

# The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (9)

William Baker, Andrew Gasson, Graham Law, & Paul Lewis



**Wilkie Collins Society**  
**December 2014**

© 2014 William Baker, Andrew Gasson, Graham Law, Paul Lewis

Introduction to Letters from Wilkie Collins to Steele MacKaye

© 2014 Caroline Radcliffe, University of Birmingham

## Introduction

This pamphlet is the ninth 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* in chronological order. The letters in ‘Last Things’ in *Public Face* vol. IV between WC’s relatives and friends during his final illness and after have also been numbered as X001 to X011. One more was added in A&C7. The table below summarises the numbering.

<b>Publication</b>	<b>Sequence</b>	<b>Pages</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
<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	5-36 37-45	[3172]-[3199], [X012]
‘Addenda’ (8) 2013	Chronological	3-22	[3200]-[3232]
‘Addenda’ (9) 2014	MacKaye Anderson Others	3-16 17-28 29-33	[3233]-[3248] [3255]-[3270] [3249]-[3271]

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 A&C3, pp. 68-9, numbered [0229], [2975], [2977], [2979], and the letter [3097] deleted by A&C8, p. 25, remain as blanks in the series.

This ninth *Addenda & Corrigenda* has been updated to December 2014 and includes 39 new letters. The first is a group of 16 letters held at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, of which 15 are to J. Steele MacKaye and the other is to Tom Taylor. *Public Face* included only one letter to MacKaye, dated 14 May 1874, and now numbered [1447], and none to Taylor. This sequence has an introduction by Carolyn Radcliffe of the University of Birmingham who located the collection.

The second is a group of 15 letters to the actress Mary Anderson which is held by one of her descendants. That collection contains a further four letters which were only known from published extracts and are now completed, substantially corrected, and in some cases re-dated. On this account these four items are also included in our *Addenda* section, though with their original numbers. There thus remain only three letters to Anderson found in *Public Face* that are not revisited here: 24 October 1885, 20 December 1887, and 20 January 1888 (BGLL IV, pp. 125-26, 289-90, and 293-94). We are grateful to the current owner of the new letters for the use of images of the series of 19 manuscripts, and also to Wilkie's recent biographer, Andrew Lycett, for tracking it down.

The remaining 8 miscellaneous new letters have been found at auctions, in book trade catalogues, in libraries, or pasted into books.

The 39 new letters take the numbers [3233] to [3271] in chronological order. Deducting the four letters deleted by A&C3 and the single letter deleted by A&C8, there are 3266 letters in the sequence to date.

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 owners who have provided texts or given permission for their inclusion.

The Corrigendum (p. 33) notes just one substantive correction to the recipient of a letter. Other corrected letters are contained in the Anderson sequence.

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

## **(A) Addenda**

### **(i) Letters from Wilkie Collins to Steele MacKaye**

Fifteen previously unpublished letters from Wilkie Collins to Steele MacKaye are contained in the MacKaye Family papers, 1751–1998, in the Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, USA. Also contained within the same batch of correspondence is a single unpublished letter from Collins to Tom Taylor, included here in the same sequence. All but one of these sixteen letters are found in manuscript form in Collins's own hand. There is also a typed transcript, by MacKaye's son, Percy, of ten letters, including the first of the sequence dated 5<sup>th</sup> February 1873, the only one which cannot be located in its original form within the collection.

James Steele MacKaye, actor, dramatist and theatrical innovator, was born in 1842 in Buffalo, New York. From an early age MacKaye started to develop and practise his own acting system. During a period of army service he took part in amateur theatricals, and this influenced his decision to move to Paris in 1869 with the intention of studying under the distinguished actor and teacher, François J. Régnier, at the Conservatoire of the Comédie Française. After meeting the acting theoretician Delsarte, however, MacKaye immediately transferred his studies from Régnier to Delsarte, commencing an intensive training (between October 1869 and July 1870) in methods that accorded more with the system of personal actor training that MacKaye had been individually developing. MacKaye returned to the USA and in 1871 gave a series of public and university lectures on oratory and acting technique based on Delsartean methodology. This eventually led him to establish the first professional acting schools in the US, including the Lyceum Theatre School, and culminated in the foundation of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts.

In 1872 MacKaye returned to Régnier for acting lessons; Régnier was impressed with MacKaye's acting, arranging his debut as *Hamlet* in Paris in 1872. It was at this point that MacKaye's connection with Collins was established. Keen to promote MacKaye's talent, Régnier wrote to Collins in London asking for introductions within the dramatic profession. Régnier was a close friend of both Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins; Dickens had died in 1870 but Régnier must surely have chosen Collins as an eminently suitable contact for his pupil. Both Collins and MacKaye were predominantly interested in French drama, both had attended numerous productions at the Comédie Française and both had an interest in developing technically grounded naturalistic acting styles. But further to their interest in acting both Collins and MacKaye had trained initially in fine art, sharing a knowledge and interest not

only in the theatre but in the plastic arts such as painting and sculpture – influences that undoubtedly affected their perception of the stage.

In a short interview in *The Times* of Philadelphia, MacKaye described his introduction to Collins's dramatic circle:

In the winter of 1873 I left Paris for England en route for America, Régnier had sent letters of introduction on my behalf to Dickens, Charles Reade, Wilkie Collins and Tom Taylor, all good friends of his. On my arrival in England I found a letter from Wilkie Collins, inviting me to dinner with him at the Athenaeum Club. When I arrived at the club I found Charles Reade, Collins and Taylor all there, and as the other guests arrived I was formally presented to them by Mr. Collins. This was the beginning of my friendship with these men, which is one of the pleasantest memories of my life. Shortly after my arrival in England Tom Taylor asked me to read 'Hamlet' to him. I did so, and was straightway engaged to take the part in a splendid production of the piece at the Crystal Palace. Mr. Taylor and I were warm personal friends, and one of our many conversations led to our association as playwrights. 'Clancarty' and 'Arkwright's Wife' are two plays in which our names are associated and which have been produced in London.

'MacKaye in England', (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) *The Times*, Friday, 14 November 1879, p. 4

The correspondence between Collins and MacKaye traces the moment in which MacKaye became the first American actor to play the role of *Hamlet* in London's Crystal Palace. Built to house the Great Exhibition of 1851, the Crystal Palace was certainly not designed for performance and was soon renowned for its appalling acoustics. Collins's comments regarding MacKaye's struggle to project his voice attest to this. The performance had been arranged by Tom Taylor; MacKaye went on to study playwriting with Taylor and Reade, collaborating with them on a number of dramatic texts.

Collins must also have found MacKaye's views on theatre technology stimulating, and MacKaye eventually patented over one hundred theatrical inventions. However, he clearly overstretched himself with his final project, the 'Spectatorium', designed to incorporate twenty-five moving stages and 12,000 audience members at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. Financial difficulties prevented its completion, possibly hastening his death in 1894. Although Collins did not live to witness MacKaye's most ambitious theatrical plan, he had previously commended many of the American's earlier theatre innovations in the article, 'The Air and the Audience: Considerations on the Atmospheric

Conditions of Theatres' (written around 1881, and first published in 1885). This indicates that Collins remained actively interested in MacKaye's work throughout his life.

The letters from Collins to MacKaye further emphasize Collins's own dramatic connections in the USA, highlighting the important network of dramatists and actors working in both Paris and New York. They shed more light on intellectual property issues relevant to the performances and foreign publications of Collins's dramas and novels, *Man and Wife* and *The New Magdalen*, and provide a brief but moving testimony to Collins's grief for the loss of his brother Charles. There is also an interesting reference by Collins to the earliest practical, QWERTY system 'Type-Writer', patented in the USA by Sholes and Glidden in 1873. Whether MacKaye had brought the newly invented 'specimen' for Collins's use is unclear, but Collins placed the machine 'at once in the hands of a friend' and did not appear to take to it personally, continuing to handwrite his manuscripts. Collins's letters to MacKaye progress rapidly from a formal politeness at the beginning of his correspondence in February 1873 to a declaration of true friendship in his letter dated 16<sup>th</sup> April 1873.

Ironically, the acquaintance of Collins and MacKaye was cut short by Collins's departure for a reading tour of the USA in September 1873 from which he returned in March 1874, just as MacKaye was preparing his own departure from England. Collins had been preparing for the tour as early as March 1873. In the final letter of the series, dated 14 May 1874 and previously published, Collins assures MacKaye, 'We will not say goodbye – we will look forward to the time when I may take your hand in America.'

Collins never returned to America nor MacKaye to England but the letters below provide a glimpse of the brief and stimulating meeting of two similarly unconventional theatrical creators from opposite sides of the Atlantic.

Caroline Radcliffe  
University of Birmingham

**[3233] TO J. STEELE MACKAYE,<sup>1</sup> 5 FEBRUARY 1873**

MS: Unknown. Transcript: Papers of the MacKaye Family, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College.<sup>2</sup> Published: Percy MacKaye, *Epoch: The Life of Steele MacKaye, Genius of the Theatre* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1927; 2 vols), I, p. 190.

90 Gloucester Place | Poximan [*sic* for “Portman”] Square, W.  
5<sup>th</sup> February 1873.

Dear Mr. MacKaye,

I shall be very glad to hear how your interests are thriving in London, and whether I can do anything to forward them. If you have no engagement on Monday evening next (the 10<sup>th</sup>) will you dine with me at the Junior Athenaeum Club (corner of Down Street and Piccadilly) at seven o'clock punctually?<sup>3</sup> You will meet Charles Reade (the novelist) and, I hope, Pigott.<sup>4</sup>

No evening dress!

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins.

---

1. James Morrison Steele MacKaye (1842–94: *ANB*), American actor, playwright and theatre manager from Buffalo, NY. MacKaye studied at the Comédie Française in 1872 and the following year was the first American actor to undertake the role of Hamlet in London. In the spring of 1874 he was engaged in collaborations with Charles Reade and Tom Taylor before returning to the United States. See: Percy MacKaye, *Epoch*, I pp. 168-227); and also [3240] 19 March 1873 to Tom Taylor. WC had first met MacKaye a few weeks earlier, shortly after his arrival in London. MacKaye wrote to his mother in a letter dated Wednesday 16 January 1873 (that date was in fact a Thursday), ‘I have an appointment to meet Wilkie Collins tomorrow at 3. P.M.’, and on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> he informed her, ‘I had a very pleasant interview with Wilkie Collins and also with Tom Taylor’ (*Epoch* I, p. 186).

2. Our source text is this transcript, typed from the original manuscript (now missing) by Percy MacKaye (1875-1956), second son and biographer of the recipient, and dated 12 December 1923. Ten numbered letters are transcribed in chronological sequence on three pages of typing paper, this being the first; in all the other nine cases the manuscript is still found among the Papers of the MacKaye Family. A pencil note on the next letter in the sequence, [3234] 7 February 1873, reads, ‘Letter #1 is framed’.

3. Gentlemen’s club founded in 1864. WC’s accounts show he joined in May 1869 and paid the annual subscription of eight guineas for the last time in January 1879.

4. Edward Pigott, who became the Examiner of Plays in the Lord Chamberlain’s office in 1874.



**[3234] \* To J. STEELE MACKAYE, 7 FEBRUARY 1873**

MS: Papers of the MacKaye Family, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College.

90 Gloucester Place | Portman Square | 7<sup>th</sup> Feby 1873

Dear Mr MacKaye,

Have you received a letter from me, posted about three days since – asking you to dine with me at the Junior Athenæum Club (corner of Down Street and Piccadilly) at 7 o'clock on Monday next? Having received no answer from you, I fear my letter may have miscarried. Please answer by return of post.

Very truly yours | Wilkie Collins

J. S. MacKaye Esq

**[3235] \* To J. STEELE MACKAYE, 9 FEBRUARY 1873**

MS: Papers of the MacKaye Family, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College.

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

Sunday Feby 9<sup>th</sup>

My dear Mr MacKaye

My best thanks for your note.<sup>1</sup> I had, unfortunately, given you up as an absentee from London for the time being, and had told Mr Charles Reade that the little dinner was put off until a more convenient time. I shall see Mr Reade tomorrow, and as soon as I know what day (after Monday) this week he can give us, I will write again to you, and propose another evening at the Club – at the earliest date possible.

Vy truly yours | WC

(Excuse haste)

---

1. Clearly in response to WC's reminder [3234] of 7 February.

**[3236] \* To J. STEELE MACKAYE, 10 FEBRUARY 1873**

MS: Papers of the MacKaye Family, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College.

90 Gloucester Place | Portman Square  
Monday | Feby 10<sup>th</sup>

My dear Mr MacKaye,

Will Wednesday next (the 12th) suit you for our adjourned Dinner?<sup>1</sup>

Hour 7 punctually.

Place Junior Athenæum Club – corner of Down Street and Piccadilly.

No evening dress.

One line by return of post (to 90 Gloucester Place) to say yes

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

---

1. It seems likely this dinner did take finally take place on 12<sup>th</sup> and is the one referred to in MacKaye's 1879 interview reported in the (Philadelphia) *Times* (see p. 4 above) and *Epoch*, p. 190. WC's accounts record a payment of £5 to the club on 14 February which may have been for the event.

**[3237] \* To J. STEELE MACKAYE, 15 FEBRUARY 1873**

MS: Papers of the MacKaye Family, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College.

**90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W.**  
Saturday Feby 15<sup>th</sup>

My dear Mr MacKaye

A line to say that my first night (at the Prince of Wales's Theatre)<sup>1</sup> is fixed for Saturday next the 22<sup>nd</sup>. I will send you two Dress Circle places – if you are disengaged on that evening?

Yours truly | Wilkie Collins

---

1. The dramatic version of *Man and Wife* which opened on 22 February 1873. It proved a great success and ran for 136 performances until August of that year, earning WC £40 a week for most of that period.

**[3238] \* To J. STEELE MACKAYE, 19 FEBRUARY 1873**

MS: Papers of the MacKaye Family, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College.

90 Gloucester Place | Portman Square  
19<sup>th</sup> February 1873

My dear Mr MacKaye

I enclose a ticket for two dress circle chairs. Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> Eight o'clock punctually (Prince of Wales's Theatre).<sup>1</sup>

One line please (in case of accidents by post) to tell me that you have got the ticket safely.

(In great haste) | Yours truly | Wilkie Collins

---

1. WC's accounts record a payment on 25 February to 'Box Office' for £10 14s, which may have been for this and other tickets.

**[3239] \* To J. STEELE MACKAYE, 27 FEBRUARY 1873**

MS: Papers of the MacKaye Family, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College.

**90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W.**  
27<sup>th</sup> Feby | (Thursday)

Dear Mr MacKaye,

I have hardly had a moment to myself since the "first night"

Are you likely to be anywhere near me, tomorrow (Friday) between 2 and 3? Don't trouble to write. If you can call tomorrow, I shall be delighted to see you.

Saturday and Sunday, I am not sure of being at home. But on Monday (if tomorrow will not suit you) you will be welcome at the same hour.

Yours truly | Wilkie Collins

**[3240] \* TO TOM TAYLOR,<sup>1</sup> 19 MARCH 1873**

MS: Papers of the MacKaye Family, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College. Extracts: Percy MacKaye, *Epoch*, I, p. 193.

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

19<sup>th</sup> March 1873

Dear Mr Taylor,

I was sorry not to be able to see you and Mr MacKaye this morning – but I am chained to my desk until my work is done. The closing numbers of “The New Magdalen” claim all my time.<sup>2</sup>

I am most unwilling to stand in the way of your plans and Mr MacKaye’s. The matter stands thus. Monday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, is the day fixed for the republication of my story in book-form. Both Miss Cavendish and I think it important to bring out the dramatic version before this – more especially as the piece will be played in America (by arrangement with me) in the course of next month. It is certainly a risk under these circumstances to delay the production in London, by a week.<sup>3</sup> But I do not feel justified in taking the sole responsibility of decision on myself, as other interests are at stake in this matter besides mine – and I will ask your permission to communicate with Miss Cavendish before I definitely reply. I will write to her at once, and you shall hear from me again – at the Garrick – tomorrow<sup>4</sup>

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

---

1. Tom Taylor (1817-1880; *ODNB*), dramatist and critic. He was looking for a venue to stage his productions of Shakespeare and hoped WC’s production could be delayed so the Olympic might accommodate him.

2. *The New Magdalen* was serialised in *Temple Bar* from October 1872 - July 1873 and in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* from October 1872 - June 1873.

3. The play was first produced on 19 May 1873 at the Olympic Theatre, London, with Ada Cavendish in the lead role of Mercy Merrick. In America, Collins was present for the opening night of Augustin Daly’s production at the Broadway Theatre, New York.

4. In the event Ada Cavendish refused to make the change and Taylor’s productions of Shakespeare plays ran later at the Crystal Palace. See *Epoch*, pp. 192-193. The first of the series, *Hamlet*, opened on Saturday 3 May (see *The Times*, 5 May 1873, p. 10).

**[3241] \* To J. STEELE MACKAYE, 16 APRIL 1873**

MS: Papers of the MacKaye Family, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College,<sup>1</sup> with envelope.<sup>2</sup>

90 Gloucester Place | 16<sup>th</sup> April 1873

My dear Mr MacKaye

One line to thank you most cordially for your friendly and consoling words. I have lost the man of all men whom I loved most dearly – nothing is left to me now but the kindness of my friends.<sup>3</sup> I say it sincerely – I am glad to count you among them.

Before this calamity fell upon me, I was shut up in my study finishing the last difficult chapters of *The New Magdalen* – or I should have gladly welcomed you. As it is, I hope to be present at your first appearance.<sup>4</sup> Let me hear what the date is – and accept my best wishes for your success.

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

---

1. On black-edged paper which WC continues to use throughout his 1873 correspondence with MacKaye.

2. Black-edged, postmarked ‘LONDON-W | 4 | AP 16 | 73’, directed to ‘J. S. MacKaye Esq | The Salisbury Hotel | Salisbury Square | E. C.’ and signed ‘Wilkie Collins’ in lower left corner.

3. Referring to the death of his brother, Charles Allston Collins, on 9 April 1873.

4. MacKaye was to appear as Hamlet at the Crystal Palace, under the management of Tom Taylor. See [3242] of 8 May 1873, and [3243] of 10 May 1873.

**[3242] \* To J. STEELE MACKAYE, 8 MAY 1873**

MS: Papers of the MacKaye Family, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College.

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

Thursday May 8<sup>th</sup>

My dear Mr MacKaye

Tomorrow (Friday) I hope to be able to get to the Crystal Palace to see you.<sup>1</sup> If you have places to spare, then I will trespass on your kindness for two tickets. If not, leave me by all means to “my own devices”.

Yours ever | WC

(In great haste)

P.S. – A line – to say yes – before I write to Pigott<sup>2</sup>

---

1. In the title role in Tom Taylor’s production of *Hamlet* at the Crystal Palace, which opened on 3 May.

2. The postscript is written on a separate slip of paper, probably torn from the foot of the second leaf of WC's folding notepaper, with little apart from the general sense and the tone of the ink to associate it with this letter. Indeed, Percy MacKaye instead associated it with WC's second letter [3247] to his father of 27 May 1873. At the end of his typed transcript he noted, 'I am not sure this "P.S." belongs with this letter, but it does not seem to fit into any other. It is written on a separate, small piece of white paper – without black edging.' We judge that there is a rather better fit, both physical and discursive, with the letter here which clearly requires a response. If we are correct, this suggests that it was Edward Pigott who accompanied WC to the Crystal Palace to watch Steele MacKaye's performance as Hamlet.

### [3243] \* To J. STEELE MACKAYE, 10 MAY 1873

MS: Papers of the MacKaye Family, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College. Extract: Percy MacKaye, *Epoch*, I, p. 199.

90 Gloucester Place | Portman Square | W.  
10<sup>th</sup> May 1873

My dear Mr MacKaye

One line to thank you, and to sincerely congratulate you.

I was – unhappily for myself – obliged to keep an appointment in London at 6 o'clock. But I saw the first three acts<sup>1</sup> – and I thought your greatest successes were just where the part makes the greatest demands on the actor – viz:– in the scene with Ophelia, in the scene with the Queen, and in the "To be or not to be" soliloquy.

When my little venture is launched I shall ask you to appoint an evening for my dining with you and being presented to Mrs MacKaye.<sup>2</sup> I can then talk to you about your Hamlet in detail.

Meanwhile, our first night at the Olympic<sup>3</sup> is fixed for Monday week – the 19<sup>th</sup>. If you do not act on that afternoon, shall I reserve two places for you and Mrs MacKaye?

Most truly yours | Wilkie Collins

I took a great dislike to your theatre – and I was sorry to observe now and then that it had tried your voice. Nevertheless, you were always heard<sup>4</sup>

---

1. Tom Taylor's production of *Hamlet* at the Crystal Palace was performed from 2.30pm; a review in the *Times* stated that the performance 'lasted for about four hours (5 May 1873, p. 10), while the *Spectator* reviewer noted the drawbacks of afternoon performances, 'from which the audience melts away for train-catching and engagement-keeping purposes before the play is over' (10 May 1873, pp. 9-10).

2. MacKaye's second marriage in 1865 was to Mary Keith Medbery.

3. The dramatic version of *The New Magdalen*.

4. The *Spectator* reviewer records, 'Again, the theatre at the Crystal Palace is in an acoustic

point of view an exceedingly imperfect structure, and that deficiency also tends to make the audience feel less indisposed to leave before the play is over.’ However, the reviewer also adds, ‘Mr. MacKaye’s Hamlet is, in the great soliloquies, much the finest which the present writer has ever seen.’

**[3244] \* TO J. STEELE MACKAYE, 15 MAY 1873**

MS: Papers of the MacKaye Family, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College.

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

15<sup>th</sup> May 1873

My dear Mr MacKaye,

All the Stalls were taken a week ago – for the first night at The Olympic.<sup>1</sup> The best places for seeing and hearing are in my possession – the front row in the Dress-Circle. I have the greatest pleasure in enclosing you four places.

(In utmost haste)

Yours always truly | Wilkie Collins

---

1. *The New Magdalen* which opened on 19 May 1873 and ran for four months.

**[3245] \* TO J. STEELE MACKAYE, 26 MAY 1873**

MS: Papers of the MacKaye Family, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College.

90 Gloucester Place | Portman Square | W.

26<sup>th</sup> May 1873

My dear Mr MacKaye,

I have been suffering a little from rheumatism – or I should have written to you before this.

If Friday next (the 30<sup>th</sup>) will suit you, I shall be delighted to avail myself of your kind invitation on that evening, at any hour which may be agreeable to you. If you are engaged on Friday, any other evening, early in next week, which you may propose will find me at your disposal.

Always truly yours | Wilkie Collins

**[3246] \* To J. STEELE MACKAYE, 27 MAY 1873**

MS: Papers of the MacKaye Family, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College. Extract: Percy MacKaye, *Epoch*, I, p. 207.

**90 Gloucester Place | Portman Square | W.**  
27<sup>th</sup> May

My dear Mr MacKaye

Another word to say that I only heard last night that you were ill. Pray let us consider Friday as deferred – and pray accept my heartiest good wishes for your recovery. I hope to be able to call and inquire about you in a few days. If you require any special medical advice (which I earnestly hope may not be the case) my doctor – once poor Charles Dickens’s doctor also – is the man.<sup>1</sup> If you can write a line or dictate a line, let me hear how you are.

Yours ever | Wilkie Collins

---

1. Francis Carr Beard.

**[3247] \* To J. STEELE MACKAYE, 27 MAY 1873**

MS: Papers of the MacKaye Family, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College.

**90 Gloucester Place | Portman Square | W.**  
27<sup>th</sup> May

Our letters have crossed! Delighted to hear that you are well enough to keep me to my engagement. On Friday at seven – with the greatest pleasure  
WC<sup>1</sup>

---

1. In his typed transcript of this letter also found among the Papers of the MacKaye Family, Percy MacKaye includes the footnote, ‘P.S. – A line – to say yes – before I write to Pigott’, adding, ‘I am not sure this “P.S.” belongs with this letter, but it does not seem to fit into any other.’ Since WC’s message here does not seem to require any reply, we have concluded that the postscript fits rather better with [3242] to J. Steele MacKaye of 8 May 1873.



[3248] TO J. STEELE MACKAYE, 17 JUNE 1873

MS: Papers of the MacKaye Family, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College. Published: Percy MacKaye, *Epoch*, I, p. 209.

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square |W.

17<sup>th</sup> June 1873

Dear MacKaye,

Forgive me for not having sooner thanked you for your kind letters.

I placed the specimen of the “Type-Writer” at once in the hands of a friend. You have no doubt heard that this very clever invention is now to be brought before the public notice – with “capital” to back it. It will, I hope, be a great success.<sup>1</sup>

I am going to Paris tomorrow or next day – if a bad cold will let me – to settle about the French translation of the (dramatic) *New Magdalen* with our excellent friend Regnier.<sup>2</sup> If you have any message to him – or anything to send – let me hear from you before 12 o’clock (noon) tomorrow. In a week I shall, though, be back again – and then we must meet.

With kindest regards to Mrs MacKaye

Yours ever | W.C

over <sup>3</sup>

P.S. Many thanks for the account of that curious Trial.<sup>4</sup> My lawyer in the U.S. (W. D. Booth of New York)<sup>5</sup> also sent me the newspaper. Needless to say that I was very much gratified by the “judgment” in my favour – and by the sympathy expressed for me in this matter.

---

1. In early March 1873 at Ilion, New York, the Remington Company started production of the Sholes and Glidden Type-Writer, the first such device with a QWERTY keyboard. According to an article in the *Times* (‘The Type Writer’, 25 April 1876, p. 6), the machine only became generally available in London from early in that year.

2. A dramatic version of *The New Magdalen* was translated by R. Du Pontavice de Heussey and published in Paris in 1887 by Paul Ollendorff as *Madeleine: pièce en quatre actes*.

3. Written in the bottom right-hand corner of the third page of the folding notepaper to draw attention to the postscript on the fourth.

4. Referring to the injunction (brought before Judge George F. Shepley of the US Circuit Court, Boston) by the Baltimore dramatic agent Walter Benn against Carlotta Leclerq, for infringing his right to the use of the title ‘The New Magdalen’ in her recent production at the Globe Theatre, Boston, which was authorized by WC. Benn claimed that his own registration of the dramatic title with Congress in late February 1873, while WC’s novel of that name was running as a monthly serial, gave him exclusive rights to its use. The injunction was denied by Judge Shepley, who noted that Benn had not followed up his registration of the title with deposit of a playscript. The newspaper report referred to here is likely to be that in the *New York Times* (23 May 1873, p. 4), which described the decision as one of ‘some international importance, and of interest generally to literary men’, while applauding the ruling as likely to

discourage a speculative practice which would 'preclude the real author, or those whom he might lawfully convey, from playing, or profiting by, his own work in this country at all'.

5. William D. Booth of 62 Wall Street, New York, who acted for WC in copyright matters in the USA (see [0738] to Booth, 15 April 1867).

## (ii) Letters to Mary Anderson

This sequence of letters to the American actress Mary Anderson contains a total of 19 items: 14 entirely new letters, plus the complete transcriptions of the manuscripts of 4 letters previously known only from the extracted versions in Anderson's autobiography, *A Few Memories*, published in London in 1896. One further letter (that of 20 February 1885) is substantially new but a few lines from it were incorporated into another letter in Anderson.

### [3255] \* TO MARY ANDERSON,<sup>1</sup> 13 MARCH 1884

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro).

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

13th March 1884

Dear Miss Anderson,

I believe devoutly in Fairy Tales. You are evidently the “Good Genius” of whom I have so often read. If you refer to Fairy Literature, you will find that nothing is too great and nothing is too little for the Good Genius. She has all London, for instance, at her feet, she has conquered the men (which is comparatively easy), and conquered the women, and received the expression of their admiration for hundreds of nights together – and yet she can kindly remember one old person who sits at an old desk telling stories. She reserves a delightful evening for him in her palace (called the Lyceum) – and, having thus fed him with hope, she completes the sum of his obligations to her by feeding him with Cake. How is he to thank her? He does'nt know how – and he trusts to her indulgence to take the will for the deed.

But on the mere mortal subject of Cake, I can speak. Years of profound study – ranging from the indigestibly elaborate and rich pudding-cake, eaten by the German Jews at religious festivals,<sup>2</sup> to the detestable English compound (price sixpence) called “Seed Cake” – have qualified me to offer a positive opinion. I describe the “Angel” variety as representing the poetry of cakes – a delicate and subtle work of art, which I hope to speak of further when I have the pleasure of calling again at Cromwell Houses.

In the meantime, believe me, dear Miss Anderson,  
Always truly yours | Wilkie Collins

---

1. The American actress Mary Anderson (1859–1940), born Marie Antoinette Henry, famed for her beauty. She appeared at the Lyceum for three seasons in the mid-1880s, becoming as popular in Britain as in the USA. Mary Anderson met WC during her first London season and remained a close friend for the rest of his life. She retired early from the stage following her

marriage to Antonio de Navarro in 1890, becoming a renowned hostess at their home in Broadway, Worcestershire.

2. The German Jewish cake could be Kugel, similar to a casserole or pudding and having its origins in the south of Germany, or perhaps Götterspeise served at festive occasions.

### [3256] \* TO MARY ANDERSON, 15 MARCH 1884

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro).

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

Saturday March 15<sup>th</sup>

Dear Miss Anderson,

I gratefully accept the card of admission to your box – for Wednesday next.

I wish I could say the same for Monday. Excepting Wednesday, every night next week must be devoted to protecting my literary property. Information reaches me that the wretches who live by stealing other peoples' ideas are only waiting to see how the story of a novel which I am now publishing serially, will end, to turn it into a play.<sup>1</sup> I must turn it into a play first, and have the play acted – or be robbed.<sup>2</sup> Since I have received your kind note, my rage is terrible and my expressions correspond. I am not fit for Angel cake. I am only worthy of D—l's Cake. Oh forgive me!

Always truly yours | Wilkie Collins

---

1. Referring to '*I Say No*' being serialised in several provincial newspapers, including *The Glasgow Herald* from 15 December 1883 to 12 July 1884.

2. No dramatic version of '*I Say No*' has been identified.

### [2292] TO MARY ANDERSON, 20 MARCH 1884

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro). Published: Anderson, pp. 151-152 (undated); BGLL, IV, pp. 27-28 (wrongly dated 6 April 1884).

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

20<sup>th</sup> March 1884

Dear Miss Anderson,

I resist the temptation to call to-day – because I dare not interfere with the hours of rest, which must be especially precious to you, I am sure, after the strain laid on you by the exertions of last night.<sup>1</sup> Let me try to express my gratitude, and the gratitude of the ladies who were with me, on a later afternoon. Only let me have (literally) two lines. One line to say – I hope and trust – that

you have had a good night, and are feeling better to-day; and one line to choose your own afternoon at 4 o'clock (or later, if it will be more convenient) for letting me call and make the attempt to tell you of the strong impression that your acting produced on me. I will only say now that the subtlety and delicacy, the perfect grace and feeling, of the Galatea did not in the least prepare me for the magnificent bursts of passion and power in the second character.<sup>2</sup> If I had been dropped suddenly into the box at the moment when you hear the cry in the garden, and had been taken out of it again a minute afterwards, I should have said to myself, I have seen a born artist. Perhaps the best criticism I can offer will be to report that (during the last half of the piece) my hands were as cold as ice, and my heart thumped as if it would fly out of me. With more thanks than I can express,

Always truly yours, | Wilkie Collins

The 5<sup>th</sup> of April is registered as a “Festival” in my calendar<sup>3</sup>

---

1. Anderson played the female title role of W. S. Gilbert's *Pygmalion and Galatea* (written especially for her) and also Clarisse in his one-act piece *Comedy and Tragedy*. WC writes on Thursday after seeing the performance from her box the night before.

2. WC refers to Clarisse.

3. The double bill opened at the Lyceum Theatre on 26 January 1884 and closed on Saturday 5 April 1884. As the Lyceum announcements in the *Times* make clear (5 April 1884, p. 10e), the final performance took place although most theatres were dark as a mark of respect for the Duke of Albany, whose funeral took place on that day. WC's postscript is taken to mean that it is her last performance with perhaps an ironic reference to the funeral of the Duke.

### **[3257] \* TO MARY ANDERSON, 3 APRIL 1884**

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro).

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

3<sup>rd</sup> April 1884

Only a word, dear Miss Anderson, to say that the pretty little box came to tell me of your kindness yesterday, at the best of all possible times – when I was dull and depressed after a long day's work. I thought of that good fellow and his beautiful nose-gay when I sent you my book yesterday – and I say, in his words, “Will you please, Miss, to accept my story?”

Always truly yours | Wilkie Collins

**[3259] \* TO MARY ANDERSON, 9 APRIL 1884**

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro).

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

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 1884

Dear Miss Anderson,

I called at Cromwell Houses yesterday (having been kept in the house by neuralgia in the face on Sunday and Monday) anxious to hear news of you, and I was rewarded by the best possible discovery – that you had got away to fresh air and to scenes not set up at the theatre. Never was a holiday better deserved than your holiday. If I can only hear – when the holiday is over – that you have decided on not risking again the terrible strain of acting in those two plays on the same night I shall be quite happy. If I had the claim to advise, I should ask you (if you are not acquainted with it already) to read Scribe’s charming little play called “Valérie”, – the first and best of all the plays in which the chief part is a blind girl. The famous Mademoiselle Mars created the character, more than fifty years since at the Theatre Francais in Paris.<sup>1</sup> If you liked the part I cannot help thinking that there is a new triumph waiting you in “Valérie” – one of these days, when you might feel inclined to surprise as well as to delight your admirers.

Here I am at the last page of my letter – it is high time to make my exit.

Most truly yours, dear Miss Anderson. | Wilkie Collins

---

1. “Mlle Mars” was the stage name of the French actress Anne-Françoise-Hippolyte Boutet (1779-1847), who played the title role in Eugène Scribe’s 1822 comedy *Valérie* at the Théâtre Français, best known as the home of the Comédie-Française.

**[3260] \* TO MARY ANDERSON, 20 FEBRUARY 1885**

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro). Extract: Anderson, p. 146; BGLL, IV, pp. 86 (both incorporated in letter to Anderson of 11 March 1885).

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

20 Feby 1885

My dear Mary Anderson,

I am the most unlucky of men, and worthier of your compassion than your kindness. My heart has been running down like a clock that is out of repair – and for the last fortnight the doctor has been winding me up again. He is getting on well enough with his repairs, but<sup>1</sup> – to my bitter disappointment – I am not able to see you tomorrow night. I can only think of you, and hear in imagination

the rounds of applause, and look forward to paying you a visit on the earliest afternoon that I can find next week – after the first night of *The Hunchback*.<sup>2</sup> I am eager to hear how the audience receive you in the old play, and to see for myself that the work and excitement are not trying your strength beyond what it will endure.

With kindest remembrances and most sincere thanks,  
Ever yours | Wilkie Collins

---

1. The passage, ‘My heart has been ... with his repairs, but’, is inserted by Anderson (p. 146) into WC’s letter of 11 March 1885.

2. Referring to Anderson’s role as Julia in the revival of James Sheridan Knowles’s *The Hunchback* (1832) at the Lyceum Theatre from 24 February (see the brief review in the *Times*, 25 February 1885, p. 5).

### **[2407] TO MARY ANDERSON, 11 MARCH 1885**

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro). Published: Anderson, p. 146; BGLL, IV, p. 86 (both incorporating a passage from [3260] to Anderson, 20 February 1885).

**90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W**  
Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 1885

Dear Mary Anderson,

May I call tomorrow (Thursday) afternoon at 3.30? If I shall not be in the way, pray don’t trouble to write. If any other afternoon at the same hour will do better – only write the day. Your time is my time. Illness – nothing but illness – has kept me away. For the last fortnight I have been (medically) intoxicated with Sal Volatile and Spirits of Chloroform; the result has been a new idea for a ghost story.<sup>1</sup> I am hard at work, frightening myself, and trying to frighten the British reader.<sup>2</sup>

Ever yours | Wilkie Collins

---

1. ‘The Ghost’s Touch’, published in the autumn of 1885; see [2412] to A. P. Watt, 9 April 1885, and [2432] to Anne Wynne, 12 June 1885, Baker & Clarke, II, pp. 495–6.

2. Anderson’s published version of the body of the letter reads as follows:

May I call to-morrow (Thursday) afternoon at 3.30, if I shall not be in the way? Illness, nothing but illness, has kept me away. My heart has been running down like a clock that is out of repair. For the last fortnight the doctor has been winding me up again. He is getting on well enough with his repairs, but I have been (medically) intoxicated with sal volatile and spirits of chloroform; the result has been a new idea of a ghost story. I am hard at work frightening myself, and trying to frighten the British reader.

**[3261] \* To MARY ANDERSON, 14 MARCH 1885**

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro).

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

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March

Dear Mary Anderson,

My copyist is only now recovering, after an operation – and some of the papers of my Scenario are missing. It is all “in my head” as the children say – and I only write now to excuse myself if the Mss does not reach you quite so speedily, as I had hoped, and to trust your indulgence to forgive the delay.<sup>1</sup>

Did my cup of tea intoxicate me on Thursday? After forgetting my wretched old hat, I committed another act of stupidity in the hall. The servant who brings this, has also in charge a walking stick, belonging to one of the gentlemen at 55, which I took away instead of my own stick! If you find the Scenario “mere drivel”, when it does reach you, you will now be able to account for that circumstance.

Ever truly yours | WC

---

1. The first of several references to a projected (but eventually abandoned) historical drama by WC which was to serve as a vehicle for Anderson’s acting talents (see Anderson, pp. 142-147).

**[3262] \* To MARY ANDERSON, 30 MARCH 1885**

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro).

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

30 March 1885

Illness again, dear Mary Anderson, – nothing but illness. Horrid neuralgic pains in the chest – produced by some nervous derangement which the doctor understands – have forbidden me the happiness of seeing you, and bringing the Scenario with me. But I have made “notes” of new situations which have occurred to me after looking over the old MS.s – and I hope soon to get to work for you in earnest, and to be able to give you some idea of the sort of play which I contemplate. Depend on my doing my best – and doing it as soon as possible.

With kindest regards to all at home.

Ever yours | WC



**[3263] \* TO MARY ANDERSON, 7 APRIL 1885**

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro).

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

7<sup>th</sup> April 1885

Dear Mary Anderson,

Under another cover (by registered letter post) I send you the First Act of the piece in Scenario – because it will show what the subject is, and whether it is likely to be the sort of work in which you can feel some interest. The idea of the situation at the end of the act – three good people placed in the false position so often produced by human frailty, and eager to do what conscience and duty demand – is the idea which will be kept in view throughout the complications of the story.

Ever yours | WC

I am getting slowly better – and I am going to ask the doctor tomorrow if there is any hope for me while “The Lady of Lyons” is in the bill<sup>1</sup>

---

1. Referring to Anderson’s role as Pauline in the revival of Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s *Lady of Lyons* (1838) at the Lyceum Theatre from 6 April.

**[2413] TO MARY ANDERSON, 14 APRIL 1885**

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro). Published: Anderson, pp. 144–5 BGLL, IV, pp. 89–90.

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

14<sup>th</sup> April 1885

Thank you, dear Mary Anderson, for your letter. You confirm the doubt that I felt when I sent you the sketch of the first act only – as a specimen of the contemplated play – and you express so clearly your ideas of what the dramatic work should be which will attract your sympathies and enable you to do yourself justice, that I already understand what is wanted – and I am eager to consult with you on the details – to ask hundreds of questions and to try if we can together meet the one serious difficulty that I see – finding a good subject. If something could be found in American history – not connected with wars – I should like it best, because the dramatic writers of the United States have left that field free – and I could let my imagination go at a full gallop without the fear of unintentionally trespassing on the literary ground which the dramatists of Europe have so largely occupied. Some suggestive book to consult must be our first discovery, and we must look back nearly 100 years or we shall be defeated by

the hideous costume of the beginning of this century.<sup>1</sup>

If I can get to the theatre, it is needless to say that I will seize the opportunity. But the weather is terribly against me. I may tell you (between ourselves) that the mischief this time is in some deranged condition of the nerves near the heart – and a very slight cause sets in action a terrific pain in the chest and the arms. But I am getting stronger, and the doctor seems to have no fear of the result – with one terrible “if” – that is to say, “if I am careful.”

Ever yours,

WC

Let me also thank you for kindly returning the Scenario – which reached me safely yesterday.

---

1. Anderson comments: ‘The play mentioned by Mr. Collins was never finished, though in one of his later letters he still expressed his usual interest in the subject’ (p. 146). See also [2481] to her of 24 October 1885, BGLL, IV, pp. 125-26.

### **[3264] \* TO MARY ANDERSON, 28 APRIL 1885**

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro).

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

Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> April | 1885

Dear Mary Anderson,

Now that you have taken leave (for the time only) of your faithful public, your faithful friend approaches and asks on what afternoon he may hope to find you at home and not engaged. After tomorrow (Wednesday), any day that you choose shall be my day, and any hour after three o’clock that will suit you will suit me.

Ever yours | WC

After some trouble, I begin to hope that I am turning the corner which leads to better health, at last.

**[3265] \* TO MARY ANDERSON, 4 MAY 1885**

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro).

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

Monday 4 May 1885

Dear Mary Anderson,

On Saturday next, at one o'clock, I will be at Boltons<sup>1</sup> with the greatest pleasure. I am so glad you have chosen this week. The doctor condemns me to leave London next week.

Ever yours | WC

---

1. Unidentified, though possibly referring to The Boltons, the prestigious neighbourhood near Kensington Palace, and site of the parish church of St Mary the Boltons.

**[3266] \* TO MARY ANDERSON, 5 APRIL 1887<sup>1</sup>**

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro).

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

Tuesday evening 5<sup>th</sup> April

Dear Mary Anderson,

I have just got back to London again – something the better for change of air – and hoping that you may not have left town yet. I am told that you are on your way to the country to produce a play at Easter! Am I right in disregarding this tremendous piece of news? And, if I am, will you tell me on what afternoon I may hope to see you if I call at the hotel? Any hour that will not be inconvenient to you will be a delightful hour to me.

Yours affly | Wilkie Collins

---

1. Year from the calendar and the reference to Easter which was the following weekend.

**[3267] \* TO MARY ANDERSON, 13 OCTOBER 1887**

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro).

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

Thursday Oct: 13<sup>th</sup> 1887

Dear Mary Anderson,

I have only now returned, and have read your kind letter with but one regret. – I wish I had received it before I left London. I have promised to spend

the afternoon of Sunday next with some friends – and they live too far away from your place of residence, in this overgrown wilderness of houses, to give me a chance of making my apologies at Kentucky tea time.

Before I make my exit in the character of a penitent, I will venture on “a broad hint”. Perhaps you may be at home on some other Sunday?

No more at present from  
yours affly | Wilkie Collins

**[3268] \* TO MARY ANDERSON, 17 OCTOBER 1887**

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro).

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

October 17<sup>th</sup> 1887

Dear Mary Anderson,

I am in the doctor’s hands again. Nerves shattered, and neuralgia at regular intervals. A prisoner in the house all day yesterday, instead of going out to lunch. This is only to thank you for your kind letter and to ask leave to write again before Sunday next. I still hope to be at your luncheon table – if Destiny, Determination, and Doctor will help me.

Yours affly | Wilkie Collins

**[3269] \* TO MARY ANDERSON, 21 OCTOBER 1887**

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro).

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

21<sup>st</sup> Oct: 1887

Dear Mary Anderson,

There is luck for some people – but there is none for me. I must be ungrateful for your kindness – and trust to you to pity and forgive me. The neuralgic pains still try me, and they are connected in some way with a weak state of my heart. The doctor is not alarmed about it – but he insists on complete rest and quiet. I am too much depressed to say any more. My love at home.

Yours affly | WC

**[2855] TO MARY ANDERSON, 31 MAY 1888**

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro). Extract: Anderson, p. 147;1 BGLL, IV, p. 321 (wrongly dated 12 June 1888).

82. Wimpole Street. W.  
31<sup>st</sup> May 1888

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

Dear Mary Anderson,

I am so completely “out of the world” that I only knew you were still at South Hampstead when Willie Winter told me the good news.<sup>2</sup> My weak heart has taken a turn in the right direction – I am much better, and I shall be delighted to dine with you as you kindly propose on Sunday next at 7.30.<sup>3</sup>

Since I last wrote, my lease at Gloucester Place has expired – and my landlord, the enormously rich Lord Portman, asked such exorbitant terms for allowing me to continue to be his tenant that I confronted the horrors of moving in my old age – and here I am in another house (82. Wimpole Street) and in a much quieter place of abode.

Ever yours | Wilkie Collins

---

1. Anderson introduces her short extract from this letter with, ‘Not long before his death he was compelled to leave his house in Portman Square, where he had lived for years. On this event he says:’

2. Anderson’s London postal address from the mid-1880s was ‘Mount Waltham, Netherhall Gardens, South Hampstead, N.W.’

3. WC writes on a Thursday, so Sunday 3 June.

**[3270] \* TO MARY ANDERSON, 9 JUNE 1888**

MS: Private (Michael de Navarro).

82, Wimpole Street. W.  
9 June 1888

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

Dear Mary Anderson,

If your letter was not so entirely kind, I might have been almost sorry to receive it. A more delightful evening I never remember than my evening at Mount Waltham.<sup>1</sup> Your friends are charming (as all your friends ought to be) – and my one regret was that I was obliged to go away at too early an hour.

For the last three days the heavy London air has reminded me that I have nerves – and the doctor insists on my going away at once to the sea. There is nothing the matter with me but “fidgets” – do you know what they are? I hope not! – and starting at chance noises. A week or two of sailing will set that right, and I shall not fail to report myself when I come back. I want to see you and your delightful house on a fine summer’s day.

Ever yours | Wilkie Collins

---

1. Anderson was a long-term resident of Mount Waltham, Netherhall Gardens, in South Hampstead. Her marriage to Antonio Fernando de Navarro on 17 June 1890 took place at a Roman Catholic chapel nearby.

### (iii) Other letters

#### [3249] \* TO CHARLES H. HIGBEE,<sup>1</sup> 31 JANUARY 1874

MS: Lewis Collection.

St James's Hotel | Boston  
January 31<sup>st</sup> 1874

Dear Sir,

I beg to thank you for a cheque for \$243<sup>25</sup>/<sub>100</sub> being the fee for my reading at Salem on Friday evening last<sup>2</sup> – less the expenses for work which I requested you to do, and for which receipted vouchers are enclosed in your letter.<sup>3</sup>

With best wishes | always truly yours | Wilkie Collins

Mr Charles H. Higbee

---

1. Charles H. Higbee, born in Salem, Mass., 24 March 1845 (Mass. Town and Vital records, 1620-1988), who was one of three curators in the Department of the Arts at the Essex Institute (*Essex Institute Bulletin*, vol. V, 1873, p. 99). He is recorded living with his parents and sister in Salem in the 1870 census, and working as a clerk in his father Charles's Leather Store.

2. At the Essex Institute as part of the Institute Course (Hanes, pp. 75 and 107). The event was advertised with an entrance fee of 50c in the *Salem Register* of 29 January, over the signatures of the three curators, including Chas. H. Higbee. A short review on 2 February was not flattering: 'the reading, though agreeable, was not particularly striking. Mr Collins's manner on the platform was gentlemanly and unpretending, and his popularity as a novelist is unquestioned.' See also [1415] to Schlesinger, 28 January 1874.

3. Measuringworth.com records the dollar pound conversion rate averaging \$5.42 to the pound in 1874 making \$243.25 equivalent to £44.88 in 1874. Given WC's problems with his manager at this time it is perhaps significant he was being paid directly. At 50c a seat – and with some having paid for the Institute's series of entertainments – it is a very large sum and implies a large audience. It was significantly more than the \$12.81 he received for a reading in December in Boston – see [1419] to Redpath, 10 February 1874.

#### [3250] \* TO [ANNE BENSON PROCTER],<sup>1</sup> 13 MAY 1875

MS: Unknown. On sale: Blackwells, August 2014, No. 54162, tipped into first edition of *The Woman in White*.

90. Gloucester Place | May 13<sup>th</sup> 1875

Dear Madam,

Your kind invitation finds me – I regret to say – suffering from illness, and not able to take my place at your hospitable table. I can only trust to your indulgence to accept my thanks and my apologies.

Believe me | vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

---

1. We are inclined to accept the bookseller's identification of the recipient as the widow of the dedicatee of *The Woman in White*, Bryan Waller Procter, taking into account the fact the book bears the MS inscription, 'From Wilkie Collins | August 15<sup>th</sup> 1860', the date of initial publication in volume form.

**[3251] \* TO HENRY HERMAN, 9 NOVEMBER 1875<sup>1</sup>**

MS: Illinois.<sup>2</sup>

My dear sir,

Many thanks for your suggestion. The end of the act was originally written as you propose – and altered for reasons too many to be mentioned here. I think it likely you are right. At any rate we will try the experiment. On the preceding leaf is the end as it was originally written.<sup>3</sup> The one change wanted is to give Dr Downward the line “That is the man” – and to drop the curtain.

Vy truly yours | W.C.

I returned you the first act by yesterdays post to care of Miss Cavendish Imperial Hotel.

- 
1. Dating from [1571] to Henry Herman, 8 November 1875, enclosing Act I.
  2. In a prompt book for *Miss Gwilt* as performed at the Adelphi Theatre, Liverpool, 9 December 1875.
  3. Written in WC's hand on the first sheet before the letter begins is the alternative ending:  
Miss Gwilt | Act 2. Page 42  
Manuel (looking) | Is that the man?  
Dr. D. (Dropping the curtain) | That is the man.  
The End of The | Second Act

==

**[3252] \* TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT,<sup>1</sup> [MARCH 1876]<sup>2</sup>**

MS: Lewis Collection.

suffered. Pray accept my excuses, and

Believe me | Very truly yours | Wilkie Collins

---

1. Cut from the end of a letter in the hand of Carrie Graves, who acted as WC's amanuensis, but signed by WC. Pasted into vol. I of a copy of the third edition of *Man and Wife*.



2. In all probability, the letter dates from the second half of March 1876, when Wilkie was laid up with gout in the eye and Carrie Graves wrote several letters for him explaining his inability to fulfil literary and other duties.

**[3253] \* TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT,<sup>1</sup> 18 AUGUST 1877**

MS: Unknown. On sale: Freeman's, 1808 Chestnut St, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19103 (16 October 2014, lot 399).

Very truly yours | Wilkie Collins | London | August 18<sup>th</sup> 1877

---

1. Probably to an American autograph collector.

**[3254] \* TO EDWARD LEAR, 25 AUGUST 1883**

MS: Lewis Collection.<sup>1</sup>

By Book Post, Registered, 25<sup>th</sup> Aug<sup>t</sup> 1883.

M. Edward Lear | Villa Tennyson | San Remo | Italy  
Wilkie Collins | 90. Gloucester Place | London. W.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Envelope cover only, with fourpenny stamp franked, 'REGISTERED | A 3 | 25 AU 83 | B.D.O.', and 'R' within an oval.
2. A box has been drawn enclosing the return address.

**[3258] \* TO MRS ROBINSON,<sup>1</sup> 8 APRIL 1884**

MS: Private.

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

8th April 1884

Dear Madam,

I will vote again for Mrs Emma Baxter with pleasure<sup>2</sup> – if you will kindly remind me of my engagement as the time of the next election approaches.

Pray excuse this late acknowledgement of your letter. My literary occupations are occupying my whole time, just at present.<sup>3</sup>

Believe me | Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

Mrs Robinson

---

1. Unidentified correspondent.

2. Both candidate and election remain unidentified, though the latter perhaps related to one of the societies concerned with anti-vivisection, the subject of WC's last published novel, *Heart and Science*.
3. WC was still occupied with the serial instalments of 'I Say No'.

**[3271] \* TO THE REV. GEORGE BAINTON, 15 JANUARY 1889**

MS: University of Georgia Libraries Special Collections, Hargrett Rare Books, PR5485.A1 1886.<sup>1</sup>

**82, Wimpole Street.** | London W. | 15 January 1889

Dear Mr Bainton,

It is not easy to tell you with what pleasure and what encouragement I have read your most welcome letter. Oh, if I had more readers like you! describes my frame of mind when I had folded up your letter.

For you know as well as I do what are the two least important things in the book – the character of Eunice, and the writing of her dream.<sup>2</sup> This last is – so far as I know – entirely the product of my own imagination. I may tell you why I write doubtfully when I am alluding to the product of my invention. It has been one of my strange experiences to receive letters from readers of my works who ask if I have not founded my story – or sometimes part of my story – on events which have actually happened. Those events are next related by way of courteous excuse for writing to me – and I have found to my amazement that my imagination has been, unconsciously, following the course of incidents which have actually happened in the knowledge of persons absolutely strangers to me. As “The Legacy of Cain” becomes more widely read, I may possibly hear that the truth has been prompting me in ways too mysterious for human discovery. If this does happen you shall be the first friend who hears of it.

I confess to having thought the success of “Jekyll and Hyde” a discouraging sign of deterioration in the public taste.<sup>3</sup> The earlier part of the book is ingeniously and powerfully written. As the end approaches the literary treatment begins (to my mind) to fail. And when we are told that a powder purchased of a chemist is an agent in a supernatural transformation of body and soul, the author's audacity seemed to me to go the length of insulting his readers. Of the many persons who asked me what I thought of the story, and to whom I said what I have said here, not one understood me.

Believe me, dear Mr Bainton,

Always truly yours | Wilkie Collins

---

1. Letter inserted into a copy of the first English edition (1886) of *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson; details courtesy of Patrick Scott and the late Dr G.

Ross Roy.

2. Eunice Gracedieu, spiteful daughter in *The Legacy of Cain*. See the following letters to Bainton: [3072] of 13 June 1888, and [2858] of 15 June 1888, in which WC asks for and acknowledges Bainton's advice; and [2910] of 29 December 1888, where WC sends him a copy of the book published in November 1888.

3. See [3189] to Charles Kent, 15 March 1886, in which WC expresses similar views on *Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

## **(B) Corrigendum**

### **[1580] TO EDWARD SAKER,<sup>1</sup> 4 DECEMBER 1875**

*III, pp.105-106. The recipient should be amended to HENRY HERMAN, as this letter is found with others to him in the Miss Gwilt prompt book. See [3251] to Herman above.*

PUBLISHED BY WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY DECEMBER 2014  
21 HUSON CLOSE, LONDON NW3 3JW  
4 ERNEST GARDENS, LONDON W4 3QU