

The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (7)

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Wilkie Collins Society
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Introduction

This pamphlet is the seventh in the series of updates to *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins: The Collected Letters*, published in four volumes by Pickering & Chatto in 2005. This update is published by the Wilkie Collins Society.

The editorial principles, transcription conventions, and abbreviations employed here remain consistent with those described in pp. ix-lxii of Volume I of *The Public Face*.

The editors are working towards publishing the entire sequence of the known letters in digital form. As part of that process each letter is being given a permanent unique number. The numbers run consecutively in order as the letters have been published. So the 2987 letters listed in *The Public Face* are numbered as published in sequence in those volumes. The numbers then continue sequentially for the new letters in subsequent *Addenda and Corrigenda*. This year the new letters are numbered in chronological sequence although they are published in two parts. In addition the letters in ‘Last Things’ in *Public Face* vol. IV from by WC’s relatives during his final illness and after his death have also been numbered as X001 to X011. This pamphlet corrects two and adds one to them. The table below summarises the numbering.

Publication	Sequence	Pages	Numbers
<i>Public Face</i> I	Chronological	3-335	[1]-[614]
<i>Public Face</i> II	Chronological	3-430	[615]-[1400]
<i>Public Face</i> III	Chronological	3-455	[1401]-[2245]
<i>Public Face</i> IV	Chronological	3-382	[2246]-[2972]
<i>Public Face</i> IV	Letter fragments	383-385	[2973]-[2981]
<i>Public Face</i> IV	Last Things	387-393	[X001]-[X011]
<i>Public Face</i> IV	Addenda	401-404	[2982]-[2987]
‘Addenda’ (1) 2005	Chronological	WCSJ VIII 48-54	[2988]-[2998]
‘Addenda’ (2) 2006	Chronological	WCSJ IX 59-68	[2999]-[3016]
‘Addenda’ (3) 2007	Chronological	WCSJ X 34-61	[3017]-[3076]
‘Addenda’ (4) 2008	Chronological	2-29	[3077]-[3116]
‘Addenda’ (5) 2009	Chronological	3-18	[3117]-[3146]
‘Addenda’ (6) 2010	Chronological	3-16	[3147]-[3171]
‘Addenda’ (7) 2011	Chronological in 2 sequences	5-35 36-44	[3172]-[3199, X012]

Any subsequent deletions or revisions to dating will not change the assigned number. Hence the four letters identified in *The Public Face* which

were deleted by *Addenda & Corrigenda* (3) (2007), pp. 68-9, numbered ([0229], [2975], [2977], [2979]), remain as blanks in the series.

This seventh *Addenda & Corrigenda* has been updated to the end of 2011 and includes 28 letters new to this edition, of which only four have been published before and those only in the nineteenth-century press.

This pamphlet also includes 34 letters from the archive of the actor Frank Archer. Some of these letters were known in whole or in part from printed sources but the discovery and purchase of the archive has enabled them to be correctly and fully transcribed including previously missing content and adding the unknown letters to the database. This almost complete correspondence with Archer is given its own section in chronological order and includes three letters written by Carrie Bartley about WC's final illness and death.

Other letters included after the Archer material in (B) include items from auction or book trade catalogues, newspapers, and letters which have come to light in albums or pasted into books.

The new letters take the numbers [3172] to [3199] in their chronological sequence (even though that is split between Archer and others). Deducting the four letters deleted by A&C (3), there are 3195 letters in the sequence to date plus 12 letters written by close relatives or friends during and after WC's last illness.

Letters marked * have not been published before. Full or partial publication in catalogues of auction houses and dealers is ignored. The editors are grateful to those owners who have provided texts or given permission for their inclusion.

The *Corrigenda* has been held over to next year's publication but, of course, corrected letters to Archer are found in the Archer section.

The editors welcome all comments and corrections by e-mail to paul@paullewis.co.uk.

(A) The Archer Archive

The discovery and purchase of the archive of Frank Bishop Arnold is a major event for Wilkie Collins scholarship. Arnold took the stage name of Frank Archer and he kept this name both professionally and among friends to the end of his life. He met Collins with Ada Cavendish at Collins's house on 11 May 1873 when he was rehearsing the lead part of Julian Gray in the first production of *The New Magdalen* which opened at the Olympic Theatre under her management on 19 May 1873. Archer and Collins remained friendly and in 1886 Collins helped Archer write and sell stories. They kept in touch until the end of 1887.

Until recently the archive remained with descendants of Archer, unexamined by scholars. About two years ago it was sold intact and remained in the hands of an antiquarian book dealer until October 2011. The whole archive was originally kept in three large trunks. It includes diaries, letters from theatrical and publishing figures, playbills, press cuttings, reading copies of plays, manuscripts by Archer and much other material. It appears to have been sorted and labelled by Archer and used by him when he wrote his autobiography, *An Actor's Notebooks* (London: [1912]).

Among the items in the archive were 32 letters from Collins and four written by Elizabeth Harriet Graves, the daughter of Wilkie's lifelong companion Caroline Graves. Elizabeth Harriet changed her name around to Harriet Elizabeth but confusingly was known in the family as Carrie. In 1878 she married the solicitor Henry Bartley.

Archer's book contained whole or partial transcripts of 14 Collins letters and lengthy accounts of meetings with Collins. In 1950 Archer's son Frank H. Arnold lent all the letters to Kenneth Robinson for his biography *Wilkie Collins* (London: 1951). In the book's 'Acknowledgements' Robinson thanks 'Frank H. Arnold, who not only entrusted me with the complete correspondence between his father (Frank Archer) and Collins, but went to great pains to send me other useful material' (Robinson, p. [9]). Robinson included twelve of the letters in his book.

Until the discovery of the archive those two published sources gave us 20 letters from Collins to Archer of which 14 appeared to be full transcripts and six were clearly extracts, in some cases very brief. In total there were fewer

than 3000 words by Collins. The new material augments that to almost 5000 words. In addition there are four letters from WC's step-daughter Carrie Bartley, one of which gives a moving and previously unseen account of his death.

The letters were originally stored in their envelopes and put in chronological order before being numbered, tied with string in a bundle and labelled with a paper strip inscribed "Wilkie Collins (in order of dates) From Apl 19. 1873 to Dec 5. 1887, 3 from Mrs Bartley (1 in 1877)". Although these letters have long been taken out of their bundle, possibly by or for Robinson but probably more recently, other bundles of letters which were intact until recently show us how they would have looked.

It seems almost certain that Archer did the numbering and filing of the WC letters as the format conforms with the way many other items – such as press cuttings – are stored. There is no reason why anyone later, such as his son Frank H. Arnold, would have taken such care with them. Indeed, we are fortunate that much of the material was not simply dumped.

The numbers on the letters – which include the letters written by Carrie – run from 1 to 36 with four numbers – 2, 21, 23, and 27 – missing from the archive. One of these letters – 21 – was included in Archer and in Robinson. Of the other three, one has been summarised from associated written material and forms part of the sequence below. There are suggestions as to the dates and contents of the other two but without written evidence they are included in footnotes rather than in the sequence. The current location of these four letters remains unknown.

With the Collins letters are also copies in Archer's hand of two letters from him to Collins. These and some other letters from the archive which relate to the letters from Collins are included in the footnotes. The footnotes also contain information drawn from Archer's personal archive of diaries, cuttings and records of his acting and writing careers. Section (B) contains a previously unknown letter from Collins taken from a press cutting in Archer's chronological scrap-book of his acting career.

The sequence below lists all the known letters from Collins to Archer as well as those written by Carrie Graves, later Bartley. Letters which have previously been published should be taken as corrections and replace the printed version

completely. The letters marked with a * are previously unpublished.

The Archer Archive now forms part of the Lewis collection.

WILKIE COLLINS LETTERS TO FRANK ARCHER

[3175] *To FRANK ARCHER,¹ 18 APRIL 1873

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive),² with envelope.³

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W.⁴

18th April 1873

Dear Mr Archer,

I send to you by todays book-post the story complete – except “The Prologue”, which has gone to the Printers of the book (in two volumes – shortly to appear)⁵. However, this piece follows the Prologue exactly – and “Julian Gray” does not appear in it – so you have got, I hope, what is really necessary⁶

vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

To | Frank Archer Esqre

Please return the proofs – beginning with the proof of the May number⁷. The preceding numbers may go into your waste-paper basket. It is only the unpublished part of the story – from May to July inclusive – that I want back.

1. Frank Bishop Arnold (1844-1917) was an actor who used the stage name Frank Archer. He played Julian Gray in the original production of *The New Magdalen* at the Olympic Theatre which opened Monday, 19 May 1873, and ran for 113 performances over 19 weeks (except Friday, 26 September) until Saturday, 27 September. Archer records that he was paid £10 a week for his work, out of which he provided his own costume (*Theatre Salaries and Parts*, bk. 1, p. 78, Archer Archive). Archer had been recommended by the Bancrofts. WC admired his work and they became friends. WC later helped him with his writing and to find a publisher. Archer reprised the role in the play’s revival at the Novelty Theatre in 1884.

2. The archive of Frank Bishop Arnold appears to have been used by Arnold to write his autobiography, *An Actor’s Notebooks* (London: [1912]). In 1950 part of the archive was lent by Arnold’s son, Frank H. Arnold to Kenneth Robinson, who included 12 of the letters in his biography *Wilkie Collins* (London: 1951). This letter appears in neither.

3. Postmarked LONDON | C 6 |AP 19 | 73 with a full mourning black border recto and black edging round the flaps verso. Addressed in Collins’s hand: ‘Frank Archer Esqre | 24 Grove Terrace | Highgate Road | N.W. | Wilkie Collins’ and with a later ms number ‘1’ on the recto. All WC’s letters in the Archive are numbered, probably by Frank Archer who seems to have sorted out the documents when preparing *An Actor’s Notebooks*.

4. The address in black gothic engraved type is centred and the page is surrounded by a full mourning black border for the recent death of his brother Charles on 9 April.

5. *The New Magdalen* was published in two volumes by Richard Bentley and Son 17 May 1873.

6. The first rehearsal had taken place two days earlier on 16 April. Archer may have felt the

need to read the book for background on the character and plot.

7. The story was being serialised in ten parts in *Temple Bar*, October 1872 to July 1873.

[1405] TO FRANK ARCHER, 6 JANUARY 1874

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹ Published with minor faults: Archer, pp. 156-7. Extract: Robinson, p. 271 (dated 8 January 1874). Published with minor faults: Baker & Clarke, II, pp. 373-4.

Buffalo | New York State | 6th January 1874

My dear Archer,

I have got both your kind letters (dated Decr 7th and Dec 16).

I entirely agree with you about the Charing Cross Theatre. But a letter from Miss Cavendish – as I understand it – informs me that she has actually taken the theatre, on her own responsibility. Under these circumstances, there is nothing to be done but to “make the best of it”.² I have written to Miss Cavendish on the subject.³ For the rest, I can only thank you for your advice – and say that I sincerely hope you will give the experiment the advantage of your assistance by playing “Julian Gray”. The one thing needful in the interests of the piece is to prevent any possible impression from getting abroad that the revival is a failure. It would be well, with this object in view, to advertise that the theatre cannot possibly be obtained for longer than a limited period.

My “readings” are getting on famously. The one drawback is that I cannot read often enough to make a large sum of money – without the risk of injuring my health. Everywhere there is the same anxiety to see and hear me – but I cannot endure the double fatigue of railway travelling and reading on the same day. Thus three or four days a week are lost days (in the matter of money) – but gained days (in the matter of health). And I have suffered enough to make health my first consideration. As to my personal reception in “the States”, it has really and truly overwhelmed me. Go where I may, I find myself among friends.

From this place I go to Chicago (stopping at certain smaller towns on the way). From Chicago I go “West” – perhaps as far as the Mormons. This will be my last tour. I propose giving farewell readings early in March, in Boston and New York – and sailing for home during the last fortnight in March.

I shall be very glad to hear how this venturesome Charing Cross experiment promises to turn out, if you have time to tell me. My address is care of Naylor & Co | Boston | Mass: | U. S. America | – who will forward all letters.

With all good wishes

Yours truly | Wilkie Collins.

1. Envelope postmarked: ‘BUFFALO | JAN | 6 | 5PM’, ‘NEW YORK | JAN | 8’ and ‘LONDON NW | C5 | PAID | JA 19’. The envelope has black half-mourning edging and the stamp has been neatly cut away. Written in WC’s hand: ‘England | via New York | Frank Archer esqre | 24. Grove Terrace | Highgate Road | London | N.W.’, with a ms number ‘3’ on the recto. The envelope numbered ‘2’ and its associated letter are missing, but could have been an invitation to lunch with Collins on 4 June 1873. Archer writes: ‘June 4 (Wednesday). At 2 o’clock went to Wilkie Collins’s to luncheon. Met there Bancrofts, F.C. Beard, Hare, MacKaye and Charles Reade [Beard and Reade for the first time].’ (*Diary* 1873, Archer Archive).
2. Referring to a planned revival of *The New Magdalen*, which had originally opened at the Olympic Theatre on 19 May 1873, starring Ada Cavendish in the part of Mercy Merrick. In WC’s absence, the project seems to have been initiated by Stefan Poles, though neither he nor Ada Cavenish seems to have had the right to authorise the performances (see [1414] to Tindell, 27 January 1874, and Archer, p.156). In the event, the revival at the tiny Charing Cross Theatre only began in January 1875. Archer felt the theatre was small and unlikely to prove a successful venue. He did not play Julian Gray in either of the 1875 productions, at the Charing Cross and National Standard theatres, but returned to the part for the 1884 revival at the Novelty Theatre. Poles turned his attention to the even more unsuitable venue of the Holborn Amphitheatre, normally used for circus performances – see [1413] to Archer, 27 January 1874.
3. The letter has not been traced.

[1413] TO FRANK ARCHER, 27 JANUARY 1874

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope¹. Extract: Robinson, p. 272; BGLL, III, p. 11.

St James’s Hotel | Boston | Mass: | Janry 27th 1874

My dear Archer

A thousand thanks for your kind attention to my interests. Nobody has any right to sanction any performance of the “Magdalen” in London but myself. Nobody has any authority to sign an agreement for me. They must be mad – I can account for the selection of the Holborn Amphitheatre and the utter setting-aside of my rights in the matter in no other way.²

I write by this mail to caution Miss Cavendish – without mentioning to whom I am indebted for my knowledge of the state of affairs. I also write to my lawyer (this is between ourselves) to tell him to interfere at once if any new absurdity is perpetrated during my absence.³ You will be adding to the service which I already owe to your friendly kindness, if you will inform him of any new attempt to produce the piece without my authority. You are more likely to hear of such things than he is. His name is W^m F. Tindell | address | Messrs

Benham and Tindell | 18 Essex Street | Strand.

=

I hope to sail for England towards the latter part of March. In the meantime, with renewed thanks

Yours ever | Wilkie Collins

Written in haste to catch the mail.

1. Envelope postmarked recto: 'BOSTON | JAN | 28'; verso: 'LONDON | L7 | FE 9 | 74' and 'LONDON NW | FE 9 | 74'. The stamp has been neatly cut away. Addressed in WC's hand: 'England | Frank Archer esqre | 24 Grove Terrace | Highgate Road | London', with a ms number '4' on the recto.

2. 'They' being WC's agent Stefan Poles and the actress Ada Cavendish, who were attempting to arrange a revival of *The New Magdalen* at a venue often used for circus performances. *The New Magdalen* had originally opened at the Olympic Theatre on 19 May 1873, starring Ada Cavendish in the part of Mercy Merrick and Archer as Julian Gray. In WC's absence, the project of a revival seems to have been initiated by Stefan Poles, though neither he nor Ada Cavendish seems to have had the right to authorize the performances (see to William Tindell of the same date, and Archer, p. 156). The idea of a revival at the tiny Charing Cross Theatre (see [1405] to Archer, 6 January 1874) had apparently been dropped and Poles next turned his attention to the even more unsuitable venue of the Holborn Amphitheatre. The play was in fact revived at the Charing Cross in 1875. See [1493] to Archer, 16 November 1874.

3. See [1414] to William Tindell, 27 January 1874.

[1493] TO FRANK ARCHER, 16 NOVEMBER 1874¹

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive). Extract: Archer, pp. 160-1. Extract: BGLL, III, p. 56.

Private

90. Gloucester Place | Portman Square | W | 16th Nov/74

My dear Archer,

It is only right, in a friendly sense, to tell you that I have accepted a proposal for reviving "The New Magdalen" at the Charing Cross Theatre in January next.² I have hesitated – solely on your account, feeling the serious loss to the piece of not including you in the cast – but the proprietor of the Theatre concedes the guarantees that I have always insisted on in such cases, and I have no alternative (having said No so often) but to say Yes, when my wishes are all consulted in the matter – and when Miss Cavendish is willing and ready to try the experiment.

I have only today announced my consent. The serious question of replacing you – I suppose we must do that, so far as we can(!) – has not yet

been discussed between Miss Cavendish and me.

Please keep this little morsel of news a secret for the present (until the cast is settled) from the “outside world”.

I want to be free to get better representatives of some of the subsidiary characters, than the representatives who originally played them – if the thing can be done.=

Yours ever, | WC

The fog was eating my back and shoulders on the first night – and I was obliged to leave “society” to be seen at the earliest future opportunity.³

The guaranteed “run” is two months. – with four more at our disposal, if we succeed commercially.⁴

1. With an envelope postmarked recto: ‘LONDON W | 4 | NO 16 | 74’; verso with WC’s monogram on the flap. Written in WC’s hand: ‘Frank Archer Esqre | Prince of Wales’s Theatre | Tottenham Street | W. | Wilkie Collins.’ The envelope has a ms note on the recto, ‘WC 5’. Archer was just back from Paris and in lodgings so this address was perhaps more secure.

2. Referring to the revival of *The New Magdalen* at the small Charing Cross Theatre from 9 January 1875, with Ada Cavendish as Mercy Merrick and Robert J. Markby as Julian Gray, the part originally performed by Archer when the play opened at the Olympic in May 1873. Archer was already engaged by the Bancrofts to perform the role of Lord Ptarmigan in the revival of Tom Robertson’s *Society* at the Prince of Wales’s Theatre (Archer, pp. 160-2, and Archer, *Theatre Salaries and Parts*, Book 1, Archer Archive). See [1405] to Archer, 6 January 1874.

3. This paragraph appears in Archer p. 161, but separated from the letter. Archer explains ‘the first night’ as that of “Sweethearts,” by Sir W.S. Gilbert’, which preceded *Society* on the bill at the Prince of Wales’s Theatre from 7 November. Presumably WC had left the theatre before the curtain rose on Robertson’s play.

4. The revival seems to have run for just the two months as payments stopped into WC’s bank account in early March. See [1505] to Archer, 24 January 1875 fn 5.

[3181] *TO FRANK ARCHER, 30 NOVEMBER 1874

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W.² | 30th Decr 1874³

A thousand thanks, my dear Archer, for your kind note. Miss Cavendish seems to think that our best chance will be to try the present representative of “Julian”. He knows the business, and has “passed muster” at Liverpool and Edinburgh.⁴ And there is nobody else !!! which is a terrible argument.

I will mention Mr Vandenhoff to Miss Cavendish⁵. She collects and pays the company – subject to my approval. I will write to you again, when I

hear from her. Pardon haste, and believe me
yours ever | WC

1. Envelope postmarked recto: 'LONDON W | D5 | DE 1 | 74'; verso with WC's monogram on the flap. Written in WC's hand: 'Frank Archer Esqre | Prince of Wales's Theatre | Tottenham Street | W. | Wilkie Collins.', with a ms note on the recto 'WC 6'.
2. Black embossed gothic type ranged right.
3. The date has been corrected in pencil, with 'Decr' struck through and 'Nov^r' inserted below, probably by the envelope annotator. The amendment must be correct as the letter clearly predates [3182] to Archer, 27 December 1874.
4. Robert J. Markby, who had played Julian Gray in the provincial tour of the play.
5. Probably Charles Vandenhoff rather than his father H. Vandenhoff, though Charles was probably in America at this time (see *The Dramatic List*, 1880, p. 356).

[3182] *TO FRANK ARCHER, 27 DECEMBER 1874¹

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹

Private

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W.² | 27 Decr 1874

My dear Archer,

My best thanks for your kind letter. Here is the "cast." – ³

Mercy ————— A. Cavendish

Grace ————— K. Rivers

Lady Janet ——— Miss Le Thière

The women will be all good.WC⁴

Julian ————— Markby (?)

Horace ————— L. Boyne (???)

Physician [Ignatius]⁵ ——— D. Evans x

x original representative⁶

No one but Mr B. was to be got for Horace. The other people applied to were incapable of seeing that the part is a thoroughly good one, and they all wanted to play "Julian".

How it will end – God Knows (and perhaps the Devil) – certainly not,
yours always | WC

The freezing weather – and the last number of "The Law and The Lady" (which I am now writing) are my only consolations under existing dramatic

circumstances. It seems to be simply impossible to find a moderately good actor who is not already engaged at (say) five times the salary he is worth.

1. Envelope postmarked recto: 'LONDON W | 7 | DE 28 | 74'; and verso: 'LONDON W | A O | DE 28 | 74', with WC's monogram on the flap. Addressed in WC's hand: 'Frank Archer Esqre | 10. Charlotte Street | Bloomsbury | W. C.' The envelope has a ms note on the recto 'WC 7'.
2. Black embossed gothic type ranged right.
3. For *The New Magdalen* at the Charing Cross Theatre. They included: Ada Cavendish who was the impresario and the original Mercy Merrick in the first production in 1873; Roma Guillon Le Thièrè, who played Lady Janet Roy in this and subsequent revivals of *The New Magdalen* (see [2110] to her, 16 February 1883); Robert J. Markby, who had played Julian Gray in the provincial tour of the play; Leonard Boyne, who played Horace Holmcroft in both the 1875 productions, and later played Midwinter in *Miss Gwilt* at the Globe in May 1876; and David Evans.
4. Written by the side of the names which WC marks with a curly bracket.
5. WC writes 'Physician Ignatius' very carelessly, but he clearly intends Ignatius Wetzel, the German surgeon played by David Evans at the Olympic Theatre in 1873.
6. Beneath WC draws a line right across the page

[1505] TO FRANK ARCHER, 24 JANUARY 1875¹

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope. Published (with minor faults): Archer, p. 162; BGLL, III, p. 64.

90 Gloucester Place | 24th Jany 1875

My dear Archer,

My only excuse for not having "reported progress" to you is – that I have been confined to my bed with ~~an~~ a violent attack of cold. I am only now able to get out again.

Financially, we are playing the piece at a profit.² – The first week's returns (which are all I have yet seen) are decidedly encouraging £93 / in the house on the first Saturday.

Excepting your part, the whole piece is far better played than it was at the Olympic. The Lady Janet³ and the Horace⁴ – both really very good, and received with genuine applause by the audience. Miss Cavendish greatly improved – and very successful with the public. Mr Markby plays "Julian" quietly and with discretion[.] I have no complaint to make.⁵

We shall see how we get on. The first week ~~is~~ was far better than I had ventured to expect. My weeks fees were at least ten pounds higher than my calculations anticipated.⁶

Give my love to Bancroft, and tell him the news "so far, is good."

1. Envelope postmarked recto: 'LONDON W | 7 | JA 25 | 75'. Addressed in WC's hand: 'Frank Archer Esqre | Prince of Wales's Theatre | Tottenham Street| W. | Wilkie Collins'. The envelope has a ms note on the recto: 'WC 8'.
2. Referring to the current revival of *The New Magdalen* at the small Charing Cross Theatre – see [1493] to Archer, 16 November 1874.
3. Roma Guillon Le Thière, who played Lady Janet Roy in the 1875 and subsequent revivals of *The New Magdalen* (see [211] to her, 16 February 1883). Archer 1912 adds the name of the actress.
4. Leonard Boyne played Horace Holmcroft in both of the 1875 productions, and later played Midwinter in *Miss Gwilt* at the Globe in May 1876. Archer 1912 adds the name of the actor.
5. Robert J. Markby about whom WC had had doubts.
6. WC's account at Coutts records four payments totalling £302-8s-3d from Ada Cavendish: 6 January, £177-16s; 13 February, £76-12s-3d; 26 February, £24; 6 March, £24.

[1588] TO FRANK ARCHER, 13 APRIL 1875

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹ Extract: Robinson, p. 133; BGLL, III, p.111 dated 1875.

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W.² |Tuesday

My dear Archer

A line to thank you for your kind note – and to congratulate you (on Mrs. Graves's part as well as on mine) upon your excellent performance of the sleepy old lord.³

All good wishes for Saturday!⁴

Yours ever | WC

1. Envelope postmarked recto: 'LONDON W | 4 | AP 14 | 75'. Addressed in WC's hand: 'Frank Archer Esqre | Prince of Wales's Theatre | Tottenham Street| W. | Wilkie Collins'. The envelope has a ms note on the recto, 'WC 9', with on the verso WC's monogram on the point of the flap.
2. Black embossed gothic type ranged right. Dated from the reference to the plays and the postmark.
3. Archer was playing Lord Ptermigant in T.W. Robertson's *Society* which the Banrofts revived at The Prince of Wales's Theatre from 7 November 1874. The run ended on 13 April so WC and Caroline Graves had seen the penultimate performance.
4. Archer was opening as Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice* at The Prince of Wales's on Saturday 17 April after three days' rehearsal (*Theatre Salaries and Parts*, Archer Archive).

[1639] TO FRANK ARCHER, 26 JULY 1876

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹ Published with minor faults: Archer, pp. 183-4. Extract: Robinson, p. 280. Published with minor faults: BGLL, III, pp. 135-136.

Worthing | 26th July 1876

My dear Archer,

I am wandering about the South Coast – and I have only just picked up my letters here, during a stay of a day or two. This is my excuse for not having thanked you for your letter long since.

My present plans are of the purely idle sort. I have just finished a story called “The Two Destinies” – and I am feeling too much fagged to do any more work for some little time to come.² I wish I had something good to offer you – but I must, for my health’s sake, let my brains rest – and I can only wish you heartily success when you step on a new stage. I hear that your “Russian Prince” was admirable. But I was too ill with the gout to go and see it.³

Yours always truly | Wilkie Collins

P.S. | My plans for | the coming autumn | are to go abroad, | I think, and get new ideas among new scenes.

1. Envelope postmarked recto: ‘WORTHING | D | JY 26 | 76’; verso: ‘LONDON | W | J 27 | X’. Addressed in WC’s hand: ‘Frank Archer Esqre | 10. Charlotte Street | Bedford Square | London | W.C.’, and initialled ‘WC’. With a ms note on the recto ‘10’, and WC’s monogram on the point of the flap on the verso.

2. *The Two Destinies* was published by Chatto & Windus in August 1876, and finished serialization in *Temple Bar* in September.

3. Referring to Archer’s performance in the role of Prince Perovsky in T.W. Robertson’s *Ours*, originally written in 1866 and revived by the Bancrofts at the Prince of Wales’s Theatre from 8 May to 4 August 1876. This was to be Archer’s last performance at the Prince of Wales’s Theatre, and he was clearly on the look out for work. He records ‘Eight Weeks Interval Bedford and London. No income’. He was then employed by Henry Neville to play The Duke of Gonzagues in *The Duke’s Device* from the end of September. He records that he ‘joined Henry Neville at the Olympic Theatre for a time’ (Archer, p. 184). In fact after 11 November he was again without work, this time for 34 weeks (*Theatre Salaries and Parts*, Archer Archive).

[1674] TO FRANK ARCHER, 22 MARCH 1877

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹ Published: Archer, p. 185. Extract: Robinson, p. 283. Published: BGLL, III, p. 157.

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W.²

22nd March 1877

My dear Archer

Thank you heartily for the Portrait. It is not only an excellent likeness – but, as I think – a finely-executed photograph.³ You are in luck – it is not everybody who is well treated by photography Richmond (the portrait-painter) described photography, from his point of view, as “Justice without Mercy”!⁴

Your kind letter finds me just recovering from another attack of gout – not so severe as usual this time.

It is needless to say that I shall feel interested in the result of the Hamlet-experiment.⁵ Your old friend “Julian Gray” still “strolls” through the country theatres with Miss Cavendish.⁶ He has been translated into Italian, and turned into an austere magistrate – the Italian public won’t have a priest of any sort on the stage! The piece has been a great success at Rome, Florence,⁷ and Milan.⁸

The ladies join with me in kind remembrances

Yours always truly | WC

1. Envelope postmarked recto: ‘LONDON W | X | MR 22 | 77’; verso: ‘LONDON N.W | L N | MR 22 | 77’. Addressed in WC’s hand: ‘Frank Archer Esqre | 24 Grove Terrace | Highgate Road | N. W. | Wilkie Collins’. With a ms note on the recto ‘WC 11’, verso a pink embossed device on the point of the flap.

2. Black embossed gothic type ranged right.

3. Perhaps the handsome portrait by Window & Grove, reproduced as the frontispiece in Archer’s *An Actor’s Notebooks*, which must date from around this time.

4. Referring to George Richmond (1809-96), RA, who WC probably met during the family trip to Rome in 1838 (see to him of 20 May 1847; also *Memoirs*, II, pp. 130-2). Richmond’s witty phrase exploits the traditional pairing of justice and mercy found in both classical and biblical sources, and had already been echoed twice by WC in his fiction. In *Armada* he notes that the ‘dreadful justice of photography would have had no mercy’ on Neelie Milroy (Book Second, ch. 2), while in *The Moonstone* Betteredge accuses gentlefolk of ‘staining your fingers in the pursuit of photography, and doing justice without mercy on everybody’s face in the house’ (First Period, ch. 8). There is more on WC and photography posted at the Lewis website.

5. Archer had not worked since 11 November, and did not appear in Hamlet until 6 July at the Princesses Theatre, Edinburgh. He records that ‘with expenses of advertising, printing, posting, extra company, fees &c &c made the cost amount to (Loss) – £17-5-11’ (*Theatre Salaries and Parts*, Bk. 2, p. 21, Archer Archive).

6. Gray is the character in *The New Magdalen* which Frank Archer had played in the

London production at the Olympic Theatre, 19 May-27 September 1873.

7. See [3183] to Signora Marini, 21 August 1876.

8. See [1687] to Georgina Hogarth, 12 July 1877. The play was translated into Italian by Professor Paolo Ferrari; it was also performed in Paris, Berlin, the Hague, Moscow and Boston (clipping from *The Daily Telegraph* 26 June 1873, pasted into *Personal Criticism, Bills, etc* vol. 1, Archer Archive).

[1707] CARRIE GRAVES TO FRANK ARCHER, 30 OCTOBER 1877

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope¹. Extract: Robinson, p. 288 ; BGLL, III, p. 174.

90. Gloucester Place | Portman Square | W. | Tuesday – Oct^r 30.

Dear Mr Archer,

Wilkie & my mother are abroad travelling – he is better for the change. When I last heard, they were at Munich.²

Thank you for your courteous reminder about the letter. As I have charge of his correspondence during his absence, I have written for it.³

Hoping you are well

Truly Yours

H.E.C. Graves⁴

F. Archer esq^{re}

1. Envelope postmarked recto: ‘LONDON N.W. | 7 | OC 31 | 77’; verso: ‘LONDON N.W. | 7 | OC 31 | S.M.P.’. Addressed by CG: ‘Frank Archer esq^{re} | The Green Room | 10. Adelphi Terrace | W.C.’, and in pencil ‘12’ and ‘Miss Graves | (Mrs Bartley afterwards)’.

2. WC had written to Chatto & Windus from Munich on 23 October 1877.

3. Robinson sheds no light on the letter in question (p. 288).

4. Although registered at birth on 3 February 1851 as Elizabeth Harriet, Caroline Graves’s daughter turned her names around and was known as ‘Carrie’, hence the ‘C’ added to her initials. Caroline herself was christened Elizabeth.

[3187] *TO FRANK ARCHER, 2 MARCH 1883

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.²

Friday 2nd March 1883

My dear Archer,

Will you kindly give me a “look-in” here – on any afternoon next week (except Tuesday) – at any time after 4.p.m. that may be most convenient

to you? My inveterate enemy the gout has only just left me after another attack. I can get out, in favourable weather – but, if I proposed to call on you, I might not be able to keep my appointment. So I propose talking over the “Magdalen” here.

One line to say when it shall be³
Ever Yours | WC⁴

1. Envelope postmarked recto: ‘LONDON W | D | MR 2 | 83’; addressed in WC’s hand: ‘Frank Archer Esqre | 21. Baker Street | W.’, with a ms note ‘13’ on the recto.

2. With address ranged right and WC’s monogram ranged left.

3. Archer looked in on WC on Monday 5th at 4.30 (Diary 1883, Archer Archive). Although he was currently appearing as Faulkland in *The Rivals* at the Vaudeville, with matinees at the Theatre Royal on Thursdays which ran until 14 July (*Theatre Salaries and Parts*, bk. 2 pp. 100-11, Archer Archive), Archer was clearly looking ahead. In the event the revival opened at the Novelty Theatre on 5 January 1884.

4. The letter was in reply to one from Archer, a copy of which is found in the Archer Archive:

21 Baker Street | W.

Copy | Feby 28 | 1883

My dear Collins

What do you think of a revival of *The New Magdalen* with Miss Cavendish and myself in our old parts? Supposing of course that we can obtain a suitable management. Thoroughly well acted and presented it ought to be a great success. Miss Cavendish tells me she had been moving in the matter before she heard from me. At any rate it would be worth talking over. What do you think?

With every good wish, believe me my dear Collins | very sincerely yours
| Frank Archer

Archer had received a letter from Ada Cavendish on 26 February (Archer Archive):

Dear Mr Archer,

Nothing would please me better than to re-appear in London in *The New Magdalen* if it could be arranged. I was about to arrange it with poor Mr Claremont when he met with that unfortunate accident, and wrote to Wilkie Collins on the subject. I feel certain that it would be a grand success. So many people have asked for it. I will see you on the subject any day you like to name.

Always sincerely yours | Ada Cavendish

[3188] *TO FRANK ARCHER, 21 MARCH 1883

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.²

21st March 1883

My dear Archer,

I ought to have thanked you for your kind note days since. The publication day of my book is advanced – and for the present I hardly know what leisure for letter-writing means.³

Yes – the waiting policy is the right policy in the matter of “Magdalen”. My last news of Miss Cavendish – now rather old news – related a domestic misfortune – the serious illness of her maid.

I “get along”, thank you, as they say in the U.S.A. This “cruel” weather is just what I like – dry.

Yours ever | WC⁴

1. Envelope postmarked recto: ‘LONDON W | 5 | MR 22 | 83’; addressed in WC’s hand: ‘Frank Archer Eqr | 21. Baker Street | W.’, with a ms note ‘WC 14’ on the recto.

2. With address ranged right and WC’s monogram ranged left.

3. *Heart and Science* was published towards the end of May and the serialisation in *Belgravia* finished with the June issue.

4. Archer wrote again a week later (Archer Archive):

Copy | Mch. 28/83

21 Baker St | W.

My dear Collins

I saw the Gattis this morning who have the Adelphi Theatre and sounded them as to producing the “Magdalen” there – of course supposing – as I said to them – that you would be willing to let them have it – but they [*illegible*] so sanguinely of their present play and then talk of some new play to follow that no opening seems at present probable. If however everything comes to her (as much as to him) who waits the “Magdalen” need not despair. I was so glad to get a better account of you. If you can defy our Nor’Easters (why did the season take its name from the wind?) you are what ~~Shakespeare~~ Pistol would call “a lad of life, an imp of fame”

Always, my dear Collins, Sincerely yours | Frank Archer

The quote is from *Henry V* Act IV, Scene 1. Apparently unknown to Archer the ‘new play’ was to be WC’s own *Rank and Riches* (see [2151] to Archer, 25 April 1883). Archer’s letter to WC followed one he had received from Ada Cavendish on 19 March 1883 (Archer Archive):

Dear Mr Archer

The negotiations of which I told you have not ripened into anything up to the present time, & I fear will not flower this season. I do so wish we could get the dear “Old Magdalen” done somewhere. It would be so very nice, And I do so

hate an idle life. What do you think of the Adelphi – if this piece is not a go! You might see Gatti about it. I have already set an influential private friend of mine on to them about it, but if you could get a personal interview it might carry more weight. We ought not to let the matter drop if possible.

Yours sincerely | Ada Cavendish

[2151] TO FRANK ARCHER, 25 APRIL 1883

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹ Extract: Robinson, p. 304, dated April 1883, BGLL, III, pp. 404-405.

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.²

25th April 1883

My dear Archer,

Thank you heartily for your friendly note. I hope to write again next week and show how gladly I profit by your kind suggestion, by proposing answering for any visit to the Theatre – subject to your convenience and Mr Thorne's.³

Miss Lingard is to play the chief part – in that new piece of mine which has been waiting for a true artist – with such special capacities as the part needs.⁴ We have had no such actress as this lady on our stage, since – since Helen Faucit at her best.⁵

Ever yours | WC

1. Envelope postmarked recto: 'LONDON W | AP 26 | 83'; verso: 'LONDON W | AP 26 | 83 | S.M.P.'. Addressed in WC's hand: 'Frank Archer Esq | Vaudeville Theatre | Strand | W.C.', and initialled 'WC'. With a ms note 'WC 15' on the recto.

2. With address ranged right and WC's monogram ranged left.

3. Archer had clearly invited WC to see his performance as Faulkland in Sheridan's *The Rivals* at the Vaudeville Theatre whose manager was Thomas Thorne.

4. Alice Lingard (29 July 1847-25 June 1897) played the part of Lady Calista in *Rank and Riches*, opening at the Adelphi on 9 June 1883. Robinson describes the opening night fiasco (p. 305).

5. Helen Faucit, Lady Martin (born Helena Faucit Saville, 11 October 1814-31 October 1898) was a renowned stage actress whose career was at its height too early for WC to have seen her then, though after her marriage she did play some Shakespearian roles in London in the 1850s and 1860s (*ODNB*).

[2152] TO FRANK ARCHER, 5 MAY 1883

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹ Published: Archer, p. 243. Published: BGLL, III, p. 405.

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.

5th May 1883

My dear Archer,

I and my companions most sincerely thank you for a delightful evening. Pray add my thanks to Mr Thorne for his kindness – and my congratulations on his admirable performance of “Acres”. He and Mrs. Stirling are comedians in the highest and best sense of the word.

And let me not forget “Falkland”. You made the most idiotic character on the British stage (written, I am firmly convinced, in some of Sheridan’s most utterly drunken moments) a gentleman in presence and manner – the victim of his own bad temper. If I had been working with you, as in the days of “Magdalen”³ – I should have protested against a little hardness here and there, and a little hurry in elocution (natural enough, having such words to speak!) – and there is the beginning and the end of my criticism.⁴

Ever yours, | Wilkie Collins.

What an excellent audience last night! – and what a delightful contrast to some other audiences at certain theatres of great pretensions which shall be nameless!

1. Envelope postmarked recto LONDON W | AP 26 | 83 | and verso LONDON W | AP 26 | 83 | S.M.P. Addressed in WC’s hand “Frank Archer Eqr | Vaudeville Theatre | Strand | W.C. | WC” and with a ms note “WC 15” on the recto.

2. With address ranged right and WC’s monogram ranged left.

3. Archer had played the part of Julian Gray in the first production of *The New Magdalen* at the Olympic Theatre in 1873, and was to repeat the role in the revival at the Novelty Theatre in 1884.

4. WC had clearly been to see Archer in the revival of Sheridan’s *The Rivals* on 4 May 1883. It was produced by Thomas Thorne at the Vaudeville Theatre from December 1882 and ran for over 200 performances. Thorne played the part of Bob Acres, Archer the obsessively jealous Faulkland, while Fanny Sterling née Clifton (1815-95: *DNB*) was Mrs Malaprop. She had also played Madame Bergman in *The Red Vial* at the Olympic Theatre in October 1858, where her performance was described as the play’s one redeeming feature.

[2230] TO FRANK ARCHER, 20 DECEMBER 1883

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹ Published with minor faults: Archer, p. 251; BGLL, III, pp. 447-448. Extract: Robinson, p. 284.

90, Gloucester Place | W. | 20th Decr 1883.

My dear Archer,

When I consented to the “revival”, the “cast” depended on my approval. I expressly stipulated that you should be the first person to whom we applied – if we were lucky enough to find you disengaged. You will now know how glad I am to hear that I am to be helped by my old comrade.² Our chance of success depends entirely, in my opinion, on making the public understand that there is such a theatre, and on telling them where to find it.³

Ever yours | WC

1. Envelope postmarked recto: ‘LONDON W | DE 21 | 83’. Addressed in WC’s hand: ‘Frank Archer Eqr | 12 Baker Street | W.’, with a ms note ‘WC 17’ on the recto. WC mistakes the house number which was in fact 21.

2. *The New Magdalen* was revived from 5 January 1884 to 8 March 1884 with Archer playing his old role of Julian Gray. For WC’s view of his performance, see [2266] to Archer, 8 February 1884. Archer records: ‘Settled engagement Dec.17 1883. First rehearsal Dec 29. Asked £20 week, but accepted £18, 6 weeks guaranteed’. In fact it ran for nine weeks and Archer was paid £183 which included some extra pay for matinées (Archer Archive, *Theatre Salaries and Parts* Bk. 2 pp117-121, Bk. 3 p. 3).

3. The production was at the new Novelty Theatre at 3 Great Queen Street, slightly away from the normal theatre area. It had opened on 9 December 1882, closed after two weeks, re-opened as The Folies Dramatiques and then as The Novelty in 1883.

[2250] TO FRANK ARCHER, 8 JANUARY 1884

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹ Extract: Archer, p. 251; BGLL, IV, p. 5.

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.²

8th January 1884

My dear Archer,

“The delightfully mild weather” unnerves me – and the form of rheumatism which moderns call “neuralgia” follows as a matter of course. On Saturday last, I was with you in the spirit – and here in the flesh.

On Sunday, Mr Charles kindly called to tell me the good news.³ In this way I know that you did noble justice to your part – and that you were never more entirely and admirably the “Julian Gray” that I long imagined than on that first night of our revival.⁴

The problem we have now to solve is – to tell the public the way to the theatre. Every night’s audience (even if we begin badly so far as numbers are concerned) will help us towards attaining that object.

Ever yours | Wilkie Collins

Frank Archer Eq

1. Envelope postmarked recto: ‘LONDON W | 2 | JA 8 | 84 | 9’. Addressed in WC’s hand: ‘Frank Archer Eq | 21. Baker Street | W.’, with a ms note ‘18’ on the recto.

2. With address ranged right and WC’s monogram ranged left.

3. Fred Charles was described in the programme as ‘Acting Manager (for Miss Cavendish)’. See also [2258] and [2259] to Fred Charles, 18 and 20 January 1884.

4. The revival of *The New Magdalen*. See [2230] to Archer, 20 December 1883. See fn. 3 for the location of the theatre. One way the theatre informed the public about its location was to issue a special first class underground railway ticket: ‘RETURN FROM CHARING CROSS TO NOVELTY THEATRE Opposite the Freemasons’ Tavern, Great Queen St., Long Acre, W.C., during the run of *The New Magdalen*’ (Archer Archive, *Personal criticisms, Bills, etc.*, vol. 2).

[2266] TO FRANK ARCHER, 8 FEBRUARY 1884

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹ Published: Archer, p. 252; BGLL, IV, pp. 14-15.

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.²

8th Feby 1884

My dear Archer,

A word to tell you that no one among your audience on Tuesday night admired your performance of “Julian Gray” more sincerely than I did.³ Excepting, here and there, a little tendency to hurry in the delivery of the words, your acting was the acting of a true artist throughout – admirable in its quiet dignity and reticence, in its complete freedom from stage-artifices, and in its easy faithful and subtle presentation of the character. I watched the audience narrowly from time to time, and I always saw the same strong impression produced on them – a far more valuable tribute than conventional clapping of hands. That recognition you received at the right time – viz: – when you were called. I had hoped to say this instead of writing it. But I am so busy just now that I can only get away from my desk in the evening.

Always most truly yours | Wilkie Collins

Frank Archer Eqr

1. Envelope postmarked recto: ‘LONDON W | 2 | FE 8 | 84’. Addressed in WC’s hand:

‘Frank Archer Esq | 21, Baker Street | Portman Square W.’, with a ms note ‘19’ on the recto. WC had again written the house number as ‘12’ but corrected it to ‘21’.

2. With address ranged right and WC’s monogram ranged left.

3. On Tuesday 5 February WC saw the revival of *The New Magdalen* at the Novelty Theatre, Great Queen Street, which he had not been able to attend on its opening night, 5 January, due to illness (see [2250] to Archer, 8 January 1884). Archer played Julian Gray, with Ada Cavendish in her role as Mercy Merrick. On 14 February the Prince and Princess of Wales attended, with the Prince (later Edward VII) coming on stage to congratulate Ada Cavendish and say ‘gracious things’ to Archer (Archer 1912, p. 252).

4. On the first page of his diary for January 1884 Archer wrote (Archer Archive):

Notes on “New Magdalen”

Collins takes £25 pr week

Salary list at Novelty £75 pr week

Should do £250 pr week at least – i.e. £35 pr night

Miss Cavendish did not lose[,] Charles told me, but made about £10 (pr week?) for her services.

Charles thought Miss Harris lost between 4 and 500£

Rent of Novelty put down by Miss Harris at £3000

Miss Nelly Harris was the ‘Sole Proprietress’ of the Novelty theatre. At £25 per week the nine week run would have brought WC £225. No identifiable sums from this play are in WC’s bank account. But an amount of £300 was received on 3 April.

[2280] TO FRANK ARCHER, 6 MARCH 1884

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹ Published with minor faults: Archer, p. 253; BGLL, IV, p. 21.

6th March 1884

My Dear Archer

Here is a copy of “The Woman In White” play – sent with the greatest pleasure.² As a reader, you will get a better idea of the piece if I send to you (as I do) a copy without the stage alterations. I mean to alter further (before the piece is played again) in the way of simplifying the story if possible. The great fault of the work at present is the intricacy of the story.

The one thing to remember, with justifiable pride – in the matter of the “Magdalen” – is that we have set an example in the art of the stage, which has produced a strong impression – and which was very much wanted at this time.

Ever yours | WC

1. The letter is without an envelope and has a ms pencil number ‘20’ on the verso.

2. Archer (1912) introduces this letter: ‘I had never seen the dramatised version of “The Woman in White”, and I asked Collins to let me read it.’ It had been published by the author in 1871. The play itself is not found in the Archer Archive.

[2590] TO FRANK ARCHER, 20 JULY 1886

MS: Unknown (formerly with Frank H. Arnold).¹ Published: Archer, p. 279. Extract: Robinson, pp. 300-1. Published: BGLL, IV, p. 181.

NELSON CRESCENT, RAMSGATE, | *July 20*, 1886.

MY DEAR ARCHER,

I have been sailing, and I have just found your letter waiting for me here. Send the story to this address (head-quarters for work after idling at sea), and I will read it with the greatest pleasure.² Forgive my Roman brevity in replying. My accumulated letters to answer make me wish I was the famous hermit of Prague, who never saw pen and ink.³

Ever yours, | WILKIE COLLINS.

1. This letter is not found in the Archer Archive. All the Collins letters in the Archive have an old pencil number on the envelope (or in one case on the blank leaf of the letter). Since the preceding letter is numbered 20 and the next 22, this would have been letter 21. The ms numbering suggest there are three other letters to Collins not present the Archive. The other missing numbers are 2, 23, and 27.

2. See [2592] to Archer, 23 July 1886 for details of the story in question.

3. See *Twelfth Night*, IV.ii.12-14: 'As the old hermit of Prague, that never saw pen and ink, very wittily said to a niece of King Gorboduc, That that is, is'.

[2592] TO FRANK ARCHER, 23 JULY 1886

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹ Published with minor faults: Archer, pp. 279-81, BGLL, IV, pp. 182-183.

14. Nelson Crescent | Ramsgate | 23rd July 1886

My dear Archer,

I have read the story.¹

First, I lay down a general principle. Writing fiction successfully is only to be accomplished by taking enormous pains. Now for the application:

You must be very much more careful than you are at present in the matter of Style. Look at your first paragraph – and at the marks which I have made on it – and you will see what I mean. When you have seen, cut out the first paragraph. It is quite useless. The right beginning of the story is at the second paragraph.

Again! The central interest in your story is in the walk across the

heath, and in what came of it. You are too long in getting to this – and the frightful consequence follows – you will be “skipped.” Also, you are a little too jaunty and familiar with the reader about your matrimonial prospects. If he once gets the idea that you are not in earnest, goodbye to the effect of your terror in the heath scene.

Once more! When you are rescued, the interest of your story is over. Fewer particulars as to the fortunes of the characters will prevent more “skipping”. In a short story – if you were Walter Scott himself – you cannot interest the reader in characters.

Now for a word of encouragement.

The incident of the dog, is excellent. It is so new and so true (as far as I know) that it throws all the other incidents into the shade. If I had been writing the story, I should have dwelt on the dog’s character in the earlier part of it, so as to interest the reader in “Nap’s” habits and doings on the ordinary occasions of his life. Said reader, puzzled and interested, would feel that something was coming in relation to that dog – would not have the least idea what it was – and when “Nap” enters on the stage and acts his grand scene, would be so amazed and interested that he would talk of the story to his friends, and “the editor” would be your obedient humble servant in the matter of future work. (N.B. – I would not describe Nap as being in his second childhood. No dog – and especially no big dog – in that condition would have rescued you. Make him old – and no more).

The other incident of the lay figure is ingenious – but there is this objection to it: it has been done before, and more than once done. Keep it by all means. I only mention my reason for giving it a secondary place in the composition.³

I will wait to offer you an introduction to a periodical, until I see what you can do on a larger canvas. The price paid for short stories by authors not yet in a state of notoriety is so miserably small that I am really ashamed to mention it.⁴ If you think you can do something with a one volume novel, pecuniary results might be more satisfactory.

A last word of advice before I say goodbye. Study Walter Scott. He is, beyond all comparison, the greatest novelist that has ever written. Get, for instance, “The Antiquary” – and read that masterpiece over and over and over again.

Ever yours | Wilkie Collins

The mss returned to you by this post

1. Envelope postmarked recto: ‘RAMSGATE F | JY 23 | 86’; verso: ‘LONDON W. | 7 | JY 24 | 86 | J’. Addressed in WC’s hand: ‘Frank Archer Eqr | 21. Baker Street | London | W.’,

and initialled 'WC' with a ms note '22' on the recto. Archer notes in his diary on 24 July: 'Letter from Wilkie Collins about "Perplexed in the Extreme". Worked at revision of "Perplexed"'. (Diary 1886, Archer Archive).

2. Archer had sent the story 'Perplexed in the Extreme' to *The Graphic* on 24 June but it was rejected by a letter dated 16 July. He clearly then sent the ms to WC for criticism. After making some revisions Archer sent the story with WC's letter to his friend F.W. Robinson, who in 1884 he had begun to publish the periodical *Home Chimes*. Robinson replied with his own criticisms of the story: 'It will be a difficult tale to sell ... the plot is too dramatic for most editors', adding 'Wilkie Collins is evidently a brick. I wonder if he had my idea about the lay-figure. Comedy sequel jars a little bit with the sensational start. But it is a very fair first tale as it stands and I shall be curious to see what comes of your revisions.' The next day Robinson wrote: 'I return Wilkie Collins's letter – he is very kind ... I shall not reread those changes – I liked it well enough first go off.' Robinson published the story in *Home Chimes*, NS 9, October 1886, pp. 219-234. Archer had followed some but not all of WC's recommendations in what is a rather dull and ordinary story. (See Archer, pp. 279-282, and *Journal* p. 130, 132, and letter from F.W. Robinson to Frank Archer, 25 and 26 July 1886, Archer Archive).

3. At the end of the story the hero mistakes artists moving and repairing a full-size wooden 'lay-figure' for the abuse and murder of a person.

4. Archer was paid £3-4s for the 16 pages on 4 October 1886 (Archer Archive).

[3190] *TO FRANK ARCHER, 30 AUGUST 1886

MS: Unknown.

Enclosing a letter of introduction¹ and recommendation to Andrew Chatto.²

1. The letter is not found in the Archer Archive. However, its former presence is attested to by the missing number '23' among the numbers written in pencil on the envelopes in the archive. Archer records in his diary on 31 August 1886: 'Letter from Wilkie Collins with Introduction to Chatto'.

2. The letter [2605] to Chatto, 30 August 1886, is found at Parrish. Archer records: '1886 Sep 1 Called and left Monogram & introduction by Wilkie Collins. Declined Sep 6' (*Journal* p. 132, Archer Archive). The firm, rather than Andrew Chatto, replied to Archer on 6 September 1886 (Archer Archive):

We return our best thanks for the favour of the perusal of the MS of your short story entitled "The Monogram" accompanied by Mr Wilkie Collins' [enclosed] letter of introduction and recommendation.

We regret to say however that in consequence of the present depressed state of the book market due to the recent overproduction of works of fiction, especially of stories of this length, which have been published in excessive numbers of late, we find we are reluctantly compelled to withhold from making you a proposal for the publication of it.

We return the MS herewith again thanking you for the sight of it
Yours faithfully | Chatto & Windus

[3191] *TO FRANK ARCHER, 7 SEPTEMBER 1886

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.²

7th Sept 1886

My dear Archer,

I am sorry to hear that we have “missed fire”.³ Shall we try again? Mr Arrowsmith of Bristol (publisher of “Called Back”)⁴ is to publish a Christmas story of mine this year.⁵ If you will risk sending the Mss. to Bristol, I will give you a letter of introduction. Perhaps you have a rough copy – in case of accidents by post?

Ever yours | WC

Mr Arrowsmith is away from Bristol for a week’s holiday. I shall hear from him when he returns.

My eye is improving – and I am hard, hard, hard at work with the sound eye

1. Envelope postmarked recto: ‘LONDON W | 3| SP 8 | 86’. Addressed in WC’s hand: ‘Frank Archer Eqr | 21. Baker Street | W.’ Initialled ‘WC’, with a ms note ‘24’ on the recto.

2. With address ranged right and WC’s monogram ranged left.

3. Archer had clearly told him about the letter from Chatto (see [3189] to Archer, 30 August 1886, fn. 1).

4. Frederick Fargus (1847-1885), *pseud.* Hugh Conway, had achieved instant success with *Called Back* which sold 350,000 copies in four years. See Graham Law, “‘Poor Fargus’: On Wilkie Collins and ‘Hugh Conway’”, *Wilkie Collins Society Journal*, NS 3, pp. 67-72.

5. *The Guilty River*.

[3192] *TO FRANK ARCHER, 9 SEPTEMBER 1886

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.²

9th Sept 1886

My dear Archer,

I think you had better – after sending the Mss by book post – add a letter from yourself, posted separately, to say that the Mss has been sent to Bristol, and enclosing at the same time my letter of introduction.³

J. W. Arrowsmith, 11. Quay Street, Bristol is the address. But we must

wait until Mr Arrowsmith returns from his holiday trip – I think some day in next week. When I know that he is in Bristol again, I will send you the letter of introduction.⁴

Ever yours | WC

My eye is better – but I am feeling the remedies and the regimen. Weak – weak – weak!

-
1. Envelope postmarked recto: ‘LONDON W | 1| SP 10 | 86’. Addressed in WC’s hand: ‘Frank Archer Eqr | 21. Baker Street | W.’, with a ms note ‘25’ on the recto.
 2. With address ranged right and WC’s monogram ranged left.
 3. The manuscript of Archer’s story ‘The Monogram’.
 4. WC was typically cautious of the dangers of losing manuscripts in the post.

[3193] *TO FRANK ARCHER, 29 SEPTEMBER 1886

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.²

29th Sept 1886

My dear Archer,

I have this evening written to Mr Arrowsmith about your story – and in a day or two I hope to be able to write again, and tell you that he is ready to receive the Mss.³

Mr A. enlarged the limits of his holiday – and I am as hard at work as a man can well be. On these grounds I know you will excuse a little delay.

Ever yours | WC

Many thanks for “Home Chimes”.⁴ They shall ring in my leisure, when it comes.

-
1. With an envelope postmarked recto: ‘LONDON W | 10| SP 30 | 86 | 4’. Addressed in WC’s hand: ‘Frank Archer Eqr | 21. Baker Street | W.’ Initialled ‘WC’ and with a ms note ‘26’ on the recto.
 2. With address ranged right and WC’s monogram ranged left.
 3. Of ‘The Monogram’. The letter to Arrowsmith has not been traced. The letter to Archer is presumably the missing letter ‘27’ in the Archer Archive.
 4. No doubt issue No. 9, October 1886, in which Archer’s story ‘Perplexed in the Extreme’ appeared at pp. 219-234. See [2592] To Frank Archer, 23 July 1886, fn. 2.

[2627] TO FRANK ARCHER, 12 OCTOBER 1886

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹ Extract: Robinson, p. 311; BGLL, IV, pp.

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.²

12th Oct: 1886

My dear Archer,

I too am disappointed. But I have had a very kind letter about it from Arrowsmith (an excellent man) which leaves no doubt that he really tried to see his way to publishing the story, and found that it was not to be done. You are I think quite right to propose sending to him a line of thanks. His letter to you merits that acknowledgement.³

It is not easy to advise you about the future – except that I am against destroying the story. I suggest putting it away – and looking at it again (with Arrowsmith’s letter in your hand) after an interval.⁴ Also, my own idea is that the play seems likely to offer the brightest immediate prospect. First, because you have in this case stage experience to help you. Secondly, because there is not the same terrible overflow of production in the drama which there is certainly in fiction – and in that account the field seems to be more at your disposal. As to the obstacles they seem to me to be – for the present – about equal in either case.

If you have any idea for a short story, send me an outline or scenario of it, after this month – and I shall hope to be free to look it over. At present, I am still hard at work on my Christmas book⁵ – and, woe is me, working against time. But the shade is off my eye, and, though I am feeling weary, I hope to get through my work in (say) three weeks more

Ever truly yours | WC

1. Envelope postmarked recto: ‘LONDON W | 7| OC 13 | 86 | 66’. Addressed in WC’s hand: ‘Frank Archer Eqr | 21. Baker Street | W.’, with a ms note ‘28’ on the recto.

2. With address ranged right and WC’s monogram ranged left.

3. Arrowsmith wrote to Archer on 5 October asking for more time, and then responded on 11 October (Archer Archive):

I have now read your Ms. and regret I do not see my way to publishing it on my own account. In the first place it is not long enough to issue in book form and yet it is too long for the plot: it reads very well and would no doubt dramatised very well but, if you don’t mind my saying so, there are some inconsistencies in it. For instance does it not strike you that the servant Heywood is rather dragged in and then sent about her business just a little bit too much at the right moment? Other things strike me but I don’t like to say more.

Believe me you come with such a recommendation (from my friend Wilkie Collins) that I should have been only too glad if I could have seen my way to have undertaken the work. Ms. by this post.

Faithfully yrs | J W Arrowsmith.

Given the strength of Arrowsmith's criticism it is odd that WC recommended Archer so highly. Archer did write a letter of thanks on 13 October, saying 'your judgement in my story is, I fear, too correct' (copy in Archer Archive).

4. The story 'The Monogram' was never published and Archer did not destroy it. He later sent it to other publishers including Routledge (declined 5 December 1887), Dicks (declined 27 March 1888), and Cassell's *Saturday Journal* (declined 12 September 1888). The 177 page manuscript is intact in brown paper wrappers with Cassell's Book Post label and stamps (Archer Archive).

5. *The Guilty River* – see the similar remarks to A.P. Watt [2622] 6 October 1886. Robinson introduces this sentence and the next – all he published – as follows: 'It was a rushed job from the start. He did not begin writing until September, and on October 12th he told Archer ...'.

[2639] TO FRANK ARCHER, 10 NOVEMBER 1886

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹ Published with minor faults: Archer, pp. 282-3; BGLL, IV, pp. 206-207. Extract: Robinson, pp. 311-12.

10th Nov 1886 | 90. G. Pl.

My dear Archer,

Thank you for your friendly inquiries. I am like the old posting-horses in the old posting days. While I was whipped my pace was wonderful. Now we have got to our destination, my head hangs down, and my fore legs tremble.² But, considering that I was twelve hours a day at work, for the last week of my labours, I have no reason to complain of my constitution – though I was sixty two years old last birthday. "The School for Scandal" and "The Rivals" are still alive, and "Jim the Penman" has been a great success.³ Moral: Don't be afraid of the 'ideotic' dirision of an audience,⁴ – and think of the people who are sick of farces in three acts.

Ever yours | WC

"After Dark" and "The Queen of Hearts" contain my shorter and better stories. In the latter book, there is a story called "Mad Monkton" (written ages ago) which had the honour of keeping Scribe in a breathless condition. He prophesied all my later success from that little specimen, when I was presented to him in Paris.⁴

1. Envelope postmarked recto: 'LONDON W | 3| NO 10 | 86 | 3'. Addressed in WC's hand: 'Frank Archer Eqr | 21. Baker Street | W.' Initialled 'WC', with a ms note 'WC 29' on the recto.

2. WC had completed *The Guilty River* by 6 November 1886 – see [2637] to Harper's of that date.

3. The popular social comedy by Sir Charles L. Young – see [2547] to Edward Pigott, 3

April 1886. The play was prompted by the career of James Townsend Saward, a working barrister who also led a cheque-forging ring in London in the 1850s. Young's version made Jim a member of an international forgery ring.

4. WC's ms. clearly has 'ideotic dirision' for 'idiotic derision', perhaps in reference to the reception of his own play *Rank and Riches* which was booed off the Adelphi stage in 1883; see Robinson (1951) for a description of the opening night fiasco (p. 305). Archer reveals that the specific reference here is to 'Her Face was Her Fortune', his own unsuccessful dramatic collaboration with Frederick W. Robinson (Archer pp. 274-5, 282). The manuscript of the three-act play *True to Her Colours* is in the Archer Archive.

5. The French dramatist Eugène Scribe (1791-1861) – see [2535] to de Heussey, 15 March 1886.

[2645] TO FRANK ARCHER, 21 NOVEMBER 1886

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope¹. Extract: Robinson, p. 312; BGLL IV, p. 210 (with speculative date).

21st Nov 1886

My dear Archer,

I have read the letter in the Athenaeum with delight.² The good man himself was here on Tuesday last to report what he had done in the way of launching "The Guilty River".³ He likes the story and believes in it – and he has advertised by posters, shop cards, newspapers – and by a hundred "Sandwich Men" promenading London with "Guilty River" all over them – and this for a shilling book! A man in ten thousand – who deserves and more than deserves everything the "Novelist" has said of him. We had sold 20,000 copies between Monday and Friday last. If we can "git along" at that rate, we shall do.

I have a last arrear of other work to get rid of before the end of this month – and then the pen and the brain shall rest together.⁴

Ever yours | WC

1. Envelope postmarked recto: 'LONDON W | 7 | NO 22 | 86 | 72'. Addressed in WC's hand: 'Frank Archer Eqr | 21. Baker Street | W.', with a ms note 'WC 30' on the recto.

2. See the letter headed 'A Latter-Day Miracle', dated 3 November 1886, and signed 'A Novelist', which appeared in the *Athenaeum* 3081 (13 November 1886) pp. 634-5. The letter praised the Bristol publisher J.W. Arrowsmith for sending the author of a shilling shocker a cheque for £100, though under the terms of the contract he and his collaborator were owed less than £40 in royalties. The anonymous novelist in question must be Grant Allen, who co-authored *Kaleess Shrine* with May Cotes, published as Bristol Library No. 11 in March 1886, the only collaboration that fits the timescale – see Topp, Vol VIII, p. 221.

3. WC writes on a Sunday so Arrowsmith must have called on Tuesday 16 November, by

which time *The Guilty River* had clearly been published.

4. The short story 'An Old Maid's Husband', published in *The Spirit of the Times*, New York, Christmas 1886, and in *Belgravia*, January 1887. See [2648] to Andrew Chatto, 4 December 1886.

[3194] *TO FRANK ARCHER, 27 DECEMBER 1886¹

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive).

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.²

27th December 1886

My dear Archer,

I most heartily reciprocate your friendly good wishes.³

If I had been well enough, I should have called to say this instead of writing it. But days like yesterday try my weak nerves, and bring back the neuralgia.⁴ And when I go out today, the doctor insists on a walk out and a walk in – to be followed by bathings and rubbings and restings. So I must wait a little longer and get better as fast as I can.

I wish you all possible success in the new play, and as good a part as you had (if I may say so) in the "Magdalen"⁵

Ever yours | WC

I am not even thinking yet of another book. What virtue on my part!!!

1. With an envelope postmarked recto: 'LONDON W | X| DE 27 | 86 | 6'. Addressed in WC's hand: 'Frank Archer Eqr | 21. Baker Street | W.' Initialled 'WC', with a ms note 'WC 31' on the recto.

2. With address ranged right and WC's monogram ranged left.

3. Presumably Archer had written with Christmas greetings.

4. *The Times* reported that the weather in London on 26 December was cold but very humid with a temperature of 40F (4.5C) and humidity of 97% (*Times* 27 December 1886, p5B). WC did not mind cold but liked it dry.

5. For much of 1886 Archer recorded 33 weeks of no income while he was 'occupied in collaborating with F.W. Robinson.' But on 14 December he had been engaged by E. Russell and G. F. Bashford to play the lead part of Sir Baldwyn Calvert in Henry Arthur Jones's comedy *Hard Hit* which opened at the Haymarket Theatre on 17 January and ran until 22 March. He was paid £10 a week (*Theatre Salaries and Parts* book 3, pp. 37-44, Archer Archive).

[3195] *TO FRANK ARCHER, 28 FEBRUARY 1887

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹

90. Gloucester Place. W. | 28th Feby 1887

My dear Archer,

I tried today to call on you, on my way home – but I was too tired to manage it. The gout has been threatening, and has been beaten back by the doctor – but the remedies employed have so weakened me that I am contemplating a retreat from London. You shall hear of me again before that time. In the meanwhile, the “Man and Wife” revival is only among the possibilities so far. My terms are sent in – and I am waiting to know what comes of it.²

I hope you have got a good play this time, as well as a good part.³

Ever yours | WC

1. Envelope postmarked recto: ‘LONDON W | 7 |MR 1 | 87 | 62’. Addressed in WC’s hand: ‘Frank Archer Eqr | 21. Baker Street | W.’, with a ms note ‘~~Wilkie Collins~~ W.C. 32’ on the recto.

2. *Man and Wife* was revived at The Haymarket from 29 March 1887, immediately following Archer’s run in *Hard Hit*. See [3193] to Archer, 27 December 1886.

3. Archer was engaged to play the part of Algernon Beltravers in *Christina* by Mark Ambient and Percy Lynwood at the Prince of Wales’s Theatre for a single matinée on April 22. He received a fee of £13-13s, out of which he spent £9-10s on his costume. In 1888 the play ran at the Olympic from 8 March to 28 April; this was Archer’s last dramatic part earning him a total of £106 (*Theatre Salaries and Parts*, book 3, pp. 44-52, Archer Archive).

[2786] TO FRANK ARCHER, 5 DECEMBER 1887

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹ Published with some faults: Archer, p. 300; BGLL, IV, p. 284.

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.²

5th December 1887

My dear Archer,

Forgive this late reply to your kind letter. I have been away – a fugitive from worries and a victim to work. For the next month to come I must be chained to the desk – (with intervals of exercise) or I would gladly propose a day for accepting your friendly invitation. In the meantime, I have an hour’s rest between 4 and 5, when a friend is always welcome. Can you kindly look in on Wednesday afternoon next? and keep me company with a cigar? If Yes,

don't trouble to write. If No, pray choose your own afternoon later, and let me have one line to say which day.³

Ever yours | WC

1. Envelope postmarked recto: 'LONDON W | 1 | DE 5 | 87 | 48'. Addressed in WC's hand: 'Frank Archer Esq | 21. Baker Street | W.', with a ms note 'WC 33' on the recto.

2. With address ranged right and WC's monogram ranged left.

3. WC writes on the Monday and Archer did indeed visit him on the Wednesday. Archer records in his diary: 'Spent an hour or so with Wilkie Collins this afternoon at his house' (Diary entry, 7 December 1887, Archer Archive.). In his autobiography Archer comments: 'There is no other reason for giving the letter which follows, except that it was the last communication I ever received from him, and led to a pleasant chat we had together two days afterwards at his own home'. There follows a lengthy description of the views expressed by WC during that conversation (pp. 301-4).

[X002] CARRIE BARTLEY TO FRANK ARCHER, 11 JULY 1889

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹ Extract: Robinson, p. 321; BGLL, IV, p. 388.

82. Wimpole Street | Cavendish Square | July 11. 1889

Dear Mr Archer

I am truly sorry to have to give a very bad account of dear Wilkie. We are terribly anxious. Dr Fenwick comes to consult with Mr Beard again to-day. On Sunday week he was attacked by paralysis – and his brain is now what we fear for. He knows all of us, but he cannot command his wonderful imagination. We are so miserable! My mother and a Nurse alone let him see them, though I am down here to answer his letters and write to his friends and wait upon the sick room. (I am his adopted daughter and Amanuensis – Mrs Graves’s married daughter.) He had a restless night and is weaker. Mr Beard says the Paralysis left his heart more affected by it than he we thought.

I will send you a line in a day or two. Our dear one has so many kind friends it is a hard task to keep them posted in news.

Believe me | Yours faithfully | H. E. Bartley

1. With an envelope postmarked recto: ‘LONDON W | 7 | JY 12 | 89’; verso: ‘GODALMING | B | JY 12 | 89’. Addressed in HEB’s hand: ‘Frank Archer Esq^{re} | The Lower Farm | Hambledon | Nr. Godalming. | Surrey’, with a ms note on the recto: ‘Mrs. Bartley 34’.

[X003] CARRIE BARTLEY TO FRANK ARCHER, 13 JULY 1889

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹ Extract: Robinson, p. 321; BGLL, IV, p. 388.

July 13. 1889

The dear patient is weaker – because he gets no sleep at nights. But he has taken a little nourishment – and so we keep on hoping.

H.E.B.

1. A post card addressed on the recto: ‘Frank Archer Esq^{re} | The Lower Farm | Hambledon | Nr. Godalming. | Surrey’; with a ms note ‘Mrs. Bartley 35’ on the recto.

[X012] *CARRIE BARTLEY TO FRANK ARCHER, 24 SEPTEMBER 1889

MS: Lewis (Archer Archive), with envelope.¹

61. Finchley Road | S. John's Wood | Sep: 24. 1889

Dear Mr Archer

My news is so sad. I couldnt write to you before it has all been so miserable. Our dear one left us at 10.35 yesterday morning. We are so sad. He died so peacefully & so quietly – and his face is beautiful with such a calm expression. Poor dear Wilkie. – We bury him on Friday at Kensal Green at noon.²

Please excuse my short note – and thanking you for your kind letter – (which I read to him – when I received it).

I am | Yours faithfully | H. E. Bartley

1. With an envelope postmarked recto: 'LONDON N.W. | 3 | 24 | 89'; verso: 'GODALMING | D | SP 24 | 89'. Addressed in HEB's hand: 'Frank Archer Esq^{re} | The Lower Farm | Hambledon | Nr. Godalming. | Surrey', with a ms note on the recto: 'Mrs. Bartley 36 & last'.

2. Archer notes in his diary on 23 September, 'Heard this evening of poor Wilkie Collins's death which took place this morning', and on 27 September, 'Wilkie Collins buried today K. Green.'. Archer kept a collection of press cuttings relating to WC including two obituaries (*Daily News* and *Daily Telegraph*, 24 September 1889), a paragraph about his death being reported in France (*Daily Telegraph*, 26 September 1889), two accounts of his funeral (*Daily News* and *Daily Telegraph*, 28 September 1889), reports of the attempt to get a memorial at St Paul's Cathedral (*Daily Telegraph*, 4 and 5 October 1889) and on probate of his will (*Daily Telegraph*, 26 October 1889). All these items are found in the Archer Archive.

END OF WILKIE COLLINS LETTERS IN ARCHER ARCHIVE

(B) Addenda – letters not in Archer Archive

[3172] *To WILLIAM PARKER HAMMOND¹, 2 JANUARY 1852

MS: Private.²

Weston-Super-Mare³ | January 2nd 1852

Dear sir,

Your letter has been forwarded to me here, from my residence at Hanover Terrace. I have great pleasure in writing these few lines, in compliance with your flattering request which you have honoured me by making.

I remain, Dear Sir, | Faithfully yours | W. Wilkie Collins

To | Wm Parker Hammond Esquire, Junr

1. The only William Parker Hammond in the UK Census records was born in Greenwich in 1823. In 1851 he lived at 74 Camden Road, north London, with his parents, William and Harriet. Both he and his father were described as ‘Merchant Foreign’ (National Archives, HO107, piece 1498, Folio 88, p. 6).
2. Inserted into an extra-illustrated copy of *Memoirs*.
3. WC was staying with Joseph Stringfield at Verandah House. See [0103] to Pigott, 22 December 1851.

[3173] *To MISS FRITH¹, 11 JUNE 1866

MS: Unknown.² On sale: Hartley’s Auctions (14 September 2011, lot 736).

9. Melcombe Place | Dorset Square | N.W. | June 11th 1866

Dear Miss Frith,

I send with this six autographs. If more are wanted, you have only to say so

You have by this time, I hope, decided on making something for the reverend gentleman’s benefit. I venture to suggest as new and appropriate, a Purple Pulpit Cushion with this inscription worked on it in letters of gold:–

“May you soon be
A Bishop!”

=

Very truly yours | Wilkie Collins

1. One of the daughters of the artist W.P. Frith, a lifelong friend of WC. At this time Alice would have been 12 and Mary Fanny 11. Several letters to Frith and his wife Isabelle are known, but this is the earliest to one of his daughters. See also [1044] to Miss Frith, 27 December 1870.

2. Tipped into front free endpaper of *Rambles Beyond Railways*, New Edition 1865, with ownership inscription of ‘W. Ward Jackson M.A. | Normanby Hall | 1870’. This must refer to Rev. William Ward Jackson (1805-74), who may be the ‘reverend gentleman’ referred to in the letter; see <<http://www.halhed.com/t4r/getperson.php?personID=I9166&tree=tree1>>.

[3174] *TO CHARLES READE, 12 OCTOBER 1866

MS: Private.¹

Newnham Paddox² | Lutterworth | October 12

My dear Reade

I am here visiting some friends until Monday morning next – when I go to town to a rehearsal of *The Frozen Deep*³ – then to my mother at Tunbridge Wells to say goodbye – then on Wednesday off to Italy. The hurry-scurry of all my proceedings lately has left me only this opportunity of thanking you – and of sending you Mrs Graves’ thanks – for the proofs of “Griffith Gaunt”.⁴ You know I have a very high opinion of the merit of the book – and I think the close quite worthy of the rest. The interview between Mercy⁵ and Mrs Gaunt strikes me as specially excellent – wonderfully observed, and done with that suppression rather than exertion of strength, which only a thorough artist can accomplish. You will be abused and misrepresented. But let the geese gabble as their nature is. Your work is true work – and true work lives.

Now for what I have to write before I go – first about you and then about me.

I have put you down and proposed you (Oct 10th) in our Candidates Book at the Athenaeum – and Dickens has with the greatest pleasure seconded you. Nothing now remains but for the Committee to do their duty, and bring you in at the next special election. I hope we shall welcome you as a member before you are many months older.

Sending you back by book-post the proofs of *Griffith Gaunt*, I also send two copies of *The Frozen Deep*. One unmarked and one marked with our stage alterations at *The Olympic*. If you and Mr House can kindly do anything for me in America – the sooner, the better – for the piece will be produced immediately at *The Olympic*. I accept beforehand any terms you can secure for

me in my absence. My bankers are Coutts & Co – and my friend Mr Charles Ward at Coutts’s manages all my business – So much for that matter!

No – a word more. I must send the play to our friend Coleman⁶, and I am afraid I shall be off before it is possible to conclude matters with him. Here again, I must ask you to help me - and here again, if I refer Coleman to you, I have at least the grace to leave you quite unfettered. Any terms you would take are terms I take too. I don’t apologise for giving you this trouble. I know you won’t mind it – and you know I would do as much for you.

So goodbye for six weeks or so. I will report myself when I come back.

Yours ever | Wilkie Collins

If you get this on Monday – a line to 9. Melcombe Place to say you have got it would find me before I go. If you want more copies of *The Frozen Deep*, you have only to let Mrs Graves know it, and you can have them.⁷

If any difficulty arises about making my bargain with Mr Coleman while I am a member of the Dramatic Authors’ Society, I have left a letter of resignation in the hands of Mr Charles Ward, Messrs Coutts & Co 59. Strand. – which letter Mr Ward will send in, whenever it is necessary⁸

1. Inserted into an extra-illustrated copy of *Memoirs*.

2. Newnham Paddox in Warwickshire; see [0710] to Palgrave Simpson, 12 October 1866.

3. The professional production of *The Frozen Deep* opened at the Olympic Theatre on 27 October 1866.

4. Charles Reade’s *Griffith Gaunt; or Jealousy* was published in 1866.

5. Mercy Vint, an innkeeper’s daughter who is bigamously married to the eponymous hero.

6. Coleman, a Yorkshire Theatre proprietor; see to Reade [0690] 3 July 1866.

7. The PS is squeezed in at the foot of the page and then up the left-hand side.

8. This further PS is squeezed in on the first page above the address which WC surrounds with a curved line. See [0710] to Palgrave Simpson of this date.

[3176] *TO WILLIAM BODHAM DONNE,¹ BEFORE 19 MAY 1873

MS: Unknown. On sale Peter L. Stern & Co., 1997, Catalogue 29.²

Summary: *The letter discusses WC’s soon to be opened play The New Magdalen.*³

1. William Bodham Donne (1807-1882), essayist and drama critic; Examiner of Plays in the Lord Chamberlain’s office 1857-1874.

2. Four page holograph letter signed by WC, laid into a first edition copy of *The Moonstone*.

3. The dramatised version of *The New Magdalen* was written at the same time as the novel and opened at the Olympic Theatre on 19 May 1873.

[3177] TO HENRY C. BIERS, AUGUST 1873

MS: Unknown. Extract: *The Argus* (Melbourne), 29 August 1873, p. 4.¹

My pen is laid down for the present, and I am practising the art of ‘reader.’ I have had proposals made to me to ‘read’ from my works in the United States during the coming autumn and winter I have accepted the proposal, and if all goes well shall sail for New York in September or October next.

1. The item is introduced: ‘The following is an extract from a letter from Mr Wilkie Collins to Mr H Biers, received by this mail, from which it appears that he has decided to follow the example of his relative the late Charles Dickens –’.

[3178] *TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, 31 JANUARY 1874

MS: Benjamin.¹

Wilkie Collins | Boston. January 31st 1874

1. A card for a collector on Wilkie’s American tour, with traces of mounting on reverse.

[3179] *TO MADAME FECHTER,¹ 21 APRIL 1874

MS: Private.

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W.

21st April 1874

Chère Madame,

J’étais desolé de vous trouver sortie, Samedi dernier, quand j’avais l’honneur d’aller vous presenter mes respects. J’espère être plus heureux la prochaine fois.

En attendant, si je pouvais vous être aucunement utile a Londres, commandez chère madame – je suis a vos ordres.

Recevez je vous prie mes meilleurs compliments

Wilkie Collins

1. Although not identified by name the only woman with whom WC corresponded in French at this time was Charles Fechter's wife. See [1469] to her 1 July 1874. The many faults in the French are WC's.

2. Translation:

I was sorry to find you out, last Saturday, when I had the honour to pay a visit to present my respects to you. I hope to be more fortunate next time.

Meanwhile, if I can be of any service to you in London, instruct me, dear madam – I am at your command.

I beg you to accept my best regards

Wilkie Collins

[3180] TO HENRY C. BIERS, MAY TO JUNE 1874

MS: Unknown. Extract: *The Argus* (Melbourne), 3 June 1874, p. 6.

I have promised, if all goes well with me, to return to my good friends in the United States. In that case I will do my best to arrange for returning by way of Australia.¹

1. The extract is introduced thus: 'Judging by the following extract from a letter received by Mr. H. Biers by the last mail, we may at no remote date expect a visit from Mr. Wilkie Collins, for the purpose of giving a series of the readings which have proved so successful in America.' WC, of course, neither returned to America nor visited Australia.

[3183] TO SIGNORA MARINI,¹ 21 AUGUST 1876

MS: Unknown. Extract: *Era* (Paris), 24 September 1876²

London, 90, Gloucester-place, W. 21st August, 1876

Madame, – My friend Signor Caccia³ has informed me of the dramatic representation of my work, called *The New Magdalen*, at Florence, and has greatly interested me by his account of your admirable impersonation of the chief character in the story. In congratulating you on having added one more to the list of your triumphs, permit me also to congratulate myself on the honour which you have conferred upon me in introducing my Magdalen to the Italian public. Believe me, Madame, with sincere esteem, your faithful servant.

Wilkie Collins

1. Italian actress, otherwise unidentified.

2. The cutting is pasted into Archer's own scrapbook with material from the 1873 production of *The New Magdalen*. The letter comes at the end of a critique of the play.

“The New Magdalen” in Florence.
(From an Occasional Correspondent.)

A few days since *The New Magdalen*, a comedy, taken by Signor Albert Caccia from Mr Wilkie Collins’s novel of that name, was represented at the Arena Nazionale of Florence. I cannot say that the success was complete, but on the whole the comedy pleased, because the adaptor had known how to make good use of the dramatic situations of the romance. The *dénoûement*, however, was not at all satisfactory; but Signor Caccia intends modifying it, in compliance with advice received from Mr Collins himself. The interpretation of the work was perfect, more particularly on the part of Signora Marini, one of the best Italian actresses of her day. Her creation of Mercy Merrick was sublime, and such as to leave an ineffaceable impression on the spectators. I happen to know that, after the first representation of *The New Magdalen*, Signor Caccia wrote to Mr Wilkie Collins, informing him how it had been received by the public, and of the superior manner in which it had been interpreted. Mr Collins, with his usual courtesy, wrote Signora Marini the following letter:—

(*Personal Criticism, Bills, etc* vol. 1, Archer Archive)

3. WC’s Italian agent; see [1583] and [1584] to Tindell, 16 and 21 December 1875

[3184] TO WYBERT REEVE, OCTOBER 1878

MS: Unknown. Extract *The Argus* (Melbourne), 22 October 1878, p. 8.¹

I sincerely congratulate you on your success as Fosco. A more complete or more honourable recognition of the impression you have produced everywhere it is impossible to imagine. I and my play are deeply indebted for your fine performance and your artistic sympathy.

1. The extract is part of an advertisement for the play headed “Wilkie Collins’s marvellous drama of the WOMAN IN WHITE. Extract from a letter from Mr. Wilkie Collins to Wybert Reeve:—”

[3185] *TO GEORGE BARNETT SMITH¹, 4 DECEMBER 1878

MS: Private.²

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W. | 4th Dec 1878

My dear Sir,

I can only suppose that another false report of my having finished “Edwin Drood” has been set afloat in America. I was asked to finish the story, soon after Dickens’ death – and positively refused. Any assertion or newspaper

report which associates me in any way with any attempted completion of the story is absolutely false. I shall be obliged if you will at once communicate this reply of mine to Mr Barnes, with my authority to positively contradict the rumour which has deceived him, and which may deceive others.

I hope myself to write to Mr Barnes, in a few days, in answer to a letter lately received from him, touching on this subject – which completely puzzled me until I read the letter which you kindly left here today. But I am very busy just now – and you will do me a kindness if you will forward this necessary contradiction immediately.

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

To | George Barnett Smith Esq

1. George Barnett Smith, London representative of A.S. Barnes of New York; see [1794] to Trübner & Co., 18 November 1878.

2. Inserted into an extra-illustrated copy of *Memoirs*.

3. Dickens died when about half way through *Edwin Drood*. In 1879 the American writer Henry Morford published *John Jasper's Secret*, which claimed to be WC's completed version of *Edwin Drood*. It was still being published with this attribution after WC's death. It was translated into French, perhaps innocently, by Bernard Derosne who had also translated some of WC's works. See [1807] to *Harper's Bazar*, 18 December 1878, [1836] to Chapman 28 March 1879, and [1864] to Sala, 25 June 1879.

[3187] *TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT,¹ 1 JUNE 1882

MS: Lewis collection.

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins | London 1st June | 1882

1. Clearly a signature for an autograph collector.

[3189] *TO CHARLES KENT, 15 MARCH 1886

MS: Lewis collection .

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.¹

15th March 1886

My dear Kent

My state of mind after reading “Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde”² may be described in two words:

Profound Depression.

The working-up of the mystery is, I don't doubt or deny, very well done—with the one drawback to me of want of tenderness and absence of poetical feeling—still it is very strongly and dramatically written. But that the audacious absurdity of the explanations of the mystery, has passed muster with a large number of readers is the most deadly symptom of degradation in the public taste that I have met with. Don't suppose that I object to the marvellous in fiction—I like it. But when I am asked to set the laws of Nature at defiance, I must have some poetical feeling to help me. The medicine-measure-glass—the powders, adulterated and otherwise—the chemist's bill—good God, what are you made of that you can read that, and believe it? And if you don't believe it, where is the hold of the story on you?³

I cannot tell you how obliged I am to you, for making me read the story, before I began to think of my own shilling book.⁴ As a warning to me, it is worth its weight in gold, and more

Ever affly yours | WC

1. Address ranged right, monogram ranged left.

2. Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (London: Longman, 1886). Despite WC's views the novella went on to be one of Stevenson's biggest successes. It was adapted for the stage the following year and is still popular today. There is no record of any book by Stevenson in WC's library – see Baker 2002.

3. See [2741] to Watt, 29 July 1887, for WC's view of Stevenson's *Kidnapped*.

4. WC did write a shilling book later that year, *The Guilty River* published by Arrowsmith for the Christmas market. See [2580] to Anne Wynne, 24 June 1886 for his 'struggle' and [2645] to Archer, 22 November 1886, where he refers to it as 'a shilling book'.

[3196] *TO S. S. MCCLURE,¹ 12 FEBRUARY 1889

MS: Unknown. Sold: eBay, 20 February 2011, #130486573341, located Peterborough, New Hampshire, USA.

82. WIMPOLE STREET | LONDON. W.

12th Feby 1889

Dear Sir,

I am confined to my room by illness – and I have forwarded your kind letter to my friend Mr A.P. Watt (of 2. Paternoster Square) who represents me in literary affairs, and to whom I beg to refer you on this occasion.²

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

S. S. McClure Esq

1. S. S. McClure, American publisher; see [2869] to him, 7 July 1888
2. See [2931] to Watt, 12 February 1889.

[3197] *To CARRIE GRAVES, 1878-1889¹

MS: Lewis collection .

To | H. E. Bartley | from | Wilkie Collins

1. Clearly written after Carrie Graves married Henry Bartley on 12 March 1878.

[3198] *To UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, UNKNOWN DATE

MS: Lewis collection

interest,

and believe me | Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

1. Undated fragment cut from the foot of a letter.

[3199] *To UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, UNKNOWN DATE

MS: Unknown. On sale: eBay (280584787306), November 2010.¹

Believe me faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

1. Undated fragment from the foot of a letter for the signature. Set beneath WC's monogram, both stuck independently to a pictorial card for display purposes.

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