



THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 1998

SOME SUMMER QUOTES

‘Light, Sir, is the grand decree of Providence’. *The Woman in White*

And for those about to take up sailing, don’t forget Wilkie’s warning and suggested cure:

‘Sounds nautically and lamentably associated with white basins, whirling waves, and misery of mortal stomachs wailing in emetic despair’. *Hide and Seek*.

‘If ever a man cured sea-sickness in a new way yet, I am that man - I got over it by dint of hard eating’. *The Frozen Deep*.

DUTCH PUBLISHERS

Enclosed with this Newsletter is ‘Wilkie Collins and his “dear Dutchmen”’. This essay by P.J.M. van Winden is based on a final research project for the Book and Publishing programme of the English Department of the University of Leiden. The project itself traces the Dutch part of the publication history of Collins’s translations from 1850 to the end of the 19th century. The essay concentrates on the particularly vivid events of 1869 and 1870 which saw Collins at loggerheads with the Dutch publishers, Belinfante Brothers. The essay is an outline of an article submitted to *Quaerendo*, which has more detail on copyright matters and Dutch book trade practices and which follows Gebroeders Belinfante’s interests in Collins to the end of the century.

RAMSGATE

The date of the proposed trip to Ramsgate has now been finalized for Saturday 12 September 1998. The day will be an informal outing and consist of a guided walk through parts of Ramsgate with a Collins connection after which members of the WCS will be entertained by the Pugin Society in Wellington Crescent - just a few doors from where Martha Rudd stayed in the 1870s. There may not be time for another reminder before September so anyone interested should contact Andrew Gasson at the above address.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Current membership of the Society now stands at well over 100. Those members who have not yet paid for 1998, however, are reminded to forward their subscriptions to Paul Lewis at 47 Hereford Road, Acton, London W3 9JW.

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

CRIMINAL SENTENCES

Recently published is *Criminal Sentences: true crime in fiction and drama* by Steve Haste (Cygnus Arts, 16 Barter Street, London WC1A 2AH; ISBN 1 900541254, £15). This book is possibly the first full-length study of the influence of true crime on fiction and drama and has brief introductory sections on what the author calls 'crime fiction' (defined as 'a literary genre in which fictional narrative is developed from the basis of real events or characters'). It discusses sub-divisions of the field and gives a useful history back to the beginnings of literature. Collins is accorded an appropriate place since *The Moonstone* 'is without doubt the first crime fiction detective novel.' The main body of the book, however, is an A to Z of crimes and criminals, giving basic details of the facts of almost 200 cases or lives. Each entry considers the fiction works based on the facts and the entire book covers over 400 publications. The volume contains plot summaries for each of the fictional works as well as the real life cases on which they are based. These are always difficult to write and the text sometimes does not flow easily - with a few split infinitives included for good measure. There is a useful bibliography and each entry has suggestions for further reading.

Keeping some very distinguished (or infamous) company, from Lizzie Borden to Thomas Wise, Collins has four entries: The Constance Kent Road Case which provided several details for *The Moonstone* including Inspector Whicher's

inspiration for Sergeant Cuff; Rachel Levenson on whom Mrs Oldershaw in *Armadale* was based; The Marquise de Douhault whose imprisonment Wilkie read of in *Recueil des Cause Célèbres* and used in *The Woman in White*; and the American Boorn Brothers Case which Collins used as the basis for 'John Jago's Ghost'. There are one or two inaccuracies and not mentioned are *Blind Love*, based on the Von Scheurer Fraud Case, and the influence of the Madeleine Smith trial on *Armadale* and *The Law and the Lady*. An interesting feature of the book is the inclusion of other fictional works based on the same real-life cases. Thus the stage play *Beautiful for Ever* (1868) was also based on Rachel Levenson; and Francis King's *Acts of Darkness* (1983) was derived from the Constance Kent case. *Criminal Sentences* relates the fictional counterparts to many different types of crime and overall will prove a very useful reference book.

OXFORD CLASSIC FICTION

The ever alert Katherine Haynes has discovered that the bookshops group, 'Books etc.', has joined forces with Oxford University Press to produce a free publication entitled *Classic Fiction etc.* This 100 page volume features extracts from the Oxford World's Classics. Each of the thirteen entries consists of a short introduction followed by a chapter from a representative work. Wilkie is duly included with Chapter II from *No Name*. Other authors range from Chaucer to Herodotus and from Lewis Carroll to Virginia Woolf.

THE MOONSTONE FROM BROADVIEW PRESS

A new edition of *The Moonstone* will be published by Broadview Press later this year or early in 1999. Edited by Steve Farmer of the University of Arizona, the new edition will contain significant contextual material which has not been republished before. In particular, it will contain the text of the stage version of *The Moonstone*, written by Collins in 1877, together with biographies of the main actors, contemporary reviews of the play, and a sketch done by Collins to show how the stage set should look. There will also be contemporary accounts of two crimes which Collins used for parts of his plot together with letters by Collins. Some pieces written by Collins about Indian culture and about Victorian theatre may also be included. Broadview, a Toronto based publisher, has already produced excellent editions of *Heart and Science*, also edited by Steve Fanner, and *The Evil Genius* edited by Graham Law.

PENGUIN EDITIONS

Adding to their existing Collins publications (*The Woman in White*, *No Name* and *Armadale*), Penguin is publishing two new editions in August. *The*

Moonstone is being re-issued with a new introduction by Sandra Kemp, replacing the previous version first published in 1966. ISBN 0140 434089; £2.50.

The Law and the Lady, a newcomer to Penguin's list, has an introduction by David Skilton. ISBN 0140 436073; £6.99.

ASSOCIATED UNIVERSITY PRESSES

The latest 80 page catalogue from the Associated Universities Presses gives details of new works as well as their extensive backlist. There are several titles listed for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well as American, Irish and European literature. By and large serious academic stuff. Details from 16 Barter Street London, WC1A 2AH (0171 405 7979; fax 01714043598).

WILKIE COLLINS (NEW CASEBOOKS)

Also due to be published shortly in the New Casebooks series is *Wilkie Collins* edited by Lyn Pykett. Few details are available at present but the title suggests a volume of essays. The publishers are Macmillan in the U.K. (at £37.50 or £11.99 in paperback) and St Martins Press in the U.S. (At \$49.95, ISBN 0312212690).

19th CENTURY RESOURCES

Primary Source Media have recently produced a new catalogue of important material designed for scholars undertaking or teaching nineteenth-century studies in Literature, British Politics, Economics, International History, and the National and Popular Press. The section on Arts, Literature and Science includes 'The Charles Dickens Manuscripts' from the Forster and Dyce Collections; *The Dickensian* from 1905-1974; 'The Bronte Manuscripts' from the Bronte Parsonage Museum and The British Library; and 'The Life and Works of A. W. N. Pugin' from the Victoria and Albert Museum. Archive material of this quality and importance proves very expensive - from several hundred pounds upwards - but further details from Primary Source Media, P.O. Box 45, Reading, RG1 8HF (0118 9568844; fax 0118 9591325).

IOLÁNI

Ira Nadel writes that he has just finished copy editing his text of *Ioláni* and the book is currently back with the publishers. He hopes to receive proofs for correction later in the summer and Princeton expect to publish either at the end of this year or early in 1999.

WILKIE COLLINS - AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE

Andrew Gasson has now set up a web page for 'additions and corrections' to *Wilkie Collins - An Illustrated Guide* at <http://www.gasson.demon.co.uk>. He would be pleased to hear from anyone with suggestions for inclusion.

SOME RESEARCH NOTES FROM PAUL LEWIS

WHERE WILKIE LIVED

The houses where Collins lived in adult life have been fairly well documented in *Rambles Round Marylebone* by William Clarke and published by the Wilkie Collins Society in 1994. But the homes he shared with his parents are less well known. Two of these at least are still extant. In 1830, when Wilkie was 6, the Collins family moved from Hampstead back to London. The house was at 30 Porchester Terrace, Bayswater. The street runs north from Hyde Park, then as now an area for political demonstrations. In a letter to his friend William Winter, written in 1887, he describes how his father, William Collins, had to place candles in all the windows or risk having the windows smashed by a crowd which supported the reforms. William did NOT support them but had to 'illuminate' the house nevertheless. A neighbour opposite who did not, had all the windows smashed.

Contemporary records show that - unusually for this time - the house numbers were arranged with odds on one side and evens on the other. They are still in the same order and the present number 30 is almost certainly the house where the Collins family lived for eight years. Once a fine Victorian villa, it has now been rather tastelessly modernised. The appearance has been further damaged by the installation of numerous security devices. It seems to be owned by a foreign embassy.

After a brief stay at 20 Avenue Road in Regent's Park, during the summer of 1840 the family once again moved again to Bayswater. Oxford and Cambridge Terrace were the rows of houses either side of what is now Sussex Gardens and the Collins family moved to 85 Oxford Terrace. It was from number 85 that William Collins wrote to his patron Sir Robert Peel, who became Prime Minister in 1841, to try to get his son William Wilkie a job in the civil service. And it was here, surrounded by his family, at 10 o'clock on 17 February 1847 that William Collins died.

It was while he lived in Oxford Terrace that Wilkie wrote his first known published article, 'The Last Stage Coachman' (*Illuminated Magazine* vol. 1 no.1 pp 209-211, August 1843). Here he also wrote his first novel *Ioláni*, never published during his lifetime, most of *Antonina* (Bentley, 1850) and the biography of his father *Memoirs of William Collins, R.A.* (Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1848). From here he travelled to work at Antrobus, the tea merchants in Strand, and later took up his studies, such as they were, to become a barrister in 1846.

The Post Office London Directory 1843 shows that number 85 was occupied by a William Cummins esq (certainly a misprint) and that Devonport Street ran between nos.82 and 83. Contemporary maps show that Devonport Street is the road now known as Sussex Place. Counting the houses towards Hyde Park reveals that 85 is the building currently known as 171 Sussex Gardens. A tall, five storey terraced Victorian house, 171 is still in fine condition.

PICTURES BY WILKIE'S FATHER AND BROTHER

Wilkie Collins father, William, was a prolific painter - his son's biography of him lists more than 200 pictures although these are not rated today and are hard to find.

Birmingham City Art Gallery

The Reluctant Departure (1815) [in the circular entrance]

Henry Cole Wing, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Seaford - Sussex (1844)

Rustic Civility (1834)

Interior with figures (possibly A Country Kitchen 1811)

The Caves of Ulysses at Sorrento Naples (1843)

Villa d'Este - Tivoli (1842)

National Gallery, London

Sunday Morning (1836)

Wilkie's brother, Charles Allston Collins, was also a professional artist for some of his life. He was on the periphery of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, though never a full member. Few of his pictures are on display.

National Gallery, London

May in the Regent's Park (1852)

Henry Cole Wing, Victoria and Albert Museum, London
The God Harvest (1854)

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
Portrait of William Bennett (1850)
Convent Thoughts (1850)

ITALIAN PERIODICAL PUBLICATION

An early Italian translation of a Wilkie Collins story has recently been identified. Pierangelo Filigheddu, an Italian scholar working on a study of the Italian writer Ottone Bacaredda (1848-1921), came across a story translated by Bacaredda entitled 'Il marito di due mogli' ('The husband with two wives') which was published in a local Sardinian newspaper *L'Avvenire di Sardegna* in 1873. The story was headlined *Romanzo Inglese del Signor W. Collins*.

In fact it is a translation of a story which first appeared as 'A Marriage Tragedy' in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (XVI, no.93 pp 334-357, February 1858). It was then republished in *The Queen of Hearts* (1859) as 'Brother Griffith's Story of a Plot in Private Life' and is generally now reprinted simply as 'A Plot in Private Life' - for example in Julian Thompson's *The Complete Shorter Fiction*.

RED HOUSE STABLES CARRIAGE MUSEUM

Katherine Haynes has also come up with details of the Red House Stables in Darley Dale, Matlock. Here they maintain a working carriage museum with a unique collection of horse drawn vehicles. There are nearly 40 carriages including one of the few surviving Hansom Cabs, a Stage Coach, Royal Mail Coach and various other private and commercial vehicles. Trips can be taken by a Carriage and Pair, complete with liveried coachman and groom. Details from Old Road, Darley Dale, Matlock Derbyshire DE4 2ER (01629 733583).

WILLIAM CLOWES

Paul Graham, who in 1995 wrote *West Norwood Cemetery: the Dickens Connection*, has recently been researching two more 'inmates'. William Clowes Senior, founded the printing firm which bears his name and his son, William Clowes Junior, was the first to install a steam press. Between them, they were responsible for printing several of Collins's novels. To mark the firm's sesquicentennial, its history was published as *Family Business* in 1953 and reproduced Collins's signature on page 56. Further research is proving difficult

in the absence of archives and anyone with additional information or suggestions of suitable sources might like to contact Paul at Flat 4, 9 St Andrew's Road, Surbiton, Surrey, KT6 4DT.

COLLINS IN *NORTHWEST*

The 13 March issue of *NorthWest*, one of London's give-away property magazines, featured a one page biographical article on Collins by Peter de Loriol. Entitled 'A Ghostly Influence', the piece is illustrated with Edward Ward's 1862 sketch of Wilkie but contains several inaccuracies. The author notes, however, that 'His dark, brooding, intense and shocking stories spawned generations of imitators.'

KENSAL GREEN

Kensal Green Cemetery now has a page on the web which includes a photograph of Wilkie's grave. It also has links through a related site, 'Page of the Dead', to various other cemeteries in the U.K. and Europe.

Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery have also been working for some time on a publication entitled *Paths of Glory: A Select Alphabetical List, Illustrated with line Drawings of the Monuments, of Persons of Note Commemorated at the Cemetery of All Souls at Kensal Green*. It is expected to be ready towards the end of the year. Collins will be described as 'the pioneer of detective fiction in England'.

SHARP

The Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP) is an international organisation for book historians with 1,000 members in 20 countries. It is open to academics and non-academics, historians, bibliophiles and all those with an interest in the history of the book. SHARP will publish a scholarly journal, *Book History*, as well as its quarterly Newsletter. Details from Dr Linda Connors, Drew University Library, Madison, NJ 07940. The organisation is also holding SHARP 98, a series of affiliated meetings in Vancouver from 15-22 July 1998. Details c/o Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing, Simon Fraser University, Harbour Centre, 515 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6B 5K3 (604 291 5215, fax 604 291 5098; e-mail sharp98@sfu.ca).

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

The Strand Magazine has recently been revived in the USA. The original, now remembered mainly for the introduction of Sherlock Holmes, was founded by George Newnes in 1891, two years after Wilkie's death. For sixty years it published not only Arthur Conan Doyle but also key authors of the twentieth century including Somerset Maugham, Graham Greene and Agatha Christie (who should have known better than to describe in *The Third Girl* (1966) Hercule Poirot complaining of Collins in 'lack of method and romantic outpourings'). *The Strand Magazine* eventually closed in 1950 and its reincarnation is a quarterly publication dedicated to the best of mysteries, short stories, essays and poetry. The annual subscription is \$24.95 for the USA and Canada; \$29.95 for the rest of the world. Further details from P.O. Box 1418, Birmingham, MI 48012-1418, USA (1 800-300-6652, USA; 0 800-961-280, UK; strandmag@worldnet.att.net)

HARPERS MAGAZINE AT HAY ON WYE

A recent trip to Hay on Wye discovered a large quantity of Harpers Monthly Magazine. These are bound half-yearly volumes from 1850, vol. I, to about 1880. They are quite reasonably priced from £3 to £5 depending on condition and several contain stories or serials by Collins. There are also a few odd issues of *Harper's Weekly*. Further details from Tim Shephard at Richard Booth's Bookshop Ltd, 44 Lion Street, Hay on Wye, Herefordshire, HR3 5AA, (01497 820322; fax 01497 821150).

THE WOMAN IN WHITE POSTER

Frederick Walker's stunning poster for the 1871 theatrical version of *The Woman in White* features prominently in the current exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum entitled 'The Power of the Poster'. The original, partly because of its colour and partly because of its sheer size, is even more striking in real life than even the best black and white reproduction.

Walker was a friend of Wilkie, his brother Charles, and Millais. Walker had written to the wood engraver W. H. Hooper 'I am bent on doing all I can with a first attempt at what I consider might develop into a most important branch of art' and, in a later letter, added 'I propose trying my hand at the thing itself - a dashing attempt in black and white'. The original on buff paper is laid to wood in charcoal, chalk and black and white gouach. It is impressively life-size, the whole frame being about 9 feet by 5 feet, and gives an overall sepia effect. It has been called 'the first high-art poster the world ever knew' and 'the first work of any importance in the history of the pictorial poster.' The original is owned by

the Tate Gallery (reference 2080). F. W. Waddy later used it as the background for a caricature of Collins published in *Once a Week* on 24 February 1872.

A small coloured reproduction of the poster is included in Margaret Timmers's *The Power of the Poster* published by the V. & A. to accompany the exhibition.

SERGEANT CUFF AND DICKENS'S FAVOURITE DETECTIVE

The latest issue of *The Dickensian* (Spring 1998, vol. 94 no. 444) has one or two interesting notes of Collins interest. Ray Dubberke's essay on 'Dickens's Favourite Detective' discusses the influence of Chief Inspector Frederick Williamson referred to in the 1872 *Yesterday With Authors* by James T. Fields as Detective W-. Dubberke concludes that 'W' was neither Inspector Whicher - the obvious choice - nor Inspector Charles Frederick Field, suggested by Philip Collins in his 1981 *Dickens Interviews and Recollections*. The article describes Williamson's rise to prominence during the 1850s and 1860s. Williamson always wore a flower in his buttonhole taken from his own garden. He was apparently famous for his roses and this could have been an inspiration for Sergeant Cuff in *The Moonstone* (1868). "Perhaps Wilkie and Williamson met on one of Dickens's underworld rambles, or perhaps Dickens simply told his friend about the detective who 'was famous for his roses'."

WISBECH MUSEUM

Also noted in *The Dickensian* was the exhibition mounted by the Wisbech and Fenland Museum on Chauncy Hare Townshend during March and April. This will now be repeated from 14 November to Christmas 1998. Collins knew Townshend well as the wealthy and eccentric friend of Dickens, meeting him at Tavistock House, Boulogne and Lausanne. He almost certainly provided the model for the hypochondriac Mr Fairlie in *The Woman in White* and the description in the novel of Fairlie's jewels is probably based on Townshend's own collection now housed at Wisbech which also has the manuscript of *Great Expectations*. Enquiries to the Curator and Librarian, Wisbech & Fenland Museum, Museum Square, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 1ES (01945 583817).

ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES

The WCS continues to be affiliated to the Alliance of Literary Societies. This year's Annual General Meeting and Seminar was held on Saturday 25 April. It took place under the joint auspices of the Lewis Carroll and Daresbury Lewis Carroll Societies with readings by Alliance President, Gabriel Woolf.

The Alliance now has an interesting web site at <http://www.sndc.demon.co.uk/als.htm> which lists affiliated literary societies (including the WCS) and gives details of their forthcoming events.

THEIR MISCELLANIES

WRITERS HANDBOOK

The 12th edition of *The Writer's Handbook* is due to be published shortly. Amongst other useful addresses and listings, it gives details of various literary societies (including the WCS). The editor is Barry Turner at 34 Ufton Road, London N1 5BX (0171-275 8662, fax O I 71-241 0118)

LEDBURY POETRY FESTIVAL

The Ledbury Poetry Festival is being held again, from 9 - 19 July. The varied programme consists of readings, performances, masterclasses, workshops, exhibitions, talks and competitions. Further information from The Ledbury Poetry Festival, Church Street, Ledbury, Herefordshire, HR8 1DH (01531634156; fax 01531 631193). Ledbury is situated between Gloucester, Worcester and Hereford and an easy drive to the bookshops of Hay-on-Wye.

CARIBBEAN CRUISE MURDER

Those wishing to combine a Caribbean Cruise on the *Sea Princess* with a spot of detective fiction may be interested in a seven day trip from 9 January 1999. Guest authors on board will be Dorothy Cannell, Harlan Coben and Shelly Reuben (no, I hadn't heard of them either) but details from The Cruise Company, 19 Snell Street, Sonora, CA 95370, USA (001 888 532-2272).

MAGNA CUM MURDER

The Mid America Mystery Conference (a.k.a Magna Cum Murder) will be held from 30 October to 1 November 1998 in Muncie, Indiana. Special guests include John Harvey, Patricia Moyes, Dorothy Salisbury Davis, Jerry Bledsoe and Laurence Shames (I still haven't heard of them). Further details from The E.B. and Bertha C. Ball Center, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306 (765 285-8975; fax 765 747-9566; kennisonk@aol.com)

'People who read stories are said to have excitable brains'.
Heart and Science.

