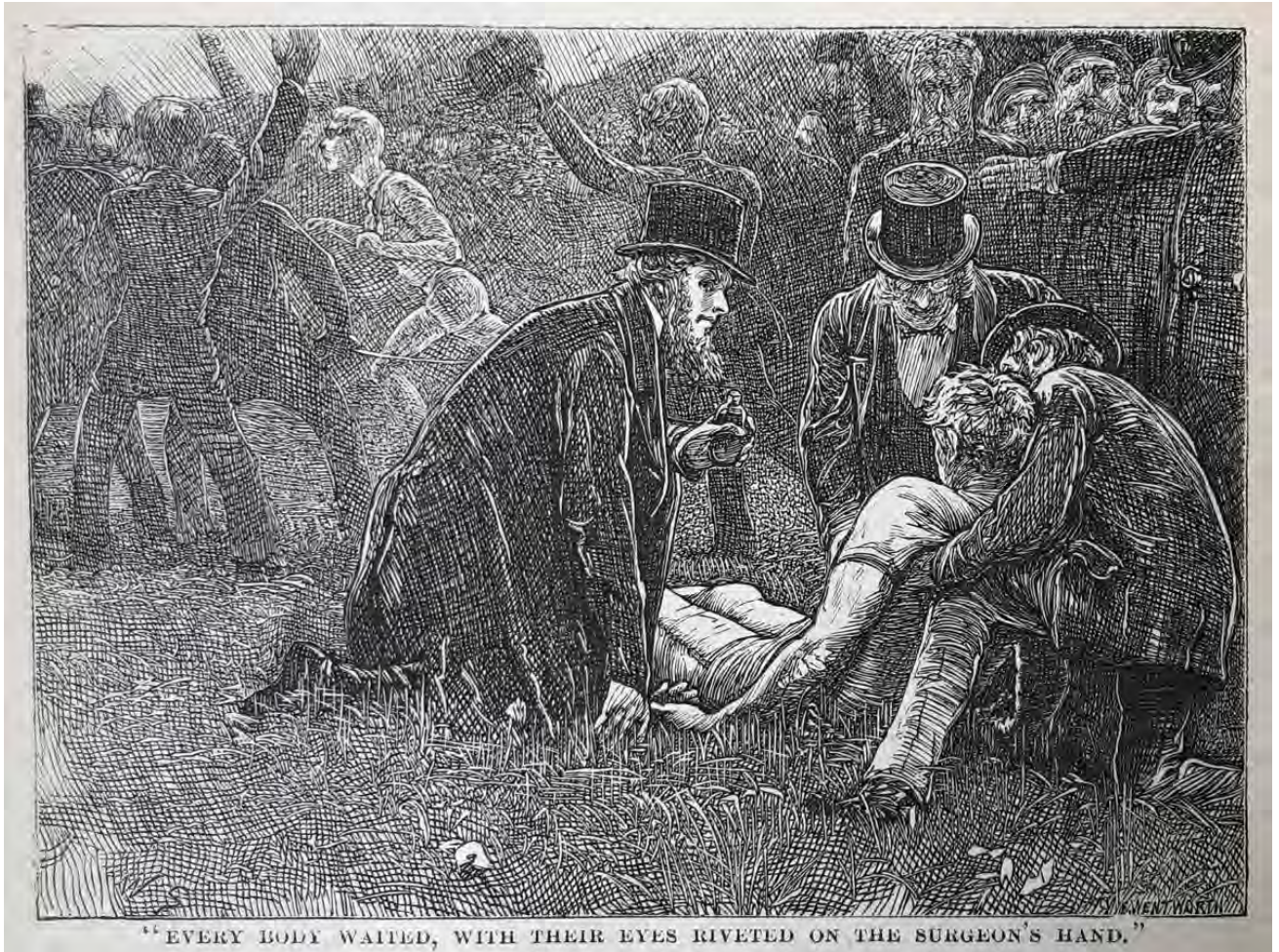


Illustration from *Man and Wife*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1870. p. 188

Man and Wife: Collins, Dickens, and Muhammad Ali

Robert Ashley

In the blue corner, wearing white trunks and weighing 190 pounds, the Reverend Septimus "Sept" Crisparkle:

The most striking anomaly in The Mystery of Edwin Drood is Dickens' favorable portrayal of professions usually the butt of his most withering scorn: the law (Grewgious), the military (Lt. Tartar, R.N.; fishermen like Peggotty and merchant mariners like Captain Cuttle are ineligible), and the clergy (Crisparkle; the Dean and Honeythunder are more in Dickens' usual style, though Honeythunder represents philanthropy rather than religion). Crisp, sparkling, and genuinely Christian, Sept is described as "fair and rosy. . . musical, classical, cheerful, kind, good-natured, social, contented, and boylike" (Dickens 13). A physical fitness buff, he is an early riser, a swimmer and boxer, who skinny-dips in the local river even when it is thinly iced, and shadow-boxes in front of his mirror, "feinting and dodging . . . and hitting out from the shoulder with the utmost straightness, while his radiant features teemed with innocence, and soft-hearted benevolence beamed from his boxing gloves" (51). He is no mere muscle-bound athlete, but has received his present position through the influence of "a patron . . . grateful for a well-taught son." Throughout the novel he undertakes with both tact and firmness the difficult task of curbing the wild impulses and improving the mind of the fierce-tempered Neville, serves as peacemaker between him and Edwin Drood, and stoutly defends him against the charge of Jasper and others that he is Drood's murderer. Even the formidable, bullying Honeythunder cannot penetrate the minor canon's calm self-assurance and spirit of Christian charity; in their final meeting Honeythunder is a badly beaten disputant. Sept treats his mother with tender affection and is in turn beloved by her. Apparently, he was to be rewarded by marriage to the most attractive young woman in the novel. In short, he is the ideal muscular Christian, the athlete as gentleman, the very model of a modern (i.e., Victorian) minor clergyman.

In the red corner, wearing black trunks and weighing 210 pounds, the "honorable" Geoffrey "Geoff" Delamayn:

Copyright ©1985 by Robert Ashley

Except for a belief in physical fitness and a fondness for cold water, Crisparkle and Delamayn of Man and Wife are the antithesis of each other, and even in attitudes toward physical fitness they differ: for Crisparkle it is a means to good health and a way to start the day off right; for Delamayn it is an obsession and a way to achieve popularity with British sporting fans and adoration from silly women. Outwardly, Delamayn is "a magnificent human animal, wrought up to the highest pitch of physical development" (Collins I 67), but actually he is a hollow shell; entirely lacking Crisparkle's healthiness, he has "muscular power" but no "vital power." His rigorous training routines have ruined his heart and lungs; consequently, he collapses during the great race between North England and South England and suffers a paralytic stroke at the end of the novel. His only chance of besting Crisparkle in the boxing ring would be to score a quick knockout; he couldn't go the distance.

Delamayn's sole virtue is that he pays his betting debts promptly; otherwise, he is completely without moral sense. Having seduced Anne Sylvester, he attempts to trap her into a "Scotch marriage" with his best friend, Arnold Brinkworth, so that he (Geoffrey) can marry a wealthy heiress; failing in this scheme, he then tries murder, again unsuccessfully. His mental powers are no higher than his moral sense: the only thing he has ever read is a newspaper, the only Dryden he has ever heard of is a fellow oarsman, and his solution to any problem is to "sweat it off." He is a failure as a son: his father has disowned him, and his mother's sole concern is to get him safely married to a woman of wealth and social position. It would be a little inaccurate to describe Delamayn as a caricature of the muscular Christian, for he has as little religion as mind or morals. What he really represents is the athlete as brute.

Both Man and Wife and The Mystery of Edwin Drood were published in 1870; the former was serialized between January and September of that year, the latter between April and September. This simultaneousness raises interesting questions about similarities between the two novels as well as the larger question of mutual influences. Although some critics, mostly Dickens scholars, tend to downplay them, parallels and echoes between the work of the two novelists abound. Dickens frankly admitted that he "conceived the main idea" of A Tale of Two Cities while "acting, with my children and friends, in Mr. Wilkie Collins' drama of The Frozen Deep" (Dickens' Preface to A Tale of Two Cities). There are circuses in Hide and Seek and Hard Times, each

published in 1854, and dust heaps in both Our Mutual Friend (1865) and The Law and the Lady (1875). After Collins' The Woman in White (1860), Dickens put his own white woman in Great Expectations (1861). The all-pervasive Oriental atmosphere of The Moonstone (1868) is repeated in The Mystery of Edwin Drood (1870); so are such motifs as drugs, roses, seizures and trances, racism and imperialism, satire on religion and philanthropy, abnormal states of consciousness, and "imps" (Goosebery and Deputy). The evidence suggests strongly that Dickens had determined to mix the ingredients of The Moonstone and bake a better cake. Not only are there athletes in both Man and Wife and Drood, but there are also striking minor parallels: in the former novel, Geoffrey Delamayn has saved Arnold Brinkworth from drowning; in the latter, Tartar has performed the same service for Crisparkle. Further, Captain Nevenden, a naval officer and the father of the heiress Delamayn wishes to marry, is called "The Tartar"; the juvenile leads in both novels (Brinkworth and Tartar) are seamen. The dates of serialization could be significant. Man and Wife was well on its way in Cassell's Magazine and the characterization of Delamayn was well established before the instalments of Drood began appearing. Could the vigorous and energetic Dickens have introduced Crisparkle as an antidote to the sedentary Collins' Delamayn? The same chronology would suggest that the drowning motif and the name Tartar, unless purely coincidental, also traveled from Collins to Dickens.

In Collins' view, Geoffrey Delamayn is the inevitable product of the British educational system and of British athletic fandom, both of which absurdly glorify physical prowess and belittle or ignore the artistic, the ethical, the social, and the intellectual. Collins' mouthpiece, the club-footed lawyer Sir Patrick Lundie, states that "'muscular education'" and "'public feeling'" have led to a growing "'coarseness . . . [in] our national manners'" and "'our national tastes'" (292). "'We are readier than we ever were to practise all that is rough in our national customs, and to excuse all that is violent and brutish in our national acts. Read the popular books--attend the popular amusements; and you will find . . . a lessening regard for the gentler graces of civilized life, and a growing admiration for the virtues of the aboriginal Britons!'" (78-79).

As for the individual athlete, "'There has been nothing in his training to soften the barbarous hardness in his heart, and to enlighten the barbarous darkness in his mind. . . . he is, to all moral intents and purposes, an Animal, and nothing more'" (297). When

faced with temptation or a moral choice he is absolutely "defenseless."

Muscular education has also destroyed individuality, as demonstrated by Geoffrey's Tweedledum and Tweedledee friends Smith and Jones: "The manhood and muscle of England resemble the wool and mutton of England. . . . there is about as much variety in a flock of athletes as in a flock of sheep" (251).

To make his presumably most devastating indictment Collins introduces a famous surgeon, who states: "There are households in England . . . in which there are young men who have to thank the strain laid on their constitutions by the popular physical displays of the present time, for being broken men, and invalided men for the rest of their lives" (303).

Few, if any, of Collins' readers yesterday or today have been overly impressed by his diatribes against muscular education. His attack on public tastes and manners seems valid enough, but he has not demonstrated that the schools and universities, with their emphasis on athletics, are to blame. Furthermore, Geoffrey Delamayn, the embodiment of Collins' attack, is not a particularly convincing character, and Collins offers no proof that his evil qualities are due to his being an athlete. To make his point, Collins would have to show an initially amiable youth gradually worsened and brutalized by athletics; in other words, he would have had to write a biographical novel, something he never attempted. An inherited tendency to evil is ruled out by Geoffrey's older brother Julius, the antithesis of Geoffrey in every way. So we simply have to take Collins' unsupported word in order to accept his thesis; his word is not enough.

Paradoxically, although it would be foolish to label Man and Wife a tract for our times, nonetheless the novel is surprisingly relevant to the role of athletics today. On the ethical and moral level, we have pointshaving by basketball players at such reputable institutions as Boston College and Tulane, the violation of NCAA regulations on recruitment by colleges and universities too numerous to name, the tampering with secondary school academic records, and so forth. On the coarsening of taste and manners, we have the prevalence of locker room language on stage, screen, and television; in fiction; and even in the conversation of presumably educated and cultured people. Musical taste must be the worst in history, with the volume and motion substituted for melody and harmony. On the inadequacies of collegiate education, we have the proliferation of "basket-weaving" courses

in order to keep athletes eligible and the multitudes of athletes who never get their degrees. On the reversion to savagery, we have the violent behavior of soccer fans, of which the recent incident in Belgium is but the latest example. On physical fitness, we have widespread use of drugs by both intercollegiate and professional athletes, the at least occasional deaths in the ring and on the football field, the semi-crippled football players, the punchdrunk boxers, and the pitiful spectacle of a great boxing champion suffering from a speech impairment. And the relationship between muscles and religion? Well, three of the four semi-finalists in the NCAA Basketball Tournament were Roman Catholic institutions. In fact, one might easily conclude that the situation today is worse than it was in Collins' time.

WORKS CITED

Collins, Wilkie. Man and Wife. 2 vols. New York: Collier, 1900.

Dickens, Charles. The Mystery of Edwin Drood. New York: New American Library, 1961.

BLANK PAGE

The Jewel Theme in The Moonstone

Muriel Smith

By his own account, Collins derives the Moonstone from two historic crown jewels.¹ Many jewels in English-language fiction probably derive from the Moonstone, but the complex jewel theme as used by Collins has in general produced two lines of simple progeny.

In an introduction to The Sign of Four,² Graham Greene makes Conan Doyle simply copy The Moonstone for his stolen jewels. The Agra Treasure, however, is in no way sacred: it is a rajah's reserve fund. The Sign of Four is closer to The Rajah's Diamond,³ and not only because both treasures finish at the bottom of the river. Each has the theme of the Eastern treasure so tempting that Westerners stick at nothing to possess it. This is one element, also, of The Moonstone's theme, but there it is compounded with another. When Betteredge feels inclined to shy the Moonstone into the Shivering Sands,⁴ it is for fear that the wicked Colonel's bequest to his niece entails a legacy of vengeance.

The Moonstone, however, if ancestor to the many sacred jewels which bring down a supernatural vengeance on the sacrilegious, is not itself one of them. To the Indians, the great yellow diamond is sacred: it is the eye of the Moon God, which they want to return to its proper place in the city of Somnauth. On the whole, we are to be glad when they accomplish their mission, but we need not take their religion seriously, and no willing suspension of disbelief is required. They get the stone back by simple everyday means.

The true heir to Collins is Frederick Irving Anderson; in The Infallible Godahl,⁵ when the White Ruby is stolen to be a collector's piece, a Westerner who has no belief in its sacredness gets it back for the Oriental ruler to whom it is sacred. Here as in The Moonstone is the respect for other people's superstitions as superstitions, the recognition that Orientals do take those odd religions of theirs seriously.

The Moonstone appeared in 1868: the story runs from 1848 to 1850. It all happens before the Indian Mutiny but, writing after the Mutiny as he is, Collins surely intends to criticize the East India Company. What triggered off mutiny in 1857 was that the Company

tried to introduce the new Enfield rifle and handled the matter insensitively. The greased cartridges had to be bitten. Rumour went round that they were greased with cow and pig fat: the cow sacred to Hindus, the pig unclean to Moslems. Hence when the Hindu sepoy rose in arms at the threatened loss of caste, they had the Moslem sepoy with them.

Collins is also surely indicating his opinion of conventional English education. Franklin Blake's miscellaneous education abroad had perhaps its demerits,⁶ but he can make the effort of imagination required for understanding an alien culture as the average Englishman of the time cannot or will not. Mr. Blake, Senior, brushes aside an Indian plot in the name of commonsense, but what is nonsense to us can be vitally important to a Hindu.⁷

In 1868, the British reading public was aware of the Hindu caste system, forced on its notice eleven years earlier. Collins is trusting it to pick up the references when that expert on India, Mr. Murthwaite, talks things over with Franklin Blake. What proves the overwhelming importance of the Moonstone to the Indians is not that they would kill anyone standing in their way but that, being Brahmins, they are willing to sacrifice their caste. They are sacrificing it doubly, by crossing the sea and by pretending to be jugglers, and the sacrifice of caste is a serious thing: the sacrifice of life is nothing at all.⁸

Collins, never timid in the face of his public, has here chosen a theme boldly: he asks for a sympathetic understanding of Indians who murder in defence of their faith at a time when horrors like the cold-blooded massacre of women and children at Cawnpore were still vividly present in the public consciousness. Dorothy Sayers, in her introduction, rightly praises him for being "sane and sincere" about sex;⁹ his essential sanity and independence of mind can be seen in this matter also.

NOTES

For so frequently reprinted a novel as The Moonstone, I include chapter references: page references are to the Everyman's Library edition, with Introduction by Dorothy L. Sayers, London: J. M. Dent & Sons: New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. (1944), cited as "EL."

¹ EL, p. xv: Author's preface 30 June 1868; the stones are the Koh-i-Noor, presented to Queen Victoria in 1849, and the culminating stone of the Russian Imperial Sceptre.

² London: John Murray & Jonathan Cape (1974); first publication 1890.

³ R. L. Stevenson, The New Arabian Nights, 1882.

⁴ EL, p. 36: First Period, The Loss of the Diamond, Betteredge's Narrative ch. 6.

⁵ Adventures of the Infallible Godahl, N.Y.: Thomas V. Crowell, 1914; anthologized in e.g. The American Rivals of Sherlock Holmes, ed Hugh Greene, London: The Bodley Head (USA: Pantheon Books), 1976.

⁶ EL, p. 13: Betteredge ch. 3.

⁷ EL, pp. 32, 34-35: Betteredge ch. 6.

⁸ EL, pp. 65-67: Betteredge ch. 10.

⁹ EL, p. xi.

BLANK PAGE

From Novel to Film: Wilkie Collins's
The Woman in White

Julie A. Karsten

A television version of Wilkie Collins's The Woman in White* was aired as a five-part series on "Mystery" for May 5, 12, 19, 26 and June 2, 1985. The "Mystery" series is hosted by Vincent Price and appears Sunday evenings on the Public Broadcasting Service channels. "The Woman in White"* was dramatized by Ray Jenkins, directed by John Bruce, and produced by Jonathan Powell.

Although not entirely faithful to the novel from which it sprang, "The Woman in White" television series managed to capture the spirit of Wilkie Collins's famous novel. The television version contains most of the characterization and suspense, and all of the tension, found in the novel.

Each character was well represented by the actor chosen for the role, both in physical attributes and demeanor, with two exceptions: Count Fosco and Walter Hartright. My only quarrel with the selection of an actor to portray Count Fosco is his lack of flesh. Marian describes Fosco as "immensely fat," a man of "odious corpulence." He describes himself as having "big elephant's legs." Walter jogs the memory of a cabbie by describing the Count as "remarkably fat." The cabbie remembers Fosco as being the "fattest gentleman as ever I see, and the heaviest customer as ever I drove." Surely the moderately heavy actor chosen to play Count Fosco does not fit Collins's description insofar as girth goes. With respect to physical characteristics (other than weight), voice, poise, and delivery, however, no actor could have done more justice to the part than did Alan Badel. Fosco's continental flair, massive head, Napoleonic features, startling eyes, and rich voice have the same effect upon the viewer of the series as Collins's original character had had upon readers for over 125 years.

The character of Walter Hartright is given a new dimension by Daniel Gerrol. In Collins's The Woman in

*The Woman in White refers to the novel by Wilkie Collins, and "The Woman in White" refers to the film version of the novel.

White Hartright is determined to avenge the wrongs suffered by Laura Fairlie, filled with a sense of honor, and possessed of some will to accomplish his purpose. But the Walter Hartright of the novel also tends to be weak-willed at times, and he must gain strength from Marian. A specific instance of this infirmness is Walter's confidence to Marian that he wishes to marry Laura. Rather than take control of the situation himself, he places Marian in the role of mediator. The Walter Hartright of the television series is a shade stronger and more confident. This aura of self-possession comes mainly from the poise of the actor and the delivery of his lines. His manner is much different from that of Collins's Walter Hartright. The strengthening of Hartright's character may be a concession to modern audiences, who prefer tough heroes over the genteel ones of the Victorian era.

The dark, somewhat mannish, Marian Halcombe is played by Diana Quick, who has the dark hair and dark complexion of Collins's character. She is able to capture Marian's strong-willed, self-denying, and self-disciplined personality, as well as Marian's sensitivity. Especially well-done are her scenes with Fosco and Laura.

Ian Richardson's portrayal of Frederick Fairlie, Esq., adds a humorous dimension to "The Woman in White." Richardson is so adept at capturing Collins's idea of the wretched, irresponsible, and lazy aristocrat found in Victorian society that one cannot help but laugh outright at Fairlie's incessant demands for the utmost in physical comfort (and self-indulgence) and at his whining voice. Right down to his twinging and cowering, the Frederick Fairlie of "The Woman in White" is identical with the Frederick Fairlie of The Woman in White.

Although Fosco, Hartright, Marian, and Fairlie stand out as the most colorful characters in "The Woman in White," Sir Percival Glyde, Laura Fairlie, and Madame Fosco also deserve attention. Glyde's temper is one of the main causes of tension both in the novel and in the movie. John Shrapnel creates and maintains such a great sense of tension in "The Woman in White" that one almost wants to leap to Laura's rescue and shelter her from Percival's violent demeanor. Only a skilled actor can create and sustain intense emotion in this manner. Examples of the tension developed by Percival are found in the scenes involving Laura's refusal to sign the required documents, the episode of the wounded dog's blood in the summer house, and Laura's discovery of Marian's supposed departure from Blackwater.

The part of Laura Fairlie, other than her role as a wronged and rather delicate lady, is a small one. Jenny Seagrove, however, has managed to make Laura more than a stereotypical damsel in distress. In "The Woman in White" Laura comes to life as a fragile, sensitive woman, one who has feelings and a mind of her own. She is not merely "a cause" for Walter Hartright or a doll to be attended by Marian. Laura displays a strong mind when she refuses to sign the documents Percival places before her. In The Woman in White, Laura looks constantly to Marian for guidance. The Laura of the television series, however, acts more independently. She comes to life as a living, breathing character instead of remaining a cardboard figure, filling space.

The part of Madame Fosco is also a small one, but in "The Woman in White" Georgine Anderson is every bit as full of fire and bedecked, no less, with odd, stiff curls as Collins's original character. Ms. Anderson's Madame Fosco is the perfect compliment to Alan Badel's Count Fosco.

The most significant difference between "The Woman in White" and The Woman in White is in the manner of narration. Narration in The Woman in White is multiple first-person, with several characters delivering their versions of the events they witnessed. "The Woman in White" uses the omniscient narrative mode. Collins's original style allows for revelation of character through the "statements" of the characters. For example, we discover Marian's frustrated desire for the freedoms and privileges of a man. We also learn of Mrs. Michelson's respect for and trust of the Count, the basis for which is the count's seeming treatment of her as an equal. The narrative technique in The Woman in White also allows us to explore Hartright's motives for bringing Laura's enemies to bay.

Much humor in the novel is lost in the transition from multiple to omniscient narration. The few pages allotted to Mr. Fairlie are very funny, as they allow us to see just how ridiculous his health complaints are. Mr. Fairlie's narrative also includes a statement concerning the nature of relations between single persons and their married relatives which is highly entertaining. "The Woman in White" lacks the clarification given the novel by Count Fosco's point-by-point narrative. Fosco's narrative has its own kind of humor, too. In the pages given over to the Count we see his genius, his pomposity, and his charm.

The television version suffers another blow in the elimination of the "presentation of evidence" style achieved by Collins in his novel. As each character

relates his portion of the story, the plot emerges, much as the case emerges in a court of law. Because each character relates only what he knows first-hand, the forward movement of the plot is stopped as one character leaves off and another begins, usually going backward in time and then moving forward. The effect is a "two steps back and three steps forward" one. In this way we obtain the story from several different perspectives and are allowed to see all of the important events first-hand. We are also kept in suspense for longer periods because Collins stalls the narrative of the novel just prior to climactic scenes.

Whatever the concessions involved in transferring the story from a multiple narrative to that of an omniscient one, the change is probably necessary. The multiple narrative technique found in the novel would have considerably lengthened the television series and would have necessitated long passages of monologue for each character. In essence, each character's narrative would have become his script.

Some of the nicer touches in "The Woman in White" are the scenery, period costumes, and photography. The nature of film, versus that of novel, allows each of these items to enhance the story. The scenery and props, complete with horse-drawn carriages and London fog, transport the viewer to nineteenth-century England. Fosco's dress makes him readily identifiable as a foreigner. Costumes also make the differences in Laura's and Marian's characters' glaring variances. Laura is always dressed in light colors and rich materials, while Marian is always dressed in dowdy clothing.

Where narrative technique hath taken, photography hath given. Laura's fragility of mind is pointed up in a superbly photographed scene--the one in which she is told by Glyde that Marian has already departed from Blackwater. As we see Laura from a quickly changing series of bizarre photographic angles, we realize just how delicately balanced her mind is and just how greatly Marian's illness has affected her. Laura's confusion is related to us in the confusion produced by the photography. Other scenes notable for good photography are Fosco's death and the first appearance of the woman in white. Anne Catherick's meeting with Walter Hartright is done in just the right way to whet our appetite for mystery. Shifting light and fog combine with echoes and horses' hooves to arouse curiosity and excitement. "The Woman in White" ends just as definitely as it begins. The appearance of Fosco's corpse, his treasured pets weaving in and out

of his clothing, ends the film on an appropriately eerie note.

All films derived from novels have their bad points, and "The Woman in White" is no exception. The plot of The Woman in White is very intricate, one in which every detail is important. In "The Woman in White" deletion of scenes which are, initially, of little interest or value, causes confusion later on in the film. A good example occurs in the scene in which Madame Fosco drugs Fanny's (Laura's maid) tea at the inn near Blackwater. Once she is unconscious, Madame Fosco proceeds to remove one of Marian's letters from the girl's bosom (the one to Mr. Kyrle) and replaces it with a blank piece of paper. The letter to Frederick Fairlie, which Madame Fosco deems harmless, is allowed to remain on the servant girl's person. This scene is deleted from the film. Consequently, when the servant girl appears at Limmeridge and speaks to Mr. Fairlie, we are confused about just what happened to the letters. We do not know if the letter the girl does deliver is the one Marian has written or one substituted by Madame Fosco. And what happened to the letter to Mr. Kyrle? Another example of deletion/confusion is the scene in which Fosco goes with Mrs. Clements to attend the ailing Anne Catherick. This scene reveals how Fosco manages to switch Anne and Laura so easily. The telescoped ending of "The Woman in White," where Laura returns to Limmeridge for her reinstatement is also confusing. We are never shown how Laura's identity is restored to her.

Other not-so-well-done portions include Marian's illness and recovery and her daring eavesdropping on Glyde and Fosco. Marian's illness and recovery are too telescoped. One moment she has a cold, the next typhus, and the next she is completely well. This suddenness rushes the film too much and so causes confusion in the time element of the story. Marian's eavesdropping on Glyde and Fosco is done too easily in the film. Marian must move very carefully in constricted surroundings to overhear the men. The easy walk on a balcony-like structure detracts from the suspense of the film version.

"The Woman in White" also has many very well constructed scenes. The scenes that contrast Marian and Laura are particularly good. These include Laura's and Marian's discussion about Laura's upcoming marriage, Marian greeting Laura upon her arrival at Blackwater, Laura and Marian conferring at the summer house at Blackwater, and Marian finding Laura at the asylum. In each of these scenes the contrast between the half-sisters is readily apparent: Marian is dark and always

dressed in dark colors, and Laura is fair and always dressed brightly. The color contrast obviously represents the contrast in their personalities. Each scene has the two women close together, usually hugging. This close contact goes on in the novel, too, and has led some readers to hypothesize that lesbian attractions are at work. The closeness serves to emphasize the differences in the sisters and is a nice touch in the film.

Mr. Gilmore's comic taking to task of Mr. Fairlie, Anne's emotional meeting with Laura, Fosco's and Percival's conversation in the library, and Walter's meeting with Mrs. Catherick are also well done, as are the circumstances at the opera, Pesca's revelation to Walter, and the final confrontation between Walter and Fosco. This last scene is exceptional in its intensity and suspense. Each of the scenes I have mentioned is crucial to the story in one way or another, and each depends upon the ability of the actors involved. Dialogue taken directly from the novel lent power to each scene.

Examination of the film version of "The Woman in White" is particularly interesting in view of the fact that Collins was involved not just with writing novels, but also with writing plays. In his preface to Basil, Collins wrote that "the Novel and the Play are twin-sisters in the family of Fiction; that the one is a drama narrated, as the other is a drama acted." Collins developed dramatic versions of several of his novels, including one of The Woman in White, which was produced in 1871 and 1872, and ran for nineteen weeks. The novel lends itself to drama because of the many dramatic climaxes found in the plot. Around every bend looms a confrontation or an unexpected twist in events. In the film version of The Woman in White the dramatic elements are used to advantage, just as Collins used them advantageously in the serialization of the novel. Although "The Woman in White" does not make use of the same breaking points Collins used in his weekly-installment novel, the weekly television episodes do end at climactic points. Good examples are Parts 3 and 4, concluding respectively with Fosco's diagnosis of typhus as Marian's ailment and Walter Hartright's discovery of Percival's forgery. "The Woman in White" takes the dramatic scenes of Collins's novel and links them with a minimal number of quiet, albeit necessary, scenes to form a fast-paced television series. The theatre of Collins's time is today's television.

As mentioned previously, "The Woman in White" is not entirely faithful to Collins's novel. These very differences, however, could make the movie a valuable

aid in the teaching of Collins. A comparative study could help students to comprehend the complexities of Collins's novel and to understand the novel form itself. An inspection of the characterization and narrative in each medium would also be of use in learning about Collins's writing techniques. Because The Woman in White originally appeared in serial form, the five-part series would allow students to see first-hand what serialization is like in using a modern medium.

"The Woman in White" would be of service in a study of the "sensation" novel too. Sensation novels became popular in the middle 1800's. They employed, in Thomas Hardy's words, "mystery, entanglement, surprise and moral obliquity" to entertain readers; Wilkie Collins included plenty of each in The Woman in White. These characteristics have survived the transition from novel to film. The Victorian fascination with crime, evident in Collins's novel, has also carried over to the television version. A preoccupation with criminal activity is something twentieth-century society shares with the Victorians. Essentially, The Woman in White was to nineteenth-century readers what "Miami Vice" and "Hill Street Blues" are to modern television viewers.

Whether the viewer is a new student of Collins or an old admirer, "The Woman in White" is sure to charm. A host of colorful characters, an intricately woven plot, beautiful scenery, and high drama combine to make this television series a success.

BLANK PAGE

Books Necessary for a Liberal Education

Wilkie Collins

[The following article was first published in the Pall Mall Gazette, February 11, 1886, page 2. The Pall Mall Gazette's reviewers had generally taken negative views of Collins's books; some of the reviews were the nastiest some of the novels received. Nonetheless, when the Pall Mall Gazette polled its readers for their favorite writer in 1884, Collins won by a wide margin. Given that Collins was the readers' favorite author, and the Pall Mall Gazette was meant to make a profit, it seems logical that despite the misgivings of the reviewers the publication's editors would ask Collins to respond to John Lubbock's earlier list of books necessary for a liberal education.

Collins has some fun with the idea of compiling such a list; while asserting that his tastes are less than highbrow, he presents a list that is both literarily respectable and likely to appeal to the Pall Mall Gazette's middlebrow readership. It reflects his interests in fiction and French literature and reveals a strong interest in travel writings. Not surprisingly, Collins values many of their works for their ability to convey images of their subjects; as a follower of Dr. Johnson's dictum that literature must first please if it hopes to instruct, Collins makes entertainment one of his important criteria for recommending books, and he quotes Johnson--as he was wont to do when defending his own writings.]¹

You have proposed that I should recommend to inexperienced readers some of the books which are necessary for a liberal education; and you have kindly sent a list of works drawn out by Sir John Lubbock with this object in view, and recently published in your journal.²

I am sincerely sensible of the compliment to myself which is implied in your suggestion; but I am at the same time afraid that you have addressed yourself to the wrong man. Let me own the truth. I add one more to the number of reckless people who astonish Sir John Lubbock by devoting little care to the selection of what they read. I pick up the literature that happens to fall in my way, and live upon it as well as I can--like the sparrows who are picking up the crumbs outside my window while I write. If I may still quote my experience of myself, let me add that I have never got any good out of a book unless the book interested me in

the first instance. When I find that reading becomes an effort instead of a pleasure, I shut up the volume, respecting the eminent author, and admiring my enviable fellow-creatures who have succeeded where I have failed. These sentiments have been especially lively in me (to give an example) when I have laid aside in despair "Clarissa Harlowe," "La Nouvelle Heloise," the plays of Ben Jonson, Burke on "The Sublime and Beautiful," Hallam's "Middle Ages," and Roscoe's "Life of Leo the Tenth."³ Is a person with this good reason to blush for himself (if he was only young enough to do it) the right sort of person to produce a list of books for readers in search of a liberal education? You will agree with me that he is capable of seriously recommending Sterne's "Sentimental Journey" as the best book of travels that has ever been written, and Byron's "Childe Harold" as the grandest poem which the world has seen since the first publication of "Paradise Lost."⁴

After this confession, if I nevertheless venture to offer a few suggestions, will you trust my honesty, even while you doubt my discretion? In any case, the tomb of literature is close by you. You can give me decent burial in the waste-paper basket.

To begin with, What is a liberal education? If I stood at my house door, and put that question to the first ten intelligent-looking persons who passed by, I believe I should receive ten answers all at variance one with the other. My own ideas cordially recognize any system of education the direct tendency of which is to make us better Christians. Looking over Sir John Lubbock's list from this point of view--that is to say, assuming that the production of a good citizen represents the most valuable result of a liberal education--I submit that the best book which your correspondent has recommended is "The Vicar of Wakefield"--and of the many excellent schoolmasters (judging them by their works) in whose capacity for useful teaching he believes, the two in whom I, for my part, most implicitly trust, are Walter Scott and Charles Dickens.⁵ Holding these extraordinary opinions, if you asked me to pick out a biographical work for general reading, I should choose (after Boswell's supremely great book, of course) Lockhart's "Life of Scott."⁶ Let the general reader follow my advice, and he will find himself not only introduced to the greatest genius that has ever written novels, but provided with the example of a man modest, just, generous, resolute, and merciful; a man whose very faults and failings have been transformed into virtues through the noble atonement that he offered, at the peril and the sacrifice of his life.

Let me not forget that the question of literary value must also be considered in recommending books, for this good reason, that positive literary value means positive literary attraction to the general reader. In this connection I have in my mind the most perfect letters in the English language when I introduce the enviable persons who have not yet read it to Moore's "Life of Byron."⁷ Again, if any voices crying in the literary wilderness ask me what travels it may be well to read, I do justice to the charm of an admirable style, presenting the results of true and vivid observation, when I mention the names of Beckford and Kinglake. Get Beckford's "Italy, Spain, and Portugal;" and, beginning towards the end of the book, whet your appetite by reading the "Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaca and Batalha."⁸ In Kinglake's case, "Eothen" is the title, and the cheap edition of the book is within everybody's reach.⁹ Dr. Kane (in "Arctic Explorations") and Mr. George Melville (in "The Lena Delta") are neither of them consummate masters of the English language; but they possess the rare and admirable gift of being able to make other people see what they have seen themselves.¹⁰ When you meet with travellers who are unable to do this, you will get nothing out of them but weariness of spirit. Shut up their books.

Keeping clear of living writers, may I recommend one or two works of fiction, on the chance that they may not have been mentioned, with a word of useful comment perhaps, in other lists?

Read, my good public, Mrs. Inchbald's "Simple Story," in which you will find the character of a young woman who is made interesting even by her faults--a rare triumph, I can tell you, in our Art.¹¹ Read Marryat's "Peter Simple," and "Midshipman Easy," and enjoy true humour and masterly knowledge of human nature.¹² Let my dear lost friend, Charles Reade, seize on your interest, and never allow it to drop from beginning to end in "Hard Cash."¹³ Let Dumas keep you up all night over "Monte Cristo," and Balzac draw tears that honour him and honour you in "Père Goriot."¹⁴ Last, not least, do justice to a greater writer, shamefully neglected at the present time in England and America alike, who invented the sea-story, and created the immortal character of "Leather Stocking." Read "The Pilot" and "Jack Tier"; read "The Deerslayer" and "The Pathfinder," and I believe you will be almost as grateful to Fenimore Cooper as I am.¹⁵

It is time to have done. If I attempted to enumerate all the books that I might honestly recommend, I should employ as many secretaries as

Napoleon the Great, and I should find nobody bold enough to read me to the end. As it is, some critical persons may object that there runs all through this letter the prejudice that might have been anticipated in a writer of what heavy people call "light literature." No, Sir; my prejudice is in favour of the only useful books that I know of--books in all departments of literature which invite the general reader, as distinguished from books that repel him. If it is answered that profitable reading is a matter of duty first and a matter of pleasure afterwards, let me shelter myself under the authority of Dr. Johnson. Never mind what I say--hear him (Boswell, vol. ii., page 213, ed. 1859):--"I would not advise a rigid adherence to a particular plan of study. I myself have never persisted in any plan for two days together. A man ought to read just as inclination leads him; for what he reads as a task will do him little good."

I first read those admirable words (in an earlier edition of Boswell) when I was a boy at school. What a consolation they were to me when I could not learn my lesson! What consolation they may still offer to bigger boys in the same predicament among books recommended to them by the highest authorities!

NOTES

¹ All notes and commentary are by Kirk H. Beetz

² John Lubbock (1834-1913) was a brilliantly versatile man. Although a banker by trade, he made important contributions to the study of physics, anthropology, geology, and entomology. He was noted for Prehistoric Times, 1859; The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man, 1870; and The Origin and Metamorphosis of Insects, 1873. He was a significant interpreter of Darwin's evolutionary theories. In addition, he helped to popularize the making of reading lists, such as ones of books necessary for a liberal education. A learned intellectual, Lubbock created lists of high-minded books. In his response, Collins (who himself enjoyed reading sophisticated works, including science books) has some fun with Lubbock's relentless high-mindedness and reminds his readers of the importance of engaging a reader's interest before endeavoring to instruct.

³ Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), Clarissa: or The History of a Young Lady, 7 volumes, 1747-1748. Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), La Nouvelle Heloise,

1760. Ben Jonson (1573?-1637), playwright and poet. Edmund Burke (1729-1797), A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, 1757. Henry Hallam (1777-1859), A View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages, 1818. William Roscoe (1753-1831), The History of the Life and Pontificate of Leo X, 1805. In Collins's day, as in our own, some literary scholars regarded Clarissa as a classic of English literature; in Collins's day, as in our own, it was rarely read. Much the same may be said of the others in this note, although Burke was commonly taught in schools in the Victorian era, and Jonson's works are now undergoing a small revival.

4 Laurence Sterne (1713-1768), A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy, 1768. George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824), Childe Harold's Pilgrimage I and II, 1812, III, 1816, and IV, 1818. John Milton (1608-1674), Paradise Lost, 1667. Sterne's work is an engaging companion. As with many of his generation, Collins was enamored of Byron's poetry; that he would select Childe Harold's Pilgrimage as a great poem indicates that he went along with the popular sentiments about poetry of his day (although the present editor confesses that he, too, is enamored of the poem).

5 Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774), The Vicar of Wakefield, 1766. Walter Scott (1771-1832) was admired by Collins as the greatest of all novelists. One need not look hard to discover many similarities between the two authors. Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was Collins's closest friend in the 1850's and 1860's. Although Collins admired Dickens, he never placed Dickens on his short list of greatest novelists (Scott, Cooper, and Balzac).

6 James Boswell (1740-1795), The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., 1791. John Gibson Lockhart (1794-1854), Life of Scott, 1837-1838. Given Collins's esteem for Scott, one should not be surprised that Collins would recommend a biography of him. However, Lockhart's work was highly regarded in those days, and although modern biographers caution that it contains inaccuracies, it still stands as a notable biographical and literary achievement.

7 Thomas Moore (1779-1852), Life of Byron, 1830. As a young man, Collins seems to have read just about everything Moore wrote.

8 William Beckford (1759-1844), Recollections of an Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaca and Batalha, 1835.

⁹ Alexander William Kinglake (1809-1891), Eothen, 1844. Eothen describes Kinglake's travels in Egypt and the Levant. Both Beckford and Kinglake's travel-books retain small audiences, and modern critics generally regard Eothen as a minor classic.

¹⁰ Elisha Kent Kane (1820-1857), Narrative of the Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin, 1854; and Second Grinnell Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin, 1856. Dr. Kane was an American physician from Philadelphia. George Wallace Melville (1841-1912), In the Lena Delta, ed. Melville Philips, 1885 (c. 1884). The Melville reference was located with the invaluable assistance of Theodore F. Gould.

¹¹ Elizabeth Simpson Inchbald (1753-1821), A Simple Story, 1791.

¹² Captain Frederick Marryat, R.N. (1792-1848), Peter Simple, 1834; and Mr. Midshipman Easy, 1836.

¹³ Charles Reade (1814-1884), Hard Cash, 1863. Reade was a close friend of Collins. Wilkie Collins Society member Thomas D. Clareson has written a detailed biography of Reade.

¹⁴ Alexander Dumas, père (1802-1870), Le Comte de Monte-Cristo, 1844. Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), Le Père Goriot, 1835. Collins regarded Balzac as one of the world's three greatest novelists, along with Scott and Cooper.

¹⁵ James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851), The Pilot, 1824; Jack Tier, 1848; The Deerslayer, 1841; and The Pathfinder, 1840. Collins regarded Cooper as one of the world's three greatest novelists, along with Scott and Balzac.

Notes on the Contributors

Robert Ashley is a familiar name to readers of the Wilkie Collins Society Journal. He has published numerous articles on Collins and was an important contributor to the revival of interest in Collins during the 1950's. His book Wilkie Collins (c. 1952) is still a standard reference for those interested in Collins's life and work. Ashley was a professor at West Point and later at Ripon College; he has retired but continues to take an active interest in Collins studies.

Muriel Smith has previously published articles on Jane Austen and lives in Maidenhead, England.

Julie A. Karsten is a graduate student at the University of Delaware.

Wilkie Collins is best known for his complex and suspenseful novels. He also worked as a journalist in his early years and was the author of many articles intended for general audiences. "Books Necessary for a Liberal Education" is a rare example of a journalistic essay from the 1880's. The Society is devoted to the study of Collins and related topics.

Kirk H. Beetz is president of the Wilkie Collins Society and one of its cofounders. He has published numerous articles on literature, including several on Collins. Among his several books is Wilkie Collins: A Bibliography, 1889-1976 (c. 1978). He is editing Collins's letters for publication. Additionally, he edits the present journal.

BLANK PAGE