

# THE LIGHTHOUSE

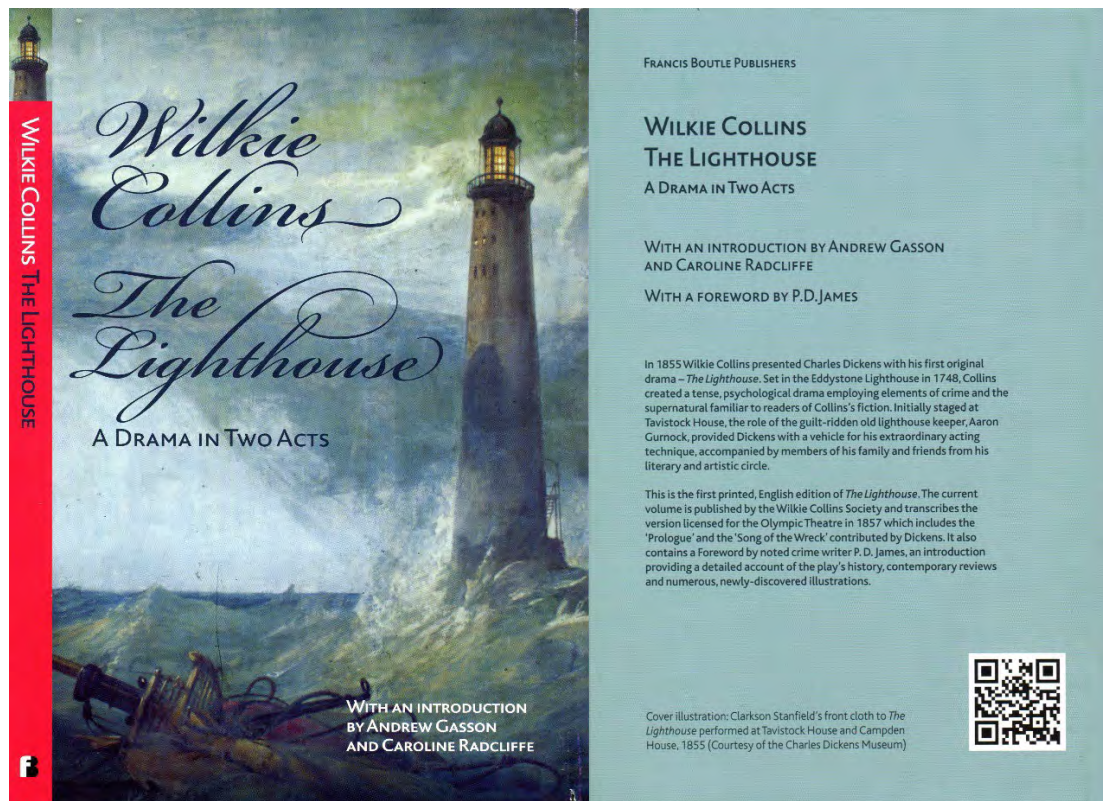
The book is now available free in pdf format below

The hardback can be purchased from the Wilkie Collins Society for  
£10+pp

UK add £3.50; Europe add £6.50; Rest of World add £10

**email [paul@paullewis.co.uk](mailto:paul@paullewis.co.uk) to order**

Or the paperback is available from the publisher by scanning the  
QR code below and searching 'wilkie collins'







WILKIE COLLINS THE LIGHTHOUSE

*Wilkie  
Collins*  
*The  
Lighthouse*

A DRAMA IN TWO ACTS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
BY ANDREW GASSON  
AND CAROLINE RADCLIFFE

**F**

The Wilkie Collins Society was formed during 1980 to promote interest in the life and works of this important nineteenth century author. Apart from *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*, which are both well known, Collins wrote numerous other novels, short stories, plays (such as *The Lighthouse*) and essays. His books have attracted readers for more than a century and his unconventional lifestyle has intrigued the literary world for nearly as long. The Society has an international membership and further details can be found at [www.wilkiecollinssociety.com](http://www.wilkiecollinssociety.com)



# The Lighthouse

Wilkie Collins

---

# The Lighthouse

A drama in two acts

Edited with an introduction by  
Andrew Gasson and Caroline Radcliffe

First published by Francis Boutle Publishers  
272 Alexandra Park Road  
London N22 7BG  
Tel/Fax: 020 8889 7744  
Email: [info@francisboutle.co.uk](mailto:info@francisboutle.co.uk)  
[www.francisboutle.co.uk](http://www.francisboutle.co.uk)

Copyright © Wilkie Collins Society, 2013  
Introduction copyright © Andrew Gasson and Caroline Radcliffe, 2013  
Foreword copyright © P. D. James, 2013  
Translation of Introduction to *Le Phare* © Caroline Radcliffe

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored  
in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form  
or by any means, electronic, mechanical photocopying  
or otherwise without the prior permission of the publishers.

ISBN 978 1903427 80 4



# Contents

- 1 Acknowledgements
- 2 List of illustrations
- 3 Foreword by P. D. James
- 5 Introduction by Andrew Gasson and Caroline Radcliffe
- 25 *The Lighthouse*
- 59 Translation of Collins's introduction to the French edition of *Le Phare*
- 65 Cast lists for *The Lighthouse*
- 69 Contemporary reviews of *The Lighthouse*
- 89 Picture sources

*A numbered edition of 250 copies  
has been produced for the Wilkie Collins Society,  
of which this is*

*Number* \_\_\_\_\_



## *Acknowledgements*

The editors would like to thank Faith Clarke for permission to publish the text of *The Lighthouse*; the British Library for permission to publish the manuscript held in its collections and for the image of the Prologue; Florian Schweitzer and the Charles Dickens Museum for providing images of Clarkson Stanfield's front cloth and Charles Collins's picture of Georgina Hogarth as Lady Grace; Paul Lewis for providing a copy of the Playbill for the 1855 original production at Tavistock House, and for *The Times* of July 1855; Jean-Pierre Rasle and Catherine Yvard for their assistance with the translation of Collins's French introduction to *Le Phare*; Pierre Tissot van Patot for providing details of the Dutch translation of *The Lighthouse*.

## *List of Illustrations*

- 4 Portrait of Wilkie Collins in 1857, aged 33
- 9 Sketch of Charles Dickens, 1855, aged 43
- 11 Clarkson Stanfield's frontcloth to *The Lighthouse*, performed at Tavistock House and Campden House, 1855
- 12 Georgina Hogarth as Lady Grace by Charles Collins
- 00 Playbill for the original production of *The Lighthouse* at Tavistock House, June 1855
- 14 Scene from *The Lighthouse* at Campden House, 10 July 1855
- 14 Illustration from *L'Ami de la maison* of a scene from *Le Phare*
- 21 Illustration from *L'Ami de la maison* showing the opening scene from *Le Phare*
- 28 Prologue to *The Lighthouse* from the original manuscript
- 60 Cover of *Une Poignée de Romans*
- 62 First page of *Le Phare*, with stage directions
- 64 Cast list from the programme for *The Lighthouse*, Royal Bijou Theatre, 3 May 1865. Lambeth School of Art
- 66 Cast list for the production of *The Lighthouse*, Boscombe Theatre, 14 April 1871
- 80 Playbill for *The Lighthouse*, Royal Olympic Theatre, 7 September 1857

## Foreword

All admirers of Wilkie Collins, and particularly members of the Wilkie Collins Society, will congratulate the Society on its imaginative and welcome decision to publish Collins's first play, *The Lighthouse*, which has never before appeared in print. This distinguished volume contains not only the play, but a wealth of contemporary and fascinating information about the genesis of the piece, Wilkie Collins's own account of how he came to write *The Lighthouse*, and reviews of the performances, both in private houses and in the public theatre. Wilkie Collins was a genius at portraying the emotions and actions of men and women under the stress of mystery and terror, and one can understand the attraction of the story of the lighthouse, the three starving lighthouse keepers isolated by the violence of the turbulent sea, the eldest of them, Aaron Gurnock, distracted by hunger and remorse for the guilt of his involvement in an ancient crime, and finally the arrival of the shipwrecked Lady Grace, who survived the attempted murder and brings to the tormented Gurnock forgiveness and reconciliation.

The reviews which the play received are particularly interesting and give an insight into the attitude of Victorian audiences to drama. Wilkie Collins paid tribute to the encouragement he received from Charles Dickens, and the reviewers described for the benefit of their readers the splendours of the private theatre in Dickens's house and the enthusiastic response of the audience. Undoubtedly to be seated so close to the stage added considerably to the atmosphere of growing tension and claustrophobic horror, while the music and sound effects of the raging storm were a powerful adjunct to the action.

The reviewer in *The Times* of 12th July 1855 wrote that the acting of Mr Charles Dickens, who took the part of Aaron Gurnock, was 'not only worthy of a professional, but of a kind not to be found save among the rarest talents ... In a word, it is a great individual creation of a kind that has not been exhibited before.' The review in *The Daily News* of 12th July 1855, when the play was again performed in a private theatre in Camden House, described *The Lighthouse* as 'a little two-act piece, extremely simple in subject and construction, but written with much beauty and full of the deepest interest', and again praised Dickens's acting which he described as 'a display of passion carried to the utmost intensity, but without overstepping for a moment the modesty of nature.' The performance of Miss Dickens, who played Phoebe the fiancée, was

described as ‘artless simplicity and gentle sweetness’, and although her performance was ‘scarcely acting ... it was something better. She sang a melancholy little ballad ... with so much simple pathos that everybody was affected as well as charmed. The Lady Grace was acted by Miss Hogarth with much intelligence, feeling, and unaffected dignity.’ Nothing more was required of lady amateur actors.

The American reviews were rather more critical of the play, one reviewer suggesting that the plot would be better suited to a short story. The *New York Times* on 22nd January 1858 wrote that ‘there is but little scope for the display of anything like dramatic construction, and but little is displayed. Mr Collins’s production has to be judged on different grounds’, but it was ‘a novelty which boldly defies traditional art, and asks for independent consideration on its own merits.’ The modified praise of the American reviewers may be due to the distance between the action and the audience in a public theatre, with the inevitable result that some of the intensity of the emotions, the terror of the twin horrors of starvation and the menace of the tumultuous sea are lost. However, *The Lighthouse*, which the reviewer at the *New York Times* proclaimed to be ‘a curiously impressive and interesting piece’ is the more interesting when we consider its influence on Wilkie Collins’s subsequent work, both novels and plays, and on the development of English drama. This first publication, in its comprehensiveness and distinction, is a fitting tribute to a remarkable writer, and all who value the work and literary legacy of Wilkie Collins will envy the readers who are privileged to have it on their library shelves.

P. D. James, 2013.







**Portrait of Wilkie Collins, in 1857, aged 33**

# Introduction

*The Lighthouse* is Wilkie Collins's earliest original drama, written in 1855. By then Collins was already a well-established author with a number of substantial publications, including *Memoirs of the Life of William Collins* (1848), *Antonina* (1850), *Rambles beyond Railways* (1851) and *Basil* (1852). The only dramatic work to precede *The Lighthouse* was Collins's translation of the French drama, *A Court Duel*, which he adapted and staged in 1850 for a charity performance at the Soho Theatre.

Collins stated that the initial inspiration for the drama was an article that he had come across, describing the history of the Eddystone Lighthouse.<sup>1</sup> The natural and sensational tragedies which had befallen Winstanley's first and Rudyard's second structures provided him with an abundance of dramatic material.

There was no English edition of the play but Collins wrote in his own introduction to the 1864 French translation of *The Lighthouse* by Émile Forgues:

At Eddystone, on a rocky islet in the middle of the waters of the English Channel, twelve miles from the nearest coastline – that of Cornwall – three lighthouses were constructed consecutively. One *brochure*, which described the vicissitudes of the perilous edifice, gave me the initial idea of composing a drama in which the lighthouse would become the theatrical setting. One can appreciate these vicissitudes when one discovers that the first Eddystone lighthouse was destroyed by fire, the second by a storm. The third remains to this day.

Initially, two men were in charge of maintaining the light at the top of the lighthouse; later a third keeper was added. These keepers lived on an utterly bleak rock, twelve miles out to sea, and were at the mercy of the elements for all regular communication with the mainland, that is to say, for all contact with the rest of the world and for the renewal of provisions essential to their survival.

This singular situation in itself struck me, as I said earlier, as full of potential for a dramatic situation never before exploited. As I continued to read the document that I referred to above, I learned that the history of the construction of the three lighthouses was also one of exceptional suffering, of unaccountable dangers endured and suffered by the various generations of men who, in turn, came to occupy this post of salvation. Amongst these perils was the danger of starving to death if communication between the islet and the mainland remained broken beyond a certain length of time.

This happened at least once – and the keepers were saved from starvation only at the last minute.

This incident supplied me with a natural introduction for a drama. I decided to set the scene in the second of the three successively constructed lighthouses because of the advantageous historical circumstances that justified certain twists in the plot. And to give as much depth as possible to the three characters I wanted to place in the scene as lighthouse keepers, I had to establish a strong relationship between them, as distinct from those with other men, which I found by linking all three, in different ways, to the history and consequences of a crime committed long ago. This also allowed me to give the moral example of a most generous forgiveness as the *denouement* of my play. It is by means of these circumstances that I hoped to be able to show the most violent emotions between men whose education has not altered their native roughness and simplicity.

Such were my ideas when I decided to write my first drama.<sup>2</sup>

Collins would also have taken inspiration for the play as he viewed the Eddystone from the Cornish shore whilst on a walking tour in 1850. He describes these first impressions in *Rambles Beyond Railways*:

We ascended the heights to the westward, losing sight of the town among the trees, as we went; and then, walking in a southerly direction through some cornfields, approached within a few hundred yards of the edge of the cliffs, and looked out on the sea. The sky had partially cleared, and the rain had ceased; but huge, fantastic masses of cloud, tinged with lurid copper-colour by the setting sun, still towered afar off over the horizon, and were reflected in a deeper hue on the calm surface of the sea, with a perfectness and grandeur that I never remember to have witnessed before. Not a ship was in sight; but out on the extreme line of the wilderness of grey waters there shone one red, fiery, spark – the beacon of the Eddystone Lighthouse.<sup>3</sup>

By this time Rudyard's Tower had been destroyed – Collins would have seen the third construction, built by Smeaton – but the evocative view was transposed by Collins to the earlier, more dramatic, historical setting.

The two act drama is set in December 1748 in the second Eddystone Lighthouse. The plot primarily concerns the three keepers of the lighthouse who, having been cut off from the mainland for over a month by ceaseless, raging storms, have finally exhausted their provisions and are on the point of starvation. In a semi-delirious state, one of the keepers, Aaron Gurnock, confesses to his son Martin, that many years before he had been complicit in the murder of an unexpected visitor, the Lady Grace. Believing that the apparition of Lady Grace has come to his bedside, urging him to confess, Aaron recounts the story of the crime. The father and son are instantly estranged. Unable to bear the burden of guilt imposed on him by his father's confession and his own, subsequent complicity in the knowledge of the murder, Martin rejects his betrothed, Phoebe, as she fortuitously arrives with a rescue crew laden with provisions. A

ship runs aground on the treacherous rocks below and the benevolent Lady Grace, is brought – alive – to safety in the lighthouse. Having survived the attempt on her life, she is returning home from France. She forgives Aaron his part in the attempted murder, relieving Martin of the obstacle to his marriage. Father and son are reconciled and returned to the mainland in time to celebrate the forthcoming nuptials.

Elements of the plot are similar to Collins's earlier short story, 'Gabriel's Marriage', published in Charles Dickens's *Household Words* in 1853.<sup>4</sup> A letter to Charles Ward from late 1854 requests a copy of *Tales of the First French Revolution* collected by Anne Marsh and in April of that year Collins published the short story 'Sister Rose', which, similar to 'Gabriel's Marriage', is set in the time of the French Revolution.<sup>5</sup> Both were later included in Collins's collection of short stories *After Dark* (1856). Further inspired by the French theme, he wove it into the plot of *The Lighthouse*, although he was clearly already developing a story based specifically around the Eddystone Lighthouse. Part of the sub-narrative within *The Lighthouse* takes place, rather anachronistically, during the earlier Seven Years War. Collins confused his dates here – *The Lighthouse* is set in 1748, whereas the Seven Years War commenced some eight years later in 1756. Collins's plot conforms to the correct chronology for Rudyard's construction but is less historically accurate in its French background.

As Collins later wrote, in 1862, to the Parisian journalist and historian, Alfred-Auguste Ernouf, his intention was:

to invent a story containing a strong human interest – to work the story out by means of characters as little theatrical and as true to everyday nature as I could make them – and, lastly, to surround events and persons thus produced with the most picturesque and striking external circumstances which the resources of the stage could realise. Thus, the story of The Lighthouse, passes in the Eddystone Lighthouse, and is illustrated by all the little picturesque circumstances of lighthouse-life.<sup>6</sup>

The first act of the play opens with three lighthouse keepers on the point of starvation. Collins uses their state of physical and emotional exhaustion as a means for the revelation of the murder story and the psychological tensions that results. The on-stage action is situated entirely within the keepers' small kitchen chamber in the lighthouse. Although off-stage action occurs at various points in the play, it is the psychological relationships of the keepers within the room and the examination of their inner feelings and consciences on which Collins focuses. This is a significant feature of Collins's work in terms of the development of nineteenth-century drama. Henry Irving's production of Leopold Lewis's *The Bells* in 1871 is frequently cited as the first 'psychological drama' – Collins precedes this by sixteen years. Henry Morley noted this effective use of off-stage drama and on-stage psychological tension in his account of the performance he witnessed:

the crime, the wreck, and all the events upon which hangs the passion of the story, not being produced upon the scene, but breaking out from the narration of the actors. None of the leading incidents are shown actually, but their workings on the minds of the three lighthouse-men who are the chief performers, and of the few other persons introduced into the story, contribute interest enough to sustain an earnest attention throughout.<sup>7</sup>

Collins wrote *The Lighthouse* during the early part of 1855. In his introduction to Forgue's translation he describes his decision to show it to Dickens:

My task accomplished, I wasn't convinced that I'd been successful. My experience of writing, formed by writing novels, could well have led me astray in the composition and writing of a dramatic work. These doubts determined me to consult Mr. Charles Dickens. Already familiar with his friendly goodness and his frankness, I knew that his examination would be perfectly conscientious, and that the results of this examination would be communicated to me without reserve.

Forgive me for saying so, but I still feel proud to say that Mr. Charles Dickens judged my first dramatic work favourably enough immediately to offer to have it performed at his house before a select audience, to put it to the test before a run in the theatre. Needless to say, this offer was immediately accepted with immense gratitude.

In May 1855, he sent his finished version to Dickens who made numerous suggestions and enthusiastically took over the production for his amateur theatricals, in which Collins had become a regular participant.

Soon after, Dickens wrote to Collins, "I have written a little ballad for Mary – 'The Story of the Ship's Carpenter and the Little Boy, in the Shipwreck.'"<sup>8</sup> The words were set to a tune composed by George Linley to Charlotte Young's ballad 'Little Nell'. Dedicated to Dickens by Linley, it had become a favourite song, his daughter, Mary, singing it to him 'constantly since her childhood'.<sup>9</sup> Dickens changed the title to 'The Song of the Wreck' and the ballad was sung by Mary (Mamie Dickens) who played the role of Phoebe during the performances of *The Lighthouse*. 'The Song of the Wreck' bears some similarities to 'The Long Voyage', a prose piece about shipwreck and survival written by Dickens for *Household Words*, 31 December 1853.<sup>10</sup> The 'Song of the Wreck' was printed on the playbill devised by Dickens for 'The Smallest Theatre in the World' as "a new Ballad, the Music by MR. LINLEY, the Words by MR. CRUMMLES."<sup>11</sup>

Dickens enlisted the assistance of his friend Clarkson Stanfield ('Stanny'), the artist and theatrical scene-painter renowned for seascapes. He wrote to him on 20 May:

I have a little Lark in contemplation, if you will help it to fly.

Collins has done a Melo Drama (a regular old-style Melo Drama), in which there is a very good notion. I am going to act it, as an experiment, in the childrens' [sic] Theatre here – I, Mark, Collins, Egg, and my daughter





**Sketch of Charles Dickens, aged 43, during his visit to Paris, November 1855, after Henri Scheffer**

Mary, the whole dram: pers: – our families and yours, the whole Audience; for I want to make the stage large, and shouldn't have room for above five and twenty spectators. Now, there is only one scene in the piece, and that – my Tarry Lad – is the inside of a Lighthouse. Will you come and paint it for us one night, and we'll all turn to and help? It is a mere wall, of course, but Mark and I have sworn that you must do it.

If you will say yes, I should like to have the tiny flats made, after you have looked at the place and not before. On Wednesday in this week I am good for a steak and the Play, if you will make your own appointment here; or any day next week except Thursday. Write me a line in reply.

We mean to burst on an astonished World with the Melo Drama, without any note of preparation. So don't say a syllable to Forster, if you should happen to see him.<sup>12</sup>

Stanfield must have accepted immediately, since Dickens wrote to Mark Lemon on 23 May:

Stanny says he is only sorry it is not the outside of the lighthouse with a raging sea and a transparent light. He enters into the project with the greatest delight, and I think we shall make a capital thing of it.<sup>13</sup>

‘Stanny’ managed to introduce the raging seascape with the illuminated lighthouse when Dickens incorporated the Prologue to the play. Stanfield may have viewed the Eddystone Lighthouse with Dickens, Forster and Maclise when they briefly toured Cornwall together in 1842; but Stanfield turned to one of his earlier works of the lighthouse for the drop scene, basing it on ‘The Eddystone Lighthouse’, published in *Stanfield’s Coast Scenery* in 1836, a book of engravings taken from his paintings. The drop which was used as a front cloth for *The Lighthouse* bears a strong resemblance both to this and to Turner’s earlier paintings of the Eddystone Lighthouse on which Stanfield possibly modelled his own work. Stanfield’s drop for the Prologue also incorporated a working illuminated lamp at the top of the lighthouse.

Alfred Ainger, who appeared as one of the relief for the keepers, reminisced on his involvement in the production, emphasising the effectiveness of Stanfield’s scene:

The production next year, on the same stage, of the drama of “The Lighthouse,” marked a great step in the rank of our performances. The play was a touching and tragic story, founded (if we are not mistaken) upon a tale by the same author, Mr. Wilkie Collins, which appeared in an early number of his friend’s weekly journal, Household Words ... The scenery was painted by Clarkson Stanfield, and comprised a drop-scene representing the exterior of Eddystone Lighthouse, and a room in the interior in which the whole action of the drama was carried on. The prologue was written (we believe) by Mr. Dickens, and we can recall as if it were yesterday the impressive elocution of Mr. John Forster, as he spoke behind the scenes the lines which follow:

A story of those rocks where doomed ships come  
 To cast their wrecks upon the steps of home;  
 Where solitary men, the long year through,  
 The wind their music, and the brine their view,  
 Teach mariners to shun the fatal light,  
 A story of those rocks is here to-night  
 Eddystone Lighthouse –

(Here the green curtain rose and discovered Stanfield’s drop-scene, the Lighthouse, its lantern illuminated by a transparency) –

in its ancient form, form  
 Ere he who built it died in the great storm  
 Which shivered it to nothing – once again  
 Behold out-gleaming on the angry main.  
 Within it are three men, – to these repair  
 In our swift bark of fancy, we shall have you back  
 Too soon to the old dusty, beaten track.<sup>14</sup>



**Clarkson Stanfield's front cloth to *The Lighthouse*, performed at Tavistock House and Campden House, 1855**

The lantern was back-lit to project a bright and intense light. The atmosphere of the Prologue, created by Forster's offstage voice and the raging seascape, must have been effective, intensified by soft music accompanying the whole.<sup>15</sup>

Clarkson's scenery was described as:

An exquisite picture (for such it is, and not merely an ordinary scene) of Eddystone as it stood in those days, from the pencil of Mr. Stanfield, was the drop-scene, and the actors were exhibited throughout as shut up in a little room within the lighthouse, also of Mr. Stanfield's painting, which, from its nature, could with the best possible effect be set up in a private drawing-room, or on a miniature stage.<sup>16</sup>

Clarkson Stanfield's impressive painting did not go to waste, Dickens had it cut down and displayed at Tavistock House and later at Gad's Hill until it was auctioned after his death for one thousand guineas.<sup>17</sup> It has been estimated that the original size of the scene, regardless of any border it may have had, was c. 9 x 14 ft, giving an indication of the height and width of the stage at Tavistock House. It is the only surviving piece of Stanfield's stage scenery from the production and is currently held by the Charles Dickens Museum.<sup>18</sup>

By 29 May, in a letter to Frank Stone, Dickens had already drawn up a daily schedule for numerous rehearsals and arranged for a dress-rehearsal on Friday 15 June. "The Lighthouse ... will occupy at least two hours in rehearsing – at first, more."<sup>19</sup>



**Georgina Hogarth as Lady Grace, painted by Charles Collins**

Dickens played Aaron Gurnock, the head light keeper, and Wilkie his son, Martin Gurnock, the second light keeper; Mark Lemon played Jacob Dale, the third light keeper. Augustus Egg, Mary Dickens and Georgina Hogarth took the parts of Samuel Furley, Phoebe and Lady Grace. The relief lightkeepers were played by the younger members of the Dickens family and their friends – Charles Dickens Junior (Charley), Edward Hogarth, Alfred Ainger and William Webster. Wilkie Collins's brother, Charles, made a portrait of Georgina Hogarth in the role of Lady Grace.<sup>20</sup> In a strikingly revealing on-stage image of the production at Campden House, Dickens, Collins and Georgina Hogarth are depicted acting together in character in one of the final scenes from Act 2 in which Aaron Gurnock begs Lady Grace for forgiveness. This is possibly the only surviving image of Wilkie Collins as an actor and is significant in its representation of the relationship between Dickens and Collins as dramatic collaborators.

The overture was composed by another young friend of Charley, Francesco Berger, who also arranged the incidental music. Berger records that he had a small but efficient orchestra to conduct while he presided at the piano.<sup>21</sup> The dresses were by Taylor of the Adelphi Theatre and Nathan of Titchbourne Street; wigs by Wilson of the Strand; and properties by Ireland, also of the Adelphi.<sup>22</sup> It is interesting to note that even for a small amateur production

Dickens chose to select some of the finest, renowned professionals from the West-end theatre.

The first performance was on Saturday 16 June 1855 at Dickens's home, Tavistock House. Collins was selective about whom he informed of his involvement in *The Lighthouse*; in a letter declining a social invitation, he regretted that "engagements which require him to be in London on the 16th and the 18th June" would prevent him from attending.<sup>23</sup> There were further performances at Tavistock House on Monday 18 and Tuesday 19 June, both of which were over-subscribed. *The Lighthouse* was performed together with the farce by Dickens and Mark Lemon, *Mr. Nightingale's Diary*. There was one other performance on 10 July, courtesy of Colonel Waugh, at Campden House, Church Street, Kensington, described as "a princely mansion in the Elizabethan style of architecture."<sup>24</sup> This production was in aid of the Bournemouth Sanatorium for Consumption and Diseases of the Chest (a branch of the Consumption Hospital, Brompton), and took advantage of "a miniature theatre, complete with pit and boxes, stage and footlights."<sup>25</sup> On this occasion the accompanying farce was *The Wonderful Woman* by Charles Dance.

Dickens apparently invited newspapers to send reporters and *The Times* of 12 July praised the professionalism of *The Lighthouse* company, in particular the acting of Dickens and Mark Lemon.<sup>26</sup>

Henry Morley also praised the acting – "to the last that piece of truest acting was watched with minute attention by the company assembled; rarely has acting on a public stage better rewarded scrutiny."<sup>27</sup>

Carlyle "compared Dickens's wild picturesqueness in the old lighthouse keeper to the famous figure in Nicholas Poussin's bacchanalian dance in the National Gallery."<sup>28</sup>

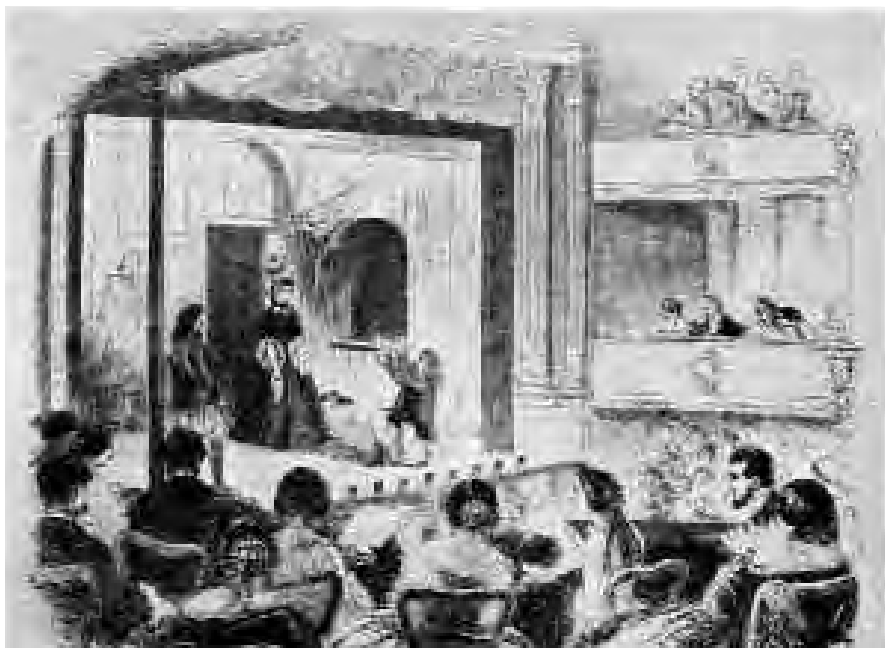
A report of Collins's acting, however, suggested it was rather less convincing. John Lehmann records an 1855 letter from Janet Wills (wife of W. H. Wills, Dickens's sub-editor on *Household Words*) describing the dress rehearsal at Colonel Waugh's private theatre:

Last night Florence and I were at the dress rehearsal for the play at the pretty little theatre attached to Campden House, Kensington, where it is played tonight for the benefit of the consumption hospital with the original cast. Mrs. Collins sat next to me and got every now and then so excited applauding her son Wilkie that I thought the respectable, comely old woman would explode, he all the time looking and acting most muffishly. Nothing could be better than the drama as drama, but oh, he makes a most unloving and unlovable lover. Dickens and Mark (Lemon) do not act, it is the perfection of *real nature*.<sup>29</sup>

Dickens's son, Charley, related how in performance, during the prologue:

at the cue, 'Eddystone Lighthouse' the green curtain was raised, and displayed, to the unbounded astonishment of the audience, Stanfield's picture;





**Scene from *The Lighthouse at Campden House*, 10 July 1855, showing (left to right) Wilkie Collins as Martin Gurnock, Georgina Hogarth as Lady Grace and Charles Dickens, kneeling, as Aaron Gurnock.**



**Illustration from *L'Ami de la maison* of a scene from *Le Phare*, 24 July 1856, showing (from left to right) Martin Gurnock, Lady Grace and Aaron Gurnock, kneeling**

and the words ‘billows rise’ were my signal – I was in charge of the storm – to let loose the elements. We had all the correct theatrical weather out in the hall, the sort of silk grindstone for the wind – Marcus Stone ... turned the wind ... – the long box of rain, the flash for lightning, the sheet of iron for the rattle of the thunder, besides half a dozen cannon balls to roll about on the floor to simulate the shaking of the lighthouse as it was struck by the waves; this had to be done all through the first act and Charley recalled he could tell by his father’s shoulders at rehearsals, that he was ready for the smallest mistake. Stanfield, crouching against the scene ... threw salt on the stage to represent (I am afraid rather indifferently...) the flying spray.<sup>30</sup>

Dickens wrote to Miss Burdett Coutts on 19 June:

I dispatch a hasty report to you and O. The audience were not so demonstrative last night as on Saturday, and the Corps Dramatique were disposed to think them “flat”. I observed however that they were crying vigorously, and I think they were quite as much moved and pleased as on Saturday, though they did not cheer the actors on so much – except in the Farce. Everybody played exactly as on the previous night – including Mr. Forster, who buffeted the guests (I am informed) in the same light and airy manner. Mrs. Stanfield was mollified, and certainly seemed to have been hustled out of the house on Saturday Night, like a species of pickpocket. Lady Beecher was evidently very much impressed and surprised, and Mrs. Yates said (with a large red circle round each eye), “O Mr. Dickens what a pity it is you can do anything else!” Longman the bookseller was seen to cry dreadfully – and I don’t know that anything could be said beyond that!<sup>31</sup>

The next performance must have gone even better with Dickens writing to Stanfield on 20 June:

I write a hasty note to let you know that last night was Perfectly Wonderful!!!  
Such an audience! Such a brilliant success from first to last!<sup>32</sup>

Collins immediately had aspirations for a production on the professional stage and with the help of Mark Lemon explored the possibility of a production at the Adelphi Theatre under the management of Benjamin Webster. Collins wrote to Mark Lemon on 28 June:

I am anxious to know what Mr. Webster’s intentions are on the subject of “The Lighthouse”. If you will kindly communicate to him the terms, on which I am willing to dispose of the play for a limited period, I think we shall come to a definite understanding immediately.

The terms, then, that I propose (if “The Lighthouse” is acted in public) are:–

Five pounds a night to be paid to me during the first twenty nights of the run of the piece – the Play to be, so far as the dramatic right over it is concerned, Mr. Webster’s property for twelve months from the first night

of its production on the stage at his Theatre. After that period, all rights over it are to revert to me.

There are one or two other minor arrangements which it will be time enough to talk over when I know how Mr. Webster is disposed to receive this proposal.

With many thanks for your kindness in charging yourself with this little negotiation.<sup>33</sup>

In the event, the play wasn't staged professionally for another two years. It opened at the Royal Olympic on 10 August 1857, when the theatre came under the joint management of Frederick Robson and William Emden, and ran for three months until 17 October. Collins had written in July to Palgrave Simpson, the dramatist and amateur actor who later became secretary of the Dramatic Authors Society:

Long before you get this you will, I hope, have received a letter from me (written immediately after the reading of the play this morning) to tell you that Mr. Gordon has been at my request, selected for trial in the part of Martin Gurnock in *The Lighthouse*. If he produces a favourable impression at Rehearsal he may consider his appearance in the part a settled thing. I told Mr. Emden that I felt certain I might in this case safely run the risk of trusting a new man – and that settled the question.

I shall, unluckily, not be at home tomorrow (Thursday) afternoon. But I shall be here from 3 to 5 on Friday afternoon – and shall be very glad to see Mr. Gordon, if you are disengaged then. If Mr. Gordon would like it, I will send for the play, and read it to him on Friday afternoon. Please drop me one line to tell me whether this shall be done.<sup>34</sup>

Walter Gordon, a relative newcomer to the stage, did play Martin Gurnock while Robson played Aaron Gurnock and George Vining spoke the Prologue. Collins, full of his triumph after the first night, wrote to his mother on 10 August:

The Play has been a great success. The audience so enthralled by the story that they would not even bear the applause at the first entrance of Robson. Everybody breathless. Calls for me at the end of the first Act. A perfect hurricane of applause at the end of the play – which I had to acknowledge from a private box. Dickens, Thackeray, Mark Lemon, publicly appearing in my box. In short an immense success. I write this in the supper room in the midst of conviviality and applause. Charley is with us, and sends his love.<sup>35</sup>

Success continued and he wrote again on 5 October:

Every thing goes on smoothly here ... Immense success of The Lighthouse. The other night the stalls were so full that the people had to be accommodated in the orchestra. Saturday last, I tried to get a private box for the Londons and found they were all taken. Robson goes into the country for

three weeks this month – When he comes back the run of the play is to be resumed. I have engaged to do them another.<sup>36</sup>

Dickens was also impressed, writing to Emden on 20 August 1857:

I was astonished by the great improvement in *The Lighthouse* since the first night; it appeared to me to be admirably done in all respects and its effect upon the audience was not to be mistaken.<sup>37</sup>

Henry Morley was less taken, mainly as a consequence of Robson's acting.

... *The Lighthouse*, which then for the first time passed to the public stage out of the drawing-room theatres at Tavistock or Campden House. It may be that one's judgement was obscured by an involuntary comparison, in each passage, of the acting of Mr. Robson's with the intensity of life that Mr. Dickens gave to the same character ... In Aaron Gurnock the whole interest is serious; he has an enfeebled body and a stricken soul, solemn awe of the spirit-world, emotions shifting with the changes of his bodily condition and of the events that pass around him. Full of interest, full of fine touches of the artist's power, is Mr. Robson's personation of the part; but it is not one of his triumphs.<sup>38</sup>

Business matters were also dealt with by Emden with Collins writing on 5 September:

Received of W. S. Emden Esqre, the sum of ten pounds, making up the sum of one Hundred pounds, in full of my demand for the right of representing The Lighthouse at the Olympic Theatre for two years dating from the 8th of August 1857.<sup>39</sup>

There was one other professional stage production of *The Lighthouse* in New York, the following year. It opened at Laura Keene's New Theatre on 21 January 1858. This was presumably with Collins's approval since *The New York Times* noted that "The scenery, by Mr. Hawthorne, is from sketches furnished by the author."<sup>40</sup> The play did not, however, receive wholehearted reviews. "Its production excited an unusual amount of interest and a large audience was present last night to witness the initial performance here" but "Brightly as the 'Light House' may have shone on English shores, it glimmers here with a very feeble flicker indeed."<sup>41</sup>

### **Versions of *The Lighthouse***

The current text is transcribed from the manuscript held at the British Library in the Lord Chamberlain's Plays collection.<sup>42</sup> It consists of 28 folios in an unidentified hand. The handwriting matches that of other scripts submitted to

the Lord Chamberlain's examiner in the same year by the Royal Olympic Theatre and is presumably that of the professional copyist employed by the theatre. Although Collins refers in his letters to various prompt copies and other copies must have existed for members of the cast and for the play's subsequent amateur revivals, only three other manuscripts are recorded by *IELM*.<sup>43</sup> One is held in the Forster Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, entitled 'The Storm at the Lighthouse'.<sup>44</sup> The different title suggests that this is possibly the earliest surviving copy. It is written and autographed in Collins's hand in a bound notebook which had come to Forster from Dickens's own collection. It contains full stage directions, the 'Song of the Wreck', but no Prologue.

There are two further copies held at the Berg Collection, New York, one of which (Berg 2) was obtained from the collection of Harry Glemby, an American art and book collector.<sup>45</sup> Both copies lack the Prologue and the 'Song of the Wreck'.

Berg 1 is a copy from the Olympic Theatre production, thus dating from 1857 and includes corrections by Collins, cast lists for the production and full stage directions which differ from those of the Forster copy.<sup>46</sup> The opening scene is written in Collins's hand, the rest in that of a copyist.

Berg 2 is in an autographed, bound notebook written in Collins's hand. A handwritten note is contained inside the front cover: "This was given by Wilkie Collins to Émile Forgues his French translator. Leon Forgues gave it to me in 1866 H.L.E." It corresponds exactly with Forgues's French translation and is therefore the text on which that is based. There is another, printed slip of paper inside the cover from the auction sale of the Harry Glemby collection (November 1926) giving an account of the play's history: "It is said that the play was privately performed before Queen Victoria, who expressed herself as somewhat shocked at what she considered its vulgar speech. The Queen's disapprobation led to the determination of the author not to publish it. The manuscript was presented by Wilkie Collins to Émile Forgues, his French translator." Although Berg 2 differs very little from Berg 1 (mainly a few added or changed stage directions) it does indeed omit some aspects of 'vulgar speech', modifying words such as 'pigheaded', although this anecdote appears to have confused *The Lighthouse* with Collins's later play, *The Frozen Deep*, which was indeed performed for Victoria in 1857.<sup>47</sup>

Although there are small variations, both Berg versions bear more similarity to the Forster version than to the BL copy – one would have expected the Berg and the BL copies to share more similarities as the BL copy, the text presented here, is that submitted to the Lord Chamberlain's Examiner of Plays (W. B. Donne) on 31 July 1857 for performance on the professional stage at the Royal Olympic Theatre. A licence was granted on 1 August and the play opened on 10 August. New plays to be performed on stage had to be scrutinised by the Examiner for inappropriate language, references or action before being licensed. The texts submitted therefore were usually fairly hurried and func-

tional versions of the finished productions, bereft of the performance directions, lighting or music cues, prop lists or even *dramatis personae* to be found in prompt copies and other scripts. This accounts for the variations between the four existing copies.

While sometimes seemingly random, the punctuation is extremely significant in each of the versions. It might be concluded that the excessive use of dots, dashes, exclamation marks and underlinings deliberately reflect Collins's intentions for the actors, indicating appropriate pauses, emphases or lines that require rapid continuousness of speech. Collins abandoned this practice in the manuscripts of later plays, but a study of each of the versions of *The Lighthouse* demonstrates that Collins used this method to guide the actors in their interpretation of the text. Dashes can be easily confused with full stops; therefore Collins's original intentions have been retained wherever possible and have been standardized in cases where they become indistinguishable from each other. Whilst the BL and the Forgues translation vary in their system of dots and dashes, the repeated dots (...) in the French copy correspond more or less with Collins's dashes in Berg 2. This deliberate and conscious system developed by Collins to express vocal nuance further supports the notion of Collins as a writer who was keen to direct and guide the actors in his dramatic works. Collins was known to recite out loud the dialogue in his novels to ensure it sounded naturalistic. In the British Library manuscript the use of capitals appears to be random. This style has been maintained in order to reproduce the text as accurately as possible.

In Collins's time there existed no printed version of *The Lighthouse* in English since he exercised his usual caution in respect of maintaining his dramatic copyright. Collins's initial intentions were written to Palgrave Simpson on 17 October 1857:

I have written to Mr. Bidwell by this post to tell him that I have been obliged to make a rule that no Ms copies shall be taken from the Olympic Prompt Book. This has been done, in my own defence, to enable me to decline applications from strangers – and for consistency's sake I must hold by my own regulation, in all cases.

However I have also written to tell Mr. Bidwell that the play will probably be printed in a short time, and that I hope it may be published in time to suit the purpose of his company – I have said this, believing that if I belong to the Dramatic Authors' Society, the play will be printed as a matter of course. Mark Lemon and Albert Smith promised to propose and second me, at a supper in celebration of the first night of the play – but we somehow forgot all about it afterwards. I write today to remind Mark of his engagement to propose me. Will you second me, in Albert Smith's absence? – that is to say, if seconding involves you in no trouble or inconvenience of any kind. The run of The Lighthouse will be stopped after this week, until Robson returns to London from his country trip – after which it will again appear in the bills. This interim would afford an opportunity of printing the play from the prompt-book – supposing I am right in my idea that the

Dramatic Author's Society undertakes the printing and publishing of plays by members.

I will tell Mark in writing to him that I have trusted to your kindness to second me. I ought to have joined the Society weeks ago.<sup>48</sup>

This initial intent seems to have changed because in a later letter to Simpson on 2 June 1860 he writes:

I am sorry that the question that Lady Stracey has paid me the compliment of asking through you, should have remained for some days without a reply, when it ought to have been answered immediately ... I am sorry, now that I do answer it, to have nothing satisfactory to say. The Lighthouse (like my other plays) has never been printed – my perverse object being to keep my dramas off the stage, in all cases (public or private) in which I could not superintend their representation myself. The only copies of The Lighthouse in existence are my own copy, which is illegible to anyone but myself, and “prompt copy” at The Olympic Theatre. I have declined so many applications for permission to transcribe this last, that I am afraid I can hardly alter my resolution (however I might wish to do so in the present case) without giving reasonable cause for offence in other quarters. Will you therefore make my apologies to Lady Stracey, and assure her that if I see any future reason to alter my determination, as far as to print my play privately, I will take care to make atonement by sending her one of the earliest copies.<sup>49</sup>

Collins was also very careful of amateur dramatic stagings of *The Lighthouse*. He had written to the otherwise unidentified E. Nelson Hazell on 27 April 1859.

I am very sorry not to be able to accede to the proposal which you make to me on the part of the gentlemen who are getting up an Amateur Play. But I have been obliged to make it a rule not to consent to representations of The Lighthouse, either in private or in public, and I have hitherto declined to avail myself of all the applications for permission to act the play which have reached me, in great numbers, from amateurs and from country managers.

I hope that you and the Gentlemen whom you represent will excuse me, therefore, if, solely for consistency's sake, I still hold to my rule and beg to decline taking advantage of the offer which you have been so good as to address to me.<sup>50</sup>

In 1862, Collins confirmed this resolution. Referring to his plays *The Red Vial*, *The Frozen Deep* and *The Lighthouse*, he wrote to the Parisian journalist and historian Alfred-August Ernouf:

None of these three dramas have been printed. In the present degraded state of the drama in England – degraded, I mean, in the literary sense – I have refused all proposals to publish them, or to allow them to be acted after the period of their first stage appearance. I mean to keep them till better times come – and if no better times come, I will turn them into Novels.<sup>51</sup>



# L'AMI DE LA MAISON

REVUE HEBDOMADAIRE ILLUSTRÉE

PARIS, LE 3 JUILLET 1864.

N° 28. — Vol. II. — BUREAU, rue Richelieu, 69.

ABONNEMENTS.

Paris, . . . . . 45 fr.

Ve la feuille illustrée, les autres volumes de droit de reproduction et de traduction à l'étranger.

Paris, . . . . . 4 fr.

Départements, . . . . . 49 fr.

## SOMMAIRE.

**Le Phare**, drame en deux actes : Prologue; acte premier. — Biographies contemporaines : Charles Dickens. — Les Bon-œuvres de Schopenhauer. — Projets d'un Congrès de la sous-œuvre entre la France et l'Angleterre. — Les Tendrilles, scène du Berry. — Une Fête, sketch de la Guyane. — Correspondance et nouvelles : Conditions pour être admis à l'École militaire de cavalerie. — Berlin, aux environs de la Télégraphie. — Sur les Conductions d'Électricité. — Les Villes innuables. — Sur le Centre de la France. — Mariage romantique. — Sonnet d'un d'homme. — Le Social est-il réalisable? — Le mot Clark. — Le Sauveteur et les deux Laitiers. — Questions.

## Le Phare (I).

DRAME EN DEUX ACTES, JOUÉ À LONDRES PAR CHARLES COLLINS ET SES AMIS.



Le Phare. — « Allons, mes garçons, réveille-moi un peu... » (Acte I<sup>er</sup>, sc. 1<sup>re</sup>.)

Ce drame, dont l'auteur de la maison offre la première à son abonné, a été écrit et joué dans des circonstances très particulières pour que nous n'ayons pas dit les faits relatés dans son ouvrage. L'auteur lui-même.

Il est également à Paris, par M. WILKIE COLLINS.

M. Wilkie Collins, ayant bien voulu nous donner à ce sujet les plus complètes détails, il nous paraît tout à fait naturel de lui rendre la parole, et de nous faire part de son ouvrage sans aucune interruption.

Il faut s'attendre cependant, pour ceux de nos lecteurs qui ne

28

**Illustration from L'Ami de la maison, 3 July 1864, showing the opening scene from *Le Phare*, with Jacob Dale, seated, and Martin Gurnock resting on the floor**

As late as 1880 Collins was still conscious of protecting his dramatic copyright, writing:

“The Lighthouse” is not published. As long as I keep the play in manuscript, I keep it out of the reach of the theatrical thieves – who set the law at defiance for the excellent reason that they have no money to pay damages.<sup>52</sup>

Nevertheless, there were amateur revivals of *The Lighthouse*. Collins wrote to Palgrave Simpson in November 1862:

I am very glad to hear that you are going to repeat the “Aaron Gurnock” success: my impression is that The Lighthouse was only sold to the Olympic for a term of years – that this term has expired – and that when you have my authority to act the piece, you have every authority needful. But as I cannot at this moment lay my hand on the agreement, it may be as well for form’s sake and for courtesy’s sake, if you write a line to Mr. Emden.<sup>53</sup>

Simpson repeated his role as Gurnock on 3 May 1865 at the Royal Bijou

Theatre of the Lambeth School of Art. There were also regular revivals from 1867 at the Boscombe Theatre by Sir Percy Florence Shelley, the poet's son. Despite Collins's embargo on English publication, *The Lighthouse*, as previously stated, was translated into French by Émile Forgues, a French critic who also translated *The Dead Secret*, *The Woman in White*, *No Name* and more particularly *The Queen of Hearts*, in which Collins addressed to him a 'Letter of Dedication'.

At a time when French readers were altogether unaware of the existence of any books of my writing, a critical examination of my novels appeared under your signature, in the "Revue des Deux Mondes." I read that article, at the time of its appearance, with great pleasure and sincere gratitude to the writer; ... Your excellent translation of *The Lighthouse* had already taught me how to appreciate the value of your assistance.<sup>54</sup>

*The Queen of Hearts* was published as *Une Poignée de Romans* in two volumes in 1864 and *The Lighthouse* appeared at the end of the second volume as *Le Phare*.<sup>55</sup> This version was evidently published with Collins's full approbation as it contains his own signed eight page introduction dated 1 July 1856, which noted that Forgue's translation of *The Lighthouse* had originally been published in the French periodical magazine, *L'Ami de la maison*. The text of *Le Phare* is considerably longer than the current manuscript in which the introduction is dated is a month earlier as 1 June 1856 and contains more extensive stage directions.<sup>55</sup>

There was also a Dutch printed version of *The Lighthouse* in 1874 (*De Vuurtoren*), taken directly from the French translation and almost certainly pirated without Collins's knowledge.<sup>56</sup>

This, then, is the first printed publication in England of *The Lighthouse*, long-delayed since the play's first production on 16 June 1855.

Andrew Gasson  
Caroline Radcliffe

## Notes

- 1 Collins's own introduction to Forgue's French translation of the play in 1864, given in full on page 61, states that *The Lighthouse* was initially published in the French periodical magazine, *L'Ami de la maison, Revue Hebdomadaire Illustrée*, nos. 26-29, 3, 10, 17 and 24 July 1856, published by M. Ed. Charton, a prolific contemporary publisher. It is also possible that Collins had seen the article 'Phare D'Eddystone' which appeared in Charton's *Magasin Pittoresque, Deuxième Année*, Paris, 1834, No. 24, pp.191-192.
- 2 *Une poignée de romans* (translated by E. D. Forgues), Seconde Série, Hetzel & Lacroix, Paris 1864. *Le Phare* occupies pp.285-346 with the introduction on pp.277-284.
- 3 *Rambles Beyond Railways, or Notes in Cornwall taken A-Foot*, Richard Bentley, London 1851, pp.42-43; illustrations were provided by his walking companion Henry C. Brandling. Richard Pearson also notes this connection is his online edition, Wilkie Collins, *The Lighthouse* (Berg 1), ed. Richard Pearson, [www.wilkiecollinsplays.net](http://www.wilkiecollinsplays.net).
- 4 'Gabriels Marriage' was a short story originally published in *Household Words*, 16-23 April 1853, and later included in *After Dark* (1856) as 'The Nun's Story of Gabriel's Marriage'. It takes place in Brittany at the time of the French Revolution. Gabriel Sarzeau becomes estranged from his fisherman father when he discovers that he had committed a murder. Before his marriage, Gabriel confesses his knowledge to Father Paul, a fugitive priest. Father Paul reveals that he was the victim but survived his wounds. He performs the marriage ceremony, forgives his attacker, and reconciles father and son.
- 5 *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins, Collected Letters, 1831-1864*, Vol. 1, eds. William Baker, Andrew Gasson,

- Graham Law, Paul Lewis, Pickering and Chatto, London 2005, pp.110-111.
- 6 *The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins*, Wilkie Collins Society, addenda and corrigenda, no.3, 2007, p.38.
  - 7 Henry Morley, *The Examiner*, 14 July 1855, p.437, col. 3; reprinted with minor changes in *The Journal of a London Playgoer from 1851-1866*, Routledge, London 1891, pp.103-104.
  - 8 *The British Academy Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12 vols., eds. Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson and Angus Easson. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1965-2002, vol. 7, p.628, 24 May 1855.
  - 9 *The Poems and Verses of Charles Dickens, Collected and Edited, with Bibliographical Notes* by F. G. Kitton, Chapman and Hall, London 1903, p.113. Linley had dedicated an earlier ballad, 'Clara' to Mrs. Dickens in October 1850 (see *Pilgrim*, vol. 6, p.193, 17 October 1850).
  - 10 *Charles Dickens*, Michael Slater, Yale, New Haven and London 2009, p.655, note 10 to p.394.
  - 11 'Crummles' was Dickens's stage name.
  - 12 *Pilgrim*, vol. 7, pp.624-5.
  - 13 *Pilgrim*, vol. 7, p.627.
  - 14 *Macmillan's Magazine*, XXIII, January 1871 pp.206-215. Ainger's recollections of the prologue differ from the BL text.
  - 15 *The Poems and Verses of Charles Dickens*, p.115, which includes the direction, "Slow music all the time; unseen speaker; curtain down" before the Prologue to *The Lighthouse*.
  - 16 *Dickens and the stage*, T. E Pemberton, George Redway, London 1888, p.125.
  - 17 *Dickens and the Drama*, S. J. Adair Fitz-Gerald, Chapman & Hall, London 1910, p.44.
  - 18 Dickens home at 48 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LX, where he lived from 1837-39.
  - 19 *Pilgrim*, vol. 7, p.634.
  - 20 Now held in the collections of the Charles Dickens Museum.
  - 21 *Reminiscences, impressions & anecdotes*, Francesco Berger, Sampson Low, Marston, London 1913, p.19.
  - 22 *Ibid*.
  - 23 *The Public Face*, 7 June 1855, letter to Mrs. Spiers.
  - 24 *The Daily News*, 12 July 1855, p.4 cols.5-6.
  - 25 *The Examiner*, 14 July 1855, p.437, col.3.
  - 26 *The Times*, 12 July 1855, p.12, col.5.
  - 27 *The Examiner*, 14 July 1855, p.437, col.3.
  - 28 *The Life of Charles Dickens*, Forster, John, ed. J. W. T. Ley, Cecil Palmer, London 1928, p.575.
  - 29 *Ancestors and Friends*, John Lehmann, Eyre & Spottiswoode, London 1962, p.173.
  - 30 'Glimpses of Charles Dickens', *North American Review*, CLX (1895), 533-4; substantially repeated in 'Reminiscences of My Father', *Windsor Magazine* supplement, LXXXI (Dec 1934), (*Pilgrim*, vol. 7, p.667, n.4).
  - 31 *Pilgrim*, vol. 7, p.650.
  - 32 *Pilgrim*, vol. 7, p.653.
  - 33 *The Public Face*, 28 June 1855, vol. 1, pp.126-7.
  - 34 *The Public Face*, 15 July 1857, vol. 1, pp.147-8.
  - 35 *The Public Face*, 10 August 1857, vol. 1, p.149. Charley here is Charles Collins.
  - 36 *The Public Face*, 5 October 1857, vol. 1, p.151.
  - 37 *Pilgrim*, vol. 8, p.418.
  - 38 *The Examiner*, 15 August 1857, p.518 col.1; reprinted in *The Journal of a London Playgoer from 1851-1866*, pp. 162-163.
  - 39 *The Public Face*, 5 September 1857, vol. 1, p.150.
  - 40 *The New York Times*, 22 January 1858, p.4, col.6.
  - 41 *New York Daily Tribune*, 22 January 1858, p.5 col.5.
  - 42 LCP Collection. Add. ms. 52967T.
  - 43 *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* Vol. IV 1800-1900, compiled by Barbara Rosenbaum & Pamela White, Mansell, London 1982, p.676.
  - 44 Forster ms. 115 Forster 48.D. (National Art Library).
  - 45 Sold at Anderson Galleries, Sale 2099, 15-16 November [1926].
  - 46 See note 3 for details of Pearson's version.
  - 47 There is possibly a similar confusion in the *New York Times* review, 22 January 1858.
  - 48 *The Public Face*, 17 October 1857, vol. 1, p.153.
  - 49 *The Public Face*, 2 June 1860, vol. 1, pp.198-9.
  - 50 *The Public Face*, 27 April 1859, vol. 1, p.176
  - 51 *Collected Letters*, Wilkie Collins Society, addenda and corrigenda, no.3, 2007, p.38, 7 May 1862.
  - 52 *Collected Letters*, Wilkie Collins Society, addenda and corrigenda, no. 6, 2010, p.14, 28 June 1880.
  - 53 *The Public Face*, 17 November 1862, vol.1, p.281.
  - 54 *The Queen of Hearts*, Hurst and Blackett, London 1859; Introduction pp.i-iii.
  - 55 *Une poignée de romans*, Hetzel, Paris 1864. The second series includes *Le Phare* on pp.285-346.
  - 56 Pierre Tissot van Patot, personal communication.

ROYAL  
**OLYMPIC THEATRE**

**WYCH STREET, STRAND,**  
LESSEES, Messrs. **F. ROBSON & W. S. EMDEN**  
Kennington Park. Tavistock Street, Bedford Square.

**N.B.—The Doors will Open at Seven, and the Performances will commence at Half-past Seven.**

**ACTUAL & RESPONSIBLE MANAGERS, MESSRS.**  
**F. ROBSON AND W. S. EMDEN**

**This Evening, Monday, Sept. 7th,**  
**AND DURING THE WEEK,**

The Entertainments will commence with the Drama, in Two Acts, of The

# LIGHTHOUSE

**BY WILKIE COLLINS.**

The ORIGINAL PROLOGUE will be Spoken by Mr. LESLIE.

The New Act-Drop & Scenery, by Mr. J. GRAY & Mr. CRAVEN, from Original Designs  
The MUSIC & ORIGINAL OVERTURE Composed & Adapted by Mr. FRANCESCO BERGER,  
Conducted by Mr. BARNARD.

**Aaron Gurnock** (the Head Lightkeeper) **Mr. F. ROBSON**  
**Martin Gurnock** (his Son—Second Lightkeeper) **Mr. WALTER GORDON**  
**Jacob Dale** (the Third Lightkeeper) **Mr. ADDISON**  
**Samuel Furley** (a Pilot) **Mr. G. COOKE**  
**First Fisherman, Mr. H. COOPER** **Second Fisherman, Mr. WHITE**  
**First Sailor, Mr. FRANKS** **Lightkeepers, Fishermen, &c.**  
**The Shipwrecked Lady.** — **Miss SWANBOURNE**  
**Phoebe Dale.** — **Miss WINDHAM**

**Scene.—Interior of the Second**  
**EDDYSTONE LIGHTHOUSE,**  
**BUILT BY JOHN RUDYER.**  
**PERIOD. — THE YEAR 1748.**

After which, will be presented a Comedietta, called

# A SUBTERFUGE

**Edward Falkner,** **Mr. G. MORRAY**  
**Oliver,** — **Mr. GEORGE VINING**  
**Lucy Falkner.** **Mrs. STIRLING**

Playbill for the production of The Lighthouse on 7 September 1857

# THE LIGHTHOUSE

**A DRAMA IN TWO ACTS**

**WITH A PROLOGUE**

ACTS 1 AND 2

BY WILKIE COLLINS ESQ

ROYAL OLYMPIC THEATRE

JULY 1857



**DRAM PERS.**

AARON GURNOCK    The Head Light Keeper  
MARTIN GURNOCK   His Son, the Second Light Keeper  
JACOB DALE         The Third Light Keeper  
SAMUEL FURLEY    a Pilot  
FISHERMEN  
SAILORS  
LIGHT KEEPERS

THE SHIPWRECKED LADY. LADY GRACE.

PHOEBE DALE

The Scene is the Interior of the second  
Eddystone Lighthouse –  
built by John Ruyard –  
Period – the year 1748



Prologue.

Under speaker - Curtain down - dark.

A story of those rocks where down'd ships come -  
To cast their wreck'd upon the steps of Home  
Where solitary men the long year through  
The wind their music and the breeze their vision -  
Warm memories to them the beacon light.

A story of these rocks is here to night.  
Eddystone Lighthouse - (Interior view discovered)

In its ancient form  
Ere he who built it, wish'd for the great storm  
That shiver'd it to nothing - once again  
Behold outgaming on the angry main!  
Within it are three men - to make repairs  
In our frail bark of fancy, swift as air!  
They are but shadows - as the lover grim  
Took none but shadows in his boat with him  
So be ye shades, and for a little space  
The real world a dream without a trace.  
Return is easy - It will have ye back  
Too soon, to the old, beaten, dusty track:  
For but an hour forget it. Billows rise  
Blow winds - fall rain - be black ye midnight skies,  
And you who watch the light - arise! arise!

Interior view rises and discovers

the scene.

PROLOGUE.

*Unseen speaker – Curtain down – dark*

A story of those rocks where doom'd ships come.

To cast their wreck'd upon the steps of Home

Where solitary men the long year through

The wind their music and the brine their view –

Warn mariners to shun the Beacon light.

A story of these Rocks is here to night.

Eddystone Lighthouse – (*exterior view discovered.*)

In its ancient form

Ere he who built it, wished for the great storm

That shiver'd it to nothing – once again

Behold out gleaming on the angry main!

Within it are three men: to these repair

In our frail bark of Fancy, swift as air!

They are but shadows – as the Rower grim

Took none but shadows in his boat with him

So be ye shades, and for a little space

The real world a dream without a trace.

Return is easy – It will have ye back

Too soon, to the old, beaten, dusty track –

For but an hour forget it. Billows rise

Blow winds – fall rain – be black ye midnight skies,

And you who watch the Light – arise! arise!

*Exterior view rises and discovers the scene.*

ACT 1. –SC 1. THE KITCHEN CHAMBER OF THE LIGHTHOUSE.

*A Tarpaulin stretched across on line.*

*Jacob Dale discovered – seated in Chair with slate on his knees – Martin Gurnock on Sea Chest opposite.*

JACOB. Martin – Martin Gurnock – Look up a bit, lad. I want to speak to you, Martin – How the Lighthouse shakes! I thought there was a lull in the storm an hour ago – no hope – no hope of rescue – Before it is calm enough for the provision boat from shore to put off we shall all have died of starvation on this lonesome rock – Martin – Oh – Martin – look up and speak to me. How is it with you, lad? – You're young and strong – you ought to weather it out longer than your father and me – longer a good deal, Martin.

MARTIN. My head feels strange – light and dizzy somehow – I've been dreaming and yet I haven't been asleep – I suppose it's hunger, Jacob – hunger and weakness.

JACOB. Aye, aye, lad, that's the complaint with all three of us now. My head is as dazed as yours. Here's our log – It's as much as I can do to steady my hand and clear my eyesight to make the entry for to day.

MARTIN. To day? Another day come then – How long is it past midnight

JACOB. One in the morning – Here's yesterday's entry – December 16<sup>th</sup> 1748. I'm just going to make to day's entry now – December 17<sup>th</sup> – Wind still blowing a gale from the South West – no hope of relief from the shore – Provisions all exhausted.

MARTIN. How long is it, today, since the boat made her last trip to the Lighthouse from shore?

JACOB. Eddystone Lighthouse – Monday 19<sup>th</sup> November – Boat came from the Ramhead and brought ten days provision for the three Light Keepers – Monday 19<sup>th</sup> to Monday 26<sup>th</sup> one week – Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> December two weeks – Monday 10<sup>th</sup> three weeks – Monday 17<sup>th</sup> – four weeks – Four weeks to day, Martin – Four weeks of heavy gales on this lonesome rock – Four weeks of weather that no Boat could put off in: Four weeks alone here, and only ten-days provisions to stand it out on.

MARTIN. We ought to have saved more – we ought to have lived on quarter rations the first week.

JACOB. It will be all one, soon, Martin – Our life's work in this world is pretty nigh over – a few hours more on less will end it.

MARTIN. We have got a little brandy left, haven't we?

JACOB. A little better than a dram left – it's in the bottle there

MARTIN. A drop a piece will Keep us alive for to day – and who knows what may happen before tomorrow – Has father moved or spoke at all since I have been dreaming here by the table?

JACOB. Not that I have heard.

MARTIN. Hush! I think I hear him moving.

JACOB. How is he?

MARTIN. Bad, Jacob – Light in the head – His eye is wandering – and he moans a kind of gibberish to himself.

JACOB. You said you were a dreaming just now lad – What of?

MARTIN. Your daughter's cottage ashore, Jacob – I fell into a sort of doze, thinking of Phoebe. When you startled me up I thought it was holiday time with me, and that I was taking my pipe in the Chimney Corner, and talking to her while she sat at work.

JACOB. A bitter thought that for Phoebe's old father away here in the Lighthouse & for you her husband that was to be, come this next blessed Christmas time.

MARTIN. They must have put up our bans in Church yesterday for the last time of asking. I dare say the congregation thought of us when they heard it.

JACOB. And prayed for us, perhaps, lad.

MARTIN. Prayed for us, likely enough – prayed for old Aaron Gurnock and Jacob Dale, prayed for Martin Gurnock, when they heard him asked in Church, and remembered that he was starving out here with ten miles of raging Sea between him & his promised wife.

JACOB. And only a year, Martin, since she gave you her promise.

MARTIN. Less by a good six weeks – Have you forgotten my getting leave on shore – and coming off when it was over with Phoebe in the boat?

JACOB. Forgotten? Not I – I can call it to mind as easy as ever you can. – I remember her taking me below into the store room, poor child – Why Phoebe, says I. Your two cheeks are as red as my old Fishing Cap – What's Martin been saying to you in the boat? He's been asking me says she – and then stops short – I know what he's been asking of you, says I – and what's more I know you have said Yes – She looks up at me with the tears in her eyes and nods her head and puts her arm round my neck and begins kissing of me – I know how to come over old father she whispers and kisses me again – Ah, Martin, I can remember – I'm not past that yet!

MARTIN. I've got a keepsake of hers – a lock of hair tied in a bit of ribbon that she used to wear round her neck on Sundays. It isn't much – but if the boat

don't get off to help us till too late, I shouldn't like it to fall into strangers' hands.

JACOB. Don't put it back – tie it to your coat – she'll see it – and the sight of it will speak plain enough to her when we have done speaking for ever.

MARTIN. How?

JACOB. How! You don't know my girl, Martin, as well as I do – The Sea may run mountains high – the winds blow heavens hard – but when the first boat puts off from Shore for the Lighthouse, whether it's day, or whether it's night, safe or not safe – risk or no risk, my Phoebe will be one of the crew.

MARTIN. When was you up in the Crow's nest last?

JACOB. Ten o'clock

MARTIN. Did you see anything?

JACOB. Towards shore the drizzle was too thick – out at sea there was a break & a strip of moon. I saw the waves running in from the Atlantic awful high. And when I looked through the night glass, I thought I made out a Ship.

MARTIN. Was she beating out to sea?

JACOB. That's more than I can tell you. If she wasn't, with such a Coast as ours under her lee – her chance in this gale is not worth that. (*Snapping his fingers*)

MARTIN. I wonder whether it keeps clear to windward still – ?

JACOB. Mind what you're at. That window hasn't been mended since the Sea Gull broke it the other night. Look out for the wash of the spray, Martin. Look out.

MARTIN. I won't keep it open more than a moment.

JACOB. Well!

MARTIN. It looks worse than ever. Where are you going to?

JACOB. Up into the Crow's nest – you know what our orders are – When the Lighthouse is hid in fog, the light keepers are to warn ships off the Eddystone Rocks by sounding the Gong – You leave the door open here – so that if anything happens I can call down the Stairs. Good bye, Martin.

*Exit*

MARTIN. Good bye, Jacob. Poor old fellow – I wish he had let me do that work for him. He's too weak for it – I know he's too weak – I don't hear father moving – the gong will disturb him – I am afraid – but that can't be helped – as long as the fog lasts we are bound to keep it going. Poor dear Phoebe – I dare say she was in Church yesterday when the parson put up the bans. (*Gong.*) Brave old Jacob! he's as good as his word – he's at work already. I wonder if father

was much startled by that first stroke of the gong – Shall I look – no – not unless he calls – he moans and murmurs about his hunger whenever he sees me and I haven't a morsel of food to give him. Oh, this storm – this storm – when will the wind shift and the sea go down. (*Gong.*) I won't give up hoping yet. I won't for Phoebe's sake – there was a lull in the storm last night, there may be another before noon.

AARON. Martin – Martin.

MARTIN. If they come off the boat in time to save us – if Phoebe should really as her father says, make one of the crew – what a meeting it will be – my heart thumps again when I think of it. (*Gong.*) How we shall talk of the storm at the Lighthouse in after years!. How much dearer this great danger and distress will make us to each other.

AARON. Martin!

MARTIN. Father! How you startled me! Do you want to sit up? Sit down on the Chest – it's nearest the fire. Are you cold?

AARON. No – not cold.

MARTIN. I thought you could not be, lying down in your Clothes with your stiff jerkin on and the great Boat Cloak over you – Stop – let me get your shoes – There, that's more comfortable now – are you still hungry?

AARON. No – not hungry.

MARTIN. There was a lull in the storm last night father – there may be another before long – and then we may look out for the boat – do you hear – for the Boat – for rescue from shore.

AARON. No rescue for me.

MARTIN. Yes – yes – for you – and for me – and for Jacob.

AARON. Where is Jacob?

MARTIN. Up in the Crow's nest – The sea fog has come down on us & he's keeping the gong going. (*Gong.*) There! Do you hear! He's as old as you and yet you see he's strong enough for his work still – Don't be down hearted father – Hope to the last, like me.

AARON. I've done with hope, Martin, I'm dying.

MARTIN. No, no – you're only weak with long fasting.

AARON. I'm dying – dying hard – dying with the horrors on me to make death dreadful

MARTIN. His mind wanders

AARON. Yes – my mind – that's it – How did you know it was my mind?

MARTIN. I did not know it. I spoke at random – don't be angry.

AARON. That's what comes of being a scholar – and he knows it's my mind – Martin, don't tell Jacob. He's an honest fellow in his way – but he can't keep a secret – He'd tell upon me. He'd get frightened, and go ashore to the magistrate – Him & me are friends, but he'd hang me for all that. While I'm alive don't tell Jacob. (*Gong.*)

MARTIN. What is it I am not to tell Jacob?

AARON. Haven't I told you?

MARTIN. No.

AARON. It's a load on my soul – I must rid myself of it before I die – I – what's this? – Blood?

MARTIN. No – no – no. Jacob drank some water a little while ago – it's only a drop spilt on the table.

AARON. Water! Ah! Water now – year's ago – it was blood.

MARTIN. How strangely he returns to that.

AARON. Isn't this my old table?

MARTIN. Yes.

AARON. My old table that I had when I was a farmer ashore?

MARTIN. Yes

AARON. My old table that I bought when I got married – that I've kept by me ever since?

MARTIN. Yes – yes –

AARON. There's the place where he put the Knife – there was blood on the blade – and a drop dripped off it.

MARTIN. Again! Father, don't point like that – He doesn't hear! His senses seem gone – what can I do for him – The Brandy! my share of the Brandy – Here, father, drink this – it will make you feel stronger – it will steady your head.

AARON. Will it? Aha! Good! I shall last a little longer after that.

MARTIN. It makes you feel steadier and clearer, doesn't it –?

AARON. Steadier and clearer – yes. Happier – no – what did I say last before you got the Brandy?

MARTIN. You said you had something on your mind – and you said that spot of wet on the table was blood. But, now you feel stronger and better.

AARON. Now I feel stronger and better I can go on and end it. Sit near me – sit



near me and let me speak. Last evening when you wished me good night did you feel my hands trembling?

MARTIN. Yes.

AARON. The secret lay very heavy on my soul last night. I couldn't get to sleep for it. I heard Jacob go to his bed place up above – I heard you fall off to sleep – I heard the old clock ticking over my head – I heard the rush of the wind and the heavy wash of the sea – I wasn't sleeping and dreaming – I was awake – and saw her ghost.

MARTIN. Whose ghost?

AARON. The woman with the black hood and the long white sleeves – and the red scar on her throat – She came close up to my bedside and spoke to me – Tell it, she says tell it Aaron Gurnock before you die.

MARTIN. Father, don't look so – don't talk so. There's a dread stealing over me – there's a thought coming into my mind. Oh, go back – go back to bed and say no more –

AARON. I must say on to the end – Sit down – It was in your mother's life time – You remember 7 or 8 years ago when I had the Farm House on the Cornish Shore.

MARTIN. Yes.

AARON. You remember the autumn time when things went wrong with me – and I got into debt – ? – When you went away with your mother to stay along with her relations a little while?

MARTIN. Yes. I remember –

AARON. When you two left the house, I was alone in it – true enough – but you hadn't been gone a day, before I had some one come to keep me company – an old mate of mine before I was married – by name Benjamin Tranter – Your mother always hated him, and said he was fit company for no honest man – so he skulked till her back was turned, and then he came and kept me company at the Farm House. Did I tell you it was Autumn time then?

MARTIN. Yes – yes.

AARON. A heavy, hot, misty Autumn time – Benjamin & me kept together in the Farm House low enough both of us – I had debts gathering behind me – and prison threatening before – And he hadn't a shilling left in the world – One night we sat by the kitchen hearth – grumbling about the hard times and rummaging our brains for ways of raising money – I remember the Sea fog had been gathering over the moor all round us, ever since the afternoon – All of a sudden my old sheep dog jumps up and growls – and then we hear a knock at the door – I go and open it – and under the porch I see a lady –

MARTIN. A lady – A lady alone on the moor at night!

AARON. There she stood, holding a stout Devonshire Pony by the bridle – and no servant or anybody with her – I’ve lost my servant miles away in this white sea mist, she says – and I want shelter for myself and my pony tonight – There were saddle bags on the pony’s back – I asked her in – and Benjamin, he took off the saddle bags – They weighed heavy and he gave me a look as he hefted them, that I didn’t like. What are you shivering about?

MARTIN. I’m cold.

AARON. I took the Saddle bags from Benjamin, & showed her into the Kitchen – She wore a black hood lined next the face with white – and a black gown with long hanging white sleeves – She was a pretty woman – with bright eyes, and a kind comely face – We are poor, says I, my wife’s away, and I haven’t much to eat in the house. Never mind that, it’s rest I want, she says – You don’t come from our parts, says I. No – says she – I’m not from your South Cornish Coast – I’m from north Devon – Have you got a bed for me to lie down upon? Yes – says I – and showed her the room – and took her saddle bags up stairs for her. We will talk more about you & your poverty tomorrow morning, says she. Those were all the words we had together all I said to her – all she said to me.

MARTIN. All you mean for that night? Father – father – I hope you mean all for that night?

AARON. All for ever! When I got back to the Kitchen, I had time to fill a pipe & smoke it out before Benjamin came in from the Stable. You’ve been a long time littering down the pony, says I. He gave me no answer – he would not even look at me. The strange lady is up in my wife’s room, says I – And where are the saddle bags, says he, very quick – up with her, of course, says I – He laughed after that – Why do you laugh? says I – He wouldn’t answer again – He seemed to want to go to sleep – I soon got drowsy myself with nothing to do and nobody to talk to, and dozed in my chair – I wasn’t quite asleep – for I heard the dog restless, and I saw in a sort of half dreaming way, Benjamin get up softly, & take a turn or two backwards & forwards in the room and then go out suddenly. After that, my head got heavier, and I fell off into a sleep. What is there in me to frighten you?

MARTIN. Everything.

AARON. I don’t know how long I slept, or why I woke: but I did wake all of a sudden – The dog was crouched down at my feet, trembling and whining – and there was a smell of burning that I couldn’t account for – The candle was guttering but there was light enough for me to see that Benjamin was in the kitchen – He had a knife in one hand and a heavy leather bag in the other, and when I opened my eyes I met his, staring straight at me – He stood by

the side of this table that we are standing by now, and when we looked at each other, he put the knife down here. I got up and saw something drip off the blade. And there's the place it dripped on – There – Martin – there!

MARTIN. Don't touch me!

AARON. Martin!

MARTIN. Don't touch me!

AARON. I didn't kill her.

MARTIN. Did you give up the guilty man?

AARON. No!

MARTIN. Did you – I can't say it – I can't speak the words!

AARON. I helped him to hide her dead body.

MARTIN. Oh, heavens!

AARON. We carried her, dressed as she was, all in black, with her hood & her long white sleeves, down the Cliff path from the edge of the Moor – down – down to the Sea Beach – We never said one word to each other all the way – The mist was gone, the tide was at the ebb – and the sand was shining under the Harvest moon. Without a word passing between us we took her into the Daw's Cave. The tide leaves it the ebb, and fills it at the flow – we left her against a heap of shells and Sea weed high up in the Cave, and went back to the Farm House – and still we never said so much as one word to each other, all the way – Benjamin –

MARTIN. Where is he now?

AARON. Where I am going to soon – he was killed in a fight at a Public House. Benjamin, I say, went into the Stable and took the pony out – saddled to the Cliffside – and I went after him, because I was afraid to be alone. He drove the pony over the cliffs on to the rocks below. Then he turns to me and says – 'It's all safe now – I burnt the bed linen while you were asleep. How much do you want? he says, and takes the Leather Bag out of his coat pocket – Nothing, says I – it's blood money, and I won't touch it – He didn't speak another word and we parted company on the spot – He went his way over the moor and I went mine back to the farm – In two days the Hue and Cry came after the lady – but the flood tide was beforehand with the Hue and Cry, and the Daw's cave was empty when the Constable and his men looked into it. They only found the pony jammed in among the Rocks and the next day they traced her servant who had gone astray in the mist to the Shaft of an old mine – After that everybody believed that she had fallen over the Cliff side in the fog. (*Gong.*)

MARTIN. And you never dropped a word of the truth?

AARON. Never to any living soul from that day to this. People came all the way, Martin, from where she lived, to know if her body had been found – poor people, who said she had fed, clothed and taught them, as if they had been her own children – They cried when they talked about her – They said, since her husband died, she always kept to that black dress of hers, always lived alone, always spent her time in doing good – They cursed the fogs and the mists of Cornwall, and the day when she heard that our poor were suffering, and set forth to help them with her money and her kind words – The very children, the strange people brought with them, fretted and cried too – and asked when Lady Grace was coming back. That was the only name they gave her – Lady Grace!

MARTIN. Father! Oh! Phoebe – Phoebe! can I look you in the face after all that I have heard –? Is the son of Aaron Gurnock worthy to wear your keepsake! Hark! I hear something – it sounded like a cheer from the Sea!

JACOB. (*without*) Martin! Martin!

AARON. It's Jacob! He's heard us talking! he's heard the secret.

JACOB. Martin! The boat from shore!

*Shout without* – Lighthouse ahoy!

AARON. Oh, Martin! Keep Jacob away from me! I know he's heard us – I know he's heard the secret.

MARTIN. The boat from Shore! And Jacob said Phoebe would make one of the crew – Dare I so much as look at her – after all that I have just heard? – She'll see the horrid secret in my face – she'll hear it in my voice!

PHOEBE. (*without*) Oh, father! father! thank Heaven we are in time!

*Enter* JACOB

JACOB. This way, Phoebe –! Here they are!

*Enter Phoebe – Furley – Fishermen and Light Keepers with Hampers etc.*

PHOEBE. Martin – dear Martin – Oh! how pale you are! How lost and sad you look –! I have suffered too, dear: the last four weeks have almost broken my heart – And your father, Martin – I don't see him. – How awfully he is altered. He seemed as if he hardly knew me.

MARTIN. Your cloak, Phoebe – let me take it off – it is wet through with Salt water.

Phoebe. Wet through, indeed, and my hood almost washed off my head. Oh, we have had such a gale to pull through, such a sea to fight with – Why, Martin, won't you let me shake hands with your father? – My father that is to be, one of these days.

MARTIN. Her father! Benjamin Tranter's accomplice her father!

PHOEBE. I don't hear you, dear.

MARTIN. My father is hardly fit to be spoken to just now – He wanders in his mind a little – It is only weakness from long want of food.

PHOEBE. Want of food! How dreadful to think of at his age, and at poor old father's – Oh! Master Furley, how long you are unpacking the hampers. Shall I come and help you?

FURLEY. No, no my lass – you had better a deal, sit down and rest yourself – after the pull we have had in the teeth of the gale.

MARTIN. Come and sit by me, Phoebe.

PHOEBE. Ah! Martin! This time yesterday I was thinking of you in Church, thinking whether I should ever sit by your side again.

FURLEY. Now my men, bustle about, and let's have the table ready in no time. Friend Aaron –

AARON. Martin! He's going to take me ashore. Stop him, Martin – stop him!

FURLEY. Leave him to me. Jacob told me his poor storm beaten wits had been woolgathering. I'll bring him round, never fear. Take you ashore? And why not – it's your turn to go ashore.

AARON. No.

FURLEY. But I say, yes – your turn – and Jacob's – and Martin's – of course! we've brought the three extra Light Keepers off in the boat to relieve you – and we're going to take you all ashore as soon as we have fattened you up again with something to eat –

AARON. Something to eat.

FURLEY. Yes – good broth, with lots of tatars and barley in it – The right sort of stuff, friend Aaron, for the stomachs of half starved men.

PHOEBE. Has your father been like that many days, Martin?

MARTIN. No, not many – one or two days – I hardly know how long.

PHOEBE. Well, as I was telling you, just now – I bore it pretty well till our bans were put up. Then, when I heard your name and mine, I burst out crying before all the people in Church – He doesn't listen –! Martin!

MARTIN. Yes, Phoebe.

PHOEBE. You don't seem to be listening to me.

MARTIN. Oh, yes! I was listening, indeed – You were saying –

PHOEBE. Oh, nothing!

MARTIN. I was listening, Phoebe, I was indeed!

PHOEBE. It was only a word or two about what happened to me in Church – For days before I had been so weak and broken down with fright and anxiety about you that I wasn't fit to bear much – You can fancy what I must have suffered, Martin, hearing the pitiful wind blow as if would blow for ever – seeing the white raging surf always the same – morning, noon and night – Asking Furley and the Fishermen every day when the Boat could put off to rescue you – and always getting the same cruel answer – no boat, lass, that ever was built could live in such a sea as that! Oh! I cried at night, Martin, and woke with the heart ache in the morning, till I thought I should die too – and wondered whether they would bury us together in the same grave – not listening again! What makes him look so anxiously that way?

FURLEY. The broth's ready! Now then, whatever you do, don't be in a hurry.

JACOB. Oh, lord, it's a pleasure only to smell it.

FURLEY. A regular nosegay, isn't it? Steady there, friend Aaron – I'm not going to let you have too much or swallow too fast. I was one of a starving Boat's Crew once myself and I know the danger of letting a famished man overeat himself. Slower, Jacob, or you'll scald your throat. Look at Martin, he's the only one of the three who swallows his broth like a gentleman.

AARON. More!

JACOB. More!

FURLEY. More – do you call that manners? Wait a bit and take breath. Do you think I'm going to let men in your condition swallow a whole saucepan full of broth among you at once?

PHOEBE. Oh, give them a little more, Master Furley, a little more can't hurt them – Look, here's Martin's basin empty.

FURLEY. Ah, I dare say – Let you alone, young woman for looking after Martin.

PHOEBE. Do you feel better, Martin?

MARTIN. Yes, Phoebe – better already.

PHOEBE. I'll make Master Furley give you some more. He looked at me in the old way then – perhaps I was wrong in thinking him altered towards me, after all.

FURLEY. Now will you all promise to take a long time over it?

JACOB. Yes.

AARON. Yes – yes!

PHOEBE. Martin deserves a double share for eating so slowly the first time.

FURLEY. Does he, Miss? I believe if you had the feeding of him, he'd be a dead man in half an hour. Now there's a second Sup for you, and let it slip down gently, or you won't get a drop more – Stop! I won't trust you – Steady! and take your time from me.

AARON. Let us alone.

JACOB. Yes – do let us alone.

FURLEY. Silence there and stop directly – or I'll pitch all the rest of the broth out of the window – Aha! I thought I should get the upper hand of you – I thought you'd give in at last to Pig headed Sam! Now, take your time properly from me and you shall have a third half – 1-2-3 – take a spoonful – 4-5-6 – take another. Stop! or by the Lord Harry the broth shall go into the Sea! 7-8-9. third spoonful – 10-11-12 – Hello! Basins empty again! I gave you four spoonfuls – Where's the fourth?

JACOB. Where it ought to be.

FURLEY. Ah ha – ha ha! Now's the time I think to throw in the Dutchman's strong waters. There my lads, drink away and be happy – Give me a toothful of liquor for myself – Here's all your good healths. Martin – drink! Phoebe you don't look half happy enough – jump up lass, and sing us a song. Sing, Phoebe, or I shall never get them to wait long enough for their third course.

PHOEBE. Sing, Master Furley.

JACOB. Sing, darling – Aye – why not?

PHOEBE. What song shall I sing, father?

JACOB. Sing my favourite song – the Song of the Wreck. It's a song of a kind heart under a poor Coat – & that's the sweetest singing Bird in a Cage I know – sing the song of the Wreck, my dear.

SONG – PHOEBE

1

The wind blew high – the waters raved  
A Ship drove on the land.  
A hundred human creatures saved  
Kneeled down upon the sand.  
Three score were drown'd, three score were thrown  
Upon the black rocks wild  
And there among them left alone  
They found one helpless child



## 2

A seaman rough, to shipwreck bred  
 Stood out from all the rest.  
 And gently laid the lonely head  
 Upon his honest breast.  
 And travelling oer the desert wide  
 It was a solemn joy  
 To see them ever side by side  
 The Seaman and the boy.

## 3

In famine, sickness, hunger, thirst  
 The two were still but one  
 Until the seaman drooped the first  
 And felt his labors done.  
 Then to a trusty friend he spoke  
 Across the Desert wide  
 O, take this poor boy for my sake  
 And kissed the child, and died.

PHOEBE. Martin doesn't hear me, father – he doesn't mind the story.

JACOB. He listens pet. How can he love you and not listen. Go on – finish it.

## 4

Toiling along in weary plight  
 Through heavy jungle more  
 Those two came later every night  
 To warm them at the fire.  
 Until the Captain said one day  
 O, seaman good and kind  
 To save thyself – now come away  
 And leave the boy behind.

## 5

The child was slumb'ring near the blaze  
 O, Captain, let him rest  
 Until it sinks, when his own ways  
 Shall teach us what is best.  
 They watch'd the whiten'd ashy heap

They touch'd the child in vain  
They did not leave him there asleep  
He never woke again.

PHOEBE. Something has altered Martin – he never so much as looked at me while I was singing. He won't notice me now – ! Why does he look so anxiously after his father. (*Gun.*)

AARON. What's that?

JACOB. Hush! (*Gun.*)

MARTIN. A ship's gun! (*Gun.*)

JACOB. A ship in danger! Stop! I know what ship it is!

MARTIN. What do you mean?

JACOB. Don't you remember, Martin, my telling you I sighted a ship this morning from the Crow's nest?

MARTIN. True – a ship far off –

JACOB. I'm afraid she's nigh enough now – When I last looked out after sounding the Gong – I thought I saw that same ship under bare poles bearing straight down on us. Perhall ! Go up and see what you can make out – Signal it down here by striking on the gong.

*Exit – Light Keeper – Furley etc*

MARTIN. You are quite sure you made out a Ship this morning?

JACOB. Yes: tho' there was a little fog still hanging to seaward – (*Gong.*) I was right – the ship is in danger!

PHOEBE. Father, can I be of any use? Do make me of some use.

JACOB. Stop a bit Phoebe –

MARTIN. The fog is lifting every moment. I can see the Ship!

JACOB. Near.

MARTIN. Awfully near.

Phoebe. Oh. what will become of the poor souls on board.

JACOB. Do you make her out large?

MARTIN. No – a Brig, with her foretopmast carried away, and her storm jib in ribbons – She's driving right down on us at the mercy of wind and sea.

*Enter Furley & Light Keepers*

FURLEY. Ropes! ropes! In less than ten minutes she'll be wreck'd on the Rocks below us – The only chance of saving the crew is to have the ropes handy

before the ship strikes – Get the ropes out of the Store Room – Take some up into the gallery – Bring some in here – and keep the rest below.

*Exit Light Keepers*

PHOEBE. Make me of some use! Do make me of some use.

MARTIN. Lively there! Lively with the Ropes!

*Light Keepers enter with a Coil of rope.*

FURLEY. Now my man, up to the gallery after me.

*Exit Furley & Light Keepers*

MARTIN. Brig ahoy!

PHOEBE. What is it?

MARTIN. They're launching a boat over the Brig's quarter – It's madness – it's throwing away their lives – Brig ahoy! don't trust to the Boat.

JACOB. They can't hear you – the wind's too high.

MARTIN. The rope, Jacob, quick with the rope. Steady, Jacob! that's enough for the present. Below there! Send a man up into the gallery!

PHOEBE. The boat, Martin – what are they doing now with the boat?

MARTIN. They have manned her, and got clear of the Brig – Gallery ahoy! We can spare you another man up there!

JACOB. Look at that wave! Oh – the boat – the boat's capsized!

PHOEBE. Father! look out again – Can you see how many are left alive in the Ship?

JACOB. Three or four only – huddled together on the deck!

MARTIN. Show your Blue Lights below there! The next Sea will bring the Brig on the Rocks.

JACOB. The boat! The boat is washed up on the high Rock beneath us – There's the name of the Ship painted in white on the Stern – Use your young eyes – read it –

PHOEBE. I can read it, father! Oh! the Ship! How awfully near us –!

JACOB. Quick! Quick!

PHOEBE. I can read it easy, father – The name painted on the boat's stern is The Lady Grace!

AARON. What?

PHOEBE. The Lady Grace!

AARON. Martin! The Lady Grace!

*Crash of the striking vessel is heard on the Rocks outside – Phoebe crouches down and hides her face – Martin springs forward to quiet his father.*

*The Act drop falls on Tableau.*

END OF ACT I

ACT 2. SCENE 1. SAME AS ACT 1.

*Furley – Fishermen – 3 sailors – Jacob – Phoebe & Martin discovered*

FURLEY. Now, my lads, those ropes have had plenty of time to get dry since yesterday.

SAILOR. Trust us to take care of them, Master Furley – These ropes saved our lives and – after you and the fishermen here – I look on them as the best friends we have in the world.

FISHER<sup>m</sup>. Give all the credit brother – where the credit is due – to Martin Gurnock there – and to Master Furley – We should never have got the first rope aboard your Brig if it had not been for them.

FURLEY. And how much do you think we should have done if it hadn't been for the man who got out on the Brig's bowsprit and risked his life to catch the rope?

SAILOR. Aye, aye! all very well – but who cast the rope so that I could catch it? No! No! I give the credit to the men at the Lighthouse. That's what I do.

FURLEY. And I give it to that rope – the rope that held firm and saved you.

FISHER<sup>m</sup>. A regular good bit of stuff that rope – Thoddy of Plymouth made it.

SAILOR. Did he now? Thoddy of Plymouth is the man for my money.

FURLEY. And mind you, here's one that oughtn't to be forgotten. If I was asked to name which rope saved the lady passenger on board the Brig, I should say this here.

FISHER<sup>m</sup>. And that's even a better bit of stuff than the other. Tinkler of Falmouth made that.

SAILOR. Tinkler of Falmouth may be the ladies' friend – but Thoddy of Plymouth for my money.

FISHER<sup>m</sup>. How do you make out that it was Tinkler of Falmouth saved the lady passenger on board the Brig?

SAILOR. When Thoddy of Plymouth was made fast between the Lighthouse & the wreck.

FURLEY. Stop a bit. First you on board the Brig lashed this same lady passenger safe in the arm Chair, didn't you?

SAILOR. Yes, but what did the arm Chair run upon to the lighthouse? – Thoddy of Plymouth.

SAILORS & FISHERMEN. Aye! aye! Thoddy of Plymouth, sure enough!

FURLEY. Stop a bit. Thoddy of Plymouth bore the weight, I grant you – But

when we wanted to haul in the Chair from the Brig to the Lighthouse and when we wanted to steady it at the bottom while we were hauling – what did we lay our hands on? – Tinkler!

FISHER<sup>M</sup>. Right, Master Furley – quite right – Tinkler of Falmouth it was.

SAILORS & FISHERMEN. Aye! aye! Tinkler of Falmouth.

SAILOR. I don't care – Thoddy of Plymouth for my money. (*Exit.*)

FISHER<sup>M</sup>. And I don't care either. This rope's the best bit of the work of the two – Tinkler of Falmouth for my money!

*Exeunt Sailors and Fisherman*

FURLEY. Well, well, which ever rope did it you and the lady Passenger are safe in the Lighthouse at any rate – And that's something to say, now the Brig has gone to pieces on the Rocks. Why, my lass, you look but down hearted this morning. Have you been up to see how the lady is getting on after her night's rest?

PHOEBE. Yes – she has slept well, and talks of going on shore in the Boat this morning.

FURLEY. That's right – Have you found out anything about her yet?

PHOEBE. Nothing, except she is the kindest lady I ever met with – We had such a long talk together & she seemed to be so interested in everything that interested me – that we got to be like old friends directly. I answered all her questions & I'm afraid I told her my secrets.

FURLEY. Nothing remarkable in that, my girl! You wouldn't be half a woman if you could keep your secrets to yourself.

JACOB. What did you tell the lady, Phoebe?

PHOEBE. I would rather not say, father, just now.

FURLEY. Well, who ever the lady may be this I will say of her – she's the bravest woman I ever clapped eyes on. To see her yesterday with her life hanging on the strength of – rope – with the sea yawning for her below – and the wind howling at her above – never screeching out – never fainting away – never saying so much as one useless word – was the bravest sight I ever saw – You were with us, Jacob, when we saved her. Did you ever see the like of it in a woman before?

JACOB. No!

FURLEY. No! that's rather a short answer, friend Jacob – Martin, neither you nor your father have seen the lady yet?

MARTIN. Yes.

FURLEY. Another short answer – no – on one side – Yes – on the other –  
Something seems to have gone wrong among the three Light Keepers.

PHOEBE. Do you know when the boat is going back to shore, Master Furley?

FURLEY. In half an hour, if the lady is ready. The sun's shining and the sea's  
smoothing. We shall have a regular holiday pull of it back to land.

PHOEBE. A holiday pull back! – There will be little of the holiday in it for me.

FURLEY. What did you say, my girl?

PHOEBE. Nothing, Master Furley – nothing.

FURLEY. I'm in the way here, that's plain enough – Martin – I'm away to look  
after the boat. Good! I can't get an answer at all, this time.

*Exit*

MARTIN. Oh, that secret! That shameful, fearful secret! Jacob, I want to ask you  
a question.

JACOB. Well?

MARTIN. When one man commits a crime, and another helps him to escape  
answering for it, is it true that the Law thinks that other man a criminal, &  
punishes him as such when ever it can lay hands upon him?

JACOB. I don't know.

PHOEBE. What makes you ask such a strange question?

JACOB. Don't speak to him! – After the way he has behaved to you, I won't have  
you speak to him.

PHOEBE. Oh, father!

MARTIN. I was reading about it in a book and I don't know – I mean – I wanted to  
know whether the book was right.

JACOB. I say again – don't speak to him. What did you tell the lady up stairs – ? –  
Furley's gone now – What did you tell her?

PHOEBE. She was so good to me, and so interested in what little I told her about  
myself – and oh – father –! She has such a sweet smile when she speaks to  
you –

JACOB. But how came she to ask you about your secrets?

PHOEBE. I don't know how she came to see it – but she said I looked a little sad –  
& asked if I had any sorrows of my own – and if she could help me –

JACOB. Yes, yes – likely enough – But what has this got to do with those secrets  
you told her.

PHOEBE. I only mentioned it, because –

JACOB. Because what –?

PHOEBE. Because she told me afterwards that she suspected I must have a sweet-heart, & then –

JACOB. Well?

PHOEBE. And then she asked if he was kind to me.

JACOB. Aye – aye – I begin to understand now.

PHOEBE. She looked at me so tenderly with her clear kind eyes – that I hardly know how it happened – I told her all.

JACOB. All I made you tell me this morning?

PHOEBE. Yes – all about Martin and me and how strangely he had altered towards me – without ever saying what I had done to change him – She spoke to me about it as kindly as if she had been my own mother – and said, if I liked, she would speak to Martin before we left the Lighthouse.

JACOB. She speak to him! Well, well, she means kindly, I dare say – But it's your father's business, Phoebe, to speak to him and speak I will, this very minute – Martin Gurnock!

PHOEBE. Oh, not now – pray – pray not now.

JACOB. Yes – now – Martin Gurnock turn this way and listen to me – I have something to say to you.

MARTIN. I am ready to hear it, Jacob.

PHOEBE. Let me go, father – let me go first.

JACOB. Well, well, my child – go away.

PHOEBE. Don't speak harshly to him, father.

JACOB. Why not? Has he behaved kindly to you? Come, come, child, none of that – I'd rather see you scold him than cry about him – There, dry your eyes, & leave us alone for a little while – Go, now, and what ever you do, don't cry any more. (*Exit Phoebe*–). Did you hear what my girl said to me just now?

MARTIN. No.

JACOB. She told me not to speak harshly to you – Face me like a man, & tell me honestly, which you deserve – harshness or kindness? – You don't answer.

MARTIN. I can't answer.

JACOB. You must, if you mean to marry my girl. What has altered you towards her? – Don't you fancy she has been telling tales to me! I noticed you last



night, after all the confusion of that Shipwreck was over: I noticed you again this morning – & I wrung the confession out of her that she had noticed you too – You don't talk to her as you used – you don't look at her as you used – you keep out of her company as if you were ashamed of her – you make her heart ache with silence and secrecy and sad looks. You have behaved as if you were ashamed of her – as if you were ashamed of taking my Phoebe for your wife.

MARTIN. Ashamed! Say afraid and you may be nearer the truth.

JACOB. Afraid of taking her for your wife – why?

MARTIN. Because she might be afraid of taking me for her husband.

JACOB. On my word as an honest man, I begin to think she might too! And since when – pray, has this fear got into your head? Since you were talking to me about her yesterday?

MARTIN. Yes.

JACOB. Did any of Furley's Crew bring you news in the boat from shore?

MARTIN. No – not a word of news.

JACOB. Not a word, eh? Then again, I say it – what has altered you since yesterday? We are not on shore where visitors can come and go, and changes may happen with every hour – We are shut up – three men alone in a lighthouse – what has happened to change you? Speak out like an honest man!

MARTIN. I have another person to consult – another person whom I am obliged to be careful of – who might suffer if I spoke out too hastily.

JACOB. What other person?

MARTIN. Oh, Jacob, have some confidence in me –! Show some pity for me – I have a fearful trouble to fight against – I have been tried as man was never tried before – I have, indeed, Jacob –! Whichever way I turn, what ever I do, the chance that I may commit some dreadful error, or be guilty of some unmanly deception, terrifies me into Silence. Give me a little time longer to think what I ought to do: and trust in me mercifully till that time arrives.

JACOB. I will give you half an hour – in half an hour, Furley's Boat will be ready to go ashore – I'm a plain man – and I don't understand all these ins and outs – and ugly mysteries and strange necessities for silence. I give you the half hour before the boat goes back – If by that time you can't speak a little plainer than you speak now – if you can't make it right with Phoebe, and right with me – all is over, Martin Gurnock, between you and her! – I her father, tell you so – and you know me for a man who sticks to his word.

*Exit Jacob*

MARTIN. Half an hour! Half an hour to decide on the future of my life, and of Phoebe's life as well – Half an hour to choose between confession that would be ruin, and deceit that would degrade me in my own estimation for ever!

*Enter Phoebe.*

PHOEBE. Martin, I have heard all!

MARTIN. All?

PHOEBE. All that passed between my father and you – What is this dreadful secret that threatens to separate us? Oh, Martin, are you really true to me still?

MARTIN. True in my heart of hearts – never truer, Phoebe, than at this moment.

PHOEBE. Then trust me with the secret! Whatever it is, I will take all the risk of telling it to my father. You turn away – won't you tell me? – Have you decided to tell my father? Let me know that, at least – our time is short – in less than half an hour – the boat will put off for shore – Martin! All that we two have to hope for in this world, is at stake. Have you decided? Yes? or No?

MARTIN. No.

PHOEBE. And yet I heard you tell my father that you loved me more dearly than ever.

MARTIN. Oh, Phoebe – do you, too, distrust me?

PHOEBE. No! Martin –! I trust in you with all my heart – and if the whole world doubted you – I would trust just the same. I spoke hastily – don't think of what I said – think of nothing but that our time is short – and that the half hour which is to decide everything is slipping fast away.

MARTIN. If I only knew where to turn for advice – ! I am not fit to decide for myself – and here, in this Lighthouse, there is no one to help me.

PHOEBE. No one! The lady upstairs, who offered of her own accord to speak to Martin. If she would only talk to him as she talked this morning to me – ! I'll speak to her – I'll go up and speak to her this very moment. Have you forgiven me those hasty words I spoke just now? My heart trusts in you, Martin, what ever my lips may say.

MARTIN. My own Phoebe – my own, generous, true hearted girl!

PHOEBE. Now to see the lady! My last hope of help is in her.

*Exit Phoebe*

MARTIN. How can I decide? How can I so much as think with such a prospect as lies before me, look which way I will? Phoebe! – she is gone! gone, perhaps never to return again – Father! father! better I had died in my cradle than

have grown up to hear what you told me yesterday.

*Enter Aaron Gurnock*

AARON. Son Martin, the boat is going back to shore – why are you stopping here alone?

MARTIN. Who am I fit company for? What honest man's face am I worthy to look at?

AARON. That is a strange way of answering! Why do you speak these words to me?

MARTIN. There are more rooms than one in the Lighthouse – Let us keep apart!

AARON. Wait! You have spoken to me as if I was the worst enemy you have on earth. What have I done?

MARTIN. Done! What should you say of a man who stood between me and my marriage with Phoebe Dale? Should you say that man was my enemy?

AARON. I am not that man.

MARTIN. Not! Remember what you said to me yesterday – Who told me the horrid secret of the murder of Lady Grace? – Who degraded me in my own eyes – & unfitted me for the eyes of others – by telling me that my father had been the accomplice of an assassin and a Robber? Who?

AARON. Who?

MARTIN. You echo my words!

AARON. No! I ask who told you – your father had been the accomplice of an assassin and a robber?

MARTIN. You ask that?

AARON. Yes – I ask it – who told you (*a pause*).

MARTIN. Have you forgotten getting out of bed, and sitting there?

AARON. I don't remember getting out of bed, or sitting there.

MARTIN. You don't? – Here is the very place where you sat – and where the table stood on which the drop of water was spilt – the drop of water that you took for a drop of blood. – How suddenly he changed when I said that about the spot of blood!

AARON. What are you muttering about? Out with it! What do you suspect me of? – You talked about blood just now. Is it murder? Ha! ha! You're a dutiful son! You honor your father's grey hairs – ha! ha! ha! Ten year's ago I should have doubled my fist and knocked you down for looking at me like that – now, I'm old and fit for nothing but to laugh at you – ha! ha! ha! Damn your suspi-

scious looks! I hate a spy. I curse a spy with all my heart and Soul – What do you suspect? Out with it, spy – out with it?

MARTIN. Is he in his right senses – ?

AARON. What do you suspect?

MARTIN . I suspect nothing – I know what your own lips told me yesterday – the infamous story of the murder of Lady Grace.

AARON. The murder of Lady Grace! What story book have you been reading that in? Lady Grace! a pretty name! Who was Lady Grace? I never heard of her before.

MARTIN. Never! I would give my right hand to know that you were innocent.

AARON. Innocent of what?

MARTIN. Of all share in the crime which began in the Farm House, Bed Room, and ended in the Daw's Cave.

AARON. The Daw's Cave! A famous place for smugglers – what about the Daw's Cave?

MARTIN . Did you never stand in it with Benjamin Tranter – one night when the body of a lady lay between you? One night when the tide was at the ebb and the sand was shining under the Harvest Moon?

AARON. How dare you ask such questions? How dare you talk about yesterday? – You were not in your right senses yesterday! You were so weak with hunger yesterday that you wandered in your mind – ! How dare you stand there with your cursed suspicious Judas looking face and talk about yesterday?

MARTIN. Take your hand away! I can't bear that hand – I see it pointing again to the drop of water on your old round table – the drop of water that you said was a drop of blood!

AARON. Martin, we are getting over hot and angry about this – I am a little too hasty with you – and you are a little too hard on me. Let us talk about it quietly – I was nigh dead with hunger and weakness, yesterday – and Jacob told me this morning I was wandering in my mind. Is that true?

MARTIN. It is true.

AARON. Wandering in my mind as Jacob says – Famished – and in fear of death – As you yourself said a minute ago. Now, tell me, Martin, is it fair to expect a man in that state to speak sense and truth? Is it fair to suspect a man on strength of what dropped from him when he was light headed?

MARTIN. I can't tell – I know nothing for certain. Can that horrible confession have sprung only from the dream of a wandering mind?

AARON. I have heard say, Martin, that starved men when the weakness gets to their heads, have dreams and visions – I dreamed – and all the night long I had dreadful visions.

MARTIN. The time of the year – the talk between himself and the murderer – the old sheep dog whining and trembling – the leather Bag of money – the crying of the poor people and the children after the kind friend they had lost – the very dress that the lady had on – he mentioned all these things, and more – Are men who wander in their minds every so exact as that?

AARON. Don't keep on muttering to yourself, Martin – talk to me.

MARTIN. That cry too, when Phoebe told him the name of the Brig! He must have spoken the truth!

AARON. Somebody named Lady Grace! How came I to talk about Lady Grace!

*Enter Lady Grace dressed in the fashion of a century ago. (as described by Aaron in Act I.)*

MARTIN. You told me you had seen her Spirit – You told me her spirit called you by your name, & reminding you of a dreadful secret, said “Tell it, Aaron Gurnock: tell it, before you die!”.

AARON. Dreams, son Martin, dreams of a wandering mind.

MARTIN. You described the very dress she wore – A black hood with white next the face – a black gown and long hanging white sleeves.

AARON. Dreams! Dreams!

MARTIN. Oh! would to Heaven they were!

AARON. Dreams!

MARTIN. Oh! if all this dread story is only a dream – if you are innocent of all share in the guilt of blood – give me proof of it – and make my life happy again – give me proof of it, and let me marry Phoebe with a Clear conscience. Father! father! tell me in one honest word, whether all you said yesterday when you spoke of Lady Grace, is true or false?

AARON. False.

LADY GRACE (*coming between them.*) True!

AARON. Mercy! Mercy!

MARTIN. Lord save us! The figure my father saw – the very dress that he described – as the dress of Lady Grace.

AARON. You found me in the night time – you came stealing on me with your ghostly step – you said “Tell it,” and I told it! Oh! why did I ever speak again? Why, why bring you back to surprise me, with the false thought in my heart

and the false word on my lips? – Spare me! Spare me! Remember how I was tempted when I denied my words – ! Remember that the shame of my guilt was exposed before my son! Oh, it is hard to hold to the truth – when the truth makes a man despised by his own child. Spare me, for I have repented – Leave me, and let me die in peace.

MARTIN. Father, there was a lady saved from Shipwreck yesterday.

AARON. Martin! On your knees! On your knees before a Spirit from the dead.

MARTIN . There was a lady saved from shipwreck while you and I were down here alone – That lady.

LADY G. Hush! Let me speak! Aaron Gurnock. Lady Grace lives – she stands before you and speaks to you now.

AARON. The Spirit spoke to me in the night, but not in that voice.

LADY G. Rise from your knees, and touch me.

AARON. The Spirit looked at me in the night, but not with those eyes –

LADY G. Touch me, and be sure that I am mortal as yourself. Rise from your knees or if you kneel at all, kneel in thanksgiving – The mercy of heaven that saved me has saved you also – from the commission of a deadly sin. The chances of repentance and atonement are yet yours – Touch my hand, touch it, and be assured that I am alive.

*(Aaron swoons.)*

He has only fainted – Leave it to me to recover him.

MARTIN. To you!

LADY G. Yes! This is woman's work – How he has suffered! It is not time only that has traced these furrows on his face!

MARTIN. Oh, Madam, to see your kind hand stretched out to help him: and then to think —

LADY G. Hush! Martin – ! In the wrecking of the Brig on these Rocks – and in the saving of my life from the walls of this Lighthouse, there is more than mere chance – the mercy to which I owe my existence has saved me to succour and forgive! – So – that is better! – Is it not true that he confessed all to you yesterday? I overheard your last words together on my entry into this room.

MARTIN. He confessed all, madam, that he could know.

LADY G. And the rest it is fit that you should hear from my lips. The last thing I remember at the Farm House is seeing a man, taller and darker than your father by my bedside – with a knife in his hand – Does he still live?

MARTIN. He is dead!

LADY G. See! He is less pale already. My next remembrance is of waking, as it seemed, to me, on board a ship – and of being questioned by strangers in a foreign tongue – In a few days more I knew that I had been found by Smugglers in the Daw’s Cave – that they had taken me away in their vessel – that we had been chased and captured by a French Privateer.

MARTIN. You must be weary of supporting him, madam. Will you let me take your place?

Lady G. No – no – In a few minutes he will be well again. His pulse is beating more firmly every moment. We were among the first prisoners whom the French took – it was then the beginning of the Seven Years war – my wound was long to heal – exile too was heavy to bear at first – but in making myself helpful among my countrymen who were taken prisoners – in comforting the down hearted and sick – I learnt patience, and bore with my hard lot. The Articles of Peace were signed only a few months back – I embarked for Plymouth in the vessel which was lost yesterday –

MARTIN. The Lady Grace?

LADY G. Called so after my name – My fellow prisoners had a grateful remembrance of what little I had done to help them – and they begged that the first English Ship despatched from the Foreign Port after the war might be called “The Lady Grace” – He is breathing more audibly – his senses are coming back – Take him from me now, Martin: for it might be dangerous if he saw me on first opening his eyes again. One word more before he recovers – There is a young girl here who has been very kind to me since my rescue from the wrecked ship. Her name is Phoebe, is it not?

MARTIN. Yes, madam, Phoebe Dale.

LADY G. Fan his face a little still. – She has been speaking to me of an obstacle to your marriage, and of a change in your conduct towards her. – I understand it now – I heard what you said when you spoke of your father’s confession and of your own marriage. You have a true heart, Martin, and your honor and courage will meet with their reward. I – who of all persons living have the most right to say it – I – tell you that you may marry Phoebe with a clear conscience now: and I promise to make your happiness and hers my care.

MARTIN. Oh, madam, how can I thank you? How show myself worthy –?

LADY G. Your father is recovering – let us say no more – I will tell Phoebe that all her troubles are at an end – Be careful with him at first.

*Exit Lady Grace*

AARON. Where am I? What has happened?

MARTIN. Nothing to hurt us, father – every thing to make us grateful and hopeful for the rest of our lives.

AARON. Am I right in my mind? Did I see her? – Was it long ago – or only lately? Did I really see her alive?

MARTIN. Alive – ! a living, breathing woman – an angel of mercy and forgiveness.

AARON. Forgiveness? Let me be – my head whirls – let me be for a minute by myself.

*Enter Phoebe.*

PHOEBE. Martin! Martin! I said the Lady would help us – I knew it would all end well if we only trusted to her.

MARTIN. Do you know how it has ended. Phoebe?

PHOEBE. No – I could wait to ask nothing – I was too happy – First, the Lady came to me, and said all my anxieties might be at an end – then my father followed her and told me he had done you wrong, and then, I suppose I must have flushed up red in the face with joy: for they both smiled at me, and I ran away to you here – Martin, Martin, did I not say, if all the world doubted you, I would trust you still!

*Enter Lady Grace and Jacob.*

LADY G. Is your father composed enough yet to be spoken to?

MARTIN. I will prepare him, madam, to hear you.

JACOB. Martin, my lad, I ask your pardon for ever having doubted you.

MARTIN. Don't name it, Jacob – Don't let us ever name it again.

*Enter Furley and the Three Extra LightKeepers.*

FURLEY. The boat for shore! Jacob, here are the three LightKeepers of the relief all ready for duty – Aaron! Martin! Look alive! The boat is manned for shore.

PHOEBE. The boat for shore! How the sound of those words has altered for the better, father, since we heard them last! Oh! dear lady! dear lady!

AARON. Whose hand helped to lay her in the Daw's Cave where the cruel sea might take her? What atonement can my bitterest repentance offer to her? Forgive me! How can she forgive me?

MARTIN. Father, can you rise? – The lady wishes to speak to you – He is still weak, madam – He wants an arm to lean on.

LADY G. Let it be mine, Martin – Your place is by Phoebe – Remember, this is your first step on the way to Church – and in a Wedding Procession the



Bride and Bridegroom walk together – Phoebe, dear – ! That is not a face for a marriage – you must learn to look happier on the wedding day. The boat’s waiting for us – the boat that takes me back to my poor Peasant neighbours, who love me: the boat that takes you to your son’s marriage – Take my hand – I entreat – I command – you to take it. The privilege of forgiving, Aaron Gurnock, is a right that we may all insist upon.

Great attribute of Him in whom we live

And who forgives us as we do forgive.

*Curtain descends slowly*

– END –

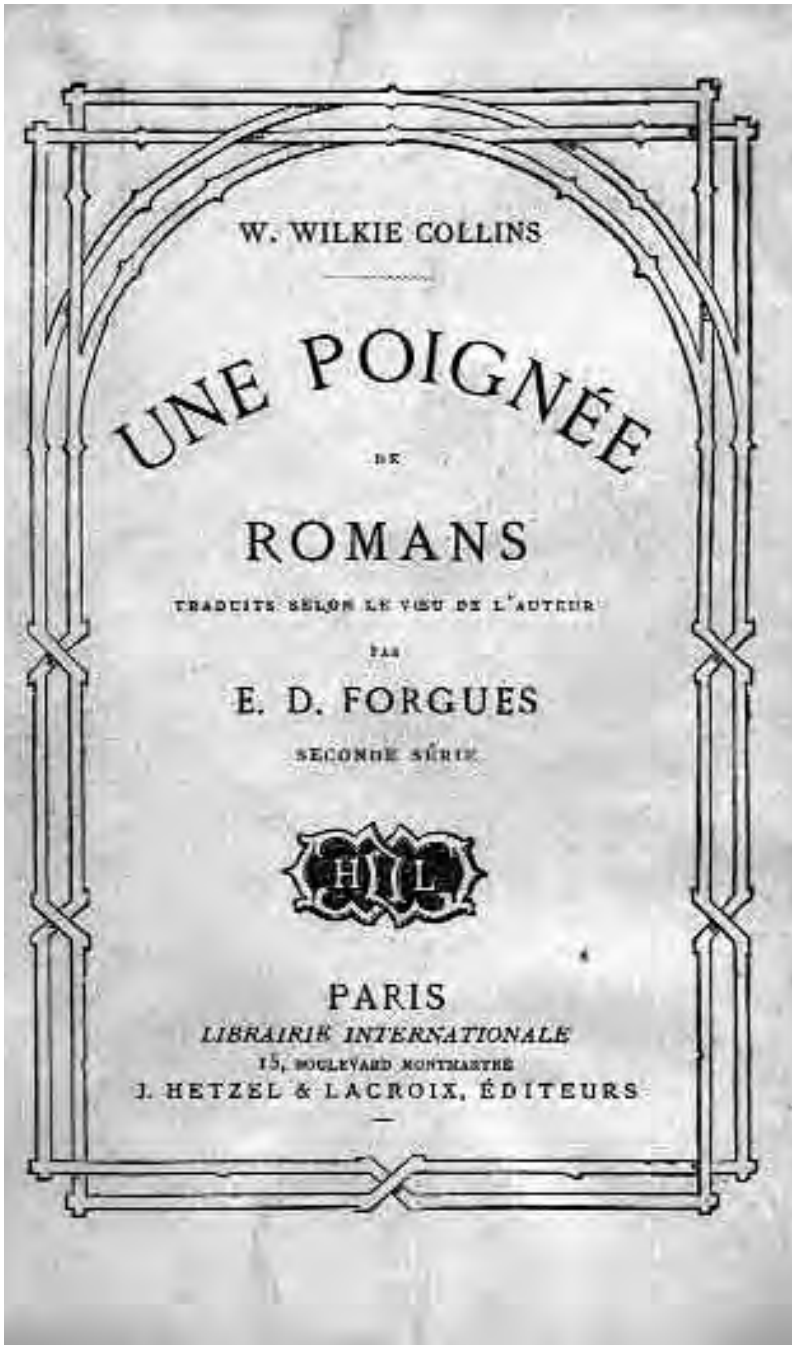
## *Translation of Collins's introduction to Le Phare*

At Eddystone, on a rocky islet in the middle of the waters of the English Channel, twelve miles from the nearest coastline – that of Cornwall – three lighthouses were constructed consecutively. One *brochure*, which described the vicissitudes of the perilous edifice, gave me the initial idea of composing a drama in which the lighthouse would become the theatrical setting. One can appreciate these vicissitudes when one discovers that the first Eddystone lighthouse was destroyed by fire, the second by a storm. The third remains to this day.

Initially, two men were in charge of maintaining the light at the top of the lighthouse; later a third keeper was added. These keepers lived on an utterly bleak rock, twelve miles out to sea, and were at the mercy of the elements for all regular communication with the mainland, that is to say, for all contact with the rest of the world and for the renewal of provisions essential to their survival.

This singular situation in itself struck me, as I said earlier, as full of potential for a dramatic situation never before exploited. As I continued to read the document that I referred to above, I learned that the history of the construction of the three lighthouses was also one of exceptional suffering, of unaccountable dangers endured and suffered by the various generations of men who, in turn, came to occupy this post of salvation. Amongst these perils was the danger of starving to death if communication between the islet and the mainland remained broken beyond a certain length of time. This happened at least once – and the keepers were saved from starvation only at the last minute.

This incident supplied me with a natural introduction for a drama. I decided to set the scene in the second of the three successively constructed lighthouses because of the advantageous historical circumstances that justified certain twists in the plot. And to give as much depth as possible to the three characters I wanted to place in the scene as lighthouse keepers, I had to establish a strong relationship between them, as distinct from those with other men, which I found by linking all three, in different ways, to the history and consequences of a crime committed long ago. This also allowed me to give the moral example of a most generous forgiveness as the *denouement* of my play. It is thanks to these circumstances that I hoped to be able to show the most violent emotions



Cover of *Une Poignée de Romans*, 1864, in which *Le Phare* (The Lighthouse) was published

between men whose education has not altered their native roughness and simplicity.

Such were my ideas when I decided to write my first drama.

My task accomplished, I wasn't convinced that I'd been successful. My experience of writing, formed by writing novels, could well have led me astray in the composition and writing of a dramatic work. These doubts determined me to consult Mr. Charles Dickens. Already familiar with his friendly goodness and his frankness, I knew that his examination would be perfectly conscientious, and that the results of this examination would be communicated to me without reserve.

Forgive me for saying so, but I still feel proud to say that Mr. Charles Dickens judged my first dramatic work favourably enough immediately to offer to have it performed at his house before a select audience, to put it to the test before a run in the theatre. Needless to say, this offer was immediately accepted with immense gratitude. The allocation of the roles was made straightaway.

Mr. Charles Dickens's sister-in-law and eldest daughter agreed to take the parts of Lady Grace and Phoebe Dale. Mr. Dickens kept the role of Aaron Gurnock for himself. He even went so far as to write a prologue in verse to explain to the audience the aim of the performance, and in the first act he added a pathetic love song to the part of Phoebe Dale.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Mark Lemon – one of the writers who has done most for English dramatic art for a good number of years – and Mr. Augustus Egg, from the Royal Academy of Art, agreed to play Jacob Dale and Samuel Furley. The author of the play, encouraged by so many good natured examples dared to take on the character of Martin Gurnock.

The theatre was installed on the ground floor of Mr. Dickens's house, and the most celebrated of our seascape painters, Mr. Stanfield, consented to take charge of the stage set. To an admirable interior of the lighthouse where the scene takes place, he added a view of the ancient Eddystone lighthouse rising from the angry waters. This last scene drop scene, though intended to serve as the front cloth, was nevertheless one of the most remarkable works of this skilful artist.

It was under these excellent circumstances that *The Lighthouse* was performed, for the first time, at Tavistock House (the residence of Mr. Dickens), on the 16 June 1855. There were two more performances, on the 18th and the 19th of the same month in front of an audience such as only Mr. Dickens could gather together. Its success, I must say, exceeded my proudest hopes. I must also say that apart from the quality of the play, the manner in which it was acted was sufficient to render its success quite certain. One knows that amateur troupes usually lack ensemble, go too fast, leading to confusion, learn their lines badly, etc. Those at Tavistock House prepared themselves through a series of rehearsals that would have exhausted the patience of any professional actor. Therefore there was no hesitation, not a single mistake. Everyone kept their

1. These two pieces of poetry are incorporated into the translation (Wilkie Collins's note)



After the three performances of *The Lighthouse* given at Mr. Dickens's house, the same actors performed it once more in public in Colonel Waugh's charming little theatre erected within his residence at Campden-House, in Kensington. This fourth performance was a benefit for a charitable institution, and there has been no other since.

Doubtless one might ask how a play produced under such favourable auspices was not performed in London theatres? In fact, two leading directors asked me for the manuscript and examined it at their leisure: both declared that they did not have at their disposal actors who could suitably play the roles of this little drama, especially the one Mr. Dickens had played with such remarkable talent and success. A singular confession which casts a strange light on the current state of our theatrical enterprises. One notes that to adapt the play – as I had originally written it without anticipating that it might be performed at Tavistock House – to the demands of this unexpected performance, I had not made any changes. Characters, stories, dialogues, everything had remained intact, apart from a few cuts of unnecessary narration. It shows that what a few zealous amateurs were able to do, and the effect that they had on an elite audience – among the most critical and difficult to please – was beyond what professional actors declared themselves able to do – beyond even what they would dare to attempt.

From the moment it became obvious to me that it was now impossible to write an original play for the English stage without having moulded each character beforehand to the particular abilities of the actor who was to play the part, I decided to abandon the idea of approaching theatre directors. No one could offer me more resources than those who had already declared themselves unable to stage my play. They stopped asking me for it; I didn't offer it anymore.

*The Lighthouse* is now going to be published, printed for the first time, in the French language.<sup>1</sup> The friends it had gained on this side of the Channel are joined on the other side by a new patron, M. E.-D. Forgues, who is willing to take charge of making it known to his compatriots. Thus, my first drama is going to be staged in front of eyes accustomed to those scenic masterpieces whose undeniable influence radiates from Paris, this great intellectual centre, to spread over the whole civilised universe. I do not dare anticipate the likely results of this perilous enterprise; I just hope that *The Lighthouse* will not discredit the generous interest that the translator dedicated to it.

W. Wilkie Collins  
London, 1st July 1856

1. The *Lighthouse* appeared in an earlier version, as we have said, in a periodical, *L'Ami de la maison*, published under the editorship of M. Ed. Charton (Wilkie Collins's note)

# THE LIGHT-HOUSE.

A DRAMA, in Two Acts, by WILKIE COLLINS, Esq.

AARON GURNOCK . . . (*Head Lightkeeper*) . . . Mr. PAUL GRAY.  
 MARTIN GURNOCK (*his son, the 2nd Lightkeeper*) . . . Mr. J. A. COURTLAND.  
 JACOB DALE . . . (*the 3rd Lightkeeper*) . . . Mr. GARTON.  
 SAMUEL FURLEY . . . (*a Pilot*) . . . Mr. CLAUDE ANDREWS.

FISHERMEN, }  
 SAILORS, } . . . . . { Mr. ST. GEORGE.  
 LIGHTKEEPERS, } . . . . . { Mr. FRASER.  
 . . . . . { Mr. HURDOW.  
 . . . . . { Mr. SOLEY.

THE SHIPWRECKED LADY . . . . . Miss AVENUE.  
 PHOENIX DALE . . . . . Mrs. GARTON.

The Scene is in the Interior of the Second Eddystone Lighthouse.

TIME:—17th December, 1748.

Cast list from the programme for *The Lighthouse*, Royal Bijou Theatre, 3 May 1865, Lambeth School of Art. Amateur production with Palgrave Simpson as Aaron Gurnock.

# *Cast lists for productions of* **The Lighthouse**

**Tavistock House, 16, 18, 19 June 1855; and Campden House, 10 July 1855**

Aaron Gurnock	Mr. Crummles [Charles Dickens]
Martin Gurnock	Mr. Wilkie Collins
Jacob Dale	Mr. Mark Lemon
Samuel Furley	Mr. Augustus Egg
The shipwrecked Lady	Miss Hogarth
Phoebe Dale	Miss [Mamie] Dickens

**Olympic Theatre, 10 August 1857**

Aaron Gurnock	Mr. F. Robson
Martin Gurnock	Mr. Walter Gordon
Jacob Dale	Mr. Addison
Samuel Furley	Mr. G. Cooke
The shipwrecked Lady	Miss Swanborough
Phoebe Dale	Miss Wyndham

**Laura Keene's New Theatre, New York, 21 January 1858**

Aaron Gurnock	Mr. Wheatleigh
Martin Gurnock	Mr. G.W. Stoddart
Jacob Dale	Mr. Burnett
Samuel Furley	Mr. Peters
The shipwrecked Lady	Miss Laura Keene
Phoebe Dale	Miss Charlotte Thompson



# BOSCOMBE THEATRE.

FRIDAY, APRIL 14, 1871.

Revival of Wilkie Collins's Drama of

## “THE LIGHTHOUSE.”

In 1867 “The Lighthouse” was produced at the Boscombe Theatre with the most distinguished success. From that time it has always been the intention of the Manager to take the first opportunity of reproducing this Drama. The opportunity has now occurred, through the kindness of Mr. J. Palgrave Simpson, who will repeat his celebrated impersonation of Aaron Gurnock.

The Second Representation of the successful Eastern, Musical, Spectacular “Phantasy,” entitled

## “A FAIRY TALE.”

The Performances will commence with

## “THE LIGHTHOUSE.”

### CHARACTERS.

Aaron Gurnock (Lightkeeper) .. .. .	MR. J. PALGRAVE SIMPSON.
Martin Gurnock (his Son) .. .. .	MR. HERBERT GARDNER.
Jacob Dale (Lightkeeper) .. .. .	CAPTAIN WINGFIELD.
Second Purser (Pilot) .. .. .	MR. HARCOURT PORTER.
1st Fisherman .. .. .	SIR PENEY F. SHELLEY.
1st Sailor .. .. .	MR. E. S. E. HARTOP.
The Shipwrecked Lady .. .. .	LADY SHELLEY.
Phoebe Dale (Daughter to Jacob) .. .. .	MRS. SCARBURY.
Fisherman, Lightkeepers, &c.	

*The Scene painted by Sir Penev F. Shelley.*

The Eddystone Lighthouse, which is the scene of the events represented in this Drama, is the wooden structure erected by John Rudyard in 1709. The previous building having been destroyed, together with its designer, in the dreadful storm of November, 1703.

Rudyard's building was of wood and was consumed by fire in 1755, seven years subsequent to the period of the story. It was replaced by the wonderful stone edifice which has hitherto defied the attacks of the most violent storms, and which still stands a proud memorial of the extraordinary skill of the great engineer, Mr. John Smeaton.

Cast list for the production of The Lighthouse, Boscombe Theatre, 14 April 1871

**Royal Bijou Theatre, 3 May 1865**

Aaron Gurnock	Mr. Palgrave Simpson
Martin Gurnock	Mr. J. A. Courtland
Jacob Dale	Mr. Garton
Samuel Furley	Mr. Claude Andrews
The Shipwrecked Lady	Miss Aylmer Blake
Phoebe Dale	Mrs. Garton

**Boscombe Theatre, 14 April 1871**

Aaron Gurnock	Mr. J. Palgrave Simpson
Martin Gurnock	Mr. Herbert Gardner
Jacob Dale	Captain Wingfield
Samuel Furley	Mr. Harcourt Popham
The shipwrecked Lady	Lady Shelley
Phoebe Dale	Mrs. Scarlett



*Contemporary reviews of  
The Lighthouse*

## The Times, 12 July 1855

### CAMPDEN-HOUSE THEATRICALS

During the month of June certain rumours that some very admirable theatrical entertainments were going on at the private residence of Mr. Charles Dickens were current among all that portion of the world that concerns itself with the proceedings of men of literature. The rumours, moreover, stated that a melodrama, never shone upon by public footlights, formed the principal part of the recreation, adding that it was not only a work of great intrinsic merit, but that it was acted to a degree of perfection that claimed and received the admiration even of professional spectators. Mr. Charles Dickens's circle of friends is very wide, and these constantly gave weight to the rumours, not only confirming their truth, but filling up the vague enunciations of fact with description and comment.

Under these circumstances, it was deemed fortunate for those less favoured mortals who had no admission to the private entertainment that the whole amateur company had resolved to exhibit themselves and their play, in consideration of certain moneys to be appropriated to the funds of a Consumption Hospital. To Campden-House, one of the most wondrous mansions of Kensington, and the residence of Colonel Waugh, who kindly lent it for the purpose, all the curious were invited who wished to see the play of the *Lighthouse*, which had been previously revealed to private circles alone. Tuesday night was the occasion fixed for the happy event.

"*La foule attire la foule*," says the French proverb, and the train of carriages that passed down Church-street to witness the Campden festivities found awaiting them a mob of humble Kensingtonians, who thronged to see the visitors, as the visitors thronged to see the play. Kensington was decidedly in a state of excitement.

When the visitors had alighted from their carriages and wound their way up a stately staircase, and through rooms fitted with mediæval splendour, they found themselves in a commodious little theatre – not a mere room with a stage at the end of it, but a real theatre, with a proper pit and regular tiers of boxes. The *salle* was of course filled long before the performance began by an audience of the most distinguished kind, who looked big with expectation, and were clamorous in their applause when the green curtain was drawn aside and discovered a beautiful drop-scene, painted by Mr. Stanfield, and representing Eddystone Lighthouse, as it stood in the middle of the last century. This was the symbol of the play about to be acted, with the following cast:–

Aaron Gurnock, the head light-keeper	Mr. Charles Dickens.
Martin Gurnock, his son, the second light-keeper	Mr. Wilkie Collins.
Samuel Furley, a pilot	Mr. Augustus Egg, A.R.A.

The relief light-keepers by Mr. Charles Dickens, jun., Mr. Edward Hogarth, Mr. Alfred Ainger, and Mr. W. Webster.

The Shipwrecked Lady  
Phoebe

Miss Hogarth.  
Miss Dickens.

Surely this list was enough to excite curiosity.

The drop-scene being removed, the interior of Eddystone Lighthouse, in which the whole of the action takes place, is exhibited to the audience. Three men, Aaron Gurnock his son Martin, and Jacob Dale, are in charge of the beacon. Aaron is at first in bed and unseen, but we learn from the other two that the whole three are likely to perish from starvation, in consequence of the stormy weather, which has kept out the proper supply of provisions. We learn, also, that more than a business connexion exists between the starving light-keepers, inasmuch as Martin Gurnock is betrothed to Jacob's daughter, Phoebe. When the duty of sounding the gong for the benefit of distant vessels summons Jacob to the "crows' nest," we are initiated into mysteries of still deeper import. Old Aaron, rising out of his bed, deeply impressed with the belief that he has seen a ghost, tells his son a wild sort of story to the effect that, although he has not exactly murdered a certain Lady Grace, he has been strangely mixed up with the crime, and has helped conceal the dead body. A sort of mad impulse seems to prompt the confession of an act that took place many years ago, and it is only the detailed nature of the narrative that makes the story look more than the record of a hideous dream. When the tale is over the weather has sufficiently cleared to allow a boat to come to the lighthouse, and the "relief," with Simon [sic] Furley and Phoebe, arrives with good store of refreshment for the starving men. The boat's crew of a wrecked vessel is afterwards saved from the billows, but Aaron is horror-stricken at hearing that the name of the ship is "Lady Grace."

In the second act poor Martin finds himself in an extreme embarrassment. The thought that he is the son of an *almost* murderer so deeply preys upon his mind that he appears cold and indifferent to Phoebe, and thus deeply incenses her father. Moreover, the nature of old Aaron is entirely changed since he has had a full stomach. He made the confession while death was staring him in the face, but now he astounds his son by doggedly denying all that he told him before. However, one of the persons saved from the wreck of the ship is Lady Grace herself, who did not *quite* lose her life through the crime of past days, and who now reappears as an angel of forgiveness. Aaron is thankful that he has providentially been saved from deadly crime, and the painful feeling that has separated the two lovers disappears entirely.

This little piece is like a charming magazine-story turned into a drama, with great knowledge of stage propriety. Not only is a tale of remorse and forgiveness told in the most pathetic manner, and with an almost religious feeling, but all the realities of a homely mode of life are brought plainly to the view, and gen-

uine humour is interchanged with the pathos.

The acting of Mr. Charles Dickens and Mr. Mark Lemon is most admirable – not only worthy of professional, but of a kind not to be found save among the rarest talents. Aaron, a rough, rugged son of Cornwall, with the lines of misery deeply furrowed in his face, rendered more irritable than humble by remorse, and ever inclined to bully his way through his own fears, is elaborated by Mr. Dickens with wonderful fullness of detail, so that there is not an accent, a scowl, or a growl without its distinctive significance. In a word, it is a great individual creation of a kind that has not been exhibited before. Jacob Dale, the bluff, honest, straightforward father of Phoebe, does not afford the same opportunity for refined variety, but his representation by Mr. Mark Lemon is a masterpiece of sturdy, thoroughly “made up” reality. Mr. Egg makes of the burly, good-humoured pilot an excellent little sketch, and the two female parts are most delicately rendered. The least satisfactory personage is Mr. Wilkie Collins, who is the author of this very beautiful little piece, and who is less able to give expression to his own ideas than any of his friends.

*The Lighthouse* was followed by Mr. Charles Dance’s comedy of *The Wonderful Woman*, with the following cast:–

The Marquis de Frontignac	Captain Disney Roebuck.
The Viscount de Millefleurs	Sir Ivor Guest.
Rodolphe, a young painter	Mr. Charles Murch.
Crepin, a cobbler	Mr. Ashe.
	Tailors, Servants, &c.
Madame Hortense Bertrand, a rich widow	The Hon. Mrs. George Wrottesley
Cecile, her niece	Miss Louisa Carew
Maid	Miss Maxwell

It will be perceived that the list here is completely different from the one preceding, and the fact cannot be denied that, while the chief characters of the first piece (with one exception) were played as few professional artists would play them, the performances of the second was thoroughly “amateur” in its character. However, it was good, highbred, thoroughly gentlemanlike “amateur,” and, as such, gave universal satisfaction.

### **The Daily News, 12 July 1855**

#### PRIVATE THEATRICALS AT CAMPDEN HOUSE

There was a dramatic performance on Tuesday night at Campden House, the residence of Colonel Waugh, for the benefit of the Hospital for Consumption. Colonel Waugh, we are informed, has magnificently given a piece of land for the site of additional buildings, and this performance has been given in aid of

the funds requisite for their erection. The management was undertaken by Mr. Charles Dickens. The entertainments consisted, in the first place, of Mr. Wilkie Collins's melodrama, *The Lighthouse*, the performance of which at Mr. Dickens's residence, Tavistock House, has recently excited so much interest; and, secondly, of Mr. Charles Dance's clever comic drama, *A Wonderful Woman*.

Campden House is a princely mansion in the Elizabethan style of architecture, and standing in the middle of spacious and beautiful grounds. It contains a theatre – small, of course, but a perfect *bijou* – exquisitely proportioned, complete in every part, and fitted up with equal taste and splendour. To this theatre, in the performance of *The Lighthouse*, the scenery, decorations and properties originally used at Tavistock House were transferred; and the piece was got up in precisely the same style and acted by the same performers.

*The Lighthouse* is a little two-act piece, extremely simple in subject and construction, but written with much beauty and full of the deepest interest. The scene is laid in the Eddystone Lighthouse, where the whole action takes place. The drop-scene is a fine picture by Stanfield; a view of the lighthouse with its beacon burning, and a ship in the distance labouring in a stormy sea. This drop-scene rising, discloses the interior of the building, in which two light-keepers are sitting sadly. They have been for weeks cut off by stormy weather from all communication with the shore, and are perishing for want of food. These are Jacob Dale, an old man, and Martin Gurnock, a young one. There is a third – Aaron Gurnock, Martin's father. Aaron is sleeping in his berth. Presently he wakes, rouses himself, and gets up – a haggard man, with a wild and ghastly countenance, as of one agitated by deep and gloomy thoughts. Profiting by the absence of his elder comrade (who has left the room to attend to some lighthouse duty), he resolves to unburthen his mind to his son, of a load of long-concealed guilt and remorse. He tells a dreadful tale: how years before, when he was a Cornish farmer and had gone down in the world, one night, when he, with a profligate companion, the only other inmate of his house, were ruminating on their debts and difficulties, a lady on horseback, who had lost her way in the fog, came to his door. She was alone, having lost her servant, and her horse carried heavy saddle bags. She was shown into a chamber; and while she slept, was murdered by his companion for the sake of the booty. Informed of the crime, he concealed it, and assisted his companion in carrying the body to a cave on the sea shore, but refused any of the plunder, and they parted. This tale fills the unfortunate son with grief and horror. He is betrothed to the daughter of Old Jacob Dale, from whom he sees himself separated by the gulf created by his father's infamy. Suddenly sounds are heard – a boat arrives, and the famishing lighthouse-men are relieved. Phoebe, the young man's sweetheart, has accompanied the party. When the first transports of joy are past, poor Phoebe sees that some change has come over her lover – his altered manner, silence and avoidance of her conversation, betoken coldness and estrangement. She is heart-struck and sad, while her father, who has likewise noticed the young man's behaviour, is



indignant that his daughter should be slighted. A signal gun is heard from a ship in distress, and presently the vessel is descried, running upon the rocks. Her name is read, and, as it is uttered, Aaron Gurnock, with a cry, falls senseless. It is the "Lady Grace," the name of the lady to whose murder he had been an accessory. So ends the first act. In the second, the whole party are preparing to leave the lighthouse. Phoebe has tended the stranger lady; and the young girl, whose heart is won by her kindness, has told her little tale of wounded affection. The lovers meet, and the young man has no difficulty in convincing Phoebe that his love is unaltered, but that he is the victim of a dreadful secret which he cannot disclose. Poor Phoebe, in despair, goes to ask the lady for help in her distress. There is now a scene between father and son. Old Aaron, from his son's manner, and something he has overheard him say, suspects that he himself has, in his previous distraction, betrayed his fatal secret, but does not know to what extent he may have done so. Gruffly asking his son what is the matter with him, he learns from the young man's answers that he knows all. On this the father attempts to disavow the tale, and tries to persuade his son that it was a hallucination of his brain, caused by famine and weakness. While he is speaking thus, the lady suddenly stands before him, attired as she was when he saw her last, on the night of her supposed murder. Believing her to be a supernatural vision, he sinks into a swoon, overwhelmed with fear and horror; but is at length restored to consciousness, and to the conviction that his supposed victim is before him in the body, and that his soul is lightened of a crime. The denouement need not be told.

This piece was admirably acted throughout. Dickens's *Aaron Gurnock* is a great performance. The part is melodramatic; but Dickens's melodrama is void of extravagance: it is a display of passion carried to the utmost intensity, but without overstepping for a moment the modesty of nature. It is as pure and chaste as the most classic tragedy. The two great scenes – in which the old man tells the tale of the murder, and afterwards tries, by alternate violence and persuasion, to make his son believe it all a fable – derived much of their immense effect from a plain, rustic homeliness of speech and manner which was full of truth, and had an air of reality absolutely startling. Mr. Mark Lemon's Jacob Dale was delightful from its spirit, simplicity, and genial heartedness; and the part of the younger Gurnock was played with much feeling by Mr. Collins, the author of the piece. A small part – that of Samuel Furley, a pilot – was raised to importance by the manner in which it was acted by Mr. Augustus Egg. Phoebe had a charming representative in Miss Dickens, who, in looks, artless simplicity, and gentle sweetness, was all that Phoebe herself could be imagined to be. Her performance was scarcely acting; but (as a great vocalist once said of Thomas Moore's singing) it was something better. We are sure that no display of histrionic art could have made the character more natural or more affecting. She sang a melancholy little ballad, very appropriately introduced, with so sweet and tuneable a voice, and so much simple pathos, that everybody was

affected as well as charmed. The Lady Grace was acted by Miss Hogarth with much intelligence, feeling, and unaffected dignity.

Mr. Dance's well-known and clever afterpiece, *A Wonderful Woman*, was capitally acted, and went off with great animation. The personages belonging to the *nobles* of the *vielle coer*, there was ample room for the display of rich costumes and splendid decorations. The court dresses of the ladies were becoming as well as magnificent; and everything on the stage was in the best possible taste. The Hon. Mrs. George Wrottesley acted the part of Madame Bertrand with much dignity and spirit. Miss Louisa Carew, as Cecile, looked beautiful, and brought out very prettily the arch and girlish naiveté of the character. The Marquis de Frontignac and the Viscount de Millefleurs were well supported by Captain Roebuck and Sir Ivor Guest; and Mr. Ashe's Crepin, the cobbler, was a piece of genuine comedy.

The theatre, we need scarcely add, had a brilliant aspect, being crowded in every part with a most elegant and fashionable audience.

### **The Examiner, 14 July 1855**

#### PRIVATE THEATRICALS

On Tuesday afternoon, there had been a similar entertainment at Grosvenor House, which produced a considerable sum of money for the help of the suffering poor; and on the evening of the same day, at Campden House, Kensington, the residence of Colonel Waugh, the most remarkable entertainment of the kind which has taken place was given with striking success, under the management of Mr. Charles Dickens.

At Campden House, which, as a mansion, is itself unusually interesting, there is a miniature theatre, complete with pit and boxes, stage and footlights. For the benefit of the funds of the Bournemouth Sanatorium for Consumptive Patients, the amateurs performed in this little theatre, before a crowded audience composed principally of ladies, a new two-act play by Mr. Wilkie Collins, and a two-act farce. The play was called the *Lighthouse*, and told a tale of Eddystone in the old times. An exquisite picture (for such it is, and not a mere ordinary scene) of Eddystone as it stood in those days, from the inimitable pencil Mr. Stanfield, was the drop-scene, and the actors were exhibited throughout as shut up in a little room within the lighthouse, also of Mr. Stanfield's painting, which from its nature could with the best possible effect be set up in a private drawing-room or on a miniature stage. Similar exigencies appear also to have been consulted in the manner of developing the plot of the play; the crime, the wreck, and all the events upon which hangs the passion of the story, not being produced upon the scene, but breaking out from the narration of the actors. None of the leading incidents are shown actually, but their workings on the minds of the three lighthouse men who are the performers, and of the few

other persons introduced into the story, contribute interest enough to sustain an earnest attention throughout. The little piece told upon the audience admirably.

But it had rare advantages. It was, in its principal parts, acted by distinguished literary men with whose artistic skill upon the stage the public has been for some time familiar. The three light-house men are at first shown cut off by a month's storms from the main land. They are an old man and his son, together with the father of the young man's sweetheart. The old man's memory is haunted by what he believes to have been his passive consent to a most foul murder. Weakened by starvation, his brain becomes wholly possessed by dread of this crime. The spectre of the supposed murdered lady seems to stand at his bedside and bid him speak. He does speak, and possessed with a wild horror at all he recollects, reveals to his son his shame. Upon the acting of this character depends the whole force of the story, as presented to the audience, and it is in the hands of a master. He is a rough man, whose face has been familiar for years with wind and spray, haggard and wild just now, and something lightheaded, oppressed not more by conscience than by hunger. He tells his tale, and his son turns from him, shrinks from his touch, struck down by horror of the crime, and the humiliation to himself involved in it. Relief comes to the party soon after this; they are fed, and the physical depression is removed. Eager then to regain his son's esteem, and cancel the disclosure of his secret, the old lighthouse man changes in manner. By innumerable master touches on the part of the actor, we are shown what his rugged ways have been of hiding up the knowledge that stirs actively within his conscience; but his effort to be bold produces only nervous bluster, and his frantic desire to recover his son's respect, though he may take him by the throat to extort it from him, is still mixed up with a horrible sense of blood-guiltiness, wonderfully expressed by little instinctive actions. We cannot follow the story to its last impressive moment of rough, nervous, seaman's prayer, in which the old man stands erect, with his hands joined over his head, overpowered by the sudden removal of the load that has so long weighed upon his heart:— but to the last that piece of the truest acting was watched with minute attention by the company assembled, and rarely has acting on a public stage better rewarded scrutiny.

The other parts were also well sustained, and by the young ladies who acted, with much delicacy and beauty. The farce that succeeded was performed by fashionable amateurs, who excited by their exertions plenty of ready laughter and applause. One gentleman, who seemed to have taken Mr. Compton for a model, was especially and most justly in favour.

Reprinted with minor changes in *The Journal of a London Playgoer from 1851-1866* by Henry Morley, London, 1891

## The Illustrated Times, 21 July 1855

### PRIVATE THEATRICALS AT CAMPDEN HOUSE, KENSINGTON

Situated in spacious and beautiful grounds, built in the Elizabethan style of architecture, and still retaining, notwithstanding some modern alterations and additions, much to remind one of other days, Campden House is replete with historical reminiscences. It was erected in the reign of the first James, about the year 1612, by an individual named Baptist Hickes, who acquired wealth as a silk-mercator in Cheapside, and afterwards, by its influence, was metamorphosed into a baronet, Lord Hickes, and Viscount Campden. Fortune, however, which bestowed upon the silk-mercator wealth, and made him a baronet and a peer, did not bless him with a son to perpetuate the name; and his daughter carried the Campden titles and estates into the family of Noel. From their pleasant suburban residence, thus acquired, the Noel descendants of the silk-mercator were ejected, during the civil war, by the Parliamentary Commissioners; and, after the restoration, they were compensated for this inconvenience by a visit of "the Merry Monarch." As years passed on and the times changed, Campden House was inhabited for a period by the Princess Anne, afterwards Queen of England, who considered that the air of the locality was likely to benefit the health of her surviving son, the boy Duke of Gloucester. In 1704, the mansion came into the possession of the Burlington family who parted with it to a certain Whig lawyer, Lord Lechmere. In the middle of the last century, it fell into the hands of a Mr. Pitt; and being then converted into a fashionable boarding-house, it so continued for more than 50 years.

Such is – briefly sketched – the history of the interesting mansion now the residence of Colonel Waugh, where on the evening of Tuesday, the 10th inst., a party of clever amateurs, under the distinguished auspices of Mr. Charles Dickens, undertook a theatrical performance for the benefit of the Hospital for Consumptive Patients, – one of the most humane institutions, we understand, of which the metropolis can boast. From all accounts, no place in the vicinity of London could have been found in all respects so well adapted for such a purpose, seeing that Campden House contains, not only one of the neatest little theatres ever seen in a private house, but comprises a fine suite of rooms, fitted up and furnished in the Elizabethan style, decorated with curious and antique specimens of the carver's art, and hung with choice examples of the early Italian and Flemish schools of painting. The rooms thus embellished were on this occasion thrown open to the visitors in an interval of the performance, and proved hardly less attractive than the theatrical entertainments.

The performances commenced with a new and original domestic melodrama, by Mr. Wilkie Collins, which has only been acted previously at Tavistock House, the residence of Mr. Dickens, on an occasion of a similar nature. Its story is soon told. Three men, Aaron Gurnock, the father, his son, and Jacob

Dale, are shut up as light-keepers in the Eddystone Lighthouse in the middle of the last century, during a long continuance of stormy weather, which for nearly a month prevents any communication with the shore. Provisions ran low, and death by starvation stares them in the face. Aaron Gurnock, the oldest man amongst them, naturally feels the effect of privation most severely. His mind, as well as his body, fails; and while but half conscious of what he is doing, he reveals to his son the frightful murder of a lady to which he was many years previously, an accessory. The young man's horror may be conceived, but he is not allowed long to dwell upon it. A ship is seen drifting on the rocks, and a portion of the crew and passengers, amongst whom is a lady, are with difficulty saved by the exertions of the light-keepers. The storm abating, a supply of provisions is brought from the shore, and accompanying the crew who bring them is Phoebe, the daughter of Jacob Dale, and the betrothed of young Gurnock. Deeply attached to her as he is, he shrinks from the idea of uniting himself – the son of a murderer – with her; and, from the hesitation and conflict of feeling thus caused, the little dramatic action and collision of characters by which the piece is distinguished takes its rise. Eventually, however, it turns out that the murderer failed to carry his purpose into effect, and that the lifeless body of his supposed victim was re-animated after he had left it for dead in a cave on the seashore, and that the Lady Grace saved from the wrecked ship is the identical individual. There is a striking scene between father and son. Old Aaron, from the youth's manner, and something he has overheard him say, suspects that he himself has in his previous distraction, betrayed the fatal secret, but does not know to what extent. Gruffly asking what is the matter with him, he learns from the answers that the youth knows all. On this the father attempts to disavow the tale, and tries to persuade his son that it was a hallucination of his brain, caused by famine and weakness. While he is speaking, the lady suddenly stands before him, attired as she was when he saw her last, on the night of her supposed murder. Believing her to be a supernatural vision, he sinks into a swoon, overwhelmed with fear and horror; but is at length restored to consciousness, and to the conviction that his supposed victim is before him in the body, and that his soul is lightened of a crime. This is the scene to which our illustration refers. Under these circumstances, of course, young Martin's love and his scruples are reconciled; the course of true love once more runs as smooth as it ought not to do, if the old proverb is to be respected; and the curtain falls upon some significant references to the third putting up of banns.

Amateur as Mr. Dickens is, few actors could have given a more vivid and truthful picture of old Gurnock's mental wanderings, his remorse, rather the result of physical weakness than moral compunction, the cunning with which on his restoration to health he seeks to remove the impression his confession has made on his son's mind, his superstitious terror at the appearance of the lady, whom he takes for her ghost, and the better and purer feelings with which he ultimately seeks and acknowledges her forgiveness. Jacob Dale was played

by Mr. Mark Lemon, with rough but heartily geniality; and Mr. W. Collins and Mr. A. Egg were creditably zealous in smaller parts. The shipwrecked lady was played by Miss Hogarth with nice feeling, intelligence, and dignity; and Phoebe by Miss Mary Dickens with charming freshness and *naïveté*. She sang a new and exceedingly pretty ballad by Mr. Linley, with a sweetness, simplicity, and expression which deservedly gained her the warm applause of the audience.

The performance concluded with Mr. Dance's well-known and clever after-piece, "A Wonderful Woman," which was well acted, and went off with great animation. The personages belonging to the *noblesse* of the *vielle coer*, there was ample room for the display of rich costumes and splendid decorations. The court dresses of the ladies were becoming as well as magnificent; and everything on the stage was in the best possible taste. The Hon. Mrs. George Wrottesley acted the part of Madame Bertrand with much dignity and spirit. Miss Louise Carew, as Cecile, looked beautiful, and brought out very prettily the arch and girlish *naïveté* of the character. The Marquis de Frontignac and the Viscount de Mellefleurs were well supported by Captain Roebuck and Sir Ivor Guest; and Mr. Ashe's Crepin the cobbler was a piece of genuine comedy.

## The Times, 12 July 1857

### OLYMPIC THEATRE

The great event, however, was the production for the first time in public of Mr. Wilkie Collins's *Lighthouse*, celebrated as the first piece played by Mr. Dickens and his friends at the private theatricals in Tavistock square. Mr. Stanfield's drop curtain, representing the Eddystone lighthouse, had been accurately copied, the original scene had been closely imitated, and Mr. F. Robson represented the almost murderer, sustained in the first instance by Mr. Dickens himself. Everything that could be done to render a piece effective was done on this occasion, and the success of the drama was proved by the call for the author, who bowed from a private box, but, nevertheless, we cannot avoid the conclusion that the *Lighthouse*, with all its merits, is rather a dramatic anecdote than an actual drama, and is consequently more suited to the drawing-room than to a regular theatre patronised by a large public. People of the ordinary stamp will now have an opportunity of witnessing a play hitherto confined to a chosen few, and will be satisfied with beholding a very charming story, very effectively acted; but those who have been admitted into the *sanctum* of Tavistock-house will also recollect and miss a certain compactness that gave to the whole performance the character of a highly-finished miniature. The taste with which the piece was put upon the stage is, however, all-important, as demonstrating the principle upon which the new managers intend to govern their establishment. Mr. Robert Brough's excellent burlesque on *Masaniello* brought the evening's performance to a mirthful conclusion.

## The Daily News, 12 July 1857

### OLYMPIC

Last night the new management of Messrs. Robson and Emden was inaugurated under specially favourable circumstances. The performances commenced with a comedietta entitled *The Subterfuge*, which is simply another version of *Livre Troisième, Chapitre Premier*, a French piece already introduced to the English public under the title of *A Novel Expedient*, and now well played by Mrs. Stirling, Mr. George Vining, and Mr. G. Murray. The curtain rose after a short interval, and Mr. Robson, who was received with thunders of applause, advanced and spoke [an] address, which had been written for the occasion by Mr. Robert Brough.

At the conclusion of the address Mr. Robson retired, and reappeared leading Mr. Emden, who was heartily welcomed. The London world had heard of the fame of Mr. Wilkie Collins' drama of *The Lighthouse*, originally produced at the Tavistock-House theatricals, and the general public were impatient to see

whether the rumours which had reached them were really based on truth, or were merely echoes of that friendly criticism which finds no fault with the exertions of amateurs. It is gratifying to be able to state that the verdict the few was on this occasion completely ratified by the many. From the rising of the curtain until its fall the audience sat in breathless interest, interrupted only by bursts of the warmest applause, while at the conclusion the enthusiasm was so great that after the actors had been called for and the author, Mr. Wilkie Collins, had bowed from his box, loud shouts were raised for various popular writers who had been described by the people in the pit, but who modestly declined availing themselves of the intended ovation.

The plot of the play may be thus briefly described. Aaron Gurnock (Mr. Robson), his son, Martin Gurnock (Mr. Walter Gordon), and Jacob Dale (Mr. Addison), are three light-keepers, who, owing to incessant storms, have been kept shut up in the Eddystone Lighthouse for a period of a month, without relief, and who, at the opening of the drama, are nearly perishing from starvation in their lonely abode. Young Martin is betrothed to old Jacob Dale's daughter, Phoebe (Miss Wyndham), and despite present misery, still indulges in the hope of making her his wife. The storm rages, and beats round the old lighthouse, and Jacob Dale, true to his profession, ascends to the "Crow's nest" there to sound the gong, as a warning to any vessel that may be driven towards the coast. During his absence, old Aaron Gurnock appears upon the scene, faint, worn, half dead with privation and superstitious terror: he has had a dream which has so affected him that he confides to his horror-stricken son the secret of his life – that in early years he had been a farmer, that during a storm a lady had come to seek refuge at his cottage, that the weighty appearance of her saddle-bags had aroused the cupidity of a friend of his then staying with him, by whom she had been murdered, and that he himself had assisted in hiding her body in the Daw's Cave, by the sea-shore. The effect of this revelation upon the sensitive mind of the son may be guessed: he is shocked beyond measure, more especially as he feels that the son of a murderer is no meet husband for Phoebe Dale. Even when, with the lull of the storm, a boat arrives from the shore bringing both provisions and Phoebe as its freight, the dreadful story still weighs upon him. He eats without appetite, and his answers to the affectionate enquiries of his sweetheart are short and unconnected. Old Aaron, in his half-daft state, fears that the party from the shore are come to deliver him to justice, while his terror is culminated when the ship seen by Jacob Dale in the morning goes to pieces on the rocks, and the name on her boat as read by Phoebe is the "Lady Grace," the identical appellation of the lady whose body was hidden in the Daw's Cave. In the second act we find Phoebe grieving over Martin's changes, but all eloquent in praise of the virtues and kindness of a lady who has been saved from the wreck, and who is then in the lighthouse; Old Jacob angry at his intended son-in-law's coolness, and determined to call him to account; and Old Aaron, fortified by food and renewed health, utterly denying his con-



fession of the previous day, asserting that it was but a creation of his fevered brain, and rating his son roundly for his shrinking from him. In the middle of his denial, however, the shipwrecked lady (Miss Swanborough) enters, dressed exactly after the description of the murdered victim, and indeed turns out to be the identical Lady Grace who was not killed, though deeply wounded, and whose life was preserved by some smugglers, who found her in the cave which served them as a hiding place for their contraband goods. Of course, all ends happily; the bar to Martin's happiness is removed, and Old Aaron lives to repent of his share in a murder which was not committed.

From this hasty sketch it will be seen that Mr. Collins has contrived to pack a great deal of interest into a very small compass; and when we reflect how many long and tedious dramas we have yawned through, where one incident would have been a relief, we think we have good reason to congratulate the public on an accession to the ranks of dramatic authors. There are many little passages in the drama which show the neophyte, while at the same time they proclaim that the author, though new to his present work, is a skilled writer, and has allowed his literary art to interfere with his dramatic efforts. These little crudities, however, will be worn away in a very short time, and we have no doubt that should Mr. Collins persevere in writing for the stage, he will speedily attain the first rank as an artist of what is known as "interesting drama."

The acting generally was very good. Mr. Robson was nervous to a degree, so nervous that it is scarcely fair to take his acting last night as a specimen of what he will eventually make the part. Mr. Addison, laying aside that mouthing which so frequently spoils his best efforts, played most admirably, with a charming natural rugged pathos which was quite refreshing. Miss Wyndham looked pretty and acted naturally; and Miss Swanborough delivered her sentences with a quiet evenness of delivery, the very perfection of soft and modulated elocution.

A special word of commendation is due to Mr. G. Cooke, who played the very small part of a boatman with such honest, hearty, bluntness as to bring down frequent rounds of applause. The scenery and appointments were excellent.

### **The Examiner, 15 August 1857**

#### OLYMPIC

The transfer of the management of this theatre into the hands of Mr. Robson and Mr. Emden was marked by the production before a crowded auditory of Mr. Wilkie Collins's dramatic story, *The Lighthouse*, which then for the first time passed to the public stage out of the drawing-room theatres at Tavistock or Campden House. The first piece of the evening was a new adaptation of an old French farce, familiar in this country as the *Novel Expedient*. In its new shape as *The Subterfuge* it will long be retained on the Olympic boards by Mrs. Stirling's

finished acting, excellently supported as it is by Mr. Vining.

Before the performance of *The Lighthouse* on the first night of his management Mr. Robson came forward to deliver an address, and was received with earnest and prolonged applause, upon which the address itself, written by Mr. Robert Brough in a weak vein of burlesque, followed as inaptly as possible. The occasion was one taken seriously by the public. For the new manager the public has a hearty friendship, and thinks its loss in the old manager with a regret upon which burlesque lines intrude with the worst possible effect. Nobody wanted to hear Mr. Robson joking for the thousandth time upon his size, and likening himself to an oyster in a coal barge. The new manager's warm sincerity of utterance did not put out of sight the bad taste which had mixed up references to the retirement of Mr. and Mrs. Wigan with a comic business of the most frivolous description. The comic address was, in fact, a serious mistake.

In a very different and a much less degree the performance by Mr. Robson of the altogether serious part of *Aaron Gurnock* in *The Lighthouse* seemed to us also a mistake. It may be that our judgement was obscured by an involuntary comparison in each passage of the acting of Mr. Robson with the intensity of life that Mr. Dickens gave to the same character. The public has had recent opportunity of seeing that the genius of Mr. Dickens can take hold of us as surely through the spoken as the written word.

But we believe the truth to be that Mr. Robson is most perfectly at home and can be seen to the best advantage in those parts by which his reputation has been made, and that his success in parts of serious interest will be greatest in those which, like *Daddy Hardacre*, permit him to add to his strokes of passion some fantastic touches that provoke us unexpectedly to mirth. In *Aaron Gurnock* the whole interest is serious; he has an enfeebled body and a stricken soul, solemn awe of the spirit world, emotions shifting with the changes of his bodily condition and of the events that pass around him. Full of interest, full of fine touches of the artist's power, is Mr. Robson's personation of the part; our objection simply means to say that it is not one of his triumphs. The little play is capitally put on the Olympic stage, and well acted throughout. The first of the two acts tells well upon the audience; the second flags upon the public stage, though even better suited than the other for a drawing-room performance.

Reprinted with additions in *The Journal of a London Playgoer from 1851-1866* by Henry Morley, London, 1891

## The New York Times, 22 January 1858

LAURA KEENE'S THEATRE.

“The Lighthouse,” a play which has excited the British literary world to an inordinate degree, was produced at this theatre last night. It is from the pen of MR. WILKIE COLLINS, the author of the “Dead Secret,” and a prolific contributor to *Household Words* and other English periodicals. This is, we believe, MR. COLLINS’ first effort in a dramatic way, and was made for MR. DICKENS’ private theatrical entertainments – that gentleman, be it known, having a very excellent little theatre attached to his house. On the occasion of its production, MR. DICKENS played the principal character, and those critics who were blessed with the entrée to Tavistock House spoke highly of the impersonation. A great deal of public curiosity was the natural consequence, and even the Queen expressed a desire to see the piece, inviting MR. DICKENS and his literary associates to Windsor Castle, for the purpose of having it performed there. MR. DICKENS replied to this gracious command that inasmuch as the ladies who appeared in the piece were not professional ladies, but relatives of his own, it was important that they should be received as guests, and not kept at arm’s-length as actresses. This was, of course, impossible, and one of the numerous sticks in waiting communicated to MR. DICKENS that it was contrary to Court etiquette to recognise any ladies as friends of the Queen who had not previously gone through the ceremony of presentation, which explanation, it is presumed, saved the country from immediate ruin – deprived the Queen of an innocent pleasure – supplied MR. DICKENS with a laugh, and furnished a topic for some American papers, in which one VICTORIA by name suffered in disparaging comparison with MR. DICKENS, and in which court etiquette generally was held up to very unjust and foolish ridicule. At the desire of the Queen the piece was subsequently produced at the Olympic Theatre, and, played by regular players, achieved success. It was also played in the principal cities by Literary Amateurs, in aid of the Jerrold Fund, and contributed largely to the prosperous issue of that charitable undertaking.

With this pedigree of the work we will proceed to a consideration of its merits. The scene is laid in the Eddystone Lighthouse – a structure which rises out of the sea some ten miles from the mainland. An exact idea of the utter isolation of this building is of the first importance, and it must not be confounded with ordinary lighthouses of the seaboard, which, as a general thing, are easily reached. To impress the mind clearly with the locality, a representation of the building, surrounded by boiling waves and furious surf, is exhibited during the performance of the overture. We then have a representation of the interior, and in this narrow shell all the action of the piece takes place. There is but little scope for the display of anything like dramatic construction, and but little is displayed. MR. COLLINS’ production has to be judged on different grounds. It is

a novelty which boldly defies traditional art, and asks for independent consideration on its own merits. Clearly it is entitled to it, for in spite of the most unpromising dramatic conditions, the "Lighthouse" is a curiously impressive and interesting piece.

The story consumes a fair amount of red and blue fire – love and murder – but is subdued to safe bounds by remarkable simplicity of language, – a simplicity which occasionally amounts to heaviness. When the scene opens the occupants of the Lighthouse are in peril of starvation. Communication with the shore has been cut off for more than three weeks, provisions are out, and the storm still rages. *Aaron*, the elder keeper, has become delirious and communicates to his son, *Martin*, the fact that some years previously he had assisted at the murder of a lady, – *Lady Grace* – the name haunts him, – who sought the shelter of his roof. His implication in the affair was to the extent of helping the real murderer, – whose vengeance he feared, – to bear the body to the sea. The old man's remorse is terrible: the young man's grief overpowering. At this point a boat arrives from the shore, and the famished lightkeepers are relieved. Among the passengers is *Phoebe*, a peasant girl betrothed to *Martin*, and dearly loved by him. He cannot look upon her now; he feels that his touch – he, the son of a murderer, – is contamination.

The perplexity arising out of this new condition of things contributes to the end of the act, where an alarm is given that a ship is on the rocks. A scene of bustle ensues: ropes are cut, and the best contrivances used for saving the passengers. *Old Aaron*, curious to know the name of the ship, engages *Phoebe* to scan the writing on her hull. She looks out between the flashes of lightning, and reads the words *Lady Grace*. *Aaron* is convulsed with horror, everyone does something, and a good picture brings down the curtain.

In the second act *Lady Grace* makes her appearance. She has been rescued from the ship which bore her name, and we soon discover that she is the lady to whose supposed murder *Aaron* was an accomplice. The interview between the sailor and lady is one of abject fear on his part, and pity and forgiveness on hers. It is a scene of considerable power, and was the turning point of the play. At the first opportunity *Martin* demands an explanation from the lady, and the story is soon unravelled. *Lady Grace*, conveyed to the shore to be washed away by the sea, was picked up by a coasting vessel, carried to France, remained there and so forth until the event of the present shipwreck. Her life is now devoted to philanthropy, and she readily forgives the suffering *Aaron*. On the strength of this forgiveness, *Martin's* conscience recovers its former elasticity, and he makes *Phoebe* happy by conventionally putting his arm round her waist and saying something in a hoarse voice which she seems to understand.

The "Light-house" is a literary curiosity, and will attract the intellectual classes. As an experiment, it does not deserve to be considered a success. The development of the story is slow and thoroughly stogy. It awakens no new emotions; appeals to no new sources of interest, and is utterly destitute of geniality.

The effort of the author seems to have been to make a play out of materials which the regular dramatist would unquestionably repudiate. He has succeeded to a creditable degree, but the world will continue to move on its axis, without experiencing any evil result from MR. COLLINS' attempted revolution in dramatic art. The piece has been excellently produced by MISS KEENE, and it is well acted. There is so much of a narrative character in the first act, however, that we would suggest to MR. WHEATLEIGH, (who plays *Aaron* very artistically,) the actual necessity of infusing some rapidity, some frenzy, into the old man during his recital of the murder. MISS BURDETT, in a character of less importance, played admirably. MISS KEENE, in a part which might be copied on your thumb-nail, played superbly. MISS THOMPSON and MR. STODDART were also good – the gentleman inclining a little too much to the declamatory style. The piece after dragging in the first act, gained strength in the second, and at the fall of the curtain was a success. The scenery, by MR. HAWTHORNE, is from sketches furnished by the author, and is therefore reliable and good.

### **New York Tribune, 22 January 1858**

#### LAURA KEENE'S THEATER

The Drama entitled "The Light House," which was performed last night for the first time in this country at Laura Keene's Theater, is one with which we are acquainted by name, from the fact that it has won two distinct popularities in England; the first, when it was performed by certain illustrious literary amateurs, among whom were Mr. Wilkie Collins, the author, Mr. Mark Lemon and Mr. Charles Dickens, with the son and daughter of the last-named gentleman; and the other, when being afterwards played at the Royal Olympic Theater, it enjoyed a "run" of a number of weeks. With so favourable a prestige, its production excited an unusual amount of interest, and a large audience was present last night to witness the initial performance here. It was reasonably supposed that a play which had secured so bright a galaxy of literary stars for its first representations must be not only intrinsically good, but must be so good as to demand an intensification of that adjective for its proper description. However great may be the powers of Messrs. Dickens, Wilkie Collins & Co. as writers, the public could not reasonably expect of them so great perfection in the player's art as to make a dull play succeed in spite of its own heaviness. But regarding "The Light-House" from an American point of view, it would seem either that the author-actors must have performed that same theatrical miracle, and that our own actors lack that supernatural power, or that the play is not a good one.

Brightly as the "Light House" may have shone on English shores, it glimmers here with a very feeble flicker indeed. In fact, it burns so dull that its brilliance is totally lost.

It is a two-act drama, with a plot which may be compressed into a very few lines:

A man tries to kill a woman – and thinks he has killed her – after a number of years he considerably acquaints his son with this little circumstance, and this son, feeling himself disgraced by his father's crime, refuses to marry a pretty girl – then the murdered woman comes in and says she isn't dead – then the young man marries the pretty girl.

This production is essentially narrative in its construction, and has very little dramatic possibility about it; the whole story has to be *told*, and not acted. This makes the piece dull, particularly as Mr. Wheatleigh, who acted the principal part, and who is generally so excellent, spoke so low and indistinctly as to be inaudible most of the time. Mr. Burnett and Miss Charlotte Thompson have very good parts, which are admirably acted, the personation of the old lighthouse keeper by the former being decidedly the best thing in the piece. Miss Keene is in the cast but does not speak more than a dozen lines, and those of the least possible importance.

The scene is set in the Eddystone Lighthouse, and the representation of the interior of that structure has been admirably painted by the scenic artist, Mr. Hawthorne. There is a new drop scene, depicting the appearance of the Eddystone Lighthouse in a storm; which we shall probably again refer to.

## Picture sources

Portrait of Wilkie Collins in 1857, aged 33. Cabinet photograph by Herbert Watkins, 215 Regent Street (Private collection)

Sketch of Charles Dickens, 1855, aged 43. From *L'Ami de la maison*, Vol. II, no. 26, p. 8, 3 July 1856

Clarkson Stanfield's front cloth to *The Lighthouse*, performed at Tavistock House and Campden House, 1855. *The Dickens Circle*, J. W. T. Ley, 1918, facing page 98 (Courtesy of the Charles Dickens Museum)

Georgina Hogarth as Lady Grace painted by Charles Collins (Courtesy of the Charles Dickens Museum)

Playbill for the original production of *The Lighthouse* at Tavistock House, June 1855 (Paul Lewis Collection)

Scene from *The Lighthouse* at Campden House, 10 July 1855. *Dickens and the Drama*, S. J. Adair Fitz-Gerald, 1910, facing page 38

Illustration of a scene from *Le Phare* from *L'Ami de la maison*, Vol. II, no. 29, p. 49, 24 July 1856

Illustration of the opening scene of *Le Phare* from *L'Ami de la maison*, Vol. II, no. 26, p. 1, 3 July 1856

Prologue to *The Lighthouse* from the original manuscript. British Library source (Courtesy of the British Library)

Cover of *Une Poignée de Romans*, Wilkie Collins, Hetzel & Lacroix, Paris, 1864, edited by E. D. Forgue

First page of *Le Phare*, with stage instructions. From *Une Poignée de Romans*

Cast list from the programme for *The Lighthouse*, Royal Bijou Theatre, 3 May 1865. Lambeth School of Art (Private collection)

Playbill for *The Lighthouse*, Royal Olympic Theatre, 7 September 1857 (Private collection)

Cast list for the production of *The Lighthouse*, Boscombe Theatre, 14 April 1881 (Private collection)





**Andrew Gasson** is the author of *Wilkie Collins – an Illustrated Guide*; and co-author of *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins: the Collected Letters* and the Collins volume in *Lives of Victorian Literary Figures*. He is Chairman of the Wilkie Collins Society.

**Caroline Radcliffe** lectures in the department of Drama and Theatre Arts at the University of Birmingham, publishing on popular Victorian theatre and sensation drama. She is also an active performer and has directed Wilkie Collins's play *The Red Vial*.

FRANCIS BOUTLE PUBLISHERS

# WILKIE COLLINS

## THE LIGHTHOUSE

A DRAMA IN TWO ACTS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY ANDREW GASSON  
AND CAROLINE RADCLIFFE

WITH A FOREWORD BY P.D. JAMES

In 1855 Wilkie Collins presented Charles Dickens with his first original drama – *The Lighthouse*. Set in the Eddystone Lighthouse in 1748, Collins created a tense, psychological drama employing elements of crime and the supernatural familiar to readers of Collins's fiction. Initially staged at Tavistock House, the role of the guilt-ridden old lighthouse keeper, Aaron Gurnock, provided Dickens with a vehicle for his extraordinary acting technique, accompanied by members of his family and friends from his literary and artistic circle.

This is the first printed, English edition of *The Lighthouse*. The current volume is published by the Wilkie Collins Society and transcribes the version licensed for the Olympic Theatre in 1857 which includes the 'Prologue' and the 'Song of the Wreck' contributed by Dickens. It also contains a Foreword by noted crime writer P. D. James, an introduction providing a detailed account of the play's history, contemporary reviews and numerous, newly-discovered illustrations.

Cover illustration: Clarkson Stanfield's front cloth to *The Lighthouse* performed at Tavistock House and Campden House, 1855 (Courtesy of the Charles Dickens Museum)

