



## ***THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY***

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### **NEWSLETTER**

**SUMMER 2015**

The two main themes for this issue of the Newsletter are the newly discovered works by Collins in *All the Year Round* and how it has now become possible to download from the internet even really obscure books and articles by or about Wilkie.

#### **NEW COLLINS WORKS IN *ALL THE YEAR ROUND***

An extraordinary discovery by book dealer and academic Dr Jeremy Parrott has been described as the Rosetta Stone of Victorian literature. It has long been a mystery who wrote what in Dickens's periodical *All The Year Round* as all entries - bar some of Dickens's own - were published without a byline. That was common in Victorian periodicals. Less than a third of the pieces have been even tentatively ascribed to an author.

Dr Parrott has found a set of 20 volumes of the periodical from 1859 to 1868 which contains a pencil annotation of the author's name by each article. Hundreds of names now tie more than 3000 pieces to their writer. Parrott believes the set - which is in a luxury and very rare binding - belonged to Dickens himself and that the annotations are by him.

Collating the list with pieces known - or speculated - to have been written by Wilkie turns up eight new articles - one written jointly with Henry Morley. It confirms his authorship of three other pieces which Paul Lewis identified as by Wilkie in the WCS publication *All The Year Round - Non-Fiction by Wilkie Collins* (April 2011). And it shows that 14 other items which have been variously attributed to Wilkie in the past were in fact written by others - six of

them by his brother Charles Allston Collins. One of those is 'Suggestions from a Maniac' which Lewis wrongly attributed to Wilkie in that publication.

The eight items with Wilkie's name by them are

1. The Crusoe of the Snowy Desert (7 May 1859, vol. I, pp. 44-48)
2. Occasional Register (14 May 1859, vol. I, pp. 64-66). Jointly written with Henry Morley
3. Appalling Disclosure for the Lord Chamberlain (9 July 1859, vol. I, pp. 261-264)
4. The Last Leaves of a Sorrowful Book (30 July 1859, vol. I, pp. 318-323)
5. Managers and Music Halls (23 March 1861, vol. IV, pp. 558-561)
6. Hear the Postman (13 July 1861, vol. V, pp. 366-368)
7. The Sentiments of Martha Jones (26 July 1862, vol. VII, pp. 472-476)
8. A Florentine Procession (14 December 1867, vol. XIX, pp. 5-6)

The timing of these pieces fits in with what we know of Wilkie's work for *ATYR* and his other writing commitments. And the style of most of them seems to be Wilkie like. 'Hear the Postman' is perhaps the least like anything else he wrote and some experts say some of the others are a bit heavy-handed. But it is possible they were written under pressure to fill a gap in the weekly's 24 pages and one - 'Managers and Music Halls' - is perhaps more of Dickens's view than Wilkie's.

Collins collected just five of his pieces in *ATYR* for republication in *My Miscellanies* so we should not expect these passed over pieces to match those standards.

There is a serious question mark over only one. 'The Sentiments of Martha Jones' is a companion piece to an earlier article 'Seaside Lodgers' (17 August 1861, vol. V, pp. 496-500) and was written at a time when Wilkie was holed up in his 'tower of refuge', Fort House in Broadstairs, struggling to keep up with the demands of the London and New York press for his weekly parts of *No Name*. 'Seaside Lodgers' is marked in the Parrott volumes as by Charles Collins. It is possible that 'Martha Jones' is also by him.

Parrott admits there are other odd errors in the annotations. But an examination of some of the volumes by Dickens expert and biographer Professor Michael Slater and by John Drew, who runs the Dickens Journals Online Project at Buckingham University, confirms that they are contemporary and possibly by Dickens himself.

The eight newly identified items can be read or downloaded at Drew's project website [www.djo.org.uk](http://www.djo.org.uk). Let us know what you think.

Apart from the Wilkie items, around 90 new Charles Collins pieces have been identified, confirming him as one of the most prolific contributors to *ATYR*. Plans for the publication of the data in the volumes – and of the new Wilkie Collins material – will be announced later.

### **COLLINS ETEXTS**

One of the indefatigable e-texters of Wilkie's works is the American fan James Rusk. Many of his e-texts are on [www.wilkiecollins.com](http://www.wilkiecollins.com). But that website is in dire need of updating and James has changed the urls of his Wilkie e-texts from those originally given there. You can now find his whole collection at <http://jr.digitalpixels.org/wc/>.

Another site where Collins's works can be downloaded is [www.online-literature.com/wilkie-collins](http://www.online-literature.com/wilkie-collins). This includes most of the full length novels and short stories, together with *Rambles Beyond Railways*. The site is easy to use but you have to run the gauntlet of typical online advertisements.

### ***MR WRAY'S CASH-BOX***

*Mr Wray's Cash-Box* was originally published in December 1851 although the title-page records it as 1852 and there was a second edition a few months later. In the USA *Mr Wray* was published much later in about 1869, by the relatively well known pirate press of Peterson's of Philadelphia, as *The Stolen Mask: or, the Mysterious Cash Box*. Issued in paper wrappers at 25cents, this edition is a difficult item to find.

There is, however, an even more scarce edition, *The Stolen Mask; or the Mysterious Cash-Box. A Story for a Christmas Fireside*, published in 1864 by the obscure Confederate publisher, The Steam Power-Press of F. G. DeFontaine & Co. in Columbia, South Carolina. It consists of 31 pages printed in double columns. It is a very strange choice by the publishers since most of the Confederate publications are tedious official documents.

A copy of *The Stolen Mask* appeared at auction in October 2009 and sold for the relatively large sum of \$540. This version can now be downloaded from <https://cdm.bostonatheneum.org/digital/collection/p16057coll14/id/53966/rec/1>

## ***BLACK AND WHITE***

*Black and White* was a play written by Collins from an idea by Charles Fechter who suggested the outline of the first two acts. With Fechter's agreement, Collins provided the ending, developed the characters and wrote the dialogue. The story is set in Trinidad in 1830 and treats the theme of slavery.

The play opened at the Adelphi on 29 March 1869 and ran for about sixty nights followed by an unsuccessful provincial tour. Collins considered it a better play than *No Thoroughfare* but felt it achieved only limited success because English audiences had been saturated with adaptations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. *Black and White* was also staged at the Globe Theatre, Boston, from 26 December 1870.

In England, the play was printed for acting purposes by C. Whiting but never published to preserve Collins's copyright. It also appeared in New York as number 296 of de Witt's *Acting Plays* which includes a diagram and description of the stage, details of the Costumes and a synopsis of the play with a cast list.

It is this edition which has now been digitised and can be downloaded directly from Google Books. If preferred it can be obtained as a print on demand bound copy from companies like SN Books through ABE for about £5 (but can take up to a month to arrive); or from Amazon which might be quicker.

## **GENERAL THEATRICAL FUND**

From the same sources, it is also possible to download *The Proceedings at the Seventh Anniversary Festival of the General Theatrical Fund* which took place in 1852. The General Theatrical Fund was a charitable institution which Collins, Dickens, a trustee, and most of the well known theatrical personalities of the day supported by donations at its annual festival, usually held in April. This is possibly Collins's first attendance since he had originally met Dickens in the spring of 1851. There is much mention of Dickens but only one note of W. Wilkie Collins in the publication, showing that he donated the sum of one guinea.

We assume that Wilkie attended the same function most years. In 1863, the Eighteenth Festival, Charles Dickens was in the Chair. On that occasion it is recorded that Collins donated five guineas whereas Dickens gave five pounds. This donation is recorded on 1 April in Wilkie's bank account at Coutts. In 1865, Collins took the chair for the Twentieth Festival and his speeches are recorded in the *Proceedings*. On this occasion he is recorded as donating an obviously quite generous ten guineas. His account at Coutts shows a total payment to the Fund on 15 April of £15-9s. No other payments to the Fund are

found in his bank account which was opened in 1860.

## **COLLINS BIOGRAPHIES**

Over the years Wilkie Collins has been well served by several biographers. In approximately reverse chronological order, these include the up to date and comprehensive *Wilkie Collins: a Life of Sensation* (2014) by Andrew Lycett; the excellent but brief summaries by Peter Ackroyd, (2012) and Melisa Klimaszewski (2011), both entitled *Wilkie Collins; The King of Inventors* by Catherine Peters (1991); William Clarke's more personal *The Secret Life of Wilkie Collins* (1988); the partially completed *Wilkie Collins* by Dorothy L. Sayers (1977) and the rather speculative *The Life of Wilkie Collins* by Nuel Pharr Davies (1956), although this does contain some very useful footnotes.

If we put to one side the obscure German critical biography by von Wolzogen in 1885, the first ground breaking biography in English, particularly for its time - 1951 - was Kenneth Robinson's *Wilkie Collins*. Highly readable, it turns up fairly regularly on ebay or ABE Books. It is now available for downloading in various formats at [archive.org/details/wilkiecollinsbio1952robi](http://archive.org/details/wilkiecollinsbio1952robi).

## **FREDERICK WALKER AND *THE WOMAN IN WHITE* POSTER**

Frederick Walker (1840-1875) was an influential painter in oils and water-colours; he was also a friend of both Wilkie and Charles Collins. Walker was responsible for the striking theatre poster of *The Woman in White*. Recently discovered in the *Life and Letters of Frederick Walker, A.R.A.* by John George Marks (London; Macmillan, 1896) is correspondence revealing some of the background to this classic piece of poster art.

On 6 September 1871 Walker wrote to William Harcourt Hooper (1834-1912), the noted wood engraver:

I write to ask you to help me in a certain little matter. Mr. Wilkie Collins is [as certain advertisements show] about to have produced on the stage, 'The Woman in White,' and there has been a little discussion on the subject of a good poster; the result being that I made at the house of his brother, Mr. C. Collins, where I write this, a sketch of the said 'Woman in White,' and it is thought to be in some degree suitable, so I propose trying my hand at the thing itself - a dashing attempt in black and white. The figure ought not to be less than 4ft. 6, or 5ft. in height; and to my way of thinking a vigorous wood-cut would be the thing, on a sheet of wood the size of a door. Will you help me with your counsel and graver, or I might say chisel.

In another letter (now lost), Walker wrote to Hooper with the prescient comment: "I am bent on doing all I can with a first attempt at what I consider might develop into a most important branch of art."

On 11 September Walker commented to his friend the landscape painter J. W. North (1842-1924: "Am just about knocked up trying to do a poster for Wilkie Collins - his 'Woman in White,' about to be produced in the theatre - but the poster not a bad idea, if I can do it. A figure in white, cut out of a black ground, and Hooper, the engraver, rather enters into it." He had also written to his mother on the same date:

Your two letters received this morning, also a very charming one from Wilkie Collins, thanking me warmly for helping 'The Woman in White' by my poster. I am going on with it, and do not think I shall commence anything else before going away.

No trace of the Collins letter has been found but by 13 September he was able to write: "The poster is going on beautifully, and I'm expecting C. Collins every minute." On 14 September Walker wrote again to Hooper:

Wilkie Collins has just been, and expresses himself delighted with what I've done. I have got it on to the big paper, but not on to the blocks. These I have had fastened together by a carpenter, and I don't quite know whether you'd say they fit close enough. I don't like to ask you to come round again, but you could tell in an instant whether they'll do to proceed upon..... I have got more 'go' and purpose in the figure, and it strikes me we shall make a good thing of it.

Walker's biographer, J. G. Marks notes:

As far as I am aware, this poster was the first thing of the kind done in England by an artist of Walker's eminence. It represents the back view of a life-sized figure of a woman, a shawl partly over her head, her face seen in profile as she looks back; one hand raised with finger to her lips, the other holding the door by which she passes out into the starry night. The drawing was first made on paper, in chalk and charcoal; the outlines were pricked through for transfer on the wood, and the design then drawn by Walker on the wood itself. The original drawing was exhibited at the Dudley Gallery in 1872, and again at the exhibition of 1876, when, Mr. Hooper tells me, the holes made for the transfer were still distinctly visible!

On 28 September Walker wrote to Hooper during a fishing trip in Scotland: "I cannot resist asking after the small engraving of the 'Woman in White,' though I fear that you will have left town before this reaches it. Was the photograph satisfactory? Pardon a natural curiosity I feel in the welfare of the poor woman, and give me a line to say how all has gone off." He followed this up on 15 October with "I've done no work since I left; the poster appears to be a success.

I have here a photo of it; will send one of 'em to you if I can get one. There are some horrible small copies made of it I hear - lithographs - enough to make one's hair stand up." On 21 October he again wrote to Hooper:

I returned from the North yesterday morning, and your letter and the small copy of the poster followed me this morning. Of course I am much disgusted with some one [whoever it may be] for so treating me. Nothing would have been easier than to copy on to the wood a photo, which I am sure you would not have refused to cut. It has taken from me all the interest and pleasure I felt in the thing.... I am almost inclined to send in a surprising bill for **the** big poster; seeing now that they forget I made it quite a labour of love.

And once again on 24 October to Hooper:

I should be glad if you could procure for me one or two copies of the big poster. You'd be surprised to hear that the theatre people have been too busy even to have the courtesy to send me one. I hear that the play will be produced at Paris, where also the poster will perhaps be seen. I suppose the lettering could easily be altered. If it goes to Paris, I hope and think it will meet with better treatment than it has here.

Despite this last comment, it is uncertain whether *The Woman in White* was actually staged in Paris although Collins was in correspondence with Régnier, asking his advice on the dramatic version. The London production opened at the Olympic Theatre on 9 October 1871.

The full text of the correspondence and indeed the entire biography can be downloaded from [archive.org/details/lifelettersoffre00markrich](http://archive.org/details/lifelettersoffre00markrich).

The drawing for the full size poster is currently on display at the Tate Gallery in London and can be seen at [www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/walker-the-woman-in-white-n02080](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/walker-the-woman-in-white-n02080)

## **SWEDISH BIBLIOGRAPHIES**

Lars-Erik Nygren is an indefatigable bibliographer from Sweden who published his *Wilkie Collins in Sweden* during 2010. This consists of 77 illustrated pages spanning Wilkie's works from 1845 to the present day. Since then he has issued four supplements to complement the original publication with a fifth in preparation. Lars-Erik has also compiled other bibliographies which contain some information about Wilkie Collins's stories although he notes these are all in the Wilkie Collins bibliography as well!

*Romanforlag och Romanblad* (2015)

The story of small book companies which issued "cheap" books (crime and love stories, colportage-novels/dime novels) in Sweden during the period 1850-1920 is still to a great extent unknown in the history of Swedish literature. This book investigates two of these companies: Carl Anderson Book Company, Andersson & Co. and Nordiska Konstförlaget. They frequently co-operated with the European Book company, Eichler. The same covers have been found on books from France, Germany, Denmark and Sweden. Many foreign books were translated into Swedish, not issued as books, but just as feuilletons in daily newspapers or in special feuilleton magazines. (76 pages, illustrations mostly in colour. (SEK 240).

*Edgar Allan Poe.*

A bibliography, printed 1998, listing all known versions of Poe's prose stories in Swedish, from 1860 to 1998. Books, anthologies, magazines, feuilletons etc. (A few copies in stock, SEK 70).

*Anna Katharine Green* (2001).

About this early female crime writer's life and works and all editions of her stories printed in Swedish in books, magazines and as feuilletons; with a supplement. (Now out of print).

*Allers Illustrerad Familj-Journals Bibliotek & Pa lediga stunder* (2004).

A list of feuilletons enclosed with every issue of the magazine *Allers Familj-Journal* from 1879 to 1913 in two different series. (60 pages, illustrations in black and white, SEK 95).

*Nordiska Forlaget* (2004, revised 2015).

Contains the complete story of the publisher, Nordiska Forlaget, 1909-1922. They issued cheap books of good quality including those by A. Conan Doyle, R. L. Stevenson, Wilkie Collins, and H. Rider Haggard.

*Foljetonger i svenska dagstidningar* (2012).

A study of feuilletons in Swedish daily newspapers and a listing of feuilletons in some of them, mostly for the period of 1860 to 1920. (272 pages, illustrated mostly in b/w and colour, SEK 350).

H. Rider Haggard and Jules Verne.

The Swedish bibliography of H. Rider Haggard has been revised and is now on the internet on the Scandinavian website for Jules Verne and H. Rider Haggard. There is also a Danish Haggard bibliography and a bibliography for Jules Verne



in all the Scandinavian languages. Lars-Erik has made some contributions to the Swedish version. See [www.jules-verne.dk](http://www.jules-verne.dk) .

More information can be obtained directly from the author, [lars-erik.nygren@cornhem.se](mailto:lars-erik.nygren@cornhem.se).

### **GARRICK VOTES NO TO WOMEN**

An historic vote by members of the Garrick Club took place on 8 July to decide whether to admit women as members. Although a narrow majority of 50.5% voted 'yes' that was not the necessary two thirds needed to change the constitution. However, enough members are angry at the result that it may be re-run later this year. The interest is so great that rather than meeting at the club itself the Palace Theatre in Cambridge Circus was hired for the night. That was the theatre where Andrew Lloyd Webber's short-lived musical of *The Woman in White* opened 15 September 2004.

But Wilkie Collins has a much stronger connection to this vote than that.

Wilkie was a member of the Garrick from 3 June 1854 until he resigned more than ten years later, ostensibly over the refusal of the Club Committee to accept William Henry Wills as a member because he "was lacking both in social and literary distinction". Wills was the *Household Words* and *All The Year Round* sub-editor and a friend of both Wilkie and Dickens, who had jointly proposed him along with 37 others.

The rejection was on 25 February 1865 and Wilkie's initial letter of resignation is dated that day on club notepaper. Dickens also wrote to resign that day. However, their actual departure was delayed because Dickens and Wilkie wanted to visit the club one last time together and Wilkie was then in Paris. Wilkie wrote again on 10 March confirming that the Secretary could now communicate his resignation to the Committee. Dickens wrote in similar terms the day before and *Pilgrim* notes that the Committee had been told of their resignations the day before. Wilkie's resignation is recorded in the Member's Book on 18 March 1865.

Although Wills's rejection gave Wilkie the reason to leave, he had been in dispute with the management of the Club for at least three years. He supported a motion on 27 April 1863 "to preserve as far as possible the original constitution of the Club ... [and] to restore the influence of the Literary, Artistic, and Dramatic element in our Society to something like its former proportions". A similar motion had been rejected a year earlier but on that occasion Wilkie arrived too late for the vote.

Wilkie had written to Millais on 6 April 1863 "Unless something is done, the old Club will fall to pieces in the new house - and it seems a pity to let it go without an effort to save it". They were concerned that its original aims might be lost when the Club moved from its old premises at 35 King Street to "the new house" at 15 Garrick Street where it remains to this day.

It seems the motion was lost. On 6 June Wilkie wrote to his friend and fellow Club member George Russell "Many thanks for your note. I am surprised at nothing which is done by these two gentlemen - or by a good many others of a like way of thinking. When you see your way to a certain means of smashing the Club to atoms, let me know and I will help you. In the meantime, I leave the little puddle in King Street to stink without any further stirring on my part." The move was delayed more than once and eventually took place on 4 July 1864, causing the annual Shakespeare's Birthday dinner on 23 April to be deferred.

Even after his resignation Wilkie visited the club on occasion with others who were members.

### ***ALICE IN WONDERLAND***

*Alice in Wonderland* was published 150 years ago this year. (See <http://goo.gl/MfvdRK>). Catherine Peters in *The King of Inventors* said that Lewis Carroll acknowledged Mrs Wragge in *No Name* to be the inspiration for the White Queen in Carroll's later book *Through the Looking Glass* (1871). Oddly Wikipedia claims the connection was the other way round even though *No Name* predates Carroll's sequel by eight or nine years.

Carroll himself wrote of the White Queen "There is a character strangely like her in Wilkie Collins' novel "No Name": by two different converging paths we have somehow reached the same idea, and Mrs. Wragg [sic] and the White Queen might have been twin sisters." (Lewis Carroll, "'Alice" on the Stage', *The Theatre*, N.S., vol. 9, No. 52, April 1887).

Lewis Carroll contributed at least one poem to *All The Year Round* where *No Name* first appeared in 1862. Both Carroll and Collins opposed vivisection and some writers have seen something in Wilkie's letters to the young Nanny Wynne which echoes Carroll's belief in the spirit of innocence of young girls.

## WILKIE AND BEETHOVEN

Members might have been enjoying Beethoven at the Proms. On Proms Extra on BBC2 on 25 July there was a performance of the climax of the Kreutzer Sonata with Nicola Benedetti on violin and Alexei Grynyuk on piano. One of Wilkie's rare pronouncements on music occurred in a letter to Nina Lehmann on Tuesday 12 June 1860 when he wrote:

"In one respect only, I have been the worse for the delightful party at Hallé's - the "Great Kreutzer Sonata" has upset me about classical music. I am afraid I don't like classical music, after all - I am afraid I am not the Amateur I once thought myself. The whole violin part of "The Great K.S." appeared to me to be the musical expression of a varying and violent stomach-ache, with intervals of hiccups."

Why not see if you can also agree with Collins's view of this at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b0643ny7/bbc-proms-proms-extra-2015-25072015> and scroll to 35'50".

Charles Hallé (1819-1895) founded and conducted the Manchester orchestra that took his name. He was a Beethoven specialist and would certainly have played the piano part at this soiree. He gave a recital on Thursdays in the season at his home at 8 Mansfield Street near Cavendish Square.

Wilkie's ire was not confined to Beethoven. A few years later (26 February 1869) he wrote to Elizabeth Benzon:

I hope you were not the worse for the concert. As for me, Herr Schumann's music, Madame Schumann's playing, and the atmosphere of St James's Hall, are three such afflictions as I never desire to feel again. I think of sending a card to Erards: "Mr Collins's compliments, and he would be glad to know how the poor piano is?"

On Monday 22 February Schumann's widow Clara had played her late husband's *Études en forme de Variations* and then, presumably equally unwelcome to Wilkie, a piano trio Op.1 No.2 in G major by Beethoven!

Sebastian Erard, based in Great Marlborough Street, was the dominant piano maker for concert platforms [www.piano-tuners.org/history/erard.html](http://www.piano-tuners.org/history/erard.html)

Wilkie preferred Mozart and told this joke in a letter to his friend Frederick Lehmann (15 August 1872) about how dull and empty London was that Summer.

I have only heard one moderately good story, of a Yankee at the Boston Musical Jubilee who was present at a performance of Mozart's twelfth Mass - and was asked what he thought of it. He said "Waal, sir!, I do think Mozart's twelfth Massachusetts is a pretty compliment to My Country- but it is a trifle too long."

WCS member, the internationally renowned cellist Steven Isserlis, emailed to remind us that Wilkie also hated his instrument, or at least he put this view into a letter of Ovid Vere writing to his beloved Carmina Graywell in *Heart and Science* (1883).

I have made a new friend here - one Mr. Morphew. Last night, he was so kind as to invite me to a musical entertainment at his house. He is a medical man; and he amuses himself in his leisure hours by playing on that big and dreary member of the family of fiddles, whose name is Violoncello. Assisted by friends, he hospitably cools his guests, in the hot season, by the amateur performance of quartets. My dear, I passed a delightful evening. Listening to the music? Not listening to a single note of it. Thinking of You.

### ***WOMAN IN WHITE* PAINTING**

A picture by John Atkinson Grimshaw, *A Moonlit Street after Rain*, painted in 1881 was sold for £209,000 at Sotheby's in London on 15 July. <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2014/victorian-pre-raphaelite-british-impressionist-art-115132/lot.29.html>

The painting, with a full moon and a lone figure on the road by a wall, is very reminiscent of the opening scenes of *The Woman in White*. A similar picture by Grimshaw, *Tree Shadows on the Park Wall*, in Leeds City Art Gallery was used as the cover for the 1996 new edition of the Oxford World's Classics, edited by John Sutherland. See <https://www.ebay.com/p/109104313>

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