



THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2016

THE WILKIE COLLINS CONFERENCE - 24 SEPTEMBER 2016

We are delighted to announce that the programme is now available for our forthcoming conference: 'The 'Heart' and 'Science' of Wilkie Collins and his Contemporaries.' The event is being organised by our Journal editor, Joanne Parsons, for Saturday 24 September 2016. It will be jointly sponsored by the Wilkie Collins Society and the Victorian Popular Fiction Association.

The venue will be Barts Pathology Museum, 3rd Floor Robin Brook Centre, St Bartholomew's Hospital, West Smithfield, EC1A 7BE, (near Holborn and the City of London). The costs will be £20 or £10 for student/unwaged plus a small processing fee (tickets are available from: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-heart-and-science-of-wilkie-collins-and-his-contemporaries-tickets-25104106057>) The Keynote speaker is professor at the University of Idaho's English Department, Tara MacDonald, whose work focuses on nineteenth century literature, gender and emotion. The conference will also feature an exciting performance from 'Rambles in Cornwall' by Jak Stringer.

We do hope you will be able to join us at this exciting event. The full programme is listed on the flier which accompanies this Newsletter.

WILKIE AND THE SUMMER WEATHER

In his letters, Wilkie frequently commented on the fine summer weather which in his youth he seemed to enjoy. Writing from Antwerp to his mother at the end of July 1846, he noted “The heat in this place is of a superior degree of intensity to the temperature of Timbucto. I write this, literally in a reeking state..... my physical energies - so awful is the intensity of the heat - completely fail me - My strength will carry me no further than the bottom of this page.” To his brother, Charles, in June 1856 he wrote “I am getting sunburnt even by this time, and my general health is improving rapidly - but I can’t get rid of the d—d rheumatism. In this respect, I suppose my inevitable exposure to all varieties of temperature at sea is rather against me. Today, however, has been lovely - scorching hot summer weather at last.

Later on, Wilkie enjoyed the heat rather less, writing again to his mother in July 1864: “It is all very well for you to talk of heat - but if you only felt the difference between Tunbridge and London! I am writing in a profuse perspiration.” To his literary agent, A. P. Watt he commented in July 1887 “The heat has quite overpowered me” and to his close friend, Sebastian Schlesinger in May 1889 “After that delightful drive had done me the greatest good, and had given me a sound night’s rest, the thunderous heat of yesterday afternoon completely prostrated me.”

Collins’s feelings towards the weather showed up in his works writing in *The Evil Genius* (1886) “Of all oppressive summers, a hot summer in London is the hardest to endure.” Although for those inclined to a more indolent approach to life, Gabriel Betteredge in *The Moonstone* decided to “set [himself] in the warm summer air next – seeing that what is good for old claret is equally good for old age.” (*The Moonstone*).

Wilkie’s solution to the heat was twofold. He regularly obtained ice from the Wenham Lake Ice Company in Massachusetts, USA, but he also drank the driest of champagnes and sheries, writing to his wine merchants Beecheno, Yaxley in 1886 “The Pints of Champagne have disappeared. Will you send me six dozen more of the same “Vin Brut,” in half bottles? The Sherry also is reported to be on its last legs. Please let me have a three-dozen case (as before) – and send another three-dozen case.” And as Mr Galli lee asked in *Heart and Science* (1883) “Isn’t a pint of champagne nice drinking, this hot weather? Just cooled with ice - I don’t know whether you feel the weather as I do? - and poured, fizzing, into a silver mug. Lord, how delicious!”

And a final summer thought with the Pakistani cricket team currently in England, the Test selectors should bear in mind that “Doctor Chennery ... was the best bowler in the Long Beckley cricket-club. A strictly orthodox man in the matter of wine and mutton.” (*The Dead Secret*).

The WCS is fortunate to have amongst its ranks some very talented members. At least two of these are called Ha(y)nes!

KATHERINE HAYNES AND GRACE POOLE

Long-time WCS member Katherine Haynes is publishing a part-work, *Grace Poole*. The story concerns the life and adventures of the servant who Jane Eyre encounters at Thornfield. Quoting from the cover blurb:

What would the life of the singular Grace Poole have been both before and after Jane Eyre came to Thornfield? Follow Grace’s adventures in childhood, in the employ of Mr Rochester and as servant in the house of one Henry Jekyll. See events described in classical works from another angle, as you share in her joys and sorrows, triumphs and disasters. Look beyond the tapestry which covers the attic door and see the woman.

It will show familiar characters like Jane and Rochester through Grace’s eyes as well as learning about her early life and what happens to her after the fire. At one point she moves to another book and is employed by the Jekyll family. The secrets she and her employers keep - and like to keep - fit in well with Wilkie’s stories. There is no direct connection but nevertheless highly recommended.

Nicely written in very much the style of the era, Part I consisting of 48 pages is now available (ISBN 978-0-9927030-6-6; £3.20 UK, £4.20 Europe, £5 rest of world including pp). There will be nine more parts. Cheques to Katherine Haynes, 150 Elstree Park, Barnet Lane, Borehamwood, WD6 2RP.

SUSAN HANES AND HER ‘PERSISTENT PHANTOM’

Overseas devotee, Susan Hanes, is author of *Wilkie Collins ‘s American Tour, 1873-4*, published by Pickering & Chatto in 2008. Also a long-standing WCS member, she has been an avid Collins fan for many years. Susan has now contributed the majority of the June 2016 monthly issue of the journal of the Chicago Caxton club,

the *Caxtonian*. Under the title of ‘My Persistent Phantom: A life with Wilkie Collins,’ it consists of lovely personal reminiscences of her fascination with Collins.

I have a confession to make. I have a relationship with a certain gentleman that has endured for more than 40 years and yet continues to captivate me even today.

Does it lessen the intrigue that the target of my obsession would now be over 190 years old? That he was short, bespectacled, and had a long, shaggy beard and unusually small hands and feet? I have been fascinated by Wilkie Collins ever since the summer before my sophomore year in high school, when I picked up his novel *The Moonstone* as part of a summer reading assignment.

And so her journey with Wilkie continues, part biographical and part personal recollections. This splendidly written piece is beautifully illustrated with portraits of Wilkie and favourite examples from Susan’s own library. The full article can be found at www.caxtonclub.org/reading/2016/jun16.pdf

WILKIE AT THE GROLIER CLUB

Susan Hanes was also featured in a recent exhibition at the distinguished Grolier Club of New York. Founded in 1884 it is America’s oldest and largest society for bibliophiles and enthusiasts in graphic arts (www.grolierclub.org). Susan writes:

It was a pleasure to share items from my Wilkie Collins collection with members of the Grolier Club of New York City at their annual New Members Exhibit, which opened on June 15, 2016 and continues through July. Coming from Chicago, I knew that one of my three allowed choices must be a letter from Wilkie, dated 31 October 1871, to the Committee of the American Chicago Relief Fund. He wrote of his “sincere admiration of the heroic spirit with which your countrymen have met the disaster that has fallen on them,” referring to the catastrophic Chicago fire of that same year. The note was accompanied by his cheque for five pounds. Two years after he sent that heartfelt letter, he arrived in Chicago during his speaking tour of America in 1874, admitting to a friend that he was less than impressed with the brash new city that had grown from the ashes of the Great Fire, calling Chicago “this city of magnificent warehouses.”

Whilst mentioning Haynes, there is another, Annie Haynes, a crime writer from the 1920s whose *The Secret of Greylands* (1924) is described as “an absorbing golden age crime novel matching Wilkie Collins’s high Victorian gothic to the agility of

early jazz age fiction.” It has just been republished by the Dean Street Press in paperback and on Kindle (ISBN 9781911095231).

‘THE FATAL CRADLE’

Members may remember the news story from Ecuador on 2 June 2016 where two babies who had been switched at birth by the hospital were finally reunited with their correct parents. (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-36432343). Wilkie, of course, had got there first in his short story ‘The Fatal Cradle: otherwise the Heartrending Story of Mr Heavysides’. It was first published as ‘Picking up Waifs at Sea’ as Chapter 4 of the extra Christmas number of *All the Year Round* for December 1861.

Wilkie’s story is a humorous tale of two babies born simultaneously on a crowded ship bound for Australia. One is the eighth child of a poor family, the Heavysides, the other the first-born of a well-to-do couple, the Smallchilds. Their identities become confused when they are placed in the same makeshift cradle and the captain, after trying several unsuccessful methods, finally allocates them by weight, giving the heavier baby to the heavier mother. The narrator claims his life has been blighted by the captain’s mistaken choice with the immortal line “My weight has been the grand misfortune of my life.”

FRITH TO PIGOTT - FRIENDS OF WILKIE COLLINS

Four newly discovered letters between two of Wilkie’s friends add to our knowledge of them. They are from the artist William Powell Frith (1819-1909) to Edward Frederick Smyth Pigott (1824-1895). The numbers in square brackets refer to the numerical sequence of letters in the *Collected letters*.

Pigott and Collins studied together for the bar and Pigott edited *The leader* to which Wilkie contributed from 1851 to 1855. After that Pigott became foreign correspondent of *The Daily News*. Then in 1873 he applied for the post of Secretary to the Royal Academy. Frith gave him his support and this advice:

The candidates have been - & are-calling on the R.A.s - go and do thou likewise ... your chances will be increased if you can be talked to & seen. (Frith to Pigott 25 June 1873).

Despite letters of support from Frith and from Collins, [3100] to Thomas Faed (12 May 1873) and [1342] to the Royal Academy (20 May 1873), Pigott lost at the election on 10 July 1873 to Frederick Eaton. Afterwards Wilkie wrote to Pigott:

I cannot tell you how sorry I am for this disappointment of your expectations. All the artists (RAs) I saw appeared to think you were certain to be chosen. Who is "Mr Eaton"? and what does it mean? ([1362] to Pigott 17 July 1873).

The new letters confirm that Frith was equally surprised. "If certain promises - or what were tantamount to promises - had been respected the result of the election might have been very different." (Frith to Pigott 14 July 1873). It turned out to be for the best. A year later on 1 August 1874 Pigott was appointed Examiner of Plays in the Lord Chamberlain's Office.

Frith wrote to Pigott "Most heartily & sincerely do I congratulate you on what I read in the papers. After all it was a... good thing you didn't succeed in becoming Secretary seeing that you have become something much more honourable and important." (Frith to Pigott 1 August 1874). His wife Isabella joined in, writing separately: "Few things have given us greater pleasure than seeing the good news about you in today's papers" (Isabella Frith to Pigott, 1 August 1874).

In fact Pigott did not formally take up the role until 25 August to allow his predecessor William Donne to "complete his twenty five years." No letter of congratulation from Collins is known. But he must surely have been pleased to have such a close friend in this key role.

It was William Donne who had intervened a year earlier when Wilkie's play *The New Magdalen* was advertised during its run with a biblical quote on repentance "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." (Luke 15:7). Donne wrote to the manager of the Olympic Theatre on 9 July 1873 to request the immediate removal "of this unprecedented and unnecessary allusion to a verse of scripture" in advertising the play. It also seems that there may have been some scripture read on stage. *The Illustrated London News* review complained that "the citation of Gospel texts on the stage is... repulsive". (See Stephens *The Censorship of English Drama 1824-1901* p. 107 and fn 41, p. 181). That seems to have been the last time the Examiner of Plays intervened in a Wilkie Collins production.

More letters by Wilkie, himself, continue to tum up in ones and twos but we have decided to postpone the next update to the *Collected Letters* until the end of this year.

TO THE STUPID READER.

'To the Stupid Reader' is the title of the introduction to *Cape Cod and all along the Shore: Stories by Charles Nordhoff*, published by Harpers in New York during 1868. Decide whether you think the opening lines can be regarded as a back-handed compliment or a criticism of Collins.

The stories collected in this volume have been printed at different times in *Harper's Magazine* except one which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Collections of stories like this, I have noticed, are commonly published at the earnest solicitation of friends, or to gratify the desires of an amiable but indiscriminating public. To prevent misunderstanding in the present case, it is perhaps well to say that the public is guiltless in respect to this volume, and that no fond friend has ever expressed even a willingness to have my stories assume this more enduring form - except the publishers, who, it will be readily believed, have no especial desire to see the book permanently on their shelves.

I have noticed that it is customary with writers, when they collect their shorter tales, to set them into one general story, which serves as a frame-work to the small pieces, and furnishes a name for the volume, such as the "Queen of Hearts" of Mr. Wilkie Collins, and Miss Edwards's "Miss Carew." In this way a story writer gives his collection the appearance, at first sight, of what is called a novel. It naturally occurred to me to follow this fashion, which has the advantage of deceiving purchasers, who buy what they imagine from the title and chapter heads to be a novel, and do not discover, until they get home, that what they took to be a fat chicken is only a small basket full of stale eggs. But I refrained, for two reasons: 1st., I think it wrong to practice such a cheat upon an unoffending and confiding public; and, 2dly., I tried in vain to invent a tale which should serve me as such a frame-work; and had at last to give it up, for lack of ingenuity.

THE MOONSTONE AND ITS PLAGIARISTS

Bookseller Adrian Harrington Rare Books of Tunbridge Wells, Kent recently listed *The Hawkmoor Mystery* by W. H. Lane Chauford with the following description:

London: Ward Lock and Co. 1932, FIRST EDITION. Crown octavo, pp. 256. Publisher's cloth in dust-wrapper [correctly priced at 3/6] with striking period artwork of skulls and a giant moth. Some trivial wear, a few minor nicks and tears but essentially a clean, bright and attractive book. A curious, dastardly tale, summarised in the publisher's blurb as follows; "A diamond of incalculable value is stolen from an Indian Temple by Captain Berrington. Then, some twenty years afterwards, in an English country house, there are strange and bewildering happenings" (possibly the sound of Mr. Wilkie Collins instructing his copyright lawyers from beyond the grave).

Priced at a not so modest £195 the book is currently still available on Harrington's website.

The Hawkmoor Mystery is far from the only tale of a stolen diamond with a curse. Modern examples are the highly acclaimed *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr and Essie Fox's *The Goddess and the Thief*; but perhaps the first *Moonstone* look-a-like was *Under Lock and Key* by the prolific nineteenth century author T. W. Speight. The book was published by Wilkie's then publisher, William Tinsley, in 1869, the year after *The Moonstone*. Immediately following the title-page appears the following disclaimer:

In justice to himself the author thinks it requisite to state that the entire plan of this story was sketched out, and several of the chapters written, before the first lines of Mr. Wilkie Collins's "Moonstone" had been given to the Public. He has further declined himself the pleasure of reading "The Moonstone" till after the completion of his own story, so as to preclude any possible charge of having derived the outline of his plot from the work of another writer. London, February, 1869.

Although the main very readable plot is different from *The Moonstone*, *Under Lock and Key* features the Great Mogul Diamond and a character who is a regular consumer of opium. In Speight's much later 1906 novel *The Grey Monk*, he also borrows from *The Moonstone* the family name Verinder.

ADAPTATIONS OF *THE MOONSTONE* AND *THE WOMAN IN WHITE*

Filming has recently started in Yorkshire for the new adaptation of *The Moonstone* due to be shown in the autumn over five consecutive afternoons on BBC I as part of the #LoveToRead season.

John Thomson (*Cold Feet*, *The Fast Show*) and Sarah Hadland (*Miranda*, *The Job Lot*) will play Sergeant Cuff and Miss Clack. They will be joined by rising stars of theatre Joshua Silver (*Photograph 51*, *Wolf Hall/Bring up the Bodies*) and Terenia Edwards (*Hero's Welcome*, *Five Finger Exercise*) in television debuts in the central roles of Franklin Blake and Rachel Verinder - one of literature's most enduring couples.

The five-part series will also feature Sophie Ward as Lady Yerinder, Stewart Clarke as Godfrey Ablewhite, Leo Wringer as Betteredge, and David Calder as Mr Bruff. It is adapted for TV by Rachel Flowerday (*Father Brown*, *EastEnders*) and Sasha Hails (*Versailles*, *Casualty*) and made by King Bert Productions. The series will be directed by Lisa Mulcahy (*Red Rock*, *The Clinic*) and produced by Joanna Hanley

(Billionaire Boy). The full details can now be seen online at www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2016/the-moonstone-casting.

The BBC has also commissioned a new four-part adaptation of *The Woman in White*. Written by Fiona Seres this Origin Pictures production “will take viewers on a thrilling ride down the paths and corridors of English country houses and, ultimately, into the depths of the Victorian madhouse” says the BBC. Executive Producer David Thompson promises it will be “as thrilling for contemporary readers as it was for Victorians” because “Fiona’s unique take really brings out the intense psychological drama that has captivated so many over the years.”

No doubt we shall see but it is a bit sad that of the 23 novels which Wilkie wrote the BBC has only ever commissioned TV versions of *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*.

A NEW PORTRAIT OF WILKIE

There is a lovely new drawing of Wilkie by Katherine Messenger to illustrate a long review of Peter Ackroyd’s new Brief Lives version of his 2012 biography. The review in the *Weekly Standard* by academic Sara Lodge is not entirely complimentary. Although “Ackroyd is at his best when Dickens steps into the frame given the depth and breadth of his knowledge, however, this digest of Collins’s life is both more superficial, and more plodding, than one would hope.” The full piece is available to read online at www.weeklystandard.com/sensational-novelist/article/2002165

JEZEBEL’S DAUGHTER AT OXFORD ACADEMIC

Oxford Academic (Oxford University Press) as part of its Soundcloud series features an interview with Jason Hall, editor of the Oxford World’s Classics edition, discussing the history and plot of *Jezebel’s Daughter* (1879). The discussion is wide ranging covering the history and plot as well as Collins’s life.

With its intricate plot and memorable characters, *Jezebel’s Daughter* is reminiscent of Collins’s blockbusters *The Woman in White* and *Armada*, this suspenseful case study in villainy is set against the financial world of 1820s Frankfurt and tells the story of two widows, one of them devoted to realizing her husband’s social reforms, the other equally devoted to the pursuit of her daughter’s happiness.

The full I interview lasts nearly fifteen minutes and can be listened to at:

<https://soundcloud.com/search?q=jezebels%20daughter>

THE RED VIAL

Jezebel's Daughter was based on the plot of Collins's much earlier play, *The Red Vial*, which was staged at London's Olympic Theatre in 1858. The text of the play has never been published so that Caroline Radcliffe of the University of Birmingham and Andrew Gasson are currently working on an edition. It will follow the style of their previous collaboration on *The Lighthouse* in 2013 and will be published by Francis Boutle.

ALLIANCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES (ALS)

The WCS continues to be affiliated to the Alliance of Literary Societies. Valerie Pedlar, our representative at their AGM weekend in Haworth on 21-22 May sends the following report:

Since this year is the 200th anniversary of Charlotte Brontë's birth, the Brontë Society volunteered to host the AGM of the ALS this year at Haworth. This meant that members had an opportunity to visit the Parsonage before it was open to the public on the Saturday, and to be shown some of the Society's treasures. All the same, there were still quite a lot of us milling round this very attractive house. But it was a pleasure to be able to pore over some of the objects in the glass cases without other people breathing down your neck! I think the objects that fascinated me most were Charlotte's 'mourning' shoes, which she had darned with Emily's hair.

Arriving on the Friday afternoon, I had time to look around Haworth itself, which was free of the hundreds of tourists that arrived on the Saturday and Sunday. Nineteenth-century Haworth, and its writers, was the topic of the Saturday afternoon speaker, Ian Dewhurst. His amusing and informative account of the various and numerous amateur writers in Haworth made me think that not only was it not surprising that the Brontë sisters had written, but it would have been surprising if they hadn't.

The Saturday morning speaker was Juliet Barker, well-known of course for her biography of the Brontës. Her talk, a revisionist approach to Mrs Gaskell's

biography of Charlotte, was very interesting - and aroused quite a lot of comment from members of the Gaskell Society.

A formal dinner in the evening was a good opportunity to chat to members of other literary societies. And this year activities were arranged for the Sunday. But the steam railway proved an irresistible attraction for some, and I decided to imagine myself as one of the Bronte women and to walk on my own to the so-called Bronte waterfall and Top Withens (the supposed inspiration for *Wuthering Heights*).

This is the second ALS weekend that I have attended and I found both to be friendly occasions. But any member of the Wilkie Collins Society is also a member of ALS and therefore entitled to attend the AGM weekend. Next year it will be hosted by the Siegfried Sassoon Fellowship and will be held at Napier University, Edinburgh, from 2-4 June.

PRICES AT AUCTION

A painting of a girl by Wilkie's brother Charles Allston Collins fetched a record price in June. *The Thoughts of a Christian Child* is a small (13.5" x 10") oil on panel in a later arched frame, signed by Collins and dated 1852 with a verse written by him pasted to the back. Gorrings auction house in Lewes, Sussex estimated it would fetch £3000 to £5000. But on 22 June after fierce bidding from more than a dozen telephone and internet bidders the hammer finally fell at an amazing £305,000 - a total cost to the new owner of £381,860. An image can be seen at goo.gl/h0X6Ta.

Not everyone was surprised. Art Dealer Rupert Maas told Paul Lewis "Not a crazy price, if you consider it was the most Pre-Raphaelite of pictures for sale this year anywhere." Maas's long essay on Charles was published in *The British Art Journal*, Spring 2015, Vol. XV no. 3, pp 38-50. A copy will be circulated to members on the email list when this Newsletter goes out.

At the same sale, a more modest 2" x 3.75" watercolour and chalk sketch of Vesuvius by William Collins fetched £100 including premium. It was taken in 1837, probably on 5 May 1837, when Wilkie and his father climbed the mountain, or possibly on 17 May when the family rode out towards it.

On the subject of crazy prices, internet searches occasionally tum them up. A copy of *Man and Wife* in the fairly common *Harper's Library Edition* of 1873 is on line for \$17,495. It claims to have Collins's inscription in it but is in fact the facsimile printed dedication 'To The American People' found in all these volumes which can usually be bought for less than \$50.

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE: LIVERPOOL'S WILD(E) POET

Richard Le Gallienne (1866-1947) sounds like a Bohemian Victorian figure of whom Wilkie would have approved. Inspired by Oscar Wilde's personal style and ideas about art, the 17 year-old Dick Gallienne renamed himself Richard Le Gallienne, wore long hair and artistic clothes, and dedicated himself to becoming an equally flamboyant figure and unconventional writer, devoted to Beauty in all its forms.

An exhibition at the Liverpool Central Library (William Brown Street, Liverpool L3 8EW) from 5 August to 31 October 2016 commemorates the 150th anniversary of the birth in Liverpool of Richard Le Gallienne – poet, critic, and novelist – with an exhibition in its Hornby Library. It is curated by Margaret D. Stetz; Mae and Robert Carter Professor of Women's Studies and Professor of Humanities at the University of Delaware; and Mark Samuels Lasner, Senior Research Fellow, University of Delaware Library.

On display are over 50 rare or unique items, many highlighting his lifelong connections to Oscar Wilde (1854-1900). Original photographs, drawings, manuscripts, unpublished letters, Victorian periodicals, and first editions tell the story of Le Gallienne's successful literary career, which took him from Liverpool to London, the US, and France. Drawn from public and private collections and local institutions (including family papers in the Liverpool Record Office of Liverpool Central Library), these materials show his importance to the Aesthetic and Decadent movements, his involvement with the *Yellow Book*, his intimate ties to late Victorian feminists known as "New Women," and his links to artists such as Max Beerbohm and Walter Sickert.

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