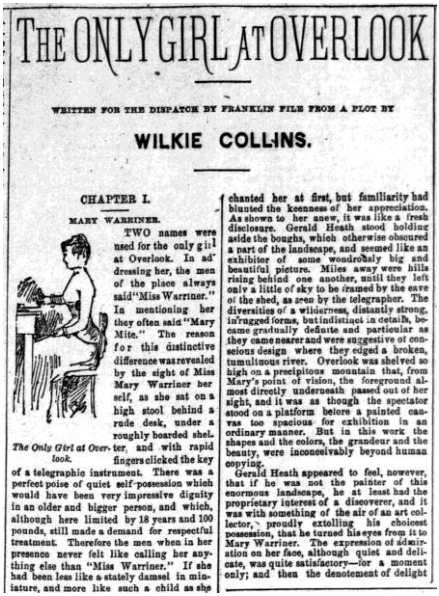
THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

Wilkie's Two Late "American Stories": Finds or Fakes?



THE ONLY GIRL AT OVERLOOK

WRITTEN FOR THE DISPATCH BY FRANKLIN FILE FROM A PLOT BY

WILKIE COLLINS.

CHAPTER I.

MARY WARRINER.

TWO names were used for the only girl at Overlook. In addressing her, the men of the place always said "Miss Warriner." In mentioning her they often said "Mary Mite." The reason for this distinctive difference was revealed by the sight of Miss Mary Warriner herself, as she sat on a high stool behind a rude desk, under a roughly boarded shelter, and with rapid fingers clicked the key of a telegraphic instrument. There was a perfect poise of quiet self-possession which would have been very impressive dignity in an older and bigger person, and which, although here limited by 18 years and 100 pounds, still made a demand for respectful treatment. Therefore the men when in her presence never felt like calling her anything else than "Miss Warriner." If she had been less like a stately damsel in miniature, and more like such a child as she

The Only Girl at Overlook.

chanted her at first, but familiarity had blunted the keenness of her appreciation. As shown to her anew, it was like a fresh disclosure. Gerald Heath stood holding aside the boughs, which otherwise obscured a part of the landscape, and seemed like an exhibitor of some wondrously big and beautiful picture. Miles away were hills rising behind one another, until they left only a little of sky to be framed by the eave of the shed, as seen by the telegrapher. The diversities of a wilderness, distantly strong, in rugged forms, but indistinct in details, became gradually definite and particular as they came nearer and were suggestive of conscious design where they edged a broken, tumultuous river. Overlook was shelved so high on a precipitous mountain that, from Mary's point of vision, the foreground almost directly underneath passed out of her sight, and it was as though the spectator stood on a platform before a painted canvas too spacious for exhibition in an ordinary manner. But in this work the shapes and the colors, the grandeur and the beauty, were inconceivably beyond human copying.

Gerald Heath appeared to feel, however, that if he was not the painter of this enormous landscape, he at least had the proprietary interest of a discoverer, and it was with something of the air of an art collector, proudly extolling his choicest possession, that he turned his eyes from it to Mary Warriner. The expression of admiration on her face, although quiet and delicate, was quite satisfactory—for a moment only; and then the denotement of delight

ONE AUGUST NIGHT IN '61.

WILKIE COLLINS' LAST STORY PLOT.

WRITTEN FROM HIS ORIGINAL SKETCH

-FOR-

THE DISPATCH.

CHAPTER I.

THE PROPHECY.

HE War of the Rebellion had begun. Missouri was about evenly balanced between secession with the Southern States and loyalty with the Northern States. The time was August in 1861. There had been struggles of legislation over the question whether Missouri should go to the South or stay with the North. Every city, every town, and many a family, was distracted and divided. All was turbulence. General Fremont was in command of the department, and

Unionist military

"Den yo', Mass'r Oliver," old Judee said, "lemme tole yo' fortin'. Dah's fo'tellin' in yo' case—sah—impo'tent fo'tellin'. I kin see dangah, Mass'r Oliver—dangah right ahead o' yo'."

"That's not hard to foretell in these war times," Oliver laughingly responded.

"Ax' me, Mass'r Oliver—ax' me," she droned.

"Tell me what you see," he said, aiming only to satisfy the curiosity of the ladies.

"I see yo' in de middle ob a soldier comp'ny—marchin'—marchin'."

"Well, I trust they're Confederates in gray, Aunt Judee. And can't you put me at their head? I am to be a captain, you know."

"Dey yan't in gray. Dey's in blue, sah. Dey's Union soldiers—marchin'—marchin," and she swayed her body, and held up her head, as though in unison with the tread of the troop which she saw. "An' yo' yan't in de command. Yo's wearin' de same clothes yo' got on now. Oh! I see dat yo's a pris'ner, fo' yo' arms is tied, an' de comp'ny guards yo' close." Her eyes turned slowly away from Oliver, and she seemed to be watching something that was moving steadily away. "Marchin'—marchin'—marchin'," she repeated over and over, but in a lower and lower tone, until she finally whispered: "Dey's gone out'n sight, sah, an' I don't see no mo'ah."

"But I'd really like to know what becomes of me," Oliver remarked carelessly.

Edited by Graham Law

CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Timeline: WC's Two "American Stories" *12*

Table: Two Story Sequences *15*

Sources *16*

"The Only Girl at Overlook" 17

"One August Night in '61" 35

Acknowledgments & Permissions *Inside back cover*

THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY
OCTOBER 2013

THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

Wilkie's Two Late "American Stories": Finds or Fakes?

Graham Law

Introduction

As members of the Society are doubtless aware, still unfinished at the author's death in autumn 1889, but completed from his detailed notes by Walter Besant, *Blind Love* was Wilkie Collins's final story. Or was it? The increasing availability of digital editions of historical newspapers,[1] together with the eagle eyes of Society member Pierre Tissot van Patot, have recently brought to light claims in the American press concerning a rival for that honour. On Sunday, September 29th, within a week of the author's demise and only a couple of days after the funeral, an article of five hundred words or so headed "Wilkie Collins's Last Plot" appeared in the (New York) *Buffalo Express*, the daily newspaper which Mark Twain had helped to found in the township just across the border from Canada on the banks of Lake Erie. The article revealed the plot in question to be a "romance of Missouri during the War of the Rebellion" under the title "One August Night in '61". It was stated that the plan for a "long novel" had been devised and submitted to the publisher before the author suffered his "first stroke of paralysis" in late June. With Collins too ill to complete the task for which he had already been paid, this original sketch had thus been "written out" by "an American novelist" in condensed form to appear in "the current succession of Sunday novelettes" in "The Express and one or two other papers". Though noting that Collins's business arrangements were generally conducted through his agent A.P. Watt, the report included a lengthy extract from a letter written by the author himself concerning payment for the piece:

[1] Repositories of historical US newspapers in digital form used in this project include: the Library of Congress, "Chronicling America" (URL: chroniclingamerica.loc.gov), Tom Tryniski's "Old Fulton New York Post Cards" (URL: fultonhistory.com), New York Public Library, "America's Historical Newspapers" (available on site only), "NewspaperArchive" (a subscription service; URL: newspaperarchive.com), and ProQuest, "Historical Newspapers" and "National Newspaper Premier" (both subscription services).

> Dear Sir:—I beg to thank you for your letter. ... To allude to the uninviting question of money, I feel that I cannot persist in returning the remittance after the expression of your resolution under no circumstances to accept it. At the same time, I cannot consent, on my side, to accept this remittance when the circumstances under which I consented to receive it no longer exist. My present idea is to satisfy my own scruples—and not, I hope, to show any want of respect for the motives which animate you in this matter—by devoting the money to the necessities of some charitable institution in London which needs and really deserves help. You will, I trust, see no objection. It is almost needless for me to say that I appreciate the courteous and friendly tone in which you have written to me, and that I am glad to do justice to the integrity of your intentions. I can only ask you and your colleagues to accept my excuses.
>
> Believe me, very truly yours, WILKIE COLLINS.[2]

A report under the same heading, and of a similar nature, though rather shorter on detail and without the quoted letter, appeared on the following Wednesday in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, with both papers assuring their readers that the promised story would appear in the columns of the special jumbo Sunday edition the following weekend. The story itself, totalling around 9,000 words and reproduced here *verbatim* from the best surviving copy (in the *Dispatch*) with the minimum of editorial oversight, duly appeared at the same time not only in those two journals but also in the New York City daily, the *Star*. (Other venues may well emerge as digitalization proceeds.) This simultaneous publication, with substantively the same text though not printed from stereotype plates, suggests strongly that the copy was supplied in galley-proof form by some central syndicating agency.[3]

There seem to be only two possibilities. Either Collins did indeed have some hand in the published story, so that it represents a fair claim to be his "last plot", or the whole affair is a fabrication taking advantage of his demise, with neither the story itself nor the letter extract having any authority. On the face of it, both sides of the case seem arguable.

Honest scoops concerning English men of letters were by no means unknown in the American press at this time. On the same sad Sunday that "Wilkie Collins's Last Plot" appeared in the *Buffalo Express*, the (New York) *World*, which had contracted to pay A.P. Watt $1500 for advance sheets of the instalments of *Blind Love*, instead of the scheduled fourteenth part of the serial, offered its readers not only a synopsis of the story so far, but also a series of revelations about the author's private life, including surprisingly precise information on his three "morganatic" children and their mother.[4] Moreover, the author's correspondence

[2] Quoted in "Wilkie Collins' Last Plot", (New York) *Buffalo Express* (29 Sep 1889), p. 12.

[3] Generally on the development of American literary syndication, including the distinction between plate and galley-proof service, see Johanningsmeier, especially pp. 34-98.

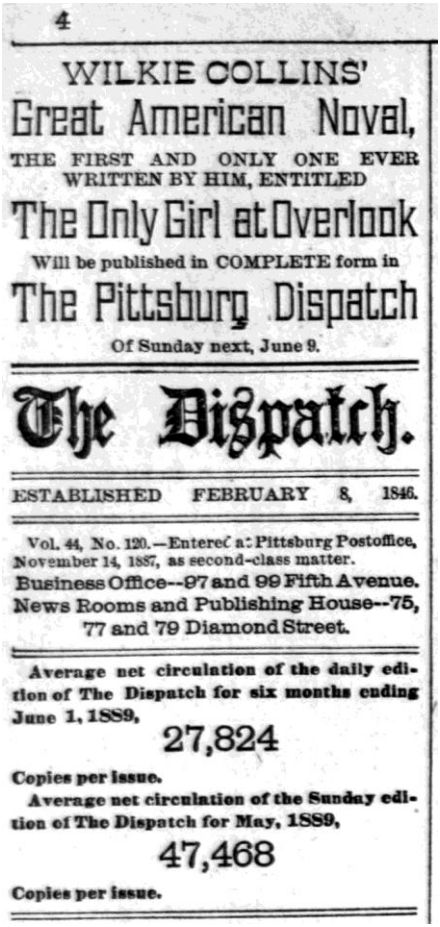
[4] "Wilkie Collins's Last Days", (New York) *World* (29 Sep 1889), p. 17; duplicated in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* (29 Sep 1889), p. 10, and other US papers. The article is also reprinted with discussion in Graham Law, "Different Worlds", *Wilkie Collins Society Newsletter* (Spring 1999), Supplement, pp. 1-4.

suggests that, probably with the encouragement of his agent, it was not then unusual for him to respond favourably to requests for material from popular publishers in the US—his work for Perry Mason & Co. in Boston, the proprietors of the *Youth's Companion*, and the Bok Syndicate Press in New York, both being good cases in point. On the other hand, the febrile nature of the American popular fiction market in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, meant that editors of cheap story papers and dime novel magazines were quick not only to reprint the writings of aliens without permission, but also to pass off hack work as that of brand-name authors. There was no recognition of international copyright in American law before the Chace Act of 1891, and the concept of the moral right of the author (*droit moral*) was not formally recognized until the US finally signed the Berne Convention nearly a century later, though British authors had protested against such damage to their literary property and reputation from as early as 1837.[5] As I have shown elsewhere, the case of the British romantic author Charlotte M. Brame provides a contemporary illustration that is larger than life, featuring the forging of letters and manuscripts to give a patina of authenticity to literary deception.[6] Since there is no clear-cut documentary evidence to clinch the case either way, reaching a judgment concerning the provenance of "One August Night in '61" involves sifting a good deal of circumstantial evidence concerning the American novelist who "wrote up" up the sketch, the journals publishing and the agency distributing it, as well as the linguistic qualities of the letter allegedly written by Collins, and his physical and mental condition during the period in question.

Before getting down to those details though, we have to confront a complicating factor: "One August Night in '61" is in fact the second short story syndicated in the American press in 1889 to be claimed as the work of Wilkie Collins. A month before the author suffered his stroke in late June, the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, one of the three papers to carry "One August Night in '61" in the October, announced the imminent appearance in its special Sunday edition of a new "series of novelettes by noted authors", with Collins second among the half dozen specifically listed. When the story was published ten days later under the title "The Only Girl at Overlook", it was described as "A Western Story written by Franklin File, From a plot by Wilkie Collins", though a couple of days earlier it had been billed as "Wilkie Collins' Great American Novel, the first and only one ever written by him". It was a detective story with romantic interest set on the wild frontier and amounted once more to some 9,000 words; the text is again reproduced faithfully here from *Dispatch* copy. A simultaneous appearance has been located in another paper, the *New York Herald*, though in this case the story was simply signed "Franklin File", with no mention of Wilkie Collins at all. The story was widely reprinted both in American provincial and Australian colonial

[5] See Law and Morita, "Internationalizing the Popular Print Marketplace", p. 213.
[6] See Law, *Charlotte M. Brame*, especially pp. 2-14.

newspapers, both later the same year and in subsequent ones, with the author's name given variously as Franklin File, Franklyn Fyles, and Franklin Fyles, but with no mention of Collins in any such appearance so far located. Moreover, the story also appeared in a single volume published in mid-1891 by Cassell in New York (also reprinted later the same year in London from the American plates), entitled *Eleven Possible Cases*, a collection of mystery stories by popular American authors, opening with "The Only Girl at Overlook" by Franklin Fyles.



4

WILKIE COLLINS'

Great American Noval,

THE FIRST AND ONLY ONE EVER WRITTEN BY HIM, ENTITLED

The Only Girl at Overlook

Will be published in COMPLETE form in

The Pittsburg Dispatch

Of Sunday next, June 9.

The Dispatch.

ESTABLISHED FEBRUARY 8, 1846.

Vol. 44, No. 120.—Entered at Pittsburg Postoffice, November 14, 1887, as second-class matter.

Business Office--97 and 99 Fifth Avenue. News Rooms and Publishing House--75, 77 and 79 Diamond Street.

Average net circulation of the daily edition of The Dispatch for six months ending June 1, 1889,

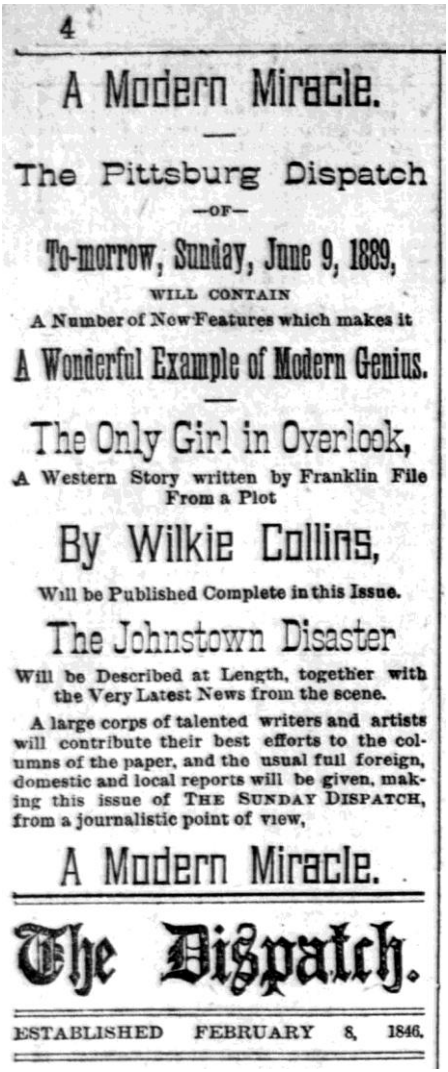
27,824

Copies per issue.

Average net circulation of the Sunday edition of The Dispatch for May, 1889,

47,468

Copies per issue.



4

A Modern Miracle.

The Pittsburg Dispatch

—OF—

To-morrow, Sunday, June 9, 1889,

WILL CONTAIN

A Number of New Features which makes it

A Wonderful Example of Modern Genius.

The Only Girl in Overlook,

A Western Story written by Franklin File From a Plot

By Wilkie Collins,

Will be Published Complete in this Issue.

The Johnstown Disaster

Will be Described at Length, together with the Very Latest News from the scene.

A large corps of talented writers and artists will contribute their best efforts to the columns of the paper, and the usual full foreign, domestic and local reports will be given, making this issue of THE SUNDAY DISPATCH, from a journalistic point of view,

A Modern Miracle.

The Dispatch.

ESTABLISHED FEBRUARY 8, 1846.

Notices of coming Sunday features in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* (7, 8 June 1889, p.4)

This was, of course, the correct spelling of the name. Franklin Fyles (1847-1911) was then serving as drama critic to the (New York) *Sun*, and already the author of a number of short stories. He was soon to achieve fame as a playwright with *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, written in collaboration with David Belasco for the 1893 opening of the Empire Theatre on Broadway.[7] "The Only Girl at Overlook" itself was adapted by him as a comic melodrama under the title "Overlook", which opened in autumn 1890 at Proctor's Opera House, Hartford, Connecticut, starring Anna Boyd and John Marshall. In this case, in addition to its unlikely setting and genre, the afterlife of the story provides little reason to trust the claims of the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* regarding the English author's hand in the story. It should also be pointed out that it is quite possible that Franklin Fyles, to whom the sole authorship of "The Only Girl at Overlook" can thus be assigned with reasonable confidence, might have had no hand in what is likely to have been the arbitrary attachment of Collins's name to the story for its publicity value.

This matters because it also seems likely that Fyles was the "American novelist" who had "written out" the copy of "One August Night in '61". Here, though, it should be noted that, without exception, all appearances of the story as a newspaper *feuilleton* associate it with Wilkie Collins and none with Franklin Fyles or the like. Moreover, there seems to have been no reprinting of the story in book form. The sole evidence for Fyles's association with the story derives from the appearance as late as 1897 of his new romantic melodrama of the Civil War, "Cumberland '61". This opened on October 18 at Haverly's Fourteenth Street Theatre on Broadway, produced by Augustus Pitou with Florence Rockwell as heroine and a comic cameo appearance from the youthful Lionel Barrymore. It ran for many months, and was frequently revived. The initial production was widely reviewed in the New York press,[8] and programmes, playbills, and posters relating to this and other stagings have survived.[9] Moreover, the play was entered at the Office of the Librarian of Congress for copyright purposes in November 1897,[10] and complete typescripts are now held at a number of libraries.[11] None of these materials refers to a contribution by Wilkie Collins.

---

[7] For a contemporary introduction to the development of Fyles's career, with a portrait, see the syndicated article "Franklin Fyles: One of the Most Promising Contributors to the American Drama", in, e.g., (New York) *Oswego Daily Times* (4 Jan 1896), p. 6.

[8] See, for example, the review of the opening night: "A New Melodrama: 'Cumberland '61' Produced at the Fourteenth Street Theatre" , *New York Times* (19 Oct 1897), p. 6.

[9] There is a programme of the opening night in the Theatre Playbills and Programs Collection at the Library of Congress, while a playbill of an 1899 revival is found in *Six Years of Drama*, p. 229; posters for productions in 1897 and 1899 are held at the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

[10] *Catalogue of Title Entries of Books and Other Articles, nos. 405-17* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1899).

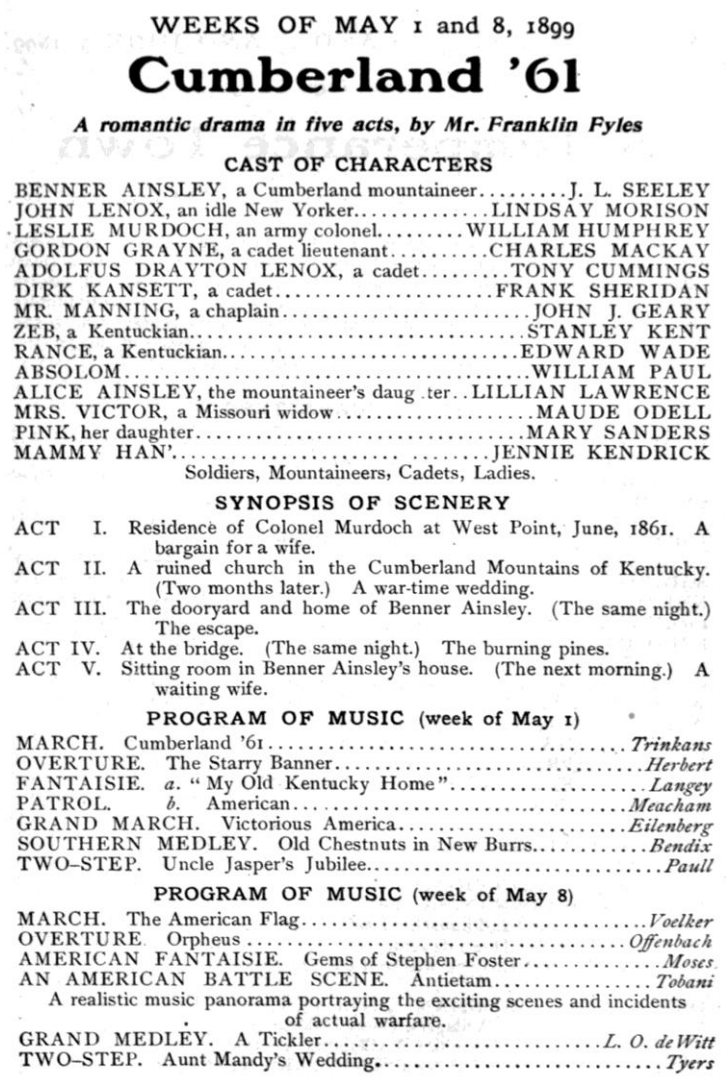
[11] For example, in the Sherman Theatre Collection, Southern Illinois University, in the Charles Morton Agency Collection, University of Chicago, and in the Performing Arts Research Collections, New York Public Library, the copy in fact consulted.

Poster, "Cumberland '61", Fall 1897 (Library of Congress Prints & Photographs)

However, careful reading suggests that, though the story has been thoroughly revised and complicated by the addition of several sub-plots, all the characters renamed, and the main setting shifted from Missouri to Kentucky,[12] the play nevertheless represents a loose adaptation of "One August Night in '61". The germs of situation and theme remain the same: in both, against the background of the Civil War, the young heroine is torn between duty towards an older husband and passion for a younger lover, the former a stern, unbending colonel in the one army who has a capital charge of spying brought against the latter, a junior officer in the other. Interestingly, the two men both swap loyalties between narrative and dramatic versions, with the young hero in Confederate grey on paper but Unionist blue on the stage, presumably to stir the national sentiments of the audience and allow a full programme of rousing music. In addition to that in the two titles, echoes also reverberate at crucial moments in the dialogue: when the heroine is asked by the young soldier why they must remain apart, "Is it that you are a Unionist and I am an officer in the Confederate army?" (col. 2) in the narrative account is replaced in the dramatic version by "Because I am to go into the Union Army and he is with the Confederates?" (fol. 13); when she confesses why she cannot follow him, "I am a wife" (col. 4) by "I am Colonel Murdoch's wife!!" (fol. 42); when the young soldier is captured by the colonel, "This is an officer in the rebel army. He is a spy." (col. 4) by "Don't honor him with your bullet. I will hang him as a spy!" (fol. 43); and when the older man is accused of acting on

[12] The reworking seems to be influenced by "A Cumberland Vendetta", John Fox's acclaimed local colour novella of 1894, set in the Cumberland Mountains.

private rather than public motives, "Would you be a murderer?" (col. 5) by "It saved you from the crime of murder" (fol. 83).[13] In both, of course, the young man escapes with his life and love wins some form of victory in the end.



WEEKS OF MAY 1 and 8, 1899

Cumberland '61

A romantic drama in five acts, by Mr. Franklin Fyles

CAST OF CHARACTERS

BENNER AINSLEY, a Cumberland mountaineer.....J. L. SEELEY
JOHN LENOX, an idle New Yorker.....LINDSAY MORISON
LESLIE MURDOCH, an army colonel.....WILLIAM HUMPHREY
GORDON GRAYNE, a cadet lieutenant.....CHARLES MACKAY
ADOLFUS DRAYTON LENOX, a cadet.....TONY CUMMINGS
DIRK KANSETT, a cadet.....FRANK SHERIDAN
MR. MANNING, a chaplain.....JOHN J. GEARY
ZEB, a Kentuckian.....STANLEY KENT
RANCE, a Kentuckian.....EDWARD WADE
ABSOLOM.....WILLIAM PAUL
ALICE AINSLEY, the mountaineer's daug ter..LILLIAN LAWRENCE
MRS. VICTOR, a Missouri widow.....MAUDE ODELL
PINK, her daughter.....MARY SANDERS
MAMMY HAN'.....JENNIE KENDRICK
Soldiers, Mountaineers, Cadets, Ladies.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY

ACT I. Residence of Colonel Murdoch at West Point, June, 1861. A bargain for a wife.
ACT II. A ruined church in the Cumberland Mountains of Kentucky. (Two months later.) A war-time wedding.
ACT III. The dooryard and home of Benner Ainsley. (The same night.) The escape.
ACT IV. At the bridge. (The same night.) The burning pines.
ACT V. Sitting room in Benner Ainsley's house. (The next morning.) A waiting wife.

PROGRAM OF MUSIC (week of May 1)

MARCH. Cumberland '61.....*Trinkans*
OVERTURE. The Starry Banner.....*Herbert*
FANTAISIE. *a.* "My Old Kentucky Home".....*Langey*
PATROL. *b.* American.....*Meacham*
GRAND MARCH. Victorious America.....*Eilenberg*
SOUTHERN MEDLEY. Old Chestnuts in New Burrs.....*Bendix*
TWO-STEP. Uncle Jasper's Jubilee.....*Paull*

PROGRAM OF MUSIC (week of May 8)

MARCH. The American Flag.....*Voelker*
OVERTURE. Orpheus.....*Offenbach*
AMERICAN FANTAISIE. Gems of Stephen Foster.....*Moses*
AN AMERICAN BATTLE SCENE. Antietam.....*Tobani*
A realistic music panorama portraying the exciting scenes and incidents of actual warfare.
GRAND MEDLEY. A Tickler.....*L. O. de Witt*
TWO-STEP. Aunt Mandy's Wedding.....*Tyers*

Playbill, 1899 Boston revival of "Cumberland '61" (*Sixty Years*, p. 229)

[13] Column numbers refer to those in the story as published in the form of a *feuilleton* in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* of 6 Oct 1889, p. 20, while folio numbers refer to those in the typescript of the play issued undated by the American Play Company of New York, and held at New York Public Library.

While the earlier dubious claims for "The Only Girl at Overlook", plus the involvement of the same New York journalist and the same Pennsylvania journal in both affairs, encourages a considerable degree of wariness concerning the provenance of "One August Night in '61", the evidence presented so far cannot be said conclusively to exclude any involvement by Collins in the second story. Indeed, the marked differences between the afterlives of the two tales might be taken to suggest that their provenances also may not have coincided. As suggested in the table, both these stories belonged to separate series of "novelettes" appearing in simultaneous sequence in a number of Sunday papers.[14] However, although the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* happened to carry both, it is not necessarily the case that the two series were supplied by the same agency. The prior announcement in the *Dispatch* of the forthcoming appearance of the first series of "Choice Original Stories" (30 May 1889, p. 4) suggests that it had a more prominent role in that syndicate than the *New York Herald* which carried no such announcement and clearly opted out of a number of the offered stories. The (New York) *Star* was likely the leading member of the second series—a role involving the setting up of the stories in type early and the distribution of galley-proofs to other participating papers—since it carried a similar preparatory announcement of a forthcoming "series of sixteen novelettes by famous authors" (24 August 1889, p. 1) and the complete set duly appeared in numbered sequence. This was not the case with the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* which passed on a couple of the later stories. The prominent role of the *Star* in the distribution of "One August Night in '61" is confirmed in other papers, including the (Iowa) *Burlington Hawk-Eye* which, though it did not carry the story itself, reported the title and stated that "before his death Wilkie Collins had been engaged by the New York Star to write a story founded on the American rebellion" (4 October 1889, p. 2).[15] Moreover, in promoting the special Sunday edition, the widely published "Prospectus of the New York Star for 1890" prominently featured a list of "distinguished contributors" which largely coincided with the authors of the sixteen tales in the series in question and included Wilkie Collins.[16]

Most interestingly, from its beginnings there had been a close link between the Bok Syndicate Press and the *Star*. From around 1886 the two Bok brothers not only began to distribute the *Star*'s "Bab's Babble" gossip column far and wide, but also supplied the New York paper with popular weekly letters by Henry Ward Beecher and Ella Wheeler Wilcox, plus their own compilations of "Literary Leaves".[17] The continued intimacy of the link at precisely the period in question is confirmed by a detailed article from October 1889 in the *Publisher's Weekly*,

[14] The patterns are confirmed by data from the *Buffalo Express* not shown in the table.

[15] See also, among other examples, the "Personal and Literary Column" of the (New York) *Cuba Patriot* (3 Apr 1890), p. 4, the date suggesting that the *Star* may have continued marketing the story for some considerable time.

[16] See, e.g., (New York) *Marcellus Observer* (13 Feb 1890), p. 7.

[17] See Bok, *Americanization of Edward Bok*, especially chapters 8-10.

which included a lengthy quotation from the New York *Star* describing the agency as "a bureau from which emanate many of the best and most striking literary articles by famous authors found in the modern newspaper ... all over this country and in Canada and England", and listing Wilkie Collins among its client authors.[18] Collins began to correspond with the Bok brothers as early as February 1883, and seems to have written to Edward fairly frequently from March 1887.[19] The only documented work supplied to the Bok agency by Collins is "How I Write My Books" which was scheduled to appear in American newspapers from late 1887.[20] The latest of the extant letters to Bok, dating from early 1889, make no mention of a new commission, but it does not seem impossible that he might have agreed to provide another piece towards the end of his life.[21]

Which brings us back to the Collins letter quoted in the *Buffalo Express* article. This we must now assume was among the publicity material supplied to interested newspapers, probably by the *Star* or the Bok agency. Confirmation is provided by the incorporation of the same article, entire including the letter, in an obituary essay on the author in the final issue of Frank Leslie's *Popular Monthly* for 1889. There, the only substantive differences were the removal of all references to the *Express* in the body of the article, and, in the quoted letter, the omission of the salutation and the replacement of "the remittance" with "the $200".[22] This duplication allows us to deal more confidently with the wording of the letter itself.

Since the claim is that the plot but not the text of "One August Night in '61" was created by Collins, there would be little point in performing a comparative stylistic analysis of the published story. But it might be instructive to carry out something similar with the text of the letter, though it represents far too short a sample of discourse for results based on vocabulary usage to be reliable. What can be done is a simple collocational analysis of phrases occurring in the quoted letter against the database of the author's more than three thousand collected letters,

[18] See "Mr E.W. Bok and 'The Bok Syndicate Press'", p. 513.

[19] That the surviving letters are not collected in a single archive but scattered among a number of owners suggests that these are unlikely to represent the entirety of the correspondence.

[20] The article was apparently syndicated by Bok under the title "Wilkie Collins Tells the Secret of 'The Woman in White'". The earliest appearances traced are: (New York) *World* (27 Nov 1887), p. 9, and *Los Angeles Times* (30 Dec 1887), p. 2.

[21] Bok was not averse to syndicating extracts from personal letters; the opening lines of WC's letter to him of 15 Jan 1889, on the possibility of writing his "own life" (Baker et al., *Public Face*, IV p. 355) soon appeared *verbatim* as a literary "snippet" in the newspapers, e.g. (Minnesota) *St Paul Daily Globe* (4 Mar 1889), p. 4. In the event, the success of the Syndicate Press was short-lived; by the early 1890s, Edward W. Bok was putting more energy into the editorship of the *Ladies Home Journal*, and by 1896 he must have given up entirely on the business of syndication, since he then published a virulent attack on the practice, concluding: "The syndicate is in business for money; for literature it cares very little ..." (Bok, "Modern Literary King", p. 341).

[22] See "Wilkie Collins", p. 657.

paying particular attention to linguistic patterns emerging in Collins's later years. The database used consists of the text of all letters listed in the *Public Face of Wilkie Collins* (2005), plus those so far appearing in the annual "Addenda and Corrigenda" issued by the Society. The standard salutation at the head ("Dear Sir") can be discounted; if the letter were indeed from Wilkie Collins to Edward Bok it would in all likelihood have begun "My dear Mr Bok", but such a personal detail would surely have been suppressed by editors anxious to maintain the illusion of exclusive access to the famous author. The valediction ("Believe me, very truly yours") is entirely characteristic of Collins for this genre of letter at this period of time, and indeed is found in two of the five extant letters to Edward Bok. The following collocations in the letter are found with some frequency in the database: "I beg to thank you" (51 instances), "I feel that I" (6), "persist in ...ing" (6), "on my side" (23), "circumstances under which" (6), (parenthetically) "I trust" (8), "see no objection" (15), "I can only ask" (12), and "accept my excuses" (44); the following on only one or two occasions: "motives which animate", "my present idea", and "almost needless"; and these not at all: "uninviting question", "want of respect for", and "courteous and friendly". This represents quite a high strike rate. Further, as an editor with over ten years' experience working on the correspondence of Wilkie Collins, I can find no obvious "false notes" in the letter as published. This is in marked contrast to the case of an earlier item published in the United States that is undoubtedly a forgery. This appeared in the unauthorized 1863 "Illustrated Library" edition of *No Name* from Gardner A. Fuller in Boston, where the prefatory matter included not only a fake autographed portrait of Collins, but also a printed laudatory letter full of false phrases such as, "I congratulate you on the exquisite portrayal of character, and the beautiful typography of this work". If the letter quoted in the *Buffalo Express* was not in fact penned by Collins, it seems likely that it was composed by someone familiar with his style of business correspondence.

If the wording of the letter raises few suspicions, the same cannot be said for its timing. According to the account in "Wilkie Collins's Last Plot", this letter was the second in a transatlantic exchange with the American publishers/ distributors taking place *after* the author's stroke at the end of June. This in itself presents major problems of credibility. As revealed by the letters in the database, Collins himself seems to have been incapable of dealing with correspondence during the whole of July and the early weeks of August 1889, though he sent a few simple messages to close friends via Carrie Bartley from as early as July 7. He dictated a letter to A.P. Watt on August 26, and wrote in his own hand to Frederick Lehmann on September 3. These, like the few other extant letters by or on behalf of the author between his stroke and his demise (only around a dozen in all) are all highly personal and dwell emotionally on his precarious state of health. The valediction "Good bye, old friend" to Sebastian Schlesinger on September 7

sets the characteristic tone of these last sad pieces of correspondence.[23] It is frankly difficult to imagine that the author could have engaged at this time in the niceties of business negotiation reflected in the letter reproduced in the American newspaper. Only if the account in "Wilkie Collins's Last Plot" were mistaken and the quoted letter in fact dated from *before* the onset of serious illness would it be possible to accept it as authentic. This, of course, would involve taking the phrase "when the circumstances under which I consented to receive it [the remittance] no longer exist" as referring to health problems preventing the completion of the commission less calamitous than the paralytic stroke at the end of June.

Thus, while no infallible witness emerges to decide the case without question, the balance of evidence probably suggests that Wilkie Collins had no hand in the composition not only of "The Only Girl at Overview" but also of "One August Night in '61". Nevertheless, with the latter case so close to call, it seems right to provide the members of the Society not only with the main evidence in the case, but also the texts of the two stories themselves, so that they may play the part the of the jury and make up their own minds.

The only thing that remains is briefly to assess the impact of the publication of such doubtful material in the American press. As we have seen, towards the end of 1889 Frank Leslie's influential and long-running *Popular Monthly*, published from 1876 and renamed the *American Magazine* from 1904, at the end of a lengthy article generally well-informed and reliable in its details of the author's life and career, gave a good deal of publicity to the appearance of "One August Night in '61", offering a warranty of its authenticity. This article in turn formed the basis of the entry on Wilkie Collins in Mildred Lewis Rutherford's weighty work of reference, *English Authors*, published in Athens, Georgia in early 1890. There, *One August Night in '61* was included as an unfinished novel in the definitive list of the author's works. But that seems to be more or less the end of the trail of dubious information. Perhaps domestic readers were learning to take with a pinch of salt the red herrings so frequently served up among the literary fare in the American popular press. And there is very little sign of the trail crossing national borders. The only appearance so far traced of either of the two tales outside the United States with the name of Wilkie Collins attached is the *feuilleton* of "One August Night in '61" on 24 November 1889 in the (Georgetown) *Daily Chronicle* of British Guiana.

[23] See Baker et al., *Public Face*, IV pp. 380-2, 387-9.

TIMELINE: WILKIE COLLINS'S TWO "AMERICAN STORIES"

30 May 1889 (Thursday): Announcement headed "Choice Original Stories" in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, p. 4, of the weekly publication of a "series of complete novelettes", beginning on Sunday 2 June with Joaquin Miller's "For Forty Eight Days", and subsequently to include stories by "Wilkie Collins, Franklin File, Emma V. Sheridan, Louise Stockton, and Nym Crinkle"

7 June 1889 (Friday): Announcement in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, p. 4, of the publication the following Sunday of "The Only Girl at Overlook", described as "Wilkie Collins' Great American Novel, the first and only one ever written by him"

8 June 1889 (Saturday): Announcement in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, p. 4, of the publication on the following day of "The Only Girl in Overlook", described as "A Western Story written by Franklin File, From a plot by Wilkie Collins"

9 June 1889 (Sunday): Publication in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, pp. 17-18, in three chapters with four illustrations, of "The Only Girl at Overlook", described as "Written for the Dispatch by Franklin File, From a plot by Wilkie Collins"; simultaneous publication in the *New York Herald*, p. 10, under the same title and with substantially the same text but without illustration, and signed at the end "Franklin File", with no mention of WC *

30 June 1889 (Sunday): WC suffers a stroke at 82 Wimpole Street, with his last serial novel *Blind Love* completed only up the eighteenth of twenty-six instalments, and thereafter writes nothing more of a literary nature; American publication in the (New York) *World* of the first serial instalment of *Blind Love*

6 July 1889 (Saturday): Publication of the first serial instalment of *Blind Love* in the *Illustrated London News*

24 August 1889 (Saturday): Announcement on the front page of the (New York) *Star*, headed "Buy the Sunday Star", of the publication of a "series of sixteen novelettes by famous authors to be published from week to week in the Sunday Star ONLY", beginning the following Sunday with "The End of the World" by Nym Crinkle, drama critic of the (New York) *World*

21 September 1889 (Friday): WC pencils what were probably his last written words, a short note to his physician, Frank Beard, beginning "I am dying old friend" (Baker et al., *Public Face*, IV p. 382)

23 September 1889 (Monday): WC dies around 10am at 82 Wimpole Street

24 September 1889 (Tuesday): Report in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, p. 8, under the heading "Wilkie Collins Dead", with a London dateline from the previous day; the accompanying sketch of his career makes no mention of a last story

27 September 1889 (Friday): Funeral of WC at Kensal Green

29 September 1889 (Sunday): Lengthy report headed "Wilkie Collins' Last Plot" in the (New York) *Buffalo Express*, p. 12, with a letter from WC, concerning the publication the following Sunday of "One August Night in '61", described as a "romance of Missouri during the War of the Rebellion" which had been "written out from Wilkie Collins' original sketch by an American novelist"; also report on 'Wilkie Collins's Last Days' in the (New York) *World*, p. 17, with details of his funeral, will, and "morganatic" family

2 October 1889 (Wednesday): Shorter report headed "Wilkie Collins' Last Plot" in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, p. 4, with no letter cited, concerning publication the following Sunday of "One August Night in '61", again described as a "romance of Missouri during the War of the Rebellion" which had been "written out from Wilkie Collins' original sketch by an American novelist"

4 October 1889 (Friday): Report in the (Iowa) *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, p. 2, as follows: "Some time before his death Wilkie Collins had been engaged by the New York Star to write a story founded on the American rebellion. The title was to be 'One August Night in '61'. He had commenced it, but it is unfinished now."

5 October 1889 (Saturday): Announcement in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, p. 4, of the publication the next day of "Wilkie Collins' Last Story, 'One August Night in '61', prepared for The Dispatch a few days before the great author's death"

6 October 1889 (Sunday): Publication in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, p. 20, in four chapters with four illustrations, of "One August Night in '61", described as "Wilkie Collins' last story plot, Written from his original sketch"; simultaneous publication with substantially the same text in both the (New York) *Star*, p. 12, unillustrated apart from an initial graphic capital, under the heading "Novels by Prominent Authors. No. VII. One August Night in '61", described as "The Last Story Plot of Wilkie Collins" and "Written from his original sketch for the Star", and in the (NY) *Buffalo Express*, pp. 1-3, unillustrated and under the title "An August Night in '61", and described as "An American Story, Completed from the Original Sketch which at the Time of His Death, Wilkie Collins was Writing for the 'Buffalo Sunday Express'" **

13 October 1889 (Sunday): Reprinting in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, p. 18, of Hall Caine's "Personal Recollections of Wilkie Collins" from the London evening *Globe* (4 October 1889), with the by-line "Written for the Dispatch"

December 1889: Publication in Frank Leslie's *Popular Monthly* of "Wilkie Collins", a survey of his career concluding with a detailed discussion of "One August Night in '61", duplicating "Wilkie Collins's Last Plot" in the *Buffalo Express*

Early 1890: Publication of Mildred Lewis Rutherford's *English Authors*, whose entry on WC lists *One August Night in '61* among his published works, describing it as an "unfinished" novel

22 September 1890 (Monday): Opening at Proctor's Opera House, Hartford, Connecticut, of "Overlook", a new comic melodrama by Franklyn Fyles, adapted from "The Only Girl at Overlook"

18 October 1897 (Monday): Opening at Haverly's Fourteenth Street Theatre on Broadway of "Cumberland '61", a new Civil War melodrama by Franklin Fyles, loosely adapted from "One August Night in '61"

* A later reprinting as a *feuilleton* of "The Only Girl at Overview, By Franklyn Fyles" has been found in the (New York) *Buffalo Sunday News*, Sunday, 17 October 1890. A version with syndicated illustrations as "Only Girl at Overlook, By Franklin Fyles" has so far been located in the following journals: (New York) *Salem Review-Press*, Friday, 14 & 21 November 1890; (Utah) *Salt Lake Herald*, Sunday, 23 November & 14 December 1890; (Indiana) *Sullivan Democrat*, Tuesday, 16 December 1890; (New York) *Oswego Daily Times*, Saturday, 5 January 1891; (Iowa) *Alton Democrat*, Saturday, 7-21 March 1891; (Texas) *San Antonio Daily Light*, Monday, 30 March 1891; (New York) *Auburn Bulletin*, Monday-Tuesday, 9-10 October 1891. Doubtless further reprints remain to be located. The story also appeared in a volume published in mid-1891 by Cassell in New York (also later reprinted in London from the American plates), entitled *Eleven Possible Cases*, a collection of mystery stories, opening with "The Only Girl at Overlook" by Franklin Fyles, and also including tales by Frank R. Stockton, Joaquin Miller, and Nym Crinkle, among others. Well before the appearance of this volume, the story was also widely reprinted in newspapers in the Australian colonies: (1) as "Only Girl at Overlook, By Franklin Fyles", in four parts with no source given, in (Victoria) *Oakleigh Leader*, Saturday, 29 August - 19 September 1889, among other papers; and (2) as "The Only Girl at Overlook, By Franklin File", in two parts and sourced from the *New York Herald*, in (Victoria) *Portland Guardian*, Friday, 13-20 September 1889, among other papers.

** Later reprintings of "One August Night in '61" as a *feuilleton* have so far been located in the following American papers: (Georgetown, British Guiana) *Daily Chronicle*, Sunday, 24 November 1889, "Wilkie Collins' Last Story Plot, Written from his Original Sketch"; (New York) *Buffalo Sunday News*, Sunday, 9-16 March 1890, by Wilkie Collins; (New York) *Salem Review-Press*, Friday, 27 June 1890, "Wilkie Collins' Last Story Plot, Written from his Original Sketch". Doubtless further newspaper reprints remain to be located; no volume publication has been traced.

TABLE. TWO STORY SEQUENCES IN US SUNDAY PAPERS IN 1889

(1) Sunday 2 June to 18 August (12 weeks)

	Pittsburgh Dispatch		***New York Herald***
2 Jun	Joaquin Miller	For Forty-Eight Days	Rev. Edward Everett Hale, A Safe Deposit
9 Jun	**Wilkie Collins / Franklin File**	**The Only Girl at Overview**	**As, Franklin File, Only Girl at Overview**
16 Jun	Louise Stockton	My Heart's Delight	<<
23 Jun	Nym Crinkle	A Flirtation in Fire	Henry Harland, Henry Norbert's Story
30 Jun	Emma V. Sheridan	Katie Tempest, Soubrette	<<
7 Jul	Maurice Thompson	In Love's Hands	<<
14 Jul	Edgar Fawcett	A Dead Man's Vengeance	<<
21 Jul	Jules Verne & An American Author	Off the Track	<<
28 Jul	Julian Hawthorne	Lieutenant Louisa	<<
4 Aug	Edward S. Van Zile	A Magnetic Man	<<
11 Aug	Franklin File	Guests at Camp Nineteen	Mary C. Montgomery, The Trained Nurse
18 Aug	C.M.S. McLellan	In the Life of an Actress	*No story published*

(2) Sunday 25 August to 8 December (16 weeks)

	(New York) *Star*		***Pittsburgh Dispatch*** (all stories unnumbered)
25 Aug	Nym Crinkle	I. The End of the World	As, The End of All
1 Sep	Brainard Gardner Smith	II. A Tragedy of High Explosives	<<
8 Sep	Edward S. Van Zile	III. An Emperor's Decree	<<
15 Sep	Sara Bernhardt	IV. Andras Normaine's Duel	<<
22 Sep	E.D. Beach	V. The Woman with Three Roses	<<
29 Sep	William J. Florence	VI. The Rock on Elmwood Hill	<<
6 Oct	**Wilkie Collins**	**VII. One August Night in '61**	**<<**
13 Oct	Henry Harland (Sidney Luska)	VIII. Sophia Paulovna Eczardy	<<
20 Oct	Dante Frealli	IX. Two of Lucia Felando	<<
27 Oct	Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen	X. A Breach of Faith	<<
3 Nov	A. Oakey Hall	XI. Vengeance by Vera Rosebery	<<
10 Nov	Phillip Braggalan	XII. The Case of Moa Barrios	<<
17 Nov	Henry Harland (Sidney Luska)	XIII. "There be Jews and Jews"	Unsigned, The Silver Locket
24 Nov	T. DeWitt Talmage & Marian White	XIV. Cousins at Madawaska	<<
1 Dec	Edward S. Van Zile	XV. A Tangle of Hearts	Bret Harte, The Chatelaine of Burnt Ridge
8 Dec	Justin H. McCarthy & Albert Belpit	XVI. Errant in the Rockies	<<

<< As in the journal to the left

Works Cited

(Material in newspapers is cited fully in the footnotes or in the timeline .)

Baker, William, et al. *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins* (4 vols; London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005).

Bok, Edward W., *The Americanization of Edward Bok: The Autobiography of a Dutch Boy Fifty Years After* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920).

Bok, Edward W., "The Modern Literary King", *Forum* 20 (November 1896), pp. 334-43.

Collins, Wilkie, *No Name* (Boston: Gardner A. Fuller, 1863).

Fox, John Jr., "A Cumberland Vendetta", *Century Magazine* 48 (Jun-Aug 1894), pp. 163-78, 366-73, 496-505; reprinted in *A Cumberland Vendetta and Other Stories* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1895), pp. 91-178.

Fyles, Franklin, "The Only Girl at Overlook", in *Eleven Possible Cases* (New York: Cassell, 1891), pp. 1-45.

Fyles, Franklin, *Cumberland '61* (New York: American Play Company, n.d.).

Johanningsmeier, Charles A., *Fiction and the American Literary Marketplace: The Role of Newspaper Syndicates in America, 1860-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Law, Graham, and Norimasa Morita, "Internationalizing the Popular Print Marketplace", in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture, Vol. 6: U.S. Popular Print Culture*, ed. Christine Bold (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 211-29.

Law, Graham, with Greg Drozdz and Debby McNally, *Charlotte M. Brame: Towards a Primary Bibliography*. URL: www.victoriansecrets.co.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/36-Charlotte-May-Brame.pdf.

"Mr E.W. Bok and 'The Bok Syndicate Press'", (New York) *Publisher's Weekly* 36 (5 October 1889), p. 513.

Rutherford, Mildred Lewis, "Wilkie Collins", in *English Authors: A Hand-Book of English Literature from Chaucer to Living Writers* (Athens, Georgia: Constitution, 1890), pp. 591-95.

"Wilkie Collins", (New York) *Popular Monthly* 28 (December 1889), pp. 653-57.

Six Years of Drama at the Castle Square Theatre, 1897-1903 (Boston: Charles Elwell French, 1903).

THE PITTSBURGH DISPATCH
SUNDAY JUNE 9, 1889

THE ONLY GIRL AT OVERLOOK.

WRITTEN FOR *THE DISPATCH*
BY FRANKLIN FILE
FROM A PLOT BY
WILKIE COLLINS

The Only Girl at Overlook.

CHAPTER I.
MARY WARRINER.

Two names were used for the only girl at Overlook. In addressing her, the men of the place always said "Miss Warriner." In mentioning her, they often said "Mary Mite." The reason for this distinctive difference was revealed by the sight of Miss Mary Warriner herself, as she sat on a high stool behind a rude desk, under a roughly-boarded shelter, and with rapid fingers clicked the key of a telegraphic instrument. There was a perfect poise of quiet self-possession which would have been very impressive dignity in an older and bigger person, and which, although here limited by 18 years and 100 pounds, still made a demand for respectful treatment. Therefore the men when in her presence never felt like calling her anything else than "Miss Warriner." If she had been less like a stately damsel in miniature, and more like such a child as she was in size only; if her employment had been something not so near to science as that of telegraphy, and not so far off from juvenile simplicity; if her brown hair had been loosely curled, instead of closely coiled, and if her skirts had stopped at her ankles instead of reaching to her feet, then she might have been nicknamed "Mary Mite" within her own hearing, as she was beyond it, by those who described her smallness in a sobriquet. There may have been a variance of opinion among those dwellers at Overlook who had made any estimate of her composure, but if there was one who believed that she merely assumed a reserve of manner because she was among 200 men, he had not yet tried his chances of exceptional acquaintance.

Overlook was crude and temporary. The inhabitants were making a roadbed for a new railway at a spot where the job was extraordinary, requiring an

uncommonly large proportion of brain to brawn in the work. Those who were mental laborers in the remarkable feat of engineering, or were at least bosses of the physical toil, were the ones who had errands at the telegraphic shed, and for whom Mary sent and received messages over the wires. The isolated colony of workers was 100 miles deep in a wilderness of mountain and forest; but not as many seconds distant, measured by the time necessary for electrical communication, from the construction company's headquarters in a great city.

"Must you wait for an answer?" Mary said, as she clicked the last word of a message. "It's an hour since your first telegram went, and they seem in no hurry to reply."

Polite indifference, and nothing else, was in her clear, gentle voice. There was neither boldness nor shyness in the eyes that opened wide and blue, as she lifted them from the paper to the man whom she questioned. There was no more of a smile than of a pout on the mouth that worded the inquiry. She did not indicate the faintest interest as to whether he went or stayed, although she did suggest that he might as well go.

"I'd rather lounge here, if you don't mind," was Gerald Heath's answer.

Here the alertness of the placid girl was faintly shown by a quick glance, but it was so furtive that the subject of her wariness did not know his face was being scrutinized; and she was quickly convinced that she was not the cause of his remaining, for he said: "I'll tell you why I'm anxious about the telegram, and in a hurry to get it."

Gerald Heath had been lazily leaning against the makeshift desk of the telegrapher, as he waited, and for pastime had whittled the smooth birch sapling that formed its outer edge. He had chipped and shaved, after the manner of those to whom a sharp pocket knife and a piece of wood provide a solace. There had been no conversation, except a few words concerning the messages. But now he heightened himself to six feet by standing erect, and took on the outlines of a magnificent physique. His proportions had not been realized before by the girl at the other side of the counter. She comprehended, too, that if his somewhat unkempt condition were changed to one which included a face cleaned of stubble beard, a suit of modish clothes to replace the half-worn corduroys, and the shine of a silk hat and polished boots at his now dusty extremities, he would become a young gentleman whose disregard might be an appreciable slight. That was the conclusion which she reached without any visible sign that her careless eyes were conveying any sort of impression to her mind. As it was, he looked an unusually burly specimen of the men to whom isolation from city life had imparted an aspect of barbarians. Before he had uttered another word she realized that he was wholly engrossed in the matter of his telegrams, and had no thought of the individuality of the listener. Not only was she not the thing that made him wait, but she might as well have been old, ugly, or a man, if only she had ears to hear.

It was a summer afternoon, and the clear, balmy weather was seasonable. The removal of protective canvas had left the structure an open shed, over the front of which hung the boughs of the two trees against whose massive trunks it leaned. Gerald Heath reached up with both hands and held the foliage aside.

"Do you get an unobstructed view?" he said. "Now, I've helped lay out railroads through many a place, where it was a shame to let trains go faster than a mile a day. I've surveyed routes that ought to provide special trains for

passengers with eyes in their heads − trains with speed graduated between 60 miles an hour and 60 hours a mile. It is an outrage on nature and art that travelers should ever be whisked past Overlook without a good chance to see what we're looking at. That's why I wrote to the President of the company, a month ago, telling him how a slight deviation from the surveyed line would enable passengers to get what's in our view now. He asked how much the line would be lengthened by my plan. A hundred yards, I answered. And I submitted a map, showing how the tracks, after coming out from the tunnel, might make a small detour to this very spot, instead of going behind a mass of rocks that will completely hide this − " and a comprehensive gesture of one arm followed his sweep of vision.

Places that get their names on impulse are apt to have appropriate ones. Camps of railway makers in a hitherto unbroken country are not often miscalled. An ensuing town on the same site may be unmeaningly named as a permanency, but the inspirations that afford transient nomenclature are usually descriptive. It was so in the case of Overlook. The railway tunneled through the mountain, and emerged at a height of 1,000 feet above a wide valley. Mary had daily, and all day long, sat overlooking the prospect. It had astonished and enchanted her at first, but familiarity had blunted the keenness of her appreciation. As shown to her anew, it was like a fresh disclosure. Gerald Heath stood holding aside the boughs, which otherwise obscured a part of the landscape, and seemed like an exhibitor of some wondrously big and beautiful picture. Miles away were hills rising behind one another, until they left only a little of sky to be framed by the eave of the shed, as seen by the telegrapher. The diversities of a wilderness, distantly strong in rugged forms, but indistinct in details, became gradually definite and particular as they came nearer, and were suggestive of conscious design, where they edged a broken, tumultuous river. Overlook was shelved so high on a precipitous mountain that, from Mary's point of vision, the foreground almost directly underneath passed out of her sight, and it was as though the spectator stood on a platform before a painted canvas, too spacious for exhibition in an ordinary manner. But in this work the shapes and the colors, the grandeur and the beauty were inconceivably beyond human copying.

Gerald Heath appeared to feel, however, that if he was not the painter of this enormous landscape, he at least had the proprietary interest of a discoverer, and it was with something of the air of an art collector, proudly extolling his choicest possession, that he turned his eyes from it to Mary Warriner. The expression of admiration on her face, although quiet and delicate, was quite satisfactory − for a moment only; and then the denotement of delight passed out of her visage, as though expelled by some physical pang. It was the suddenness of the change, for it was of itself very slight, that made it perceptible. Gerald instinctively turned to look for the cause.

Into the picture had come a human figure. A few yards in front of the hut stood a man. In relation to the landscape far beyond he was gigantic, and the shade of the trees made him devilishly black by contrast with the sunlight of heaven that illumined the rest. He was thus for an instant in silhouette, and it chanced that his sharp outlines included a facial profile, with the points of a mustache and beard giving satanic suggestion to an accidental attitude of malicious intrusion. The illusion was almost startling, but it was momentary, and then the form became the

commonplace one of Tonio Ravelli, who walked under the shelter.

"Do-a I eentrude?" he asked, with an Italian accent and an Italian bearing. "I supposa no − eh? Thece ees a placa beesness."

Mary's small departure from a business-like perfunctory manner ended at once. She took the scrap of paper which Ravelli laid on her desk, and without a word translated its writing into telegraphic clicks. Ravelli was a sub-contractor, and this was one of his frequent communications with officials at the company's city office. The response was likely to be immediate, and he waited for it.

"To get the full value of this view," Gerald Heath resumed, and now he addressed himself to Mary directly, as though with almost a purpose of ignoring Ravelli, to whose greeting he had barely responded, "you need to come upon it suddenly − as I once did. We had been for months blasting and digging through the mountain. Every day's duty in that hole was like a spell of imprisonment in a dark, damp dungeon. And your men, Ravelli, looked like a chain-gang of convicts."

"You woulda no dare say so mooch to theira fa-ces," Ravelli retorted, with an insolence that was unmistakably intentional.

"Oh, I didn't mean a reflection on them," said Gerald, disregarding the other's quarrelsome aggressiveness. "We all look rascally in the mud, drip, and grime of tunnel work. And your gang of swarthy Italians are bound to have a demoniac aspect underground."

It was more careless than intentional that Gerald thus provoked Ravelli. There had been dislike between them, growing out of friction between their respective duties as a civil engineer and a sub-contractor, for the former was necessarily a critic of the latter's work. But they had never quarreled, and Gerald saw nothing in this occasion, as Ravelli seemed to, for any outbreak of temper.

"Bettare be civ-vil witha your tongue," Ravelli sneered.

"Well, I think so, too, as we are with a lady."

"Zat ees whya I inseest you treata me as one gentleman."

So it seemed that he was especially regardful of how he figured in the presence of Mary Warriner.

"Like one gentleman? Oh, I will treat you like two gentlemen − so politely," and Gerald began to again nonchalantly whittle the birchen pole. "I was going to tell how, when at last we broke through the rock at this end of the tunnel, I happened to be right there. A blast tore out an aperture several feet wide. We saw daylight through the smoke. We rushed pell-mell over the broken stone, and struggled with one another to get through first. It was − why, it was you, Ravelli, wasn't it? − whom I tussled with. Yes, we got into the breach together. You tried to push me back. You couldn't − of course, you couldn't;" and the narrator's reference to his own superior strength was exasperatingly accompanied by a glance not free from contempt.

"Eet was-a all een fun," Ravelli smilingly explained to Mary, and then his eyes turned darkly upon Gerald: "Eef eet had-a been one ear-nest fight − ," the different result was vaguely indicated by a hard clinch of fists and a vicious crunch of teeth.

It was beyond a doubt that Ravelli could not bear to be belittled to Mary; but she and Gerald were alike inattentive to his exhibition of wrath.

"No prisoner was ever more exultant to escape," Heath went on, "than I was to get out of that dark, noisome hole into clean sunlight. I ran to this very spot, and − well, the landscape was on view, just as

it is now. It was like getting from gloom out into glory."

The young man's exuberant words were not spoken with much enthusiasm, and yet they had sufficient earnestness to prove their sincerity. He had stopped whittling, and his knife lay on the desk, as he turned his back against the sapling and rested both elbows on it.

"So I've been writing to the president of the company, urging him to deflect the route a trifle, so that passengers might come out of the tunnel to see a landscape worth a thousand miles of special travel, and to be had by going less than as many feet. This is the very latest day for changing the survey. To-morrow will be too late. That is why I'm telegraphing so urgently."

Click, click, click. Mary went to the telegraphic instrument. She delivered the message by word of mouth, instead of taking it down in the usual manner with a pen.

"Gerald Heath, Overlook," she translated from the metallic language of the instrument. "Your idea is foolish. We cannot entertain it. Henry Deckerman, President."

Gerald looked like a man receiving a jury's verdict involving great pecuniary loss, if not one of personal condemnation, as he listened to the telegram.

"Zat ees whata I theenk," remarked Ravelli, with insolent elation; "you ar-r-e one-a fool, as ze President he say."

Gerald was already angered by the dispatch. The taunting epithet was timed to excite him to fury, which he impulsively spent upon the more immediate provoker. He seized Ravelli by the throat, but without choking him, and almost instantly let him go, as though ashamed of having assailed a man of not much more than half his own strength and nearly twice his age. With Italian quickness Ravelli grabbed Gerald's knife from the desk, against which he was flung. He would have used it too, if self-defense had been necessary, but he saw that he was not to be further molested, and so he concealed the weapon under his arm, while Gerald strode away, unaware of his escape from a stab.

"He is-a one beeg bully," said Ravelli, with forced composure. "Eef a lady had-a not been here − "

"You tormented him," the girl interrupted. "I once saw the best-natured mastiff in the world lose his temper and turn on a − " She stopped before saying "cur," and added instead: "If he was foolish, you were not very wise to tease him."

"He is-a what to you, zat you take-a hees part?"

She bit her lip in resentment, but made no reply.

"Pare-haps he is one-a lover oof you?"

Still she would not reply to his impertinence. That angered him more than the severest rejoinder would have done.

"Oh, I am sure-a zat he ees one suitor."

She gave way at length to his provocation, and yet without any violent words, for she simply said: "You are insulting, while he is at least reasonably polite − when he heeds me at all, which isn't often."

"Not-a often? But some-what closely he heed-a you. See zat."

With an open palm he struck the place on the sapling where Gerald had whittled. The spot was on the outer edge, where Mary could not see it from her seat. She went around to the front of the primitively constructed desk, or high counter, to gratify her curiosity. There she saw that Gerald had carved a hand − her own hand, as she instantly perceived. The small and shapely member was reproduced in the fresh, pale wood with rare fidelity. She

had unconsciously posed it, while working the key of the telegraphic instrument under the jack-knife sculptor's eyes, and there had been ample time for him to whittle a fac simile into the birch.

"He is almost as impertinent as you are," she said, and turned to see how Ravelli took the comment.

But Ravelli had disappeared.

Then, being alone, she laid a hand of her own coquettishly alongside its wooden counterpart, and critically admired the likeness.

"It was an unwarranted liberty," she said to herself, "but he did it very well."

The delicate fiber of the wood had favored the carver's purpose. The imitation hand bore a shade of flattery in the barely tinted birchen white, and in the fine grained satin smoothness that the keen blade had wrought, but this was not too much for more than a reasonable compliment. As to the modeling, that was sincerely accurate, and the fingers rested on the key precisely as Mary had seen them during many hours of many days. It is an excessively vain girl who admires herself as actually as she does a portrait, and the telegrapher really saw more beauty in the birchen hand than she had ever observed in the live one. As she contemplated it, Ravelli returned noiselessly behind her. "I a-wish to say something, Mees Warriner."

The Italian accent of Ravelli grated with unnatural harshness on Mary's ears, and if he had been an intruder upon her privacy, instead of a man in a really public place, she would not have been surprised into a deep flush. She snatched her hand away from its wooden counterpart, and clasped it with its mate behind her, as she leaned her shoulder against the carving to hide it.

"If you have a message to send," she said, "I can't get it on the wire too soon. It's within five minutes of time to shut off."

She started to go behind the desk. He stopped her with a touch upon her shoulder, and she shrank away reprovingly, although it was solely the man's earnestness that had made him do it.

"No, no; it ees not words for-a ze wire zat I have-a for you," he said. "I wish-a to tell to yourself something. Will you lees-ten?"

"Yes, if it is something that I ought to hear."

"Thees eez it. I am a-more than I seem here − deef-e-rent − so deef-e-rent you would hardly know-a me. In zis place I am on-ly a contractor for ze laborer. I am-a as com-mon as my gang in-a clothes − in-a manner, too, eh? But een one hour − een one minute − I could-a con-veence you zat I am-a some-ting finer."

Mary did not show in her perfectly regained composure that she was so much as puzzled by the man's enigmatic talk. She said: "I don't see how it could be worth while, Mr. Ravelli."

"O, yes − I beg-a par-don for ze contradiction − yes, it ees worth-a while. Away from-a here, Mary, I would-a be so deef-e-rent zat you a-love me."

"Stop, Mr. Ravelli − stop."

The command was positive, but it was not obeyed.

"I love-a you − "

He caught her by one wrist as he began. She was utterly unresistant. If she had struggled, or cried out, he would have gone on with his voluble, excited declaration; but her placidity was incomprehensible to him.

"Mr. Ravelli," she began after a moment, "you understand English?"

"Perfectly, Mees Warriner."

"Well, here is plain English for you. I would use Italian if I could, so that you mightn't mistake me. You are to let go of my hand."

He did it.

"You are to go away instantly, and never come here again except on business. Go at once."

That he did not do.

"For what-a did you come here, into one camp oof men, eef − "

"If I didn't expect to be unsafe? I'll tell you. It was a mistake. Operator No. 9 was ordered to this post. No. 9 had been a man, who had within a week been discharged, and his number given to me. By an oversight, no alteration was made in the record to show the sex of the new No. 9. I couldn't afford to lose the work. Besides − "

"Well-a, besides − "

"Besides, I reasoned that every man at Overlook would protect me against all the other men − if − "

"Yes, eef − "

"Yes, if I cared absolutely nothing for any single one of them. Therefore, I am not afraid. But you must not annoy me."

Fury flashed into the man's eyes, into his reddened face, into the sudden tension of his gripped hands. The girl's contemptuous indifference maddened him. She saw this, and was at once alarmed, for she realized that here was a reckless lover − one who heated dangerously where another would have chilled under disdain; but she maintained an unshaken voice, as she said: "You may as well know, however, that I am amply protected. The night watchman is ordered to include this combined office and residence of mine in every round he makes. So I sleep quite unconcernedly. In the daytime, too, I shall have a defense, if it becomes necessary."

"O, have-a no alarm, Mees Warriner," and the man's facial expression softened singularly as he gazed wistfully at the girl. "I haf said I love-a you." Then, with a startlingly quick transition, he glared menacingly off in the direction that Gerald Heath had gone. It seemed curious to Mary, too, that in his rage his English was clearer than usual, as he growled: "It is your lover that should be afraid of me." He flung out one fist in a fierce menace, and added in Italian: "Nel vindicarvi bisogna ch'egli mi rende la sua vita."

CHAPTER II.
THE NIGHT AND MARY WARRINER.

The full moon looked for Mary Warriner's little house that night, as soon as a clearance of the sky permitted, and then beamed down on her abode effulgently. But it was 11 o'clock before the gusty wind blew the thick clouds aside and let the orb illumine Overlook. Back of the shed in which the telegrapher worked by day was a structure in which she slept at night. It was built of slabs, with big growing trees to form its irregular corners, and their lowest limbs contributed the rafters, while stripped bark and evergreen boughs made the roof. The foliage swayed above in the fitful wind, and covered the cabin and the grass around it with commingling, separating, capering shadows of leaves, as though a multitude of little black demons were trying to get to the slumberer within. Their antics looked spiteful and angry at first, but as the wind lessened to a breeze, and as the moon seemed to mollify them, they became frolicsome without malice; and at length, when the merest zephyrs impelled their motions, they gamboled lazily, good-humoredly above and around the couch of Mary Mite.

It was midnight when a man shot into the open space around the cabin like a missile. He ran first to the front of the structure, where a tarpaulin curtained the shed for the night, and gazed for a moment blankly at this indication that the hour was not one of business.

Tremendous haste was denoted in his every step and gesture. He plucked twice at the canvas, as though to pull it down. Then he skurried around to the single window of Mary's apartment, whose only door opened into the shed, and pounded with his knuckles on the ill-fitted sash, making it clatter loudly. Silence within followed this noise without.

"Hello! Wake up!" he cried. "Don't fool for a minute. Wake up!"

There was no response, and he skipped to and fro in his impatience. He was an ordinary shoveler and pounder, with nothing to distinguish him from the mass of manual laborers at Overlook, but, unlike the usual man with an errand at the telegraphic station, flourished a scrap of paper.

"I want to telegraph," he shouted, and struck the window again. "Get up quick! It's life and death!"

Mary Warriner was convinced that her services were urgently and properly required. She peeped warily out to inspect the man, estimated him to be merely a messenger, and then opened wide the sash, which swung laterally on hinges. Her delicate face bore the same sort of calm that characterized it in business hours, but the moon shone on it now, the hair had got loose from the bondage of knot and pin, and for an outer garment she was carelessly enwrapped in a white, fleecy blanket. The man did not give her time to inquire what was wanted.

"You're the telegraph girl, ain't you?" he exclaimed. "Well, here's something to telegraph. It's in a hurry, hurry, hurry. Don't lose a minute."

"I couldn't send it to-night," Mary said.

"You must."

"It isn't possible. There is nobody at the other end of the line to receive it. The wire is private − belongs to the railroad company − isn't operated except in the daytime. You'll have to wait until to-morrow."

"To-morrow I'll be 100 years old, or else dead," the man almost wailed in despair.

"What?"

"I was only 10 years old yesterday. To-night I'm 60. To-morrow'll be too late. Here − here − send it to-night, Miss. Please send it to-night."

The mystified girl mechanically took the piece of paper which he thrust into her hands, but her eyes did not drop before they discovered the insanity in his face, and when they did rest on the paper they saw a scrawl of hieroglyphics. It was plain that this midnight visitor was a maniac. Against Overlook's civil and sane men Mary had entrenched herself confidently behind her apathy, but within the round of the clock she had been beset by agreeable sentiment, by violent passion, and now by irrational delusion. She screamed for help.

A watchman responded almost instantly to her call. He was a stalwart fellow, employed to guard the company's tools and machinery against mischief at night, and his patrol, since Mary inhabited the cabin, had brought him very frequently past the place. He chanced to have come almost there when he heard the outcry. Upon seeing the cause of the girl's fright, he dropped all perturbation of his own, and treated the incident as a matter of course. The lunatic wobbled like a drunken man, about to collapse, as he mumbled his request over and over again.

"Here, now, Eph," the watchman said, with as much cajolery as command, "you mustn't bother the young lady. Ain't you ashamed to scare her this way? Get right out of this."

The watchman took the other by the arm, and, as they started off − one insisting and one objecting − the official

looked back to say: “He won’t hurt nobody, Miss Warriner − he’s just a little cranky, that’s all.”

Mary watched them out of sight, and while she was doing so, Gerald Heath approached from the contrary direction. He had heard the girl’s scream. Why he was within earshot he might not have been able to explain satisfactorily, for it was not his habit to take midnight walks, even when the air was so brightly moonlit and so temporarily fine; but if cross-questioned, he would doubtless have maintained that he had sought only to escape from the darkness and closeness of his shanty quarters. Besides, where would he so likely wander, in quest of good sight and breath, as to the spot whence he could view the scenery which he in vain asked the railway company to exhibit to their passengers? As he turned the corner of the cabin he saw Eph and the watchman departing, and comprehended the disturbance.

“Eph has been frightening you, Miss Warriner,” he said.

Mary screamed again, but this time it was a low, musical little outcry of modesty. She had not observed Gerald’s approach. She clutched the blanket closely around her white throat, which had been almost as much exposed as by an ordinary cut of frock, and drew under cover the gleaming wrists which had all day been bared to a greater extent by sleeves of handy working length. Then she reached out one taper arm, and swung the sash around on its hinges, so its inner covering of muslin made a screen between her and the visitor. He did not apologize for his intrusion, and she pouted a little on her safe side of the sash, at his failure to do so.

“I see it was Eph that alarmed you,” he said. “What did he do?”

She told him, and then asked: “Who is he, and what ails him?”

“He is a common laborer with an uncommon affliction,” was the reply. “One day an excavation caved in, and for an hour he was buried. Some timbers made a little space around his head, but the rest of him was packed in earth. He had breathed the enclosed air two or three times over, and was almost suffocated. When we got him out he was insensible. He never came back to his senses. He believes he is living at the rate of more than a year every hour. This is why he was in such a hurry with his imaginary message.”

“Poor fellow,” came from the obverse side of the sash.

“Yes, poor fellow,” the narrator assented. “I understood his hallucination at once. When a man is suddenly placed in mortal peril, his past life dashes before him. Half drowned men afterward tell of reviewing in a minute the events of years. It is a curious mental phenomenon. Well, this poor chap had that familiar experience, but with a singular sequence. The impression that all his lifetime before the accident happened in a brief time has remained in his disordered mind. He believes that his whole earthly existence is condensed − that future years, as well as his past ones, are compressed into days, and his days into minutes. Nothing can disabuse him of this idea. Everything is to him ephemeral. That’s why I nicknamed him Eph − short for Ephemeral, you see. He doesn’t remember his real name, and on the roll he had only a number. He has done his work well enough until within a few days, but now his malady seems to have turned to the worst. He has talked wildly of getting some physicians to check the speed of time with him, and it may have been that he wished to telegraph to this fancied expert.”

“It is singular,” Mary said, “and very sad.”

The midnight incident seemed to have

come to a conclusion. It was a proper time for Gerald to say good night and go away. He still stood on the opposite side of the half-open sash, around the edge of which appeared a small set of finger tips, which pulled the screen a little closer, showing that the girl was minded to shut herself in. But a hand twice as big opposed hers, gently yet strongly, and in doing so it touched hers; upon which she let go, and the window flew open.

"Oh, you mustn't see me," Mary exclaimed, as Gerald got a vanishing glimpse of the white-draped figure. "Good night."

"You will be afraid if left alone," Gerald protested; "you can't go to sleep, nervous as you must be."

"I surely can't go to sleep talking," was her rejoinder, with the first touch of coquetry she had indulged in at Overlook.

"I won't talk, then. I'll only keep guard out here until daylight. Eph may return."

"But there's the watchman. It is his duty."

"It would be my delight."

That silenced the invisible inmate of the cabin. The moon shone into the square opening, but Mary was ensconced somewhere in the darkness that bordered the income of light.

"Should I apologize?" Gerald at length began again. "It is like this, Miss Warriner. I used to know how to behave politely to a lady. But for six years I've lived in wildernesses − in railroad camps − from Canada to Mexico. We've had no ladies in these rough places − no women, except once in a while some mannish washerwoman or cook. That's what makes you so rare − so unexpected − that is why it would be a delight to be a patrolman outside your quarters − that is why I don't wish to go away."

"Oh! − oh! I am interesting because I am the only specimen of my sex at Overlook. That isn't a doubtful compliment; it is no compliment at all. Good night."

"You misconstrue me altogether. I mean − "

"I am sure you do not mean," and now the tone was pleadingly serious, "to remain here at my window after I request you to go away. I am, as you have said, the only girl at Overlook."

"If there were a thousand girls at Overlook − "

"Not one of them, I trust, would prolong a dialogue with a young gentleman at night through the open window of her bedroom."

Half in respectful deference to Mary's unassailable statement of the rule of propriety applicable to the situation, and half in inconsiderate petulance at being dismissed, Gerald let go of the sash with an impulse that almost closed it. This time two miniature hands came out under the swinging frame. Would more than one hand have been naturally used? Was it not an awkward method of shutting a window? And Mary Warriner was not a clumsy creature. But there were the hands, and Gerald grasped them. They fluttered for freedom, like birds held captive in broad palms by completely caging fingers. Then he uncovered them, but for an instant kept them prisoners by encircling the wrists long enough to impetuously kiss them. Another second and they were gone, the window was closed, and the offender was alone.

He walked slowly away, accusing himself of folly and ungentlemanliness, and he felt better upon getting out of the clear, searching moonshine into the dim, obscuring shade of rocks and trees, among which the path wound crookedly. There rapid footsteps startled him, as though he was a skulking evil doer, and the swift approach of a man along an intersecting pathway, made him feel like

taking to cowardly flight. But he recognized the monomaniac, Eph, who was in a breathless tremor.

"Mr. Heath, could a man walk to Dimmersville before the telegraph station there opens in the morning?" Eph asked, with several catches of breath and a reeling movement of physical weakness.

"You go to bed, Eph," was the reply, meant to be soothing, "and I'll see that your telegram goes from here the earliest thing in the morning. That won't be more than six or seven hours from now."

"Six or seven hours," the poor fellow deploringly moaned; "I'll be a good many years older by that time. Oh, it's awful to have your life go whizzing away like mine does," and he clutched at Gerald with his fidgety hands, with a vague idea of slowing himself by holding to a normal human being.

Then he darted away, swaying from side to side with faintness, and disappeared in the foliage which lined the path he was following.

Gerald watched him out of sight, and was about to resume his own different way when the voice of Tonio Ravelli was heard, with its Italian extra A to the short words and a heavy emphasis on the final syllable of the long ones.

"Mistair Heath," he said, "I saw-a your affectionate par-ting weez Mees Warriner."

Gerald had just then the mind of a culprit, and he began to explain apologetically: "It was cowardly in me to insult a defenseless girl. She didn't invite it. I am ashamed of myself."

He hardly realized to whom he was speaking. The two men were now walking rapidly, Ravelli taking two strides to one of the bigger Gerald, in order to keep alongside.

"You-a should be ashamed − you-a scoundrel."

As much of jealous fury and venomous malice as could be vocalized in six words was in Ravelli's sudden outbreak. Gerald was astounded. He turned upon his companion, caught him by both lapels of the coat, and shook him so violently that his boot soles pounded the ground. Ravelli staggered back upon being loosed, and threw one arm around a tree to steady himself.

"I didn't mean to hurt you," said Gerald, "but you shouldn't be reckless with your language. Perhaps you don't know what scoundrel means in English."

"I saw you-a kiss her hands."

"Did you? Well, do you know what I'd do to you, Ravelli, if I saw you kiss her hands − as I did − without her consent? I'd wring your miserable neck. Now, what are you going to do to me?"

"I am-a going to keel you!"

Gerald Disarms Ravelli.

The blade of a knife flashed in Ravelli's right hand, as he made a furious onslaught; but the stronger and quicker man gripped both of his assailant's wrists, threw him violently to the ground, and tortured him with wrenches and doublings until he had to drop the weapon. In the encounter the clothes of both men were torn, and when Ravelli regained his feet blood was dripping from his hand. The blade had cut it.

"You meant to kill me," Gerald exclaimed.

"I said-a so," was the sullen, menacing response.

"And with my own knife!" and Gerald, picking up the knife, recognized it.

"Your-a own knife − ze one zat you carve-a Mary's hand with so lovingly."

Ravelli had retained it since the previous afternoon, when he had picked it up from Mary Warriner's desk. Its blade was now red with blood, as Gerald shut and pocketed it.

"You cowardly murderer!"

"Murderer? Not-a yet. But I meant to be."

Ravelli turned off by the cross path, and Gerald passed on.

CHAPTER III.
A STROKE OF LIGHTNING.

The first man to go to work at Overlook in the morning was Jim Wilson, because he had to rouse the fire under a boiler early enough to provide steam for a score of rock drills. The night watchman awakened him at daybreak, according to custom, and then got into a bunk as the other got out of one.

"Everything all right?" Jim asked.

"I guess so," the other replied. "But I haint seen your boiler sence afore midnight. Eph was disturbin' Mary Mite, and so I hung 'round her cabin pretty much the last half of the night."

Jim went to his post at the boiler, and at an unaccustomed pace, from the point where he first saw and heard steam hissing upward from the safety valve. On quitting the night previous, he had banked the fire as usual, and this morning he should have found it burning so slowly that an hour of raking, replenishing, and open draughts would no more than start the machinery at 7 o'clock. Going nearer he found that open dampers and a fresh supply of coal had set the furnace raging.

What was that which protruded from the open door, and so nearly filled the aperture that the draught was not impaired?

A glance gave the answer. It was the legs and half the body of a man, whose head and shoulders were thoroughly charred, as Jim was horrified to see when he pulled the remains out upon the ground.

Jim ran to tell the superintendent, and within a few minutes a knot of excited men surrounded the body. The gathering grew in numbers rapidly. By means of the clothing the dead and partially burned man was identified at once as Tonio Ravelli. That he had been murdered was an equally easy conclusion. The murderer had apparently sought to cremate the corpse. Whether he had found it physically impossible, or had been frightened away, could only be conjectured.

"Who can have done it?" was the question asked by Superintendent Brainerd, the autocrat of Overlook.

There was a minute of silence, with all staring intently at the body, as though half expecting it to somehow disclose the truth. The night watchman was first to speak.

"Eph might have done it," he said.

Then he told of the monomaniac's visit to the telegraph station, and of the acute stage which his malady had reached. Nobody else present had seen him since the previous evening. Superintendent Brainerd ordered a search of the lodgings. Ten minutes were sufficient for a round of the different quarters. Eph was in none of them. The searchers returned to the furnace, and with them came Gerald Heath.

"I met Eph yonder where the paths cross, not a hundred yards from here, a little past midnight," Gerald said. "He

was terribly excited. That was after he had tried in vain to telegraph a crazy message. Evidently his delusion, that his whole life was condensed into a brief space, had driven him to a frenzy. He spoke of walking to Dimmersville, but I tried to quiet him, and he disappeared."

Dimmersville was a town about ten miles distant, in a direction opposite to that from which the railroad had worked its way through the mountains. No wire connected it with Overlook, and there was no public road for the nearest third of the way, although a faint trail showed the course that a few persons had taken on foot or horseback.

"Very likely Eph has gone toward Dimmersville," Brainerd argued, "and we must try to catch him."

Before the order could be specifically given a horse and a rider arose over the edge of the level ground and came into the midst of the assemblage. The man in the saddle had a professional aspect, imparted chiefly by his smoothly shaven face. In this era of mustaches, a hairless visage is apt to be assigned to a clergyman, who shaves thus from a motive of propriety, an actor, who does it from necessity, or somebody who aims at facial distinction without the features suitable to that purpose. A countenance of which it can only be said that it has one nose, one mouth, and two eyes, all placed in expressive nonentity, and which is dominated utterly by hair on and around it, may be less lost to individuality if entirely shaven. Of such seemed the visage of the dark man, who calmly rode into the excitement at Overlook.

"Which way have you come?" Brainerd asked.

"From Dimmersville," was the reply.

"Did you see anybody on the way?"

"I started very early. Folks were not out of their beds in the houses − as long as there were any houses − and that is only for five or six miles, you know. After that − yes − I did see one man. A curiously excited chap. He looked tired out. He asked the distance to Dimmersville, and whether the telegraph office would be open by the time he got there. Then he skurried on before I'd half answered him."

All that was known of the murder was told to the stranger by half a dozen glib tongues, and it was explained to him that he had encountered the maniacal fugitive.

"I knew there was something wrong about him," said the stranger. "It is my business to be observant."

He dismounted and hitched his horse to a tree. The dead body was shown to him. He examined it very thoroughly. All the particulars were related to him over and over. Then he drew Superintendent Brainerd aside.

"My name is Terence O'Reagan," he said, and in his voice was faintly distinguishable the brogue of the land whence the O'Reagans came. "I am a government detective. I have been sent to work up evidence in the case of some Italian counterfeiters. We had a clew pointing to a sub-contractor here − the very man who lies there dead. Our information was that he used some of the bogus bills in paying off his gang. Now, it isn't going outside my mission to investigate his death − if you don't object."

"I would be glad to have you take hold of it," Brainerd replied. "We can't bring the authorities here before noon, at the earliest, and in the meantime you can perhaps clear it all up."

The eagerly curious men had crowded close to this brief dialogue, and had heard the latter part of it. O'Reagan became instantly an important personage, upon whose smallest word or movement they hung expectantly, and nobody showed a keener interest than Gerald Heath. The

detective first examined the body. The pockets of Ravelli's clothes contained a wallet, with its money untouched, beside a gold watch.

"So robbery was not the object," said O'Reagan to Brainerd. "The motive is the first thing to look for in a case of murder."

Next, he found blood on the waistcoat, a great deal of it, but dried by the fire that had burned the shoulders and head; and in the baked cloth were three cuts, under which he exposed three stab wounds. Strokes of a knife had, it seemed, killed the victim before he was thrust partially into the furnace.

A storm was coming to Overlook unperceived, for the men were too much engrossed in what lay there on the ground, ghastly and horrible, to pay any attention to the clouding sky. Gloom was so fit for the scene, too, that nobody gave a thought from whence it came. To Gerald Heath the going out of sunlight, and the settling down of dusky shadows, seemed a mental experience of his own. He stood bewildered, transfixed, vaguely conscious of peril, and yet too numb to speak or stir. Detective O'Reagan, straightening up from over the body, looked piercingly at Gerald, and then glanced around at the rest.

"Is there anybody here who saw Tonio Ravelli last night?" he asked.

"I did," Gerald replied.

"Where and when?"

"At the same place where I met Eph, and immediately afterward."

"Ah! now we are locating Eph and Ravelli together. That looks like the lunatic being undoubtedly the stabber."

"And we must catch him," Brainerd interposed. "I'll send riders toward Dimmersville immediately."

"No great hurry about that," the detective remarked; "he is too crazy to have had any clear motive or any idea of escape. It will be easy enough to capture him." Then he turned to Gerald, and questioned with the air of a cross-examiner: "Did the two men have any words together?"

"No," was the ready answer; "I don't know that they even saw each other at that time. Eph went away an instant before Ravelli came."

"Did you talk with Ravelli?"

"Yes."

"About what?"

"Not about Eph at all."

"About what, then?"

Now the reply came reluctantly: "A personal matter − something that had occurred between us − an incident at the telegraph station."

"The station where Eph had awakened the girl operator? Was it a quarrel about her?"

"That is no concern of yours. You are impertinent."

"Well, sir, the question is pertinent − as the lawyers say − and the answer concerns you, whether it does me or not. You and Ravelli quarreled about the girl?"

"The young lady shall not be dragged into this. She wasn't responsible for what happened between Ravelli and me."

"What did happen between you and Ravelli?"

The two men stood close to and facing each other. The eyes of the detective glared gloatingly at an upward angle into the pale but still firm face of the taller Gerald, and then dropped slowly, until they became fixed on a red stain on the sleeve of the other's coat. Did he possess the animal scent of a bloodhound?

"What is that?" he sharply asked. He seized the arm and smelt of the spotted fabric. "It is blood! Let me see your knife."

Quite mechanically Gerald thrust one hand into his trousers pocket and brought

out the knife which he had taken back from Ravelli, whose blood was on it yet.

The storm was overhead. A first peal of thunder broke loudly. It came at the instant of the assemblage's intensest interest − at the instant when Gerald Heath was aghast with the revelation of his awful jeopardy − at the instant of his exposure as a murderer. It impressed them and him with a shock of something supernatural. The reverberation rumbled into silence, which was broken by O'Reagan:

"There'll be no need to catch Eph," he said, in a tone of professional glee. "This man is the murderer."

Again thunder rolled and rumbled angrily above Overlook, and the party stood aghast in the presence of the man dead and the man condemned.

"Bring him to the telegraph station," O'Reagan commanded.

Nobody disputed the detective's methods now − not even Gerald; and a prisoner as completely as though manacled, although not touched by any one, he went with the rest.

Mary Warriner had taken down the tarpaulin in front of her shed when the men approached. In the ordinary course of her early morning doings she would wait an hour to dispatch and receive the first telegrams of the day, and then go to breakfast alone at the table where the engineers and overseers would by that time have had their meal. She was astonished to see nearly the whole population of Overlook crowd around her quarters, while a few entered. But she went quickly behind the desk, and took her place on the stool. The soberness of the faces impressed her, but nothing indicated that Gerald was in custody, and her quick thought was that some disaster made it necessary to use the wire importantly.

Arrested for Murder.

"I wish to send a message," said O'Reagan, stepping forward.

The eyes of the girl rested on him inquiringly, and he palpably flinched, but as obviously nerved himself to proceed, and when he spoke again the Irish accent became more pronounced to hear, although not sufficiently to be shown in the printed words: "I will dictate it slowly, so that you can transmit it as I speak. Are you ready?"

Mary's fingers were on the key, and her bright, alert face was an answer to the query.

"To Henry Deckerman, President," the detective slowly said, waiting for the clicks of the instrument to put his language on the wire; "Tonio Ravelli, a sub-contractor here, was murdered last night."

Mary's hand slid away from the key after sending that, and the always faint tint in her cheeks faded out, and her eyes flickered up in a scared way to the stern

faces in front of it. The shock of the news that a man had been slain, and that he was a man who, only the previous day, had proffered his love to her, was for a moment disabling. But the habit of her employment controlled her, and she awaited the further dictation.

"His body was found this morning in the furnace of the steam boiler," O'Reagan resumed deliberately, "where it had evidently been placed in a vain attempt to destroy it."

A shudder went through Mary, and she convulsively wrung her small hands together, as though to limber them from a cramp. But her fingers went back to the key.

"The murderer has been discovered," the detective slowly continued, and the operator kept along with his utterance word by word. "He killed Ravelli for revenge. It was a love affair." Here the girl grew whiter still, and the clicks became very slow, but they did not cease. O'Reagan's voice was cold and ruthless: "The motive of the murderer was revenge. His name was Gerald Heath."

All but the name flashed off on the wire. Mary Warriner's power to stir the key stopped at that. She did not faint. She did not make any outcry. For a moment she looked as though the soul had gone out of her body, leaving a corpse sitting there. A grievous wail of wind came through the trees, and a streak of lightning zig-zagged down the blue-clouded sky.

"Go on," said O'Reagan.

"I will not," was the determined response.

"Why not?"

"Because it is not so. Gerald Heath never murdered Ravelli."

Gerald had stood motionless and silent. Now he gave way to an impulse as remarkable as his previous composure had been singular. If there had been stagnation in his mind, it was now displaced by turbulence. He grasped Mary's hands in a fervid grip; then dropped them and faced the others.

"I did not kill the Italian," he said. "He attacked me with my knife which he had stolen. In the struggle his hand was cut, but I took the weapon away from him. He quitted me alive and unhurt. I never saw him again. You don't believe it? Mary does, and that is more than all else."

"The circumstances don't favor you," the detective retorted, "they convict you. You killed Ravelli because you and he were both in love with this young lady."

"Isn't it the rejected suitor who kills the other for spite?" This was in Mary Warriner's voice, weak, but still steady. "Ravelli loved me, I knew, and I drove him away. Mr. Heath loved me, I believed, and I had not repulsed him. If I were the cause of a murder between them, it should be Ravelli who killed Gerald."

"You detested Ravelli?" O'Reagan asked, with a strange bitterness.

"Yes."

"And you love Heath?"

The answer was no more hesitant than before: "Yes."

"Send the rest of my message," and the detective was boisterous. "Send the name. Gerald Heath is the murderer."

He roughly seized her hand and clapped it on the key. She drew it away, leaving his there. A blinding flash of lightning illumined the place, and what looked like a missile of fire flew down the wire to the instrument, where it exploded. O'Reagan fell insensible from the powerful electrical shock. The rest did not altogether escape, and for a minute all were dazed. The first thing that they fully comprehended was that O'Reagan was getting unsteadily to his feet. He was bewildered. Staggering and reeling, he began to talk.

Mary was first to perceive the import of his utterance. He was merely going on

with what he had been saying, but the manner, not the matter, was astounding.

He spoke with an Italian accent, and made Italian gestures.

"You-a send ze mes-sage," he said; "Heath ees ze murder-are. Send-a ze mes-sage, I say."

Tonio Ravelli had unwittingly resumed his Italian style of English.

REVEALED BY AN ELECTRIC SHOCK.

His plenitude of hair and whiskers was gone, and in the face, thereby uncovered, nobody could have recognized him in Detective O'Reagan but for his lapse into the foreign accent; and he said so much before discovering his blunder that his identification as indeed Ravelli was complete.

Who, then, was the dead man? Why, he was Eph.

Nothing but the fear of being himself condemned as a murderer of the maniac, as a part of the scheme of revenge against Gerald, induced Ravelli to explain. He had found Eph lying dead in the path, after both had parted from Gerald. The plot to exchange clothes with the corpse, drag it to the furnace, burn away all possibility of recognition, and thus make it seem to be his murdered self, was carried out with all the hot haste of a jealous vengeance. Ravelli was not an Italian, although very familiar with the language of Italy, and able, by a natural gift of mimicry, to hide himself from pursuit for a previous crime. Overlook had been a refuge until his passion for Mary Warriner led him to abandon his disguise. Thereupon, he had turned himself into Terence O'Reagan, a detective, whose malicious work wrought happiness for Gerald Heath and Mary Warriner.

==========

He seized Ravelli by the throat

But for an instant kept them prisoners

He roughly seized her hand

Syndicated illustrations in (New York) ***Salem Review-Press*** (14, 21 Nov 1890, p.1)

THE PITTSBURGH DISPATCH
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1889

ONE AUGUST NIGHT IN '61

WILKIE COLLINS'
LAST STORY PLOT
Written from His Original Sketch For
THE DISPATCH.

CHAPTER I.
THE PROPHECY.

The War of the Rebellion had begun. Missouri was about evenly balanced between secession with the Southern States and loyalty with the Northern States. The time was August in 1861. There had been struggles of legislation over the question whether Missouri should go to the South or stay with the North. Every city, every town, and many a family, was distracted and divided. All was turbulence. General Fremont was in command of the Unionist military department, and he had sent General Lyon with a small army to drive out the Confederate troops, who had entered the State from Indian Territory under command of General Ben McCulloch. The movements of both commanders were for awhile as chaotic as the diverse sentiments of the people, for the Governments of the United States and the Confederate States were alike indecisive in their policy concerning the uncertain territory. The battle of Wilson's Creek was not far off, and the immediate region was loosely possessed by Confederate troops.

But peaceful quite was the yard of a farmhouse which overlooked the stream at sundown of a summer day. Four persons were unconsciously grouped in a way that made a fair picture. They were two men and two women, not one of whom had gone further in life than a few years beyond maturity. One woman sat negligently on a bench, with one arm hanging over its back and the other swinging at her side. Her face was so perfectly regular and proportionate in its features that it might have been expressionless but for large black and wonderfully lustrous eyes. He who stood behind her leaning on the back of the seat was a very manly fellow. A tendency to

slouchiness in his clothing was in keeping with free and careless ways, and indicated his rural rearing as certainly as the woman's nicety of dress showed her acquaintance with the exactions of a fashionable life in the city.

The other couple were in a swing that hung from the limb of a tree, the brawny man clasping the ropes with his hands, and the slender woman clinging to him with more energy than her position seemed to require. She jumped down of a sudden, and perverted the fact by saying: "You were hugging me, Tudor Bowne." She ran out of the yard, he following, and clumsily protesting his innocence of intentional impropriety.

The pair that remained had listened with the air of being still diverted by something that was by no means new to them: and the woman said: "They are amusing, Mr. Willett." Her tone was lazy, like her attitude and her manner. Whether she was affected by the listlessness that comes of summer lounging in the country, or whether her calmness or surface was a careful covering of activity underneath, young Oliver Willett had been trying to discern. He courageously determined on a more direct way to the desired knowledge than guessing, and precipitately began, in thoughtlessly chosen, but ardent words, an avowal of his passion.

A woman came to the open window of the house and stood eaves-dropping. This was May Willett − Oliver's sister, and older than he. She waited only long enough to comprehend what her brother was doing and then interrupted by presenting herself before them. Oliver walked into the house without saying another word. May took the place that he had left at the back of the seat, and said quietly, but with a firm modulation: "Mrs. Armytage, I have been listening. I heard what my brother said, and I know what he was going to say. I am going to speak frankly − it is my duty. You and Mrs. Dimmock − married women − came here to spend a few weeks. I welcomed you as a school-day friend, and her as your friend. You asked me not to tell anybody that you were wives."

"That was her freak, not mine," Mrs. Armytage replied; "I was ashamed of it from the start."

"You acquiesced, at least, and I gave you my word not to let even Oliver know. I did not foresee that you would so quickly become lovers. He has been commissioned an officer in the Confederate army, yet he lingers here, away from his duty, and in dangerous proximity to the Unionists' advance."

Mrs. Armytage's manner was placid as she said: "Am I to blame? I have not undertaken to control his conduct or his heart. I am the wife of a United States army officer, and who can say that I am unfaithful? I have tried to discourage your brother, and it is not my fault if I have not succeeded. But if you order me away, I will not hesitate about going."

Mrs. Armytage arose with stately dignity, but May drew her back to the seat, saying: "Forgive me."

"I impose only one condition," Mrs. Armytage said. "Promise never to undeceive your brother. Let him continue to think of me with respect."

"I promise," May said.

Tudor Bowne and Mrs. Dimmock returned to the yard, and saw nothing in Mrs. Armytage's beautifully immobile face to show that a gust of feeling had swept over it. Mrs. Dimmock was clinging to Tudor's arm with a clever mockery of affection, and he was exhibiting an exaltation of delight. They were bringing along an aged negress, whose gaudily turbaned head and tatterdemalion garments made her a singular figure. That was old Judee, of familiar repute in the county as a witch,

but an engrossing novelty to the guests. A wandering vagabond she was, and she told fortunes with all the weirdness of which she was capable. She was regarded as a voodoo necromancer, and among the blacks she was feared, if not quite reverenced; while the whites were not free of superstition regarding her charms, spells and prophecies, although at the Willett homestead there was an intelligent disposition to treat her jocosely whenever she visited the place.

But she was quickly the center of a group comprising all the persons of the premises, and she shrewdly chose the two strange ladies to especially impress herself upon. The account which is here to be given of her prediction and what ensued, is to be construed as the reader pleases either as a narrative or [? *sic.* for "of"] something occult, or of something altogether explainable as matters of chance coincidence. The writer is merely a historian, with no disposition to theorize upon the incidents which he sets forth.

Aunt Judee's Prophecy.

Old Judee was formal in her method as a prophetess. She proffered her services to Mrs. Armytage first, and then to Mrs. Dimmock; but those ladies, conscious of their roguery in having figured before their two wooers as maidens, were scared by the negress' offers of divination, and refused to have their fortunes told.

"Den yo', Mass'r Oliver," old Judee said, "lemme tole yo fortin'. Dah's fo'tellin' in yo' case − sah − impo'tent fo'tellin'. I kin see dangah, Mass'r Oliver − dangah right ahead o' yo'."

"That's not hard to foretell in these war times," Oliver laughingly responded.

"Ax' me, Mass'r Oliver − ax' me," she droned.

"Tell me what you see," he said, aiming only to satisfy the curiosity of the ladies.

"I sec yo' in de middle ob a soldier comp'ny − marchin' − marchin'."

"Well, I trust they're Confederates in gray, Aunt Judee. And can't you put me at their head? I am to be a captain, you know."

"Dey yan't in gray. Dey's in blue, sah. Dey's Union soldiers − marchin' − marchin'." and she swayed her body, and held up her head, as though in unison with the tread of the troop which she saw. "An' yo' yan't in de command. Yo's wearin' de same clothes yo' got on now. Oh! I see dat yo's a pris'ner, fo' yo' arms is tied, an' de comp'ny guards yo' close." Her eyes turned slowly away from Oliver, and she seemed to be watching something that was moving steadily away. "Marchin' − marchin' − marchin'," she repeated over and over, but in a lower and lower tone, until she finally whispered: "Dey's gone out'n sight, sah, an' I don't see no moah."

"But I'd really like to know what becomes of me," Oliver remarked carelessly. "I trust that you," and he covertly addressed Mrs. Armytage, "have some regard as to that."

Old Judee turned her gaze on that lady, and stared steadily, yet vacantly.

"Well, well," Mrs. Armytage asked;

"and what are you seeing now?"

"I see yo' on horseback, lady − ridin' hard − ridin' fast. Great trouble in yo' face − great trouble." Suddenly she ceased to speak, and spread one hand to her ear in the attitude of listening. "I heah's yo' say somefing. 'I must sabe him − I must sabe him!' Dat's what you' sayin'. An' now yo' rides into de woods." She had seemed to follow with her eyes the course of the equestrienne, making recognizable the movement of a person in the saddle of a running horse. "Dah − yo's gone. I doan see no moah."

"Try again."

"No, missy − I doan' see no moah."

Even those who had seen Old Judee before in similar exhibitions were soberly impressed. There was martial excitement in the air, and the woman's rude yet moving description of Oliver a captive in the hands of a company of soldiers stirred them.

"I'm afraid, Aunt Judee," said Oliver, half jesting and half in earnest, "that you're indulging your Northern sentiments. We're old, old friends, yet you make the Yankees capture me."

"But she sends a rescuer after you," Mrs. Dimmock suggested.

Had the negress merely indulged her wish and fancy in describing the Confederate officer as a prisoner? And had she, taking an easy cue from his manner and words to Mrs. Armytage, sought to mollify him by representing the lady as seeking his deliverance? She had the cunning of the Southern voodoo votaries, whether she possessed any of their supposed supernaturalism or not.

"Look again," Oliver insisted. "You've put me into a predicament − now see me through it."

Old Judee took his hand, and reached for one of Mrs. Armytage's, too. Still kneeling, and with the hands tightly clasped, she gazed steadfastly at the young couple, and then beyond them into the distance.

"I see yo' both," she said. "Yo', Mass'r Oliver, is in front ob de soldiers."

"Ah! at last you've put me in command," he interjected.

"Dey am de Union soldiers − standin' still − standin' solemn. Yo' am facin' dem. Dey lifts dar guns. Dey fires at yo' an yo' falls. De lady am dar, too; pale as death. She am faintin'. She drops on de groun'. De smoke ob de guns gets thick. It hides yo' both. I can't see. Dat am all."

Old Judee arose to her feet, rubbed her eyes, had a minute of apparent bewilderment, and then was sufficiently wide awake to take the coin which Oliver handed to her.

"All humbug," he said.

"Of course," Mrs. Armytage assented.

But they gazed in silence after the black woman, as she walked away, and nobody was prompt to ridicule her prophecy. It had made, at least momentarily, a serious impression on all who heard it.

CHAPTER II
LOVE AND WAR.

Half an hour later, Mrs. Armytage and Mrs. Dimmock were alone in the garden when a lumbering carriage rolled to the gate. Colonel Armytage, of the Union army, was the man who alighted. His hair was white enough for 70 years, but his skin was sufficiently ruddy and smooth for 50; and his age was a fair compromise betwixt the two that is, 60. He kissed his wife, and said, "Your color indicates some sort of emotion, and that is unusual in you." She replied with perfect equanimity that a wife ought to be pleasurably agitated on meeting her husband after a separation.

"I have come to take you back to

Springfield," said he.

Mrs. Armytage was frightened, and she furtively scanned his face for information of the reason; but there was no anxiety betrayed in her tone when she asked if they were to go soon. There was more feeling in the exclamation, "I am glad," after he had said, "Immediately."

"I'm not," said Mrs. Dimmock.

The arrival of a carriage was not so common an event as to be uninteresting, and from the house emerged several servants. As they came toward the Colonel, he hastily said to his wife and Mrs. Dimmock: "General Lyon has arrived at Springfield. There is to be a forward movement. We can't leave you any longer in a rebel household. Hush − they must not hear."

May Willett came out, and Colonel Armytage was presented to her. She welcomed him gracefully; and being told that her visitors were about to go away, said that she was very sorry, which was a lie that politeness required of her.

Mrs. Armytage hurried the preparations for departure with all her might, because she hoped to avoid a meeting between ber husband and Oliver or Tudor. She whispered her purpose to May, who gave aid to its accomplishment.

Colonel Armytage went into the house for a glass of water before starting. May accompanied him. The two wives were waiting impatiently in the yard, when Oliver Willett and Tudor Bowne sauntered into it together. Mrs. Armytage fled like a coward into the house. Oliver attributed her withdrawal to displeasure at his recent half-made avowal of love. From Mrs. Dimmock he learned of the intended sudden departure, and he connected it instantly with his previous guess that his love-making had given offense. Mrs. Dimmock made a bold stroke by saying:

"Colonel Armytage is in the house − her father," repeating the latter words so as to fix them in Oliver's mind, "and he will take us away within five minutes. Now, listen to me, and she put her arms carelessly through those of the men. "He says the condition of this section is dangerous. He is a Union officer, and the folks around here are rebels. Now, if his identity became known he might be treated roughly. So please avoid mentioning his name, or his relation to Miss Armytage."

Oliver did not answer, but Tudor said: "When you command I obey," and went into the house with the able young falsifier.

Mrs. Armytage soon came out, wearing a hat and a light cloak, in readiness for the ride. On seeing Oliver alone she would have retired, had he not detained her. "Here in Missouri," he said very earnestly, "our ways are blunter than yours of the Eastern cities. I love you − you know it." She endeavored to get past him, but he stopped her by a clasp of her wrist. "A second, I beg. I recall the avowal. I do not wish to violate usage or propriety − I will ask your father's consent to woo you. He is here, and [I] will speak to him frankly."

Mrs. Armytage perceived the error into which Oliver had been led as to Colonel Armytage's relationship to her. She said entreatingly: "No, no − don't speak to him!"

"Why not? My love is honorable."

"Mine is not." This was her hasty thought, uttered before she had considered how much of confession it conveyed.

"Then you do love me?" said Oliver, catching only at one phase of her meaning.

He would have clasped her, but she drew back, saying: "Hush! He is coming. In heaven's name, Oliver, do not say anything to him. I will tell you why some

time. I have written a message to you. It is behind the mirror in my room. Look for it after I am gone."

He seized her hand, and was about to kiss it, when Colonel Armytage and the rest came out of the house. He stepped back into a shadow, from which, unseen, he heard them bid adieu to his sisters [*sic.*] and saw them ride away.

"Drive fast," said Colonel Armytage to the negro who held the reins. He added to the women, "This neighborhood is not over safe for us."

"It is full of peril," said Mrs. Armytage.

The journey of ten miles to Springfield was made in the early evening, and it conveyed Colonel Armytage and the two ladies direct to the house where he had for a week been provisionally quartered. The town was a hubbub of military occupation. General Lyon meant to advance upon the Confederates next day, and the preparations were confused, for in those early days of the war the operations had little of the precision and orderliness subsequently achieved. Colonel Armytage's absence, though brief, had left his duties to accumulate, and he had no time to devote to his regained wife.

Frivolous Mrs. Dimmock, interested by the hurly-burly, had no thought of the farmhouse that she had so recently quitted; but Mrs. Armytage wandered away into the garden. She sat on a bench, leaned against the tree that made a back for it, and turned her face toward the bright moon, which had risen just high enough to shine over the wall that lined the garden on that side. Externally she was the placid, cool, young beauty. In her mind, so well hidden by her characteristic self-control, was being formed, and not without a struggle, a firm resolution to think no more of Oliver Willett. A noise at the wall startled her, and Oliver leaped over. He stood before her, took off his hat and bowed low. His entrance to the garden had been rapid and resolute; but now he was hesitant, as though a little confounded by his situation. Mrs. Armytage rose, and looked at him with wonder in her lustrous eves as she said:

"What brings you here?"

'You," he answered.

"You are reckless."

"A lover knows no fear."

"But he should not let his own fearlessness be the destruction of the woman he loves."

"What do you mean?"

"Did you get the message that I left for you?"

"Yes; and came with it to its author."

They had spoken so rapidly that their dialogue thus far had been as inconsiderate as it was exciting to them; yet she maintained by for [? *sic.* for "far"] the most composure, and when he would have grasped her hands she stepped back with a show of displeasure.

"My letter told you," she said, "that you must never see me again − that there was a sufficient reason why we must not meet."

"It told me, too," he said, uncooled by her repellent manner, "what your lips had refused to tell. I had begun to believe that you were heartless, and the sudden knowledge of the truth − that you loved me − was like stimulant to an invalid − potent to make the blood tingle, the heart bound and the brain whirl. What could I do but come to you?"

"Forget it if I wrote anything to encourage your madness. I was thoughtless − I scrawled hurriedly to escape observation. Remember only that I said we must not even think of each other."

"I know the letter word for word."

He took from a pocket a crumpled sheet of paper that looked like a page torn

from a diary; but he scarcely glanced at it as he recited what was penciled on it.

"It says: 'The past two weeks were to me like a brief existence in another life than my own. I had never loved any man. My situation forbade me to entertain such a sentiment, except for one who was powerless to excite it. You made me love you.'" He held the writing before her, and added triumphantly, "they are your words."

"Blot them out and read the rest."

She stood with folded arms as passive as a statue. He read, aided by his recollection and the bright light of the moon:

"I am free to confess it because I also tell you that I must abjure the passion that makes me irresolute, while I write out my own sentence. I cannot bear to explain to you the reason why we must be strangers, but it is absolute, irresistible, final."

"Why do you come here after that?" she said, still calm.

"I come to learn what the thing is that can part us."

"I will not tell you."

"Is it that you are a Unionist and I an officer in the Confederate army?"

"No; that is not the reason."

He argued no more, but said, "You puzzle me," as he thrust the paper into a breast pocket. She looked toward the house, with a thought for the first time of being observed, so absorbed had she been, despite her self-possession.

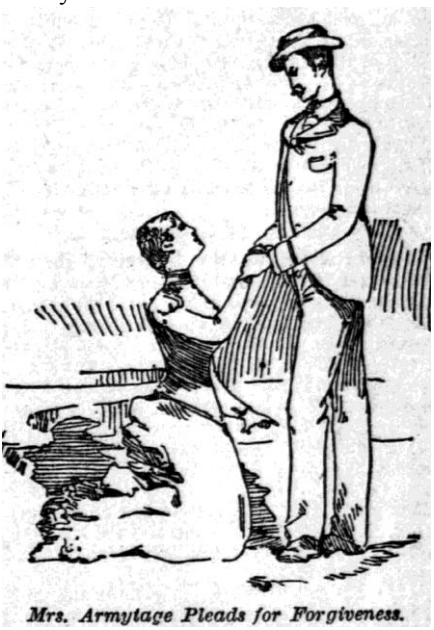
"Somebody will come," she said. "Go at once. If you were recognized here you might be put under arrest."

He instantly concluded that her repulse of him had been caused by her fear for his safety. That was pleasing to his vanity, and allaying to the doubts that had been taking shape in his mind as to whether she did love, after all. He clasped her passionately. She did not struggle to escape, but resolved instead on the course that she well knew would be more effectual, and which she was convinced she could not now avoid. She said:

"Oh, must I abase myself before you? I desired you to forget me, or remember me respectfully. You compel me to tell you what it is that must keep us apart. I am a wife."

She was freed instantly. Not that he, with intention recoiled from, her; but his arms relaxed involuntarily, and he stood with the limpness of a man who had received a terrible physical as well as mental shock. He gasped out, after a pause: "A wife, did you say?"

"Yes; wife of the man you thought was my father."



Mrs. Armytage Pleads for Forgiveness.

The first definite sentiment that was formed out of the jumbling of ideas in his mind was resentment; and he began: "Your deceit – "

"You will forgive me," she pleaded, in tone as well as in words, "when you know that at the first, I had no deliberate thought of seriously deceiving you, when you consider the self-condemnation I

have suffered, when I tell you that the determination to be an honorable wife is made at the cost of a breaking heart."

Her attitude of supplication, her eye, that he had never before seen hold tears, her voice, that he had never before heard to express passion − these drove the resentment out of his thoughts, and left only the over-mastering knowledge of the reality of her love. Therefore, it is not surprising that he said: "Struggle no more, but go with me now. I will take you away from your unloved husband."

He again put his arms around her, and partly through an effort to free herself and partly through an unconsidered impulse, [she] slid down to her knees. She clung to his hands while she said:

"Don't break my good resolution! Don't use your influence for evil, but sustain me in my honor!"

He lifted her tenderly to her feet and said: "Your rebuke makes me ashamed of myself. Good-by."

"Farewell; and remember that my good repute is in your keeping."

He took her hand respectfully. "I swear!" he said, with all the solemnity that could attend a more formal oath-taking, "by the hand that I may never hold again, by my unalterable love, that I will sooner give up my life than this secret."

He started toward the wall, but turned back as though to say something more. He saw her standing rigid and white in the moonlight, and people hurriedly approaching. Colonel Armytage was at the front of the party, but they were led by a man in the uniform of a sergeant, who pointed and said: "This is an officer in the rebel army. He is a spy."

"He is Mr. Willett, at whose home I have been a guest," said Mrs. Armytage, with wonderful calmness; but, while she spoke with a steady voice, she leaned against the seat for support.

"Young man," said Colonel Armytage, "it will be necessary for you under the circumstances to explain your presence here, at the headquarters of the Union commander. I hope you can do so satisfactorily."

Oliver said firmly: "I have no explanation to make."

"General Lyon has been warned," Colonel Armytage continued, "that a spy would visit these premises to-night, to get information as to our plans for to-morrow. I sincerely regret that my wife's friend has rendered himself liable to detention, and I trust that he has not endeavored to use knowledge that he may have gained in social intercourse. Guards, conduct this gentleman to the General!["]

Oliver thought vaguely of trying to escape, but the grasp [? *sic.* for "group"] of soldiers was upon him. Then he recollected Mrs. Armytage's letter, and his hands went involuntarily to his breast. She saw the gesture and knew what it meant. She clung to the seat, only by a hard resistance preventing herself from falling into it.

Colonel Armytage also saw the movement, and said as Oliver was marched away, "Search him for documents that he may be carrying."

CHAPTER III.
TWO OF OLD JUDEE'S VISIONS REALIZED.

At midnight Mrs. Armytage was the sole occupant of a room in the second story of the spacious house which Colonel Armytage and his staff occupied. The windows looking out on the same large garden from which Oliver Willett had been taken as a spy not long before, were wide open, for the atmosphere was sultry. Mrs. Armytage sat by a table. During an hour she had scarcely stirred from one

position. Slowly she had come to a clear appreciation of what had happened, and she was waiting, as one strapped to a guillotine might, with awful dread − awaiting the fall of the blade − for her husband to come with the letter that she felt must ere this have been taken from Oliver. The 12 strokes of a clock at midnight sounded to her unreasonably like a knell; and from that she went into a daze of wondering why the bell's familiar noise suggested such an idea to her. As persons in dreams condense hours into seconds, so her thoughts had wandered far and wide before the twelfth stroke; and then, looking up, she saw her husband standing before her.

"Not abed yet?" he said.

That was not like what she expected, and she thought it was a trivial preface for the real matter; but he seemed to expect a reply, and so she said: "How could I sleep?"

"True," he answered, while she listened with every fiber strained to meet an accusation; "the sad event of to-night has shaken my nerves, and they are stronger than yours." He kissed her on the forehead. She took the endearment with a heart-bound, as an indication that somehow the calamity had been averted, and hesitatingly asked, "What − what was the result? He explained that −"

"He explained nothing. It was not possible for him to clear himself. He was caught at the enemy's headquarters on the night before an important movement. Probably he supposed that his acquaintance with you would be a plausible excuse for his presence, and he was brave enough to take the chance. His bold plan might have been successful had he not carried a paper that condemned him."

"Condemned him?"

"Yes; for although he managed to destroy the paper before anybody read it − "

"He destroyed it?"

"The careless guards gave him the opportunity. Doubtless it contained memoranda of what he had learned."

Mrs. Armytage understood full well that Oliver had kept his vow to protect her reputation, although in doing so he had destroyed the proof that he was not a spy. In the first warmth of her gratitude she glowed with a blind desire to save him in return. Hence she exclaimed, "The paper contained no such thing."

"How do you know?"

The question brought her to the point of confession, if she intended to make one; but instead she shrank from it. "Who knows that it did?"

"Well, he refused to deny it when a reasonable account of the paper's contents might have saved his life."

"Is his life in danger?"

"He has only a few hours to live. He is sentenced to be shot at daybreak."

Once more the woman forgot herself in her appreciation of the sacrifice that had been made for her, and she exclaimed: "Oh, it will be murder! He is not a spy."

"I would like to think so, but he will not plead not guilty," he added, as she sank back in her chair, covered her face and wept. "I know it is shocking to you to know that the man who was your host yesterday is to be shot this morning, and that your husband is in a sense his executioner. War necessities are brutal."

Mrs. Armytage stood up and put her arms around her husband's neck. "You never denied me anything I asked, reasonable or unreasonable. Save this man's life. Help him to escape, if it can be done in no other way."

Her impulsive action was astonishing to him, and he was by it distracted from her words; but when he comprehended them he said: "Your proposition is

dishonorable."

"Would you be a murderer?" She was as vehement now as she had just been wheedling; and she took her arms from around his neck. "He is not a spy − I know it. By saving him you would keep yourself clear of an innocent man's blood."

"Proof that he is not a spy would save him. Can you furnish that?" and he gazed searchingly into her face.

"Yes," she answered quickly and somewhat defiantly; but, being thus brought to the point of confession, she again fell short of heroism. "No, no!" she said; "I mean that a woman's discernment is sometimes better than a man's. I have seen him in his home, and have become acquainted with his qualities. He is honorable, brave − "

"Those are qualities that would fit him for a mission of peril."

Angered by her arguments for Oliver being turned against him, she broke out, petulantly: "You are heartless."

"You know I am not," said the old man, kindly, but chidingly. "My affection for you, scarcely requited, is proof to the contrary. Were I naturally jealous, your plea for this young man might arouse suspicion in my mind as to your motive."

She crouched down at his side as he took a seat and put her arms around him in a caressing way that was not common to her. He saw that she was weeping. In spite of an exertion of the will, such as was wont to steady her nerves under any circumstances, she trembled like a coward. At length she said: "You love me very dearly. Would it disturb you to know that some other man loved me, too?"

"And that you loved him?"

He said that with a quickness that startled her. She leaned on his knees, as she responded: "Why need you come so readily to that supposition?"

"Who is the man?"

"Oliver Willett."

He stood up so hastily that she was prostrated on the floor He did not help her up, and she arose unaided. This rebuff at the outset of a confession made her waver in her purpose. She asked herself why a partial revelation of the facts would not do as well; and, hoping rather than believing that it would, she said: "He made me a proffer of his love. I repulsed him. I told him that he must never see me again. He followed me to the city and then asked me to fly with him. Then he was arrested. That is the truth, as I live. He is no spy. Now you will save him − will you not? There must be some way of doing it, when you are convinced that he did not come here on the errand imputed to him."

"Is that all you wish to say?"

"Is that not enough?" she replied, a little be wildered, and feeling that her determination was melting away.

"You are trying to deceive me. Your motive I do not condemn, but the device fails. Your pity for him has impelled you to a desperate effort to save his life. You have exceeded what duty to your friend required."

"I have told you the truth, as there is a heaven above us!"

"Stop!" Could this cold, stern old man be the petting husband she had known? She looked at him in wonder and fear. "You have forgotten one point − the document that he destroyed."

She felt that this was the time and the last to tell all that she had left untold. She raised her eyes to his face, and saw that he was iron. Again she resorted to a fragment of the truth.

"That was a letter from me to him, commanding him not to seek me."

"If that be so, why should he have destroyed it? There is nothing in such a letter the hiding of which would be worth a man's life.["]

She could have met this objection with the little that remained unconfessed − that the letter contained her confession of love for Oliver Willett. She had intended to tell that, and to trust to her husband's indulgent love for forgiveness; but now she was convinced that he would not forgive that one fault. She was silent, and ere she knew it he had quitted the room.

The Colonel went at once to the improvised guardhouse, where Oliver Willett was awaiting the execution of the sentence of death. The young man had repeatedly asked himself why he had destroyed the proof that he was not a spy, and as often he vividly remembered his promise to Mrs. Armytage, made in the solemn nature of an oath, that he would sooner die than reveal the secret of her love. Then the idea would get uppermost in his mind that he was throwing his life away in an unworthy cause. Swayed by these opposing considerations and oppressed by physical dread, he was fast settling into apathy − something that was beyond his previous agitation, and a relief from it, when Colonel Armytage entered.

"Mr. Willett," he said, "you have but a few hours to live, unless you can yet prove that your errand was not that of a spy."

Oliver guessed that the Colonel suspected the truth, and, on the quick impulse of shielding the woman of his worship he exclaimed: "I cannot do it I expect to die."

"Have you no desire to live?"

"No man a stronger; but I voluntarily took upon myself a solemn obligation, and I must not be a coward because the worst has come of it."

"Yes, you might have had some other errand − that of a lover meeting his sweetheart, for example. Was that it in your case?"

Oliver was certain now that his surmise was correct. He said as conscientiously as any man ever lied, "No."

"If it were so, and you could prove it, your life would be spared."

"I can prove no such thing."

"That removes a sorrow from me, and seals your fate. Within an hour my wife has told me that you were her lover − that you came to see her, and not as a spy from the rebels."

Believing that she had confessed the whole truth instead of only an ineffectual part of it, Oliver's only sentiment for the instant was pride in his own sacrifice.

The Colonel left him to himself.

An hour later a muffled woman was in his presence. When she showed her face it was so close that he felt her breath fall hot on his cheek, and it was Mrs. Armytage who spoke: "I could not let you die with the thought that I, safe in your sacrifice, had not tried to save you. I told my husband why you came to the city, but he would not believe me. I conjure you to convince him that I told the truth."

It is not always true that men are braver in premeditating heroism than when the time of action comes. Oliver had, even [? *sic*. for "ever"] since his interview with Colonel Armytage, wavered from his determination to die possessed of this woman's secret. He had balanced his obligation to her against his family's grief and his own dread of death, and which was weightiest he had scarcely been able to determine. But now, under the powerful influence of her presence, and in the knowledge that she appreciated and loved him, he felt steeled in his purpose of keeping his vow. He said very quietly: "Your husband has been here."

"And you told what I said?"

"Yes."

"You assured him that it was true? They will believe it, and you will be saved?" She waited with affright for his

answer. She honestly believed that she hoped he would say "Yes;" but in her mind was a shadowy, awful fear of what might be the consequences to herself.

"It is too late to alter my purpose if I would," he said, taking her hands in his. and feeling that they were hot and nervous. "Your letter is destroyed. If I were to tell its contents now, 1 should not be believed. I have thought it all over. My life is very precious to me; but mine or yours must go − for what would be left of yours worth retaining if the world regarded you as a faithless wife? I will die in the flush of a high resolve. You would linger, if I had proved cowardly, in years of death. No; I have kept my oath and your secret."

When Mrs. Armytage was once again in her room, the first gray light of dawn shone into the window where she sat. Her husband had not returned. The horrible duty of the execution of the court martial's sentence devolved on him, and, although he assigned its details to a staff officer, it added to his other activities of the night and kept him away from her. Soon she heard the beat of a muffled drum, marking the tread of marching feet. Looking out through the shutters, she saw a company of 60 soldiers coming down the street.

In their midst was Oliver Willett.

The first vision of Old Judee was realized. The prophecies of the negress had not been recalled by the distracted woman, but now she felt that Oliver's march to death had been foretold. With a dumb, still sense of despair for her lover, she watched the dreadful procession until it passed beyond her sight and hearing.

"What was it that Old Judee told next?" she exclaimed. "I remember. She saw me riding on horseback toward a wood. She heard me say that I must save him. How? I can't conceive a way."

She was in a condition now in which quietude was not possible. Her saddle-horse was in a stable near by. She did not consider what she meant to do, nor hardly realize what she was doing. Old Judee's prophecy impelled her. She hastily dressed herself in her riding habit, and reached the stable unobserved. There she saddled and bridled the horse, impetuously mounted him, and rode in the direction that the detail of executioners had gone. Once beyond the limit of the town, she discerned at a distance the company just entering a grove. Urging her horse into a run she dashed after them disappearing into a wood just as the prophetess had professed to see her do in the second vision.

CHAPTER IV.
SHOOTING THE SUPPOSED SPY.

The place selected for the execution of the death sentence on Oliver Willett was in a grove two miles from the town. The motive in the selection was to have the spot as near as possible to the section inhabited by Southern sympathizers, that the fate of the supposed spy might readily become known among them. The first of those directly interested in the event to arrive on the ground was Mrs. Armytage. She knew the spot chosen, and she reached it by a detour on her fleet horse ahead of the soldiers afoot. She sat still on her horse, and, hearing the birds sing, fell to marveling that they sang at such a dreadful tune. Pleasant sounds seemed to her shamefully out of keeping with the occasion. She tried to devise a plan of action on behalf of her lover. One thing alone she had not confessed to her husband − that Oliver's love of her had been reciprocated by her. Should she publicly avow it? What good would it do?

"You here, ma'am?"

She turned and saw Sergeant Brickson.

He was a soldier of the regular army, and had for several years been in her husband's regiment. He continued: "You will be seen if you stay. The prisoner and the squad − the firing squad, ma'am − aren't more'n five minutes away. Your husband's coming too. I beg pardon, but I didn't suppose you wanted him to find you here."

"I do not care," she said impassively.

"Well, ma'am, you said − at least I know young Willett's your lover, and I −"

"You are ready enough to ascribe the worst to my interest in him. I wish my husband would be as uncharitable."

She was speaking meditatively, but seeing that her words puzzled the Sergeant she added, "I would at this instant give all I possess for proof of what you are so ready to believe."

"I can give it to you," and the Sergeant displayed the letter that had drawn Oliver to the city, that had been partly burned and hidden, and that he had given to Major Dimmock. He held it up so that Mrs. Armytage could see it and asked, "Isn't this your letter to your lover?["]

"Yes, yes." she eagerly answered. "How did you get it?"

"I got it where he hid it after he tried to burn it."

"Give it to me." She reached for it but he drew it away.

"Excuse me, ma'am. I'm a man that sees an unexpected chance before him to rise in the world. I did a service for you last night and you're under promise to pay me − to pay me with a promotion in the army. I let you get to the prisoner, who was in my charge, and you agreed to have your husband make a captain of me."

"And I will keep my promise."

"I've got no right to doubt you, ma'am, but a man's first duty's to look out for his own interest. That mayn't be scripture, but it's sense. To put it plain," and here he rested his hand on his horse's mane, and went closer to her, "it seems to me as if this letter's a kind of a written note, payable on demand − payable in promotion on demand. Of course I don't understand it all. but I do know this is a love letter from Colonel Armytage's wife to this young man that's going to be shot. Before I got it I had your bare word that I'd be made a captain. Now I hold something that'll compel you to keep your promise."

"Sergeant, hear me." There was not a trace of discomposure in her manner: but her brilliant eyes seemed to the soldier to be blazing at him. "You reason shrewdly, yet you are at fault. You think I dread your showing that letter to my husband. You are mistaken. If I had it I would put it in his hands myself. The man they are going to shoot is not a spy. He came to meet me, and he is going to die because he has suppressed this evidence. That latter is proof of the truth, and I would use it, if I could, for his salvation and my destruction."

"Your destruction?"

"Yes: but what of that?"

"I'll tell you what of it, ma'am, as far's it concerns me." The Sergeant had been dumfounded at first by her avowal, but he had, nevertheless, comprehended the new bearing of the letter. "If your husband discarded you, how could you pay me what you owe me? Where'd be your power to have me promoted?"

She still sat calmly on her horse; but her eyes were so burning in their gaze that the Sergeant no longer dared to meet them.

"Will you let an innocent man be shot when you can save him?" she asked.

"He deserves it, doesn't he?" and the Sergeant's lack of confidence in his argument was shown by his retreating a step. "It's not for me to go betwixt him

and his resolution."

"Give me the letter I implore. You see that it will give no power over me, for I only desire to make it public."

"You do now, ma'am," and the Sergeant's tone gained boldness as his argument grew logical, "but you will not after your lover is dead − when no good to him could come of your disgrace. Then it will be worth to me − "

"How much? Name the sum, and I will pay it."

"You haven't enough money about you, ma'am."

"I can obtain it. You shall be paid to-morrow. "

"What would be your to-morrow if this letter came to light? You'd be homeless, penniless, for Colonel Armytage would turn you into the street. We in the ranks know his hard side − you don't." The sound of drums in the distance was heard, "They are coming − you must not be seen."

"I will not go away," she said, firmly.

"Hide yourself, then."

"No."

The Sergeant looked at her face, and saw by it that no entreaty or command of his would move her. His hope of advancement was fading away. The beating of the drums came nearer and nearer; and even the measured tramp of feet was audible. In sheer desperation he caught hold of the horse's bridle. The spirited beast reared. The movement was, quick and violent. Mrs. Armytage was thrown heavily to. the ground. The Sergeant had only time to see that the smooth white of her forehead was flecked with red, and that she was unconscious, before the soldiers came conducting Willett. His terror and dread were increasing as he felt that death was close: but his face, ashen from its whiteness and rigidity of resolute expression did not disclose his mental agony. He with the rest saw Mrs. Armytage lying on the ground. The blood was trickling over her face from a cut near her temple, and there was no sign of returning consciousness. He went to her so quickly that the soldiers thought it was an attempt to escape, and muskets were leveled at him in a twinkling; but no hindrance was made to his gently lifting her.

She lay on his breast with her head on his shoulder and his arms sustainingly around her − an instant so, and then Colonel Armytage was there, looking on in astonishment. But the brief time had been sufficient for a strong effect on Oliver. The helplessness of the unconscious woman; the face so close that he might have kissed the parted lips; the belief that she had come to the place of execution to save him if she could − these things aroused him out of the awful fear of death into which he had been sinking, and made his heart burn with heroic resolution.

Colonel Armytage stood mute at the sight of his wife in Oliver's arms, and, in a mistaken feeling of anger, he muttered a curse. The wound on her forehead, however, partly explained, and the Sergeant only added that she had been thrown from her horse. She was gently put on the ground again and a drummer was hurried off for water.

It was only natural that the accident to Mrs. Armytage should seem, even to the Colonel, of small comparative consequence. The deliberate shooting of a human being was a horror that was not to be crowded out of minds by an event that at a time less fraught with thrilling interest would have been exciting in itself.

The Colonel dispatched a messenger for a physician, saw for himself that his wife's hurt was not very serious, and then turned to Oliver.

"I would not have come here." he said

in a tone too low for anybody but Oliver to understand, "but that I wanted to give you a last opportunity to prove your innocence if you could. I will take on myself the responsibility of delaying this execution on your assurance that you are not a spy." He pointed to the woman at their feet and continued: "Perhaps it is her persistent friendship that moves me to make this offer."

Her friendship! Oliver knew it was her love. His thoughts ran fast like those of a drowning man, leading him like a flash through his terror of death, through his adoration of her, through his following of her after she had forbidden him, and so to his own promise. "I will sooner part with life than your secret."

"You hesitate," said Colonel Armytage.

Mrs. Armytage uttered a low moaning − the first indication of returning consciousness.

"I must, not hesitate!" Oliver exclaimed, with some impetuousness of manner. "The cause that I serve will not permit me to waver in my duty."

"Is there nothing I can do for you − no message I can bear to your family?"

"My poor sister she will be left alone. Her heart will be broken. Where is she!"

"The sad news was sent to her several hours ago."

Oliver thought it was strange, knowing her strength of resolution and love, that she did not come to bid him farewell. He gave to Colonel Armytage a goodby message for her, and the two men shook hands.

Preparations for the killing of Oliver Willett were swift and simple. Much of the celerity was due to the sergeant who glanced often uneasily at Mrs. Armytage, fearing she would become conscious before the deadly volley had been fired. The 20 musket bearers were ranged, and Oliver was made to stand in readiness. He requested to face the executioners, with eyes unbandaged, and was indulged. At the same time, under Colonel Armytage's direction, Mrs. Armytage was lifted by two of the drummers to be carried a short distance away. The Colonel was glad of a reason for avoiding the death sight; and the excuse was good, for his wife was fast coming to consciousness. He had barely turned his back, however, before he heard a new voice, that of Tudor Bowne, who did not go to Oliver at first, but addressed Colonel Armytage.

"I come to ask a favor," he said. "Friends of Oliver desire to secure his body. They await your permission."

"You have permission."

Tudor waved his hat as a signal to eight men to approach from where, at a distance of a hundred yards, they had stopped. Then he went to Oliver, grasped his hands, and said: "Goodby, old friend!" In a whisper be continued: "Heed what I say, Oliver; your life depends on it. When the command is given to fire drop instantly to the ground. Stand firm when you hear the order, 'Make ready;' don't stir at the command, 'Aim!' but fall flat on the ground just before the word 'Fire.' Don't fail."

The eight men walked into the field. They carried a long, rough box, which they sat down close by. Oliver looked at it and shuddered as he saw that it was a coffin.

"Are these men unarmed?" the Captain in command asked.

"Search them," Tudor suggested.

The officer gave the command, "Ready!" and the muskets were leveled.

"Remember my parting words, Oliver!" Tudor shouted.

Oliver was like a stone in immovability and almost as devoid of sensation. He thought but not very clearly, that Tudor had resorted to a device to give him courage through a false hope. Should

he drop to the ground before the fire would he not simply prolong the ordeal, and be open to the accusation of cowardice? He knew that it was owing to confidence in his bravery that he was not bound and blindfolded. Ought he to flinch?

Time and again through the night had Old Judee's vision come into his mind. All the way from the guardhouse to this spot the tap of the drums had kept time with her words. "Marchin' − marchin' − marchin'." Upon seeing Mrs. Armytage on the ground, with her saddled horse close by, he had known of her riding to the place in accord with what the negress had professed to see in her the second prophetic view. Now it flashed upon him that her third phantasm had depicted his fall before the muskets of soldiers. Was he to strive against a fate so manifestly foreordained. Or, would his voluntary prostration, as directed by Tudor, satisfy the prediction? These thoughts were almost instantaneous. His mind was suddenly as clear as crystal, and his nerves and muscles tense and strong.

"Aim," commanded the Captain.

Mrs. Armytage slid out of the arms of the men who bore her, and who had been detained by Tudor's words with the Colonel. She opened her eyes and saw Oliver facing the ready muskets. She tried to scream, but could not make a sound. The Colonel quickly grasped her, to turn her away from the scene that horrified her so perceptibly. Oliver saw her fall in a faint, and, even in that fateful moment, he recalled that as a part of the third vision.

"Fire!"

Oliver fell on his face, so brief an instant before the rattle of the volley that the soldiers did not know he was unhurt. Their attention, too, was startlingly diverted. Tudor and his eight companions sprang to the long box, flung off the cover, and took out muskets. The amazed soldiers with empty guns, found themselves confronted like magic by these stalwart armed ones.

The first to stir was Oliver, who was quickly on his feet alive to the truth of the situation. The second was the Sergeant who was on him with a drawn sword, suddenly and furiously. There was a brief wrestling struggle, and then the Sergeant was on the ground, with his own sword held by Oliver at his breast. Then there was a bargain wordless and quick, but binding. Then the Sergeant bought his life with the letter that he had refused to sell to Mrs. Armytage. He pulled it from his pocket and held it up. Oliver recognized it and comprehended the offer. He clutched the crumpled, scorched paper, and permitted the Sergeant to get up.

Here the story of one August night ends − with the rescuers and the rescued starting for the near stream, where boats were ready for them, with the soldiers cowed and practically unarmed, gazing irresolutely at the retiring victors; and with Old Judee's reputation as a prophetess firmly established in Southwestern Missouri. The reader may believe that her foresight of the marching Unionists, with Oliver as their prisoner, was a conceit inspired by her war sympathies, for she might reasonably have wished for the capture of any Confederate officer. Having thus disposed rationally of that matter, it is easy to regard Mrs. Armytage's ride as merely as [? *sic.* for "a"] circumstance caused by the prediction. But the third vision alleged by the woman, that in which Oliver fell before the discharge of musketry, and Mrs. Armytage fainted at the spectacle − well, it is left in this plain story for anybody to ascribe to either singular coincidence or veritable witchery, as he pleases.

[THE END.]

OLIVER'S SUCCESSFUL RUSE.

==========

"Dey's Union solders −marchin'−marchin'"

"He is a spy"

"I can prove no such thing"

"She opened her eyes and saw Oliver facing the ready muskets"

Illustrations in (New York) ***Salem Review-Press*** (27 June 1890, pp. 1-2)

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the assistance of the following individuals and institutions: Maurice Klapwald, of the New York Public Library, who was extremely efficient in facilitating access to the microfilm run of the New York *Star*; Prof. Anne Humpherys, of the Graduate Center, City University of New York, who helped me to get my hands on a surrogate copy of the typescript of "Cumberland '61"; and, of course, Pierre Tissot van Patot and Andrew Gasson, of the Wilkie Collins Society, who dug up much of the initial evidence concerning Wilkie Collins's "American Stories", and commented helpfully on an earlier draft of this pamphlet.

Permissions

All images found in this pamphlet are in the public domain and no permission is required to reproduce them. Grateful thanks are due to all the individuals and institutions concerned for making this material freely available for non-commercial use.

- Images from the *Pittsburg Dispatch*, including those on the front cover, are provided by Penn State University Libraries, University Park, Pennsylvania, and derive from the "Chronicling America" website (chroniclingamerica.loc.gov), sponsored jointly by the Library of Congress and the National Endowment for the Humanities.
- The image of the 1897 "Cumberland '61" poster, originally produced by the Strobridge Lithographic Company of New York, derives from the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division website (www.loc.gov/pictures/item/var1994001865/PP/).
- The image of the 1899 Castle Street Theatre playbill for "Cumberland '61" derives from a copy of *Six Years of Drama at the Castle Square Theatre, 1897-1903* (Boston: Charles Elwell French, 1903) held at the Harvard University Library, digitized by Google and available from the "Internet Archive" website (archive.org/details/sixyearsdramaat00frengoog).
- Images from the *Salem Review-Press* derive from Tom Tryniski's "Old Fulton New York Post Cards" website (fultonhistory.com).

THIS EDITION OF
WILKIE'S TWO LATE "AMERICAN STORIES"
IS LIMITED TO 200 COPIES