



THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

WINTER 1996

'A PICTORIAL TOUR TO ST. GEORGE BOSHERVILLE'

With this Newsletter comes the latest WCS reissue of one of Collins's out of print pieces. Now that almost all of his fiction, short and long, is back in print it was decided at a recent committee meeting that we should concentrate on the non-fiction works, many of which have never been republished and are difficult to locate in their original form. With the help of Paul Lewis and his computer, we begin with 'A Pictorial Tour to St. George Bosherville', an early piece originally published in volume XXIX, no. 173 of *Bentley's Miscellany*, May 1851, pp 493-508. It runs to about 10,000 words and is longer than any of our previous publications. We would be interested to hear from members with suggestions for future reprints.

MEMBERS CONTRIBUTIONS

The WCS *Journal*, originally produced by Kirk Beetz in the States, unfortunately seems to have gone into abeyance. If any members have short articles, say up to about 1,500-2,000 words and preferably submitted both as printed copy and on disk, we would be keen to consider them for inclusion with future Newsletters. We would also like to hear of any news items or recent publications we may have omitted to mention.

JOINT MEETING WITH THE DICKENS FELLOWSHIP

On Monday 4 November Professor Michael Slater gave a highly entertaining and informative talk, 'Christmas with Dickens and Collins', about Collins's collaboration with Dickens in writing Christmas Stories for *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. He highlighted the different character of Wilkie's sensational

contributions (such as 'The Ostler'/'Dream Woman') compared with Dickens's own writing which was directed much more for the family at Christmas.

CHARLES DICKENS CHRISTMAS STORIES

Professor Slater's talk coincided with the newly published *Charles Dickens: The Christmas Stories*, edited by Dr Ruth Glancy. This volume contains all the original illustrations and appears in the new paperback *Everyman Dickens*, of which Professor Slater is Series Editor (Good value at £8.99 for 843 pp; ISBN 87712 7). Although the book is mainly Dickens, Collins's contributions are well represented with detailed editorial notes throughout.

EVERYTHING IN DICKENS

Following his monumental *Everyone in Dickens*, George Newlin has now produced *Every Thing in Dickens: Ideas and Subjects Discussed by Charles Dickens in his Complete Works - a Topicon*. This companion volume is an assemblage of extracts from the complete works and attempts to include every notable passage or comment by Dickens on the subjects which interested him. (£99.95, ISBN 0-313-29874-2). Further details from Greenwood Press, 3 Henrietta Street, London WC2E 8LU (Tel 0171 240-0856, Fax 0171 379-0609).

A POSSIBLE NORTHERN MEETING

Mark Valentine, of 23 Southfield Terrace, Addingham, Ilkley, West Yorkshire, LS29 0PA, is keen to arrange an informal meeting of WCS members in the North. Anyone interested in attending such a gathering should contact him direct at the above address.

THE MOONSTONE

BBC Television is currently producing a new film version of *The Moonstone*. It is expected to be a lavish production in keeping with the several nineteenth century period dramas of recent months. It is due to be shown during the Christmas-New Year schedule. There should also be an introductory piece on the BBC *The Bookworm* programme some time during December.

SUTTON PUBLISHING

Sutton Publishing now have eighteen Collins titles available as well as their new edition of William Clarke's *The Secret Life of Wilkie Collins*. Details are enclosed with an order form for Sutton's latest offer

for 50% off *The Secret Life*.

"THE WOMAN IN WHITE"

Kirsten Hüttner's PhD dissertation, "*The Woman in White*": Analysis, Reception and Literary Criticism of a Victorian Bestseller has now been published in English by the German academic publishers, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier (DM 54.80, ISBN 3-88476-227-3). Contents include Literary Analysis; the Sensation Genre; Reception and Literary Criticism in Germany, England, France and Russia; and a comprehensive Bibliography. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy should contact WVT, Postfach 4005, 54230 Trier, Germany; (Tel 0651-41503, Fax 41504)

ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES

The Wilkie Collins Society continues to be affiliated to the Alliance of Literary Societies. They have sent advance notice that next year's AGM and Seminar will take place in Birmingham on Saturday 19 April and will be hosted by the Mary Webb Society. The Alliance is also compiling a list of speakers for eventual circulation. Let me know if you are interested in attending the meeting, or if you are prepared to give a talk about Wilkie Collins and the areas to which you might be prepared to travel. I will then pass on details to the Alliance Secretary, Bill Adams.

THE NEW OUP *THE WOMAN IN WHITE* (REVIEWED BY PAUL LEWIS)

A new edition of *The Woman in White* is a hard thing to do. It remains Collins's most popular and most analysed work. But Professor John Sutherland starts with the best credentials. He has already raised new questions about the chronology of the book (see 'The Missing Fortnight' in *Is Heathcliff A Murderer*, OUP 1996 ISBN 0-19-282516-X) and now adds a new social context to Wilkie's story.

The sources for *The Woman in White* have been well documented before - the French book of court cases Collins bought in Paris, the court case of William Palmer the poisoner, and several contemporary accounts of people falsely incarcerated in lunatic asylums. But John Sutherland also suggests that the book is partly inspired by events in the life of Wilkie's friend Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton. Unhappily married, he had his sane wife committed to an asylum until a campaign by her friends and the newspapers obtained her release.

Sutherland, like almost every other editor of *The Woman in White*, chooses to use the 1861 one volume edition of the book as his text. For the first time he collates this edition with the manuscript of the novel and the serial publication in *All The Year Round*. His copious notes record every variation. Sutherland also goes further than anyone before in setting out an entire chronology of the story from Fosco's birth in 1790 to Frederick Fairlie's death in 1852. His appendixes on the writing and publication history and a facsimile of the page in *All The Year Round* when the magic words first hit paper complete an excellent edition.

But I have some regrets. This text replaces the previous OUP World's Classics text (edited by Harvey Peter Sucksmith) which was the only one in print to divide the story into its original forty serial parts. It also contains some excellent archive material about Collins. Technically out of print it can still be found at the bargain sticker price of £1.99 (ISBN 0-19-282403-1).

And I do have some quibbles with Sutherland's racy introduction - *The Woman in White* is not Collins's fourth published novel but at least his fifth (*Antonina*, *Basil*, *Hide and Seek*, *The Dead Secret*, and the short *Mr Wray's Cash-Box* all preceded it); we don't really know that "Collins was, in later life, an indefatigable sexual experimentalist"; and the suggestions of a final *ménage à trois* between Walter Hartright, Laura Fairlie, and Marian Halcombe are not really supported by the text. But at £2.50 this is a fine addition to any enthusiast's library which will add to everyone's knowledge about this marvellous book.

DAPHNE DU MAURIER

We have been asked to mention the Daphne Du Maurier Festival of Arts and Literature which will take place from 9-18th May 1997 at Fowey on the Cornish Riviera. Further details from Tourism and Leisure Department, Restormel Borough Council, Penwinnick Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 5DR (Tel 01726 74466, Fax 01726 68339)