

WHAT WILKIE EARNED FROM ALL THE YEAR ROUND

Scholars have largely overlooked the fact that Wilkie Collins was paid a one-eighth share of the profits of All The Year Round for two years from August 1860 to July 1862. Dickens paid Collins directly out of his own three-quarters share. It amounted in total to just over £588.50.

Household Words

Part of Dickens's income from 1850 to the end of his life came from his share of the profits of his periodicals *Household Words* and *All The Year Round*.

In the original agreement of 28 March 1850 profits in *Household Words* were shared four ways. Dickens took a half, the publisher Bradbury and Evans a quarter, sub-editor William Henry Wills an eighth and John Forster the final eighth. In 1856 Forster gave up his share which reverted to Dickens but he gave half of it, one sixteenth, to Wills. So from that time Dickens took 9/16ths of the profits and Willis 3/16ths while Bradbury and Evans kept its quarter. In addition Dickens was paid £500 a year as editor and Wills was paid £8 a week (£416 a year) as sub-editor.¹

In June 1851 Henry Morley – who had by then contributed five pieces to *Household Words* – was offered a job on the staff at £5 guineas (£5.25) a week (£273 a year). And in October 1856 Wilkie Collins was added to the staff on the same terms. Dickens wrote to his sub-editor W H Wills

“I have been thinking a good deal about Collins, and it strikes me that the best thing we can just now do for H. W. is to add him on to Morley, and offer him Five Guineas a week.”²

Before that he had earned £241-12s-6d (£241.63) on a per column basis for his 28 contributions to the periodical.³ A year later Dickens added an extra £50 a year to Collins's remuneration. That would bring it up to £323 a year or £6-4s-2½d (£6.21) a week. It is not known if this precise amount was paid.

“I don't remember whether I have told you that I have made the arrangement with Collins – that he is extremely sensible of the extra Fifty, and was rather unwilling to take it – and that I have no doubt of his being devoted to H.W. and doing great service.”⁴

All The Year Round

After arguing with the publishers of *Household Words*, Bradbury & Evans, Dickens launched his own periodical *All The Year Round* and acted as his own publisher. He purchased the rights to *Household Words* and incorporated it into his title. Dickens took for himself three quarters of the profits of *All The Year Round* – the same as his half share and the quarter paid to Bradbury & Evans on *Household Words* – plus £504 a year for his job as Editor. The remaining quarter was given to Wills while he worked there with half of that – a one eighth share – to be his even if he gave up his job as sub-editor for which he was paid £420.⁵ So both Wills and Dickens got precisely £4 a year more in salary than they did on *Household Words* and a bigger share of the profits. The accounts were made up each half year to the end of April and October and Dickens and Wills were normally paid their shares around the middle of June and December.

Collins also seems to have had a small pay rise. He wrote a number of pieces for the early numbers of *All The Year Round* and on 3 August 1859 he went to Broadstairs for some peace and quiet to work on a new serial novel for the periodical which was to become *The Woman in White*.⁶ He wrote from there to his friend Charles Ward who worked at Coutts bank, where Collins's mother Harriet had an account which, until August 1860, he relied on for his non-cash transactions.

“You will receive two enclosures with this. The small note addressed to "Mr Holsworth" is an order for the payment of my salary to Bearer until further notice. Can you send a porter with it, every Wednesday, beginning from next Wednesday the 10th? And will you keep the accumulation of money for me in your desk, till I want it? You will receive it ready done up in little paper packets containing £6..6..- each.”⁷

This letter shows Collins was paid six guineas a week now and all in cash which was about £4.60 a year more than he earned on *Household Words*. A month later Ward was due to visit again and Wilkie asked him to fulfil “the eternal commission to bring me money” setting out precisely the accumulated six guinea packets, a cheque for £25 which he had received, deducting other money Ward had sent him or spent on his behalf, and asking him to

“stow away in a safe pocket £32..14..6, making up that sum with one Ten pound note, four fives, and the rest in precious metals. I hope I shan't want so much as this but it is best to be on the right side - so please bring it.”⁸

The money was “the last I need give you the trouble of drawing for me”. His time in Broadstairs was coming to an end and he returned to London on 14 September.

The Woman in White was serialised in *All The Year Round* from 26 November 1859 to 25 August 1860. Collins finished writing it on 26 July 1860⁹ and as that work finished Dickens made him a more generous offer.

New Deal

On Sunday 29 July Dickens asked Collins to have dinner with him two days later at the *All The Year Round* office.¹⁰ *The Woman in White* had been a phenomenal success, boosting the circulation of *All The Year Round* and almost trebling the profits which Dickens and subeditor Wills shared.¹¹

Although Dickens preferred to keep friendship and business separate and normally let Wills do the negotiating over money, it is quite possible that they discussed the agreement then as Pilgrim suggests.¹²

We know what the deal was from a detailed letter from Collins to Dickens dated 7 August 1860.¹³ It set out the terms “which I understand to be as follows”. It may be that this offer was only made verbally either at that dinner or subsequently over the next few days. Collins wrote

“The engagement is to be for two years, dating from the 31st of July 1860. My salary, for those two years, is to be seven guineas a week. I am to receive, during the same period, additional remuneration equivalent to one eighth share of the whole annual profits of All The Year Round paid me by cheque, at the time when the profits are regularly divided between the partners.”

This letter was treated as a legal agreement and is folded in four and noted on the blank outside as lawyers noted such documents.

“7 August 1860 | Wilkie Collins | 12 Harley Street | Agreeing to renew his | Engagement with “All the | Year Round” — and Stipu-| lating the Terms”.

Written the other way up at the bottom of the sheet

“August 7th 1860 | Wilkie Collins | About his engagement | with “All The Year Round”

It is a rare survivor – one of only three letters from Dickens to Collins which has survived intact out of at least 175 which he wrote.¹⁴ Earlier that year Dickens had burned all his correspondence in a field at his home in Gad’s Hill¹⁵ and he wrote later

“I always destroy every letter I receive not on absolute business”¹⁶

Clearly this letter from Collins was a business letter to keep. But it lay almost unnoticed in the Library at Johns Hopkins University, Maryland pasted into a copy of John Forster’s *Life of Charles Dickens*. It was not published until 1997 when it appeared in Pilgrim.¹⁷ And it had been almost completely overlooked by Collins scholars until then.

The second mention

The profit share was also referred to in another letter written by Collins nearly seven years later. It was first published by Baker & Clarke *The Letters of Wilkie Collins*, 1999.

On 14 May 1867 Collins wrote to W H Wills negotiating for the money he was to receive for writing *The Moonstone* which was to be serialised in *All The Year Round*.

In the letter Collins set out what he was paid by the periodical while writing *No Name* which was published over 45 weeks from 15 March 1862 to 17 January 1863. In this letter he refers to the £7-7s (£7.35) a week he was paid for 30 weeks pre-publication while writing *No Name* from 12 August 1861 to 9 March 1862 – a total of £220-10s (£220.50). And then the same £7-7s a week for 45 weeks of publication – a total of £330-15s (£330.75) plus another £100 “at the end of the story”.

He also refers to “Dickens’s cheques in payment of my share of the Profits from Augt 1861 when I began writing the book to Jany 1863 when the publication ended.” He then lists those three payments (the last three in Table below). The total remuneration for writing *No Name* came to £1041-0s-8d (£1041.03).¹⁸

In fact although the serialisation continued until 17 January 1863, the contract for the profit share ended in July 1862. Collins got his £7-7s a week for that time but did not also get a share of the profits for those final six months. Perhaps the payment of £100 “at the end of the story” which Collins received from W H Wills on 1 January 1863 was in lieu of a profit share.

This letter had been noticed only once before. It was referred to in *The Life of Wilkie Collins* by Nuel Pharr Davis in 1956 but it was consigned to an endnote on p.330 (referred to from p.249) where it was misdated 14 May 1876, and printed with the columns of figures mis-aligned. The significance of the profit share was missed by Davis, though he did refer to the £7-7s a week pay and characterised the letter as “Wilkie indignantly sent back a complex mass of figures”.¹⁹

Overlooked

Despite these two letters, Wilkie’s share of the profits of *All The Year Round* has been overlooked by commentators and biographers, not just of Collins but of Dickens too. Where *All The Year Round* profits are mentioned they have simply been given as split three quarters to Dickens and one quarter to Wills. See for example Edgar Johnson *Charles Dickens his Tragedy and Triumph*, 1953, vol.II p. 945, Patten *op. cit.*, p.271, and Michael Slater, *Charles Dickens*, 2009 p.475.

All seem to have relied on R. C. Lehmann’s *Charles Dickens as Editor*, 1912. He cites the formal *All The Year Round* agreement drawn up when the periodical was begun of which he says he has a copy

“Both in regard to profits and losses Dickens is to be interested as to $\frac{3}{4}$ and Wills as to $\frac{1}{4}$.”²⁰

There is no mention of Collins’s share – which came later and, as I show below, was paid to him directly by Dickens out of his own three-quarters share.

The payments

Collins’s share of the profits lasted only two years as provided in the contract from 1 August 1860 and thus ended on 31 July 1862.

The evidence for the payments comes partly from the letter to Wills of 14 May 1867 cited above. But conclusively from the bank accounts of Collins and Dickens held in annual ledgers at Coutts bank.

They list five payments from Dickens to Collins which can be related to the share of the profits from *All The Year Round* in the two years of his agreement from August 1860 to July 1862.

Table – payments to Wilkie Collins from profits of *All The Year Round*

1 6 months Profits to	2 Total profits	3 WC’s share	4 Amount	5 Date paid	6 Payer
31 Oct 1860	£1821-0s-4d	Half of $\frac{1}{8}$ th	£113-16s-3d	12 Dec 1860	[Recd] Do.
30 Apr 1861	£679-5s-1d	$\frac{1}{8}$ th	£84-18s-3d	13 Jun 1861	Reced
31 Oct 1861	£413-8s-10d	$\frac{1}{8}$ th	£51-13s-6d	13 Dec 1861	By Reced
30 Apr 1862	£1760-0s-5d	$\frac{1}{8}$ th	£220-0s-0d	16 Jun 1862	By Reced
31 Oct 1862‡	£1889-14s-7d	Half of $\frac{1}{8}$ th	£118-2s-2d	20 Nov 1862	Of Chas Dickens Esq
Total	£6563-9s-3d		£588-10s-2d		

The table shows the profits of *All The Year Round* for five half years from 31 October 1860 to 31 October 1862. The dates and figures in Columns 1 and 2 are taken from Patten who took them from manuscript data held at the Rosenbach Museum, Philadelphia.²¹

Column 3 sets out Collins’s share of these profits as he set out in his letter of 7 August 1860. His agreement ran from 1 August 1860 to 31 July 1862 so for the first three months and the last three months he received his share for only half the period over which profits were calculated. His share was thus a half of one eighth. In the other three periods he received a full one eighth share.

The amounts he received in column 4 are taken from two sources. First, they are recorded with the date and payer in the annual ledgers of Wilkie Collins’s account at Coutts Bank. The ledgers are held by Messrs. Coutts & Co., 440 Strand, London and were transcribed by Paul Lewis. The amounts are confirmed by entries in Dickens’s Coutts account – payments of these dates and amounts are recorded to W. Collins or Wilkie Collins.²²

The amounts in Column 4 are within a penny or two of precisely one eighth or half of one eighth of the total profits.

Some of these payments to Collins are recorded in other places too. An image of the cheque for the 13 June 1861 payment is in Andrew Gasson, *Wilkie Collins – an Illustrated Guide*, 1998, p. 45.

The last two payments are also mentioned, simply as payments from Dickens to Collins, by M Veronica Stokes in 'Charles Dickens: A Customer of Coutts & Co.' *The Dickensian*, January 1972, Vol. 68, No. 366, p.28.

The third payment for £51 13s 6d was mentioned by Collins in a letter dated 13 December 1861

"A cheque for £51.13.6 – which please pay into my account (being all the division which Sir E. B. L. leaves me this time!)"²³

Wilkie's reference to E.B.L. must imply that profits were low because of Edward Bulwer Lytton's unpopular *A Strange Story*, which filled the gap between *Great Expectations* and *No Name* from 10 August 1861 to 8 March 1862. The nature of this payment was wrongly identified in *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, 2005.²⁴

The final payment of £118-2s-2d was also mentioned by Collins in a letter to W H Wills on 21 November 1862

"Many thanks for your letter, and for the payment to my account at Coutt's of £118. 2. 2 – being the eighth of my balance of A.Y.R. to the end of my term."²⁵

The Public Face adds in a footnote "For his duties as a staff member of All The Year Round (which included the composition of *No Name*), WC received an eighth share of the profits as well as seven guineas a week. See to CD, 7 August 1860, and to Wills, 14 May 1867."

Collins departs

Collins announced his intention to leave *All The Year Round* at the start of 1862. Dickens replied on 5 January

"In the A.Y.R matter...I am very sorry that we part company (though only in a literary sense), but I hope we shall work together again, one day."²⁶

Collins did write again for *All The Year Round* but not until 'The Dead Lock in Italy' 8 December 1866 for which no payment can be identified.²⁷ A year later he worked with Dickens to write *No Thoroughfare* as the 1867 Christmas number. He agreed on £300 for the latter²⁸ but the only apparently relevant payment into his account is for £150 on 12 December 1867. For *The Moonstone* he seems to have received £1000 and then £42 a month for six months December 1867 to May 1868 during part of the time it was being published making a total of £1252, significantly more than the £1041 he received for *No Name*, as he intended.²⁹

No further payments from Wills or *All The Year Round* are identifiable although Collins acted as 'conductor' or editor for at least part of the time when Dickens was in America from November 1867 to April 1868.³⁰ He contributed a previously unidentified short piece in December 1867.³¹ Dickens paid Collins £5-15s-6d on 11 December 1868. No reason for it is known.

¹ Robert L Patten, *Charles Dickens and his Publishers*, Oxford 1978 pp. 462-464.

² Dickens to Wills, 16 September 1856. Pilgrim vol. VIII p.189

³ Paul Lewis, unpublished analysis from Anne Lohrli, *Household Words: A Weekly Journal*, 1973.

⁴ Dickens to Wills, 2 October 1857. Pilgrim vol. VIII p. 458

⁵ Patten *op.cit.* p. 271 and R. C. Lehmann, *Charles Dickens as Editor*, 1912, p. 261.

⁶ [0309] to Harriet Collins, 26 July 1859, Baker & Clarke I pp. 169-170.

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- ⁷ [0310] to Charles Ward, 7 August 1859, Baker & Clarke I, p. 175.
- ⁸ [0315] to Charles Ward, 7 September 1859, Baker & Clarke I, pp. 178-179.
- ⁹ See [0357] to Harriet Collins, 26 July 1860, Baker & Clarke I, p. 184.
- ¹⁰ Dickens to Collins, 29 July 1860, Pilgrim vol. IX p. 277
- ¹¹ See Patten *op.cit.* who records (p.464) that profits rose from £469-13s-2d in the six months before the story began to £1246-13s-7d in the next half year and then to £1365-15s-3d the next half year. After that they fell back £509-8s-9d, almost their previous level.
- ¹² Pilgrim vol. IX, p.277, fn. 3
- ¹³ [0364] to Charles Dickens, 7 August 1860, Baker & Clarke *Letters of Wilkie Collins*, vol. I, p. 185
- ¹⁴ Paul Lewis, 'My dear Dickens: Reconstructing the letters from Collins' *Wilkie Collins Society Journal*, 2006, NS vol. IX pp3-42
- ¹⁵ See Paul Lewis 'Burning: The Evidence' *The Dickensian* Winter 2004, Vol. 100, No.464, pp. 197-208
- ¹⁶ To W.C. Macready, 1 March 1865, Pilgrim vol. XI p. 22
- ¹⁷ Pilgrim, vol. IX, Appendix E, p. 569.
- ¹⁸ [0750] to W H Wills, 14 May 1867, Baker, Gasson. Law, Lewis *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins* vol. II, p. 73
- ¹⁹ Nuel Pharr Davis, *The Life of Wilkie Collins* 1956, p.249.
- ²⁰ R.C.Lehmann *Charles Dickens as Editor* 1912, p. 261.
- ²¹ Patten, *Dickens and his Publishers op.cit.*, p.464.
- ²² I am grateful to Tracey Earl of Coutts Archives for access to these documents.
- ²³ [0451] to Ward 13 December 1861, *Public Face*, vol. I, p. 253
- ²⁴ Baker, Gasson, Law, and Lewis, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, 2005 vol. I p. 253 fn. 1.
- ²⁵ [0505] to W H Wills, 21 November 1862, BGLL I, pp. 282-283.
- ²⁶ Dickens to Collins, 5 January 1862, Pilgrim vol. X p. 5.
- ²⁷ His authorship is attested to by a letter from Dickens to James Birtles, 25 November 1866, Pilgrim XI p. 276 "In yesterday's make-up, there is an article by Mr. Wilkie Collins, called the Dead Lock in Italy".
- ²⁸ [0749] to W H Wills 13 May 1867, Baker & Clarke, vol. II, pp. 286-287.
- ²⁹ All figures from Wilkie Collins's Coutts accounts.
- ³⁰ See [0789] to Harriet Collins 26 November 1867 BGLL, II, pp. 92-93.
- ³¹ 'A Florentine Procession' *All The Year Round*, XIX No. 451, pp. 5-6, Parrott, forthcoming.