



THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2002

VICTIMS OF CIRCUMSTANCES

Enclosed with this Newsletter is the Society's latest publication, the first complete edition of *Victims of Circumstances Discovered in Records of Old Trials*. It had always been thought that Collins wrote only two of these short pieces based on miscarriages of justice – 'A Sad Death and Brave Life' and 'Farmer Fairweather'. They were published by the WCS as one of its early reprints in 1992. Recent work by Graham Law in connection with the forthcoming edition of Collins's letters suggested the existence of a third article. Some astute detective work, worthy of Sergeant Cuff himself, tracked down the original manuscript of 'The Hidden Cash' at Stanford University Library and the story is now republished for the first time since it originally appeared in 1887. Full details of its disappearance and rediscovery are explained in Graham's meticulously researched introduction.

WILLIAM CLARKE

Our congratulations and best wishes go to William Clarke who celebrated his 80th, birthday during June. Most members will know that he is married to our Patron, Faith Clarke, Wilkie's great granddaughter. William Clarke's excellent biography, *The Secret Life of Wilkie Collins* was originally published in hardback during 1988 and has more recently been republished by Sutton Publishing in paperback.

THE LETTERS OF WILKIE COLLINS

Nearly 250 previously unknown letters from Wilkie Collins have been identified by the editors of *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins* and there are more to come. When it is published in three years' time the book will be the definitive edition of the writer's letters, supplementing the prize-winning 1999 edition of *The Letters of Wilkie Collins* by William Baker and William Clarke. That was the first ever edition of his letters, but publishing constraints limited it to including the full text of only 462 letters. The new book will publish the full text of all the other letters – more than 2,000 – together with essays linking Wilkie's correspondence with his life and 19th century publishing. At the moment – and it changes each week – the editors have identified 2484 letters by Wilkie Collins in 73 collections. More than half are in the United States of America, a few in

Australia and the rest in the UK. They are addressed to a total of 476 recipients. More than 1,000 are business letters, 700 odd are to his friends, and fewer than 200 are to relatives. New letters are turning up all the time – some had remained unidentified in library collections, others have been made available by collectors, and a considerable number have appeared on the commercial market. Some had been lost for generations stuck in the pages of books, others collected in scrap books, and some appear, apparently from nowhere, in dealers' or auction catalogues. One turned up at Sotheby's on 11 July 2002. If any member has, or knows the location of, letters which have not been previously recorded please contact paul@paullewis.co.uk. The editors will guarantee anonymity – or a full credit – at the owner's preference.

VICTORIAN STUDIES AND COLLINS'S LETTERS

The latest issue of *Victorian Studies* (vol. 44, No. 1, Autumn 2001) contains a detailed review of the two volume Macmillan edition of *The Letters of Wilkie Collins* edited by William Baker and William Clarke published in 1999. The review is generally favourable although picking out one or two minor inconsistencies in editorial procedures. But as we all agree, "The appearance of the letters of Collins in print is welcome. We not only discover the challenges Collins faced throughout his publishing career and the nature of his friendships but we understand more fully the severity of his illnesses and dependency on laudanum, his determination to oversee access to his work, and his descriptive talent...We unquestionably have, now, more information about Collins's publishing habits, income, writing practices and ... [will give] critics new insights into the sensational and scientific mind of this persistently popular Victorian writer." The review is by WCS member Professor Ira Nadel, of the University of British Columbia. Ira's other claim to fame is his recently published biography of Tom Stoppard, *Double Act*. The *Letters* are available from Macmillan (now Palgrave) and when first published were available to WCS members at a substantial discount for direct purchase from the publishers.

The same issue of *Victorian Studies* also reviews *The Haunted Mind: The Supernatural in Victorian Literature*, edited by Elton E. Smith and Robert Haas, Scarecrow Press, \$39.50, £33.25. The reviewer here, William Hughes, takes the editors to task for omitting a reference to Wilkie's *Haunted Hotel*.

THE 'WHO DUNNIT?' EXHIBITION AND CONFERENCE

The Galleries of Justice (Museum of Law) are hosting an exhibition entitled 'Who Dunnit?' This will concentrate on the history of crime fiction and the opening section will be devoted to the works and influence of Wilkie Collins. The exhibition will run from 9 September 2002 to 28 February 2003 and will be held at Galleries of Justice, Shire Hall, High Pavement, Lace Market, Nottingham NG1 1HN (www.galleriesofjustice.org.uk).

The exhibition is timed to coincide with a three day conference organised by Nottingham Trent University, also to be held at the Galleries of Justice, Nottingham, from 11-13 September 2002. The conference will examine the issues surrounding the identification and representation for public consumption of what constitutes 'bad behaviour' including

crime. Papers will include identifications and representations including legal documentation both fictional and non-fictional, examination of the processes of detection, trial and punishment. This year's core theme is the enduring popularity of Agatha Christie and has been chosen as a celebration of the launching at the Galleries of Justice Library of their Crime Fiction collection for the East Midlands. Other themes include 'crime and society'; 'detection and methods of policing in fiction and practice'; 'perpetrators and victims'; 'policing society through drama and representation'; and 'reconciling fact and fiction'. For further information contact the conference organisers, Dr Judith Rowbotham (JudithRowbotham@ntu.ac.uk; 0115-848-3299); Dr Kim Stevenson (Kim.Stevenson@ntu.ac.uk; 0115-848-2266); or for Agatha Christie details, Karen Mitchell (karen-mitchell@ntlworld.co.uk).

WILKIE COLLINS'S LIBRARY

Greenwood Press have now published Professor William Baker's *Wilkie Collins's Library: a Reconstruction*, as part of their Bibliographies and Indexes in World Literature, No. 55 (ISBN 0-313-31394-6). The publicity material records how the reconstruction of Collins's library offers a thorough analysis of the books he owned and his response to them and so illuminates Collins as both a reader and writer.

The book begins with a narrative discussion of the contents of Collins's library and its auction. This introductory essay sheds light on the types of books he owned, his use of those texts in his writings, and the dispersion of his collection in 1890. The bulk of the volume provides annotated entries for each item from his library. Entries include publication and bibliographic information, descriptions from sale catalogues, information about the author of the item, citations of the book or author from Collins's letters, and information on the present location or subsequent history of the item. An appendix catalogues paintings and artwork in Collins's possession at the time of his death. The contents include a Preface; Introduction; Wilkie Collins and His Books; The 1890 Dispersion of Wilkie Collins's Library; The Composition of Wilkie Collins's Library; Conclusion; Reconstruction of Wilkie Collins's Library; Appendix; and Index.

William Baker, of course, is no stranger to the WCS as co-editor of *The Letters of Wilkie Collins* (1999). He is Professor, Department of English, and Professor, University Libraries, at Northern Illinois University. His previous books include *Recent Work in Critical Theory, 1989-1995: An Annotated Bibliography* (1996), *Twentieth-Century Bibliography and Textual Criticism: An Annotated Bibliography* (2000), and *A Companion to the Victorian Novel* (2002), all available from Greenwood Press.

Wilkie Collins's Library is distributed in the UK by EDS, 3 Henrietta Street, London WC2E 8LU (020 7240 0856). Although expensive, the price of £58.50 represents a 15% discount for WCS members when using the enclosed form for direct sales.

THE MOONSTONE – A NEW DRAMATIC VERSION

Over the years there have been relatively few dramatic texts of Wilkie's works. A welcome addition is Michael Theodorou's recent version of *The Moonstone* published as part of Nelson Dramascripts (www.nelson.co.uk ISBN 0-17-432553-3). The series

is actually designed for students in the lower and middle years of secondary school and plays are designed to be either read or acted. The format consists of an introduction; the script itself notes: activities such as discussion, improvisation and artwork; and a retrospective look at the play with further activities. *The Moonstone* is an exciting addition to the series and keeps nicely to the spirit of Collins's original – unlike a certain television version. Act I, 'The Loss of the Diamond', contains 32 scenes and Act 2, 'The Discovery of the Truth', a further 20. There are certainly copious notes, although being aimed at a more junior audience, most will be rather elementary for WCS members. In the author's words, *The Moonstone* presents a daunting task ... what do you leave out... it seems impossible to exclude any strands for fear of missing out essential detail." The author's own concept is "to tell the story as swiftly as possible and to focus on the one vital question: Who stole the Moonstone?" Wilkie would have approved of this approach and probably of this particular version. He had his own problems with dramatising the novel for the stage in 1877 and ended up oversimplifying the plot by omitting Rosanna Spearman, Ezra Jennings and even the Indians. He also restricted the action to a twenty-four hour period and set the play at Rachel Verinder's country house in Kent rather than Yorkshire. Michael Theodorou's version does rather better, retaining all of the important characters and keeping to the original locations.

WILKIE COLLINS, CHARLES DICKENS AND RELIGION

WCS member, Carolyn Oulton, has completed her book on Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens which is expected to be issued towards the end of the year. Carolyn writes: "It covers Newman and George Eliot as well, but is really concerned with Dickens and Collins and their response to evangelicalism. The premise is that they deliberately subverted orthodox doctrine in their writing; i.e. they were not just blithely unaware of the religious crisis going on around them. It will be the first full length treatment of Wilkie's religion (and the only statement I've found of a Christian belief apart from an allusion in an old issue of the *WCS Journal*). It aims to shake up the assumption that neither of them thought much about religion. And in the course of doing this, I look at philanthropy and criminality as well as ideas of damnation and redemption. The cover illustration will feature, very appropriately, Charles Collins's *Convent Thoughts*."

LIBRARIES AND THE ASSAULT ON PAPER

Not directly related to Wilkie, but issues that at least indirectly affect all of us concerned with literary research, are raised in Nicholson Baker's *Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper* (Random House, New York, \$25.95 and in the UK, Vintage, £7.99 paperback). It seems that Librarians and archivists, who were once upon a time dedicated to the preservation of the materials under their care, have increasingly adopted the practice of microfilming books and periodicals which are subsequently either disposed of or destroyed. In the most recent edition of *The Private Library* (Spring 2001, 4:1), the editor, David Chambers, argues an eloquent case against this destruction of source material. The main culprits are the major US institutions and research libraries such as the Library of Congress, Harvard and Yale, and Columbia, where vast runs of periodicals and books have been cut up, filmed and thrown out. Nor is the British Library totally free of guilt and Nicholson Baker's hook was apparently stimulated by its sale of foreign newspapers – including those from the US which no longer exist over

there – since its legal obligation extends only to preserving British newspapers in their original form. The argument for all of this destruction is purely to save space. *Double Fold* was also reviewed by Max Egremont in the summer issue of *The Author* (CXIII. No. 2). Those who feel strongly about the preservation of our paper heritage can join The Friends of the National Libraries, c/o The Department of Manuscripts, The British Library, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB (michaelhorrie@blueyonder.co.uk)

KOH-I-NOOR DIAMOND

The untimely death of the Queen Mother earlier this year prompted an article in the *Daily Mail* on 3 April 2002 on the Koh-i-Noor, the great diamond centrepiece of the crown made for the coronation of George VI in 1937. The article is mainly concerned with the effect of the Indian diamond's curse on its male owners and gives a gruesome chronology of its victims from the 16th century onwards. The stone was ultimately appropriated by the Governor General, Lord Dalhousie, from the nine year old Punjabi prince, Duleep Singh, and smuggled into England for the Great Exhibition of 1851.

Wilkie, of course, was well aware of the Koh-i-Noor and its history and it was one likely inspiration for *The Moonstone*. Other possible contenders were the Orloff and the Pitt diamonds, whilst the fabulous yellow colour was taken from the King of Portugal's gem. It is also feasible that the paths of Duleep Singh and Wilkie might have crossed since he stayed in Whitby during the summer of 1861 and the Maharajah rented the nearby Mulgrave Castle between 1859 and 1864. But whatever the truths, Sergeant Cuff put it best with "Carbon, Betteredge! Mere carbon."

NINETEENTH CENTURY SHORT TITLE CATALOGUE

Those interested in nineteenth century bibliography have previously been able to obtain the existing 1801-1870 catalogue on CD. Now available is the period 1871-1919. Together, the two CDs now list 1,500,000 English titles and have been compiled from holdings in the major copyright libraries in the UK and USA. The data can be searched in a variety of ways including author, title, date, publisher and illustrator. The price for private individuals is £61.75 including VAT (more for institutions) and the CDs can be obtained from Avero Publications Ltd, 20 Great North Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE2 4PS.

ACKROYD AND THE MISSING WILKIE

Peter Ackroyd's majestic three part series on Dickens (BBC 1, 11th, 18th, 25th May 2002) was brilliantly done. Ackroyd loomed from the Victorian mist to weave together Dickens's story as one of secrets and lies. He began, and ended, with the railway accident at Staplehurst five years before Dickens died, when he was returning from France with his mistress Ellen Ternan and her mother. Real locations merged seamlessly with scenes from BBC productions of Dickens's stories. Actors played Dickens's relatives and friends, speaking words that were, in the annoying style of Ackroyd, a mixture of the real and the invented. Although Forster and even Thackeray were portrayed, there was not a single mention of Dickens's closest friend and literary collaborator- Wilkie Collins. It was a bizarre omission. The series is not yet available on video or DVD but Dickens's life has been repackaged again by Ackroyd in an

illustrated book, *Dickens – Public Life and Private Passions* BBC books, 2002 £16.99, ISBN0563 534 737. There at least Wilkie gets a few brief mentions, though his real significance in Dickens's life is still not recognised. There is an audio tape version of the book read by Ackroyd with Anton Lesser as Dickens, and a website www.bbc.co.uk/dickens

AUSTRALIA

Publication of Wilkie's work in Australian periodicals has been discovered by the Melbourne academic Toni Johnson-Woods. Her *Index to Serials in Australian Periodicals and Newspapers. Nineteenth Century* lists 11 Australian serialisations of 9 of Wilkie's works in six periodicals. The earliest to appear was *No Name* in the *Illustrated Melbourne News* from July 1862 and the last *The Evil Genius* in the *Sydney Mail* starting January 1886. Wilkie's agent in Australia was H.C Biers in Melbourne and a dozen of Wilkie's letters are in Australian libraries. Any further information about Wilkie in Australia or New Zealand would be welcome. The book is A\$26 from Mulini Press, PO Box 82, Jamison Centre, Canberra, 2614. Australia. ISBN 0949910686.

NEW EDITIONS

In August, Travelman Publishing, which issues short folding pamphlet style stories for reading on journeys, is publishing what it calls *Biter Bit* but which publicity shots show to be *The Traveller's Tales of a Terrible Bed*. 'The Biter Bit' was first published as 'Who is the Thief?' in *The Atlantic Monthly* April 1858 and then renamed 'Brother Griffith's Story of The Biter Bit' in *The Queen of Hearts* (1859). It is rarely republished though it is one of Wilkie's seminal detective stories. 'A Terribly Strange Bed' is much reprinted and first appeared in *Household Words* in April 1852. ISBN 186092042X, approximately £1.

In September, Hesperus Press is publishing *Who Killed Zebedee?* Edited by Martin Jarvis this is one of Wilkie's later short stories published in the New York periodical *Spirit of the Times*, Christmas 1880. It was renamed 'Mr Policeman and the Cook' in *Little Novels*. ISBN 1843910195 price £5.99. In October, Dover Publications promises a new edition of *The Moonstone*. ISBN 0486424510 price £3.

PRESS CUTTINGS

Under the heading 'What is the most exciting book ever written' in the *Sunday Telegraph*, 31 March 2002, John Mortimer nominates *The Woman in White*. A drawing master is "caught up in a plot of mesmerising wickedness, devilish skill and mythic qualities... Wilkie Collins can be funny, startling, terrifying, sarcastic and never less than gripping."

Wilkie is mentioned on two occasions (*The Dead Secret* in 1857 and *The Queen of Hearts* in 1859) in the publicity material for *The Oxford Chronology of English Literature*. This monumental work covers printed records from 1474 to 2000, and includes 30,000 titles from some 4,000 authors, with a strong emphasis on English Literature. It is divided into five broad categories: Fiction; Poetry; Drama; Literary scholarship; and Non-fiction.

Jessica Moran (*Scotsman* 8/6/02) says “Tire of McDermid and Rankin. and you should certainly check out Wilkie Collins.”

Academic Dr Adrena Telford is taken to task for her view that women owe current problems of sex discrimination to Victorian writers. She looked at five books by Dickens and one each by Thackeray, Gaskell and Charlotte Bronte. But Robert Mendick, writing in the *Independent on Sunday* (23/6/02), says “Where would the heroines of Wilkie Collins, Trollope, George Eliot fit into this [theory]?” Quite.

The *Time Out* guide to London cemeteries (17/4/02) doesn't forget Wilkie's place in Kensal Green – worth a visit at Harrow Road London W10, 9am-6pm every day.

Wilkie's lifelong fight for proper copyright protection was remembered in a piece on the BBC Online website (17 June 2002) with a quote from Wilkie's 1880 ‘Considerations on the Copyright Question’.

The playwright John Arden (*Stage* 18/4/02) recalls among other things the six plays he wrote for BBC Radio 4 based on stories by Wilkie. And James Maxwell's staging of a play based on a Wilkie story was remembered in *Irish Times* 15 June 2002.

Finally, Wilkie continues to be the gold standard of suspense fiction to which modern books are compared, favourably or not. These include *The Grenadillo Box* by Janet Gleeson (Bantam £12. 99), *The Impressionist* by Hari Kunzru (Hamish Hamilton £12.99), and the Orange prize-winning *Bell Canto* by Ann Patchett (Fourth Estate £6.99).

WILKIE COLLINS AND JOHN JASPER'S SECRET

Ken Cutler is seeking information regarding the publication of *John Jasper's Secret*. This is a continuation of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, written by US journalist Henry Morford and originally published anonymously in 1871. By the end of the 19th century this had been incorrectly attributed to ‘Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens the Younger.’ Cutler has found some details in ‘The History of a Mystery; A Review of the Solutions to “Edwin Drood”’ by George F. Gadd in *The Dickensian* of October 1905. This acknowledges a Mr H. Snowden Ward and there is also a Collins letter to *Harper's Bazar* of 18 December 1878 denying his involvement in any continuation. Ken Cutler would he pleased to receive any information about either Snowden Ward or a column in Harpers called ‘Sayings and Doings’; he can be contacted at Goldascut@aol.com.

KATEY DICKENS

An exhibition on Dickens's daughter Katey opened on 18 July at The Dickens I louse Museum in London. Kaley married Wilkie's brother Charles on 17 July 1860. Charles Collins died on 9 April 1873 and 14 months later Kate married another artist. Charles Perugini; it is under this name of Kate Perugini that she is now usually known. After her death in 1929 her reminiscences were published by her friend Gladys Storey. Called *Dickens and Daughter* the book remains a key source of disputed facts about Dickens's relationship with his wife and his mistress Ellen Ternan. Kate was an artist herself and

the exhibition – called ‘My Lucifer Box’ – contains several of her paintings as well as biographical material. It will run until 2003.

Dickens lived in Doughty Street before he knew Collins but there are some interesting Wilkie related artefacts from later years, including the backdrop by Clarkson Stanfield to Wilkie’s play *The Lighthouse* as well as photographs and copies of plays and playbills. Admission to the house is £4 and there is no extra charge for the exhibition. Dickens House Museum, 48 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LX (020 7405 2127 or look at <https://dickensmuseum.com>).

E-TEXTS

James Rusk continues with his work of putting Collins’s novels into e-text form. His latest is *Blind Love* leaving only *Heart and Science* of the novels to be done apart from *Iolani* which may be excluded for copyright reasons. His three non-fiction works and several of his essays, remain to be done. You can read *Blind Love* at www.blackmask.com/jrusk/wcollins/blind/blindttl.htm and all the etexts of Wilkie’s work, including short stories and some non-fiction, are listed on www.wilkiecollins.com, menu item 5.

ART NOTES

Another major work by Wilkie’s father, William Collins RA, resurfaced at auction recently. *The Morning Lesson* was sold at Christie’s on 11 June (lot 40). Painted and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1834 (not 1836 as the catalogue stated) Wilkie described it as a “fresh, open, dewy landscape” with a “tranquil Cumberland distance” and “a rosy girl, teaching a little child at her knees to read the alphabet”. Originally sold to Mr Carey of Philadelphia for 120 guineas, it now fetched £28,860 including premium.

ESSAY COMPETITION

The David St John Thomas Charitable Trust is combining with the Alliance of Literary Societies to sponsor an essay competition on the subject ‘Does 19th century fiction still have anything to say to a 21st century audience?’ Arguments should be set out in up to 1,000 words and sent by 15 October 2002 to ALS Joint Competition, DT Charitable Trust, P.O. Box 6055, Naim IV12 4YB. There are no entry fees or entry form and there is a first prize of £100 and second prize of a £25 book token. Rules can be obtained from the above address.

DICKENS WALKS

Guides to walks in Charles Dickens’s London are now available from Dickens-and-London.com. They include David Copperfield’s London; a Covent Garden Walk; Exploring Fled Street; and Discover London’s Docklands. Some of the material should include areas with which Wilkie was familiar and the guides are illustrated with 19th century and modern pictures. The walks last about two hours and start and finish at London underground stations. The guides cost £3.99 and can be bought on the internet with a credit or debit card; or for those preferring something less virtual from 22 King Charles Walk, London SW19 6JA (020 8789 0029).

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