



## *THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY*

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### **NEWSLETTER**

**SUMMER 2018**

#### **SUMMER PUNCH**

In 1854 Mark Lemon, editor of the humorous magazine *Punch* from 1841-1870, wrote to Wilkie Collins from the *Punch* office

Let me thank you for your excellent story. I shall have it in type some time next week when we will have a chop together at the Garrick & arrange abt the illustrations to it if you are so minded. (Morgan Library, record ID 122171).

So, somewhere in volumes XXVI or XXVII for 1854 or, possibly, XXVIII for early 1855 (The letter is dated only '1854') there is a Wilkie Collins story, perhaps illustrated, waiting to be found.

One of these volumes does contain a very brief reference to Wilkie. Drawing an analogy between his new book *Hide and Seek* and the game being played out in the conflict between the Russians and the French and English in the Baltic (XXVII, p.14).

We already know of four other volumes of *Punch* that contain items related to Wilkie:

1. 6 April 1861 Vol. XL, p. 140  
A half page cartoon by an unknown artist

### AWFUL APPARITION!

Mrs. T. (to T., who has been reading the popular novel). “Pray, Mr. Tomkins, are you Never coming Up-stairs? How much longer are you going to sit up with that ‘Woman in White?’”

### 2. 7 March 1868 Vol. LIV, p.105, A NEW NOVEL COMPANY

The first novel by the Sensational Novel Company (Limited).

This one page announcement is then followed for the next 16 issues from 14 March 1868 Vol. LIV pp. 112-113 to 27 June 1868 p. 276 by CHIKKIN HAZARD, a parody by F. C .Burnand of sensation fiction in general including Wilkie’s – for example *The Woman with No Name* and *No Thoroughfare without a Heart*.

### 3. 14 January 1882, Vol. LXXXII, p. 22

A cartoon by Linley Sambourne titled Punch’s Fancy Portraits. — No.66 Wilkie Collins, as ‘The Man in White doing Ink-and-Penance for having written *The Black Robe*’.

Then there is reference to Wilkie’s brother, Charles Collins:

### 4. 1851, Vol. XX, p. 219, PUNCH AMONG THE PAINTERS

A page mocking four works of art and specifically on Charles Collins:

‘Nothing can be more wonderful than the truth of Collins’s representation of “Alisma Plantago,” except the unattractiveness of the demure lady, whose botanical pursuits he has recorded under the name of...CONVENT THOUGHTS’. It also parodies Millais’s *Mariana in the Moated Grange*. Both sections are illustrated by a cartoon parody of the paintings.

You can read almost all the volumes (but not 1882) online at <https://sites.google.com/site/punchvolumes>.

### **THE HARLEY STREET BASEMENT**

Being in the presence of the buildings where Wilkie wrote his books is always exciting. But the house in Harley Street where he finished *The Woman in White* and wrote *No Name* was demolished probably in the 1970s and is now an ophthalmology medical centre – 22 Harley Street W1G 9AP.

When Wilkie lived there from March 1860 to the end of 1864 this house was numbered 12 Harley Street. The house next door, No.13, was on the corner of Queen Anne Street. Later Harley Street was renumbered and No.12 became No. 26. So don't be fooled by the current No.12, that was No.5 in the 1860s.

There is a photograph of the house at [https://collage.cityoflondon.gov.uk; search '26 Harley Street'](https://collage.cityoflondon.gov.uk/search/26%20Harley%20Street). There is also a splendid picture there, taken in 1959, of the staircase Wilkie would have walked up each day.

When Wilkie lived there the house was owned by Edward Foxhall, an architect in his sixties, and let to George Gregson, a dentist. Wilkie rented the upper floors from him for £27-10s a quarter. Even after he left he consulted Gregson about his teeth. In 1868 when he had finished the final instalment of *The Moonstone* he wrote

My labours are over at last, and I take this first opportunity at my disposal of consulting you about my teeth. ([0843] to George Gregson, 8 July 1868).

Although the house has gone you can still stand in the area that was its basement. Beneath the modern development of the medical centre and flats is the Harley Street Q Car Park (entrance on Chandos Street, turn left from Wigmore Street up Chandos Street to find the entrance on the left). A one hour stay will cost you £7.50. Look through the grill into the basement from the pavement outside what was 26; you will be able to see which vehicle is parked there or near it and find the spaces that are where the basement was. It may well have been where Wilkie kept his dry champagne!

Wilkie's final years were spent just around the corner at 82 Wimpole Street. This house was also rebuilt and further details can be found at [www.wilkie-collins.info/home\\_wimpole.htm](http://www.wilkie-collins.info/home_wimpole.htm). A description of the sale of Wilkie's effects held at this address was published in the Pall Mall Gazette for 25 October 1889. This was reprinted in the WCS Newsletter for Winter 2010 with illustrations published in 'A Visit to Wilkie Collins' (WCS August 2017).

## **AUGUST CHOICE**

To celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the final instalment of *The Moonstone* being published in *All The Year Round* on 8 August 1868, *The Guardian* has picked

Wilkie's novel for their August reading club. The selector Sam Jordison writes on 24 July 2018

William Tinsley, who published *The Moonstone* in book form, reported crowds of "anxious readers" waiting around his office, as well as "several" bets being taken on the book's eventual outcome. ...

...Sergeant Cuff, the man who unravels *The Moonstone's* mystery, set the template for many of the literary detectives that followed. Harder to dispute is Eliot's other claim – that *The Moonstone* was the "longest and best" detective novel. Not least because the great Dorothy L. Sayers (who knew something about the genre herself) agreed, and labelled it: "probably the very finest detective story ever written." (*The Guardian* 24 July 2018).

Wilkie used to boast that no-one had ever guessed the solution before reaching the end of the book. Read more - [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com) and search 'moonstone'.

There is also a recommendation by Alexandra Shulman in *The Spectator* to read *No Name*. She found herself in Aldeburgh where Wilkie set the novel. She explains why she recommends it in 'Why British weather is like a bad boyfriend' at [spectator.co.uk](http://spectator.co.uk) search 'bad boyfriend'.

### **MOONSTONE CARTOON**

There was a brief mention of Wilkie Collins by Matthew Sweet on Suzy Klein's *Essential Classics* programme on Radio 3 on 13 June. Sadly the programme is no longer on i-Player. He referred to a cartoon strip parody of *The Moonstone* in a magazine called *Judy* (full title *Judy; or the London Serio-Comic Journal*) – and yes it was a rival to *Punch*! Published in Vol. XVIII, 15 December 1875, p. 88, it was by the little known Victorian cartoonist Marie Duval. You can see it on the website that commemorates her work at [www.marieduval.org/drawings/judy-v18-p88](http://www.marieduval.org/drawings/judy-v18-p88).

Members who have had time to read the Introduction to the *Red Vial*, recently published by the WCS, will have seen 'Dialogues with Dramatists' on p. 20, another cartoon from *Judy*, published two weeks earlier than *The Moonstone* parody, on 1 December 1875.

### **LEWIS CARROLL**

Lewis Carroll read and enjoyed Wilkie Collins and also read three books by his brother, Charles Allston Collins.

Charlie Lovett's *Lewis Carroll Among His Books* (Jefferson: 2005) is a catalogue of 2365 books which Charles Dodgson was known to own or read. The information comes from detailed analyses of sales, auction records, catalogues, Lovett's own collection, and Dodgson's diaries, such as this entry for 14 February 1871:

I write at 2 a.m. having been sitting up reading *Man and Wife* by Wilkie Collins – a most interesting tale as far as I have gone. (p. 85, #444)

Lovett also identified that Dodgson read *The Fallen Leaves* in 1880 (p. 84, #443) and owned a copy of *Blind Love* (p. 85, #445). He also possessed *A Message from the Sea*, the 1860 Christmas number of *All The Year Round*. But Lovett is less clear than he should be about who wrote it “Many believe Dickens collaborated with Wilkie Collins and others on this work. (p. 103, #585).” In fact it was known even in the nineteenth century that Collins wrote chapter IV ‘The Seafaring Man’ and parts of Chapters II and V. Harriet Parr, Amelia B. Edwards, and Henry Chorley wrote other parts.

What Dodgson knew about the authorship is unclear and it is listed by Lovett as one of 21 of Dickens's works.

Dodgson also owned three books by Wilkie's brother Charles. He read *The Bar Sinister* (1864) during an illness in 1895 and owned a copy of both *A Cruise upon Wheels* (1862) and *The Eye-Witness* (1860). See p. 84, #440-442.

I am grateful to Saad al-Maliky for this reference to Lovett in his PhD thesis *Charles Allston Collins (1828-1873): A Literary and Artistic Life* (Buckingham: 2018); he kindly sent a copy.

## **MISS GWILT**

Wilkie's dramatised version of *Armadale*, called *Miss Gwilt*, opened in London at the Globe Theatre on 15 April 1876 after its inaugural run from 9 December at Liverpool's Alhambra. Erected in 1868 in Newcastle Street near the Strand, the Globe was described as ‘shoddily built’ and backed onto the equally poor Opéra Comique: they were dubbed the rickety twins. The Globe was demolished for road widening in 1902 – the same scheme that took away the office of *Household Words* at 16 Wellington Street.

You can see an image of the interior of the Globe theatre at [www.victorianweb.org/victorian/art/architecture/london/151.html](http://www.victorianweb.org/victorian/art/architecture/london/151.html). The engraving shows the inside and allows us to picture the play being performed there and rehearsals with Wilkie directing it. He wrote to the publisher George Bentley the day before it opened

My eye still persists in recovering – in spite of the unfavourable weather. This week I have been obliged to devote all the energies which my illness has spared to the rehearsals of my new play – which is tried in London for the first time tomorrow night. ([1606] to George Bentley, 14 April 1876).

*Miss Gwilt* ran at The Globe until 4 July 1876 produced by and starring Ada Cavendish. An account of how Wilkie rehearsed the play is told in a letter from Arthur Pinero who played Darch in the production.

He used to sit, his manuscript before him, at a small table near the footlights, and there he made such additions and alterations as Miss Ada Cavendish deemed necessary. He did this with the utmost readiness and amiability, influenced perhaps by her habit of calling him ‘Wilkie’, a familiar mode of address which, I recollect, surprised and shocked me not a little. (Walter de la Mare, ‘The Early Novels of Wilkie Collins’, in *The Eighteen-Sixties* ed. John Drinkwater, Cambridge: CUP, 1932, pp. 68–69 n. 1.)

## **WILKIE IN THE CARLYLE LETTERS**

The online Carlyle letters made available by Duke University have produced two little titbits of information about Wilkie. On 2 April 1861 he went to dine at John Forster’s house with Dickens, and Jane Carlyle who writes to Isabella Barnes [3 April 1861]

I was engaged to dine at Mr Forsters, with Dickens and Wilkie Collins. (<http://carlyleletters.dukeupress.edu/content/vol37/#lt-18610403-JWC-IEB-01>)

This event was presumably Forster’s 50<sup>th</sup> birthday dinner on 2 April 1861.

Wilkie was also at Forster’s 55<sup>th</sup> birthday party on 2 April 1866. Jane Carlyle was not at the party this time but took round a telegram about to show all the company about her husband Thomas Carlyle’s success in his inaugural address as Lord Rector of Edinburgh University. She writes to Thomas:

And it was pleasant to see with what hearty good will all there, Dickens, Wilkie Collins, as well as Fuzz, received the news. Search online at <http://carlyleletters.dukeupress.edu//content/vol43/#lt-18660403-JWC-TC-01>

Neither event appears in Wilkie's letters nor was his presence noted in Forster's *Life of Dickens*.

### **'A STOLEN LETTER'**

The ever alert Pierre Tissot van Patot has found what is almost certainly the earliest translation of 'A Stolen Letter'. This was discovered in the Paris *Revue Britannique* of January 1855, pp. 239-247 with the title 'A Bon Chat Bon Rat' and attributed to Charles Dickens. Collins's story had only recently been published with the title 'The Fourth Poor Traveller' in 'The Seven Poor Travellers', the Extra Christmas Number of *Household Words* for December 1854. It was subsequently included in *After Dark* (1856) as 'The Lawyer's Story of a Stolen Letter.'

### **THE DEAD ALIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Members who have read either *The Red Vial* or *Jezebel's Daughter* will recognise a news item from South Africa at the beginning of July. A woman believed to have been killed in a car accident gave workers in the local mortuary a fright after they realised she was actually alive. Paramedics had pronounced the woman dead at the scene "showing no form of life." It wasn't until workers checked on the bodies in the mortuary fridges that it became clear she was actually breathing. The woman was then taken to hospital where she made a recovery.

Apparently this situation is not that uncommon in South Africa (and elsewhere in the world) so perhaps they should take a leaf out of Wilkie's book and attach a bell to 'dead' victims's right hand. Those with a suitable degree of morbid curiosity can find other examples online including one man who woke up in the middle of his own funeral. Search for 'South African mortuary'.

### **FRANKLIN BLAKE AND A MURDER MYSTERY IN PARIS**

Published in June 2016, *Coup de Pierre: A Murder Mystery in 1850s Paris* is another novel using characters from Wilkie Collins. This time it borrows Franklin and Rachel (Verinder) Blake from *The Moonstone*. The story begins in Paris during September 1852. Quoting from the publisher's blurb:

Four years after the revolution that brought down the last king of France, Paris is coming to terms with the regime installed by Louis-Napoleon, nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte. Lucien de Boizillac, a young captain in the Paris police, is deployed to track down the last few dissidents still resisting the rebirth of imperial rule. Now that the recent disorder has been suppressed, English visitors are returning to the city. Among them are Franklin Blake and his young wife, Rachel (née Verinder), married three years before, following the disentangling of the mysterious theft of a priceless diamond (described in "The Moonstone" by Wilkie Collins). But Blake is snared by a loose end left from his youthful excesses in the French capital, before his marriage. Lured into a meeting with a former lover, he is discovered in a back-street tavern, slumped over her lifeless body. Blake is thrown into prison, to stand trial for murder. Boizillac is drawn into unravelling the murder, despite the hostility of Alfred Graize, the police inspector who leads the investigation. As he digs deeper, he exposes a network manipulated by the new regime which seems set on achieving Blake's condemnation. Can Boizillac overcome these hostile forces to get at the truth? Or will Franklin Blake be found guilty of a crime which, contrary to all the evidence, he denies committing?

There is one positive review on Amazon from which the book can be bought. (ISBN-13: 978-1786971111, paperback); or direct from the publisher, FeedaRead, from where an extract can be downloaded.

## **WILLIAM COLLINS**

Paintings by William Collins continue to appear in galleries and at auction. Probably the finest repository of available paintings can be found at Sigmund and Jocelyn Fine Art. Their most recent acquisition is the oil on canvas 'The Virgin and Child' at the not so modest price of £20,000. All of their Collins pictures are fully detailed with several full colour illustrations to be found at [www.sandjfineart.co.uk/gallery/william-collins](http://www.sandjfineart.co.uk/gallery/william-collins).

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