



THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

## MILKING THE MOONSTONE

What Wilkie Collins earned from his great detective novel

by  
Paul Lewis

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."—SHAKESPEARE.

### ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL.  
CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.  
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

N<sup>o</sup>. 454.] SATURDAY, JANUARY 4, 1868. [PRICE 2d.

#### THE MOONSTONE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE WOMAN IN WHITE," &c. &c.

Prologue.

THE STORMING OF SERINGAPATAM (1799):  
(Extracted from a Family Paper).

I.

I ADDRESS these lines—written in India—to my relatives in England.

My object is to explain the motive which has induced me to refuse the right hand of friendship to my cousin, John Herncastle. The reserve which I have hitherto maintained in this matter has been misinterpreted by members of my family whose good opinion I cannot consent to forfeit. I request them to suspend their decision until they have read my narrative. And I declare, on my word of honour, that what I am now about to write is, strictly and literally, the truth.

The private difference between my cousin and me took its rise in a great public event in which we were both concerned—the storming of Seringapatam, under General Baird, on the 4th of May, 1799.

In order that the circumstances may be clearly understood, I must revert for a moment to the period before the assault, and to the stories current in our camp of the treasure in jewels and gold stored up in the Palace of Seringapatam.

II.

One of the wildest of these stories related to a Yellow Diamond—a famous gem in the native annals of India.

The earliest known traditions describe the stone as having been set in the forehead of the four-handed Indian god who typifies the Moon. Partly from its peculiar colour, partly from a superstition which represented it as feeling the influence of the deity whom it adorned, and growing and lessening in lustre with the waxing and waning of the moon, it first gained the name by which it continues to be known in India to this day—the name of THE MOONSTONE. A similar superstition was once prevalent, as I have heard, in ancient Greece and Rome; not applying, however (as in India), to a diamond devoted to the service of a god, but to a semi-transparent stone of the inferior order of gems, supposed to be affected by the lunar influences—the

moon, in this latter case also, giving the name by which the stone is still known to collectors in our own time.

The adventures of the Yellow Diamond begin with the eleventh century of the Christian era.

At that date, the Mohammedan conqueror, Mahmud of Ghizni, crossed India; seized on the holy city of Somnauth; and stripped of its treasures the famous temple, which had stood for centuries—the shrine of Hindoo pilgrimage, and the wonder of the Eastern world.

Of all the deities worshipped in the temple, the moon-god alone escaped the rapacity of the conquering Mohammedans. Preserved by three Brahmins, the inviolate deity, bearing the Yellow Diamond in its forehead, was removed by night, and was transported to the second of the sacred cities of India—the city of Benares.

Here, in a new shrine—in a hall inlaid with precious stones, under a roof supported by pillars of gold—the moon-god was set up and worshipped. Here, on the night when the shrine was completed, Vishnu the Preserver appeared to the three Brahmins in a dream.

The deity breathed the breath of his divinity on the Diamond in the forehead of the god. And the Brahmins knelt and hid their faces in their robes. The deity commanded that the Moonstone should be watched, from that time forth, by three priests in turn, night and day, to the end of the generations of men. And the Brahmins heard, and bowed before his will.

The deity predicted certain disaster to the presumptuous mortal who laid hands on the sacred gem, and to all of his house and name who received it after him. And the Brahmins caused the prophecy to be written over the gates of the shrine in letters of gold.

One age followed another—and still, generation after generation, the successors of the three Brahmins watched their priceless Moonstone, night and day. One age followed another, until the first years of the eighteenth Christian century saw the reign of Aurungzebe, Emperor of the Moguls. At his command, havoc and rapine were let loose once more among the temples of the worship of Brahma. The shrine of the four-handed god was polluted by the slaughter of sacred animals; the images of the deities were broken in pieces; and the Moonstone was seized by an officer of rank in the army of Aurungzebe.

Powerless to recover their lost treasure by

VOL. XIX. 454

The first appearance of *The Moonstone*.  
*All the Year Round*, 4 January 1868, p. 73

Wilkie Collins Society  
August 2022

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# THE MOONSTONE.

By WILKIE COLLINS.  
Author of "The Woman in White," "No Name," etc.

Printed from the Author's Manuscript.  
RICHLI ILLUSTRATED.

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Powerless to recover their lost treasure by open force, the three guardian priests followed and watched it in disguise. The generations succeeded each other; the warrior who had committed the sacrilege perished miserably; the Moonstone passed (carrying its curse with it) from one lawless Mohammedan hand to another; and still, through all chances and changes, the successors of the three guardian priests kept their watch, waiting the day when the will of Vishnu the Preserver should restore to them their sacred gem. Time rolled on from the first to the last years of the eighteenth Christian century. The Diamond fell into the possession of Tipppo, Sultan of Seringapatam, who caused it to be placed as an ornament in the handle of a dagger, and who commanded it to be kept among the choicest treasures of his armory. Even then—in the palace of the Sultan himself—the three guardian priests still watched in secret. There were three officers of Tipppo's household, strangers to the rest, who had won their master's confidence by conforming, or appearing to conform, to the Mussulman faith; and to those three men report pointed as the three priests in disguise.

### III.

So, as told in our camp, ran the fanciful story of the Moonstone. It had no serious impression on any of us except my cousin—whose love of the marvelous induced him to believe it. On the night before the assault on Seringapatam he was absurdly angry with me, and with others, for treating the whole thing as a fable. A foolish wrangle followed; and Hernecastle's unucky temper got the better of him. He declared, in his boastful way, that we should see the Diamond on his finger if the English army took Seringapatam. The sally was saluted by a roar of laughter, and there, as we all thought that night, the thing ended.

Let me now take you on to the day of the assault.

My cousin and I were separated at the outset. I never saw him when we forded the river; when we planted the English flag in the first breach; when we crossed the ditch beyond; and, fighting



"THE BOY BECAME QUITE STIFF, AND STOOD LIKE A STATUE, LOOKING INTO THE HOLLOW OF HIS HAND."

every inch of our way, entered the town. It was only at dusk, when the place was ours, and after General Baird himself had found the dead body of Tipppo under a heap of the slain, that Hernecastle and I met.

We were each attached to a party sent out by the general's orders to prevent the plunder and confusion which followed our conquest. The camp-followers committed deplorable excesses; and, worse still, the soldiers found their way, by an unguarded door, into the treasury of the Palace, and loaded themselves with gold and jewels. It was in the court outside the treasury that my cousin and I met to enforce the laws of discipline on our own soldiers. Hernecastle's fiery temper had been, as I could plainly see, exasperated to a kind of frenzy by the terrible slaughter through

which we had passed. He was very unfit, in my opinion, to perform the duty that had been intrusted to him.

There was riot and confusion enough in the treasury, but no violence that I saw. The men (if I may use such an expression) disgraced themselves good-humoredly. All sorts of rough jests and catch-words were bantered about among them; and the story of the Diamond turned up again unexpectedly, in the form of a mischievous joke. "Who's got the Moonstone?" was the rallying cry which perpetually caused the plundering as soon as it was stopped in one place to break out in another. While I was still vainly trying to establish order I heard a frightful yelling on the other side of the court-yard, and at once ran toward the cries, in dread of finding some new outbreak of the pillage in that direction.

I got to an open door, and saw the bodies of two Indians (by their dress, as I guessed, officers of the palace) lying across the entrance, dead.

A cry inside hurried me into a room, which appeared to serve as an armory. A third Indian, mortally wounded, was sinking at the feet of a man whose back was toward me. The man turned at the instant when I came in, and I saw John Hernecastle, with a torch in one hand and a dagger dripping with blood in the other. A stone, set like a pommel, in the end of the dagger's handle, flashed in the torch-light, as he turned on me, like a gleam of fire. The dying Indian sank to his knees, pointed to the dagger in Hernecastle's hand, and said, in his native language: "The Moonstone will have its vengeance yet on you and yours!" He spoke those words, and fell dead on the floor.

Before I could stir up the matter the men who had followed me across the court-yard crowded in. My cousin rushed to meet them, like a madman. "Clear the room!" he shouted to me, "and set a guard on the door!" The men fell back as he threw himself on them with his torch and his dagger. I put two sentinels of my own company, on whom I could rely, to keep the door. Through the remainder of the night I saw no more of my cousin.

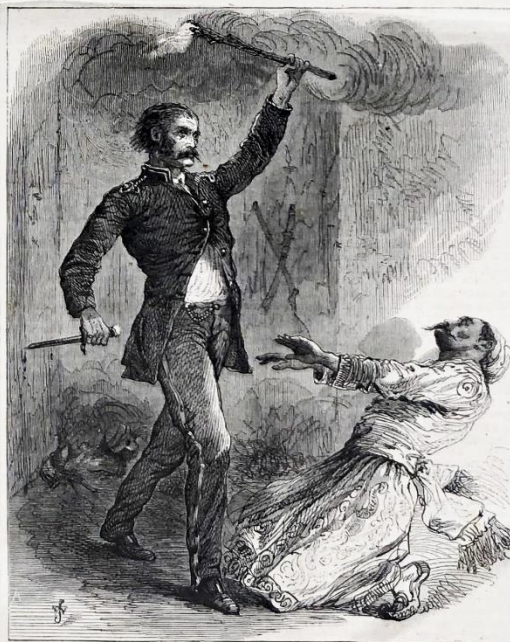
Early in the morning, the plunder still going on, General Baird announced publicly by beat of drum that any thief detected in the fact, be he whom he might, should be hung. The provost-marshal was in attendance to prove that the general was in earnest; and in the throng that followed the proclamation Hernecastle and I met again.

He held out his hand as usual, and said, "Good-morning."  
I waited before I gave him my hand in return.

"Tell me first," I said, "how the Indian in the armory met his death, and what those last words meant when he pointed to the dagger in your hand."

"The Indian met his death, as I suppose, by a mortal wound," said Hernecastle. "What his last words meant I know no more than you do. I looked at him narrowly. His frenzy of the previous day had all calmed down. I determined to give him another chance."

"Is that all you have to tell me?" I asked.  
He answered, "That is all."  
I turned my back on him; and we have not spoken since.



"THE MOONSTONE WILL HAVE ITS VENGEANCE YET ON YOU AND YOURS!"

The first appearance of *The Moonstone* in America  
Harper's Weekly, 4 January 1868, p. 5

## MILKING THE MOOSTONE

**Wilkie Collins was renowned for his ability to sell and resell his work. This new analysis, based on his accounts, agreements, and letters, estimates his earnings from his famous detective novel *The Moonstone*.**

### Introduction

From 1857 to 1862 Wilkie Collins worked for Charles Dickens on his two periodicals *Household Words* and then *All the Year Round* as an employee. His first blockbuster novel *The Woman in White* was serialised in *All the Year Round* from 26 November 1859 to 25 August 1860. It trebled the profits of the periodical<sup>1</sup> and was followed by *No Name* from 15 March 1862 to 17 January 1863 which had a similar effect. The success of *The Woman in White* was so great that the publisher Smith, Elder, in Wilkie's own words, "bought me away" from the periodical for the next novel to follow *No Name*. George Smith purchased the rights to publish it as a serial and a book on terms which, as Collins told his mother, Dickens agreed

...amply justify me in leaving. Smith & Elder offer me (in writing) for a work of fiction a little longer than *The Woman In White* – which work of fiction is to follow the story I am now going away to write for "All the Year Round" – the sum of —

Five Thousand Pounds !!!!! Ha! ha! ha! =

Five thousand pounds, for nine months or, at most, a year's work – nobody but Dickens has made as much.<sup>2</sup>

That next novel after *No Name* became *Armadale*. Dickens praised it highly and demanded to read the proofs as they came off the press but added

If, in the remote dark coming ages when you shall have done this book, you would care to come back to the old quarters...always remember that Wills with Carte blanche, and I with open arms, await you.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Figures from Robert L Patten, *Charles Dickens and his Publishers*, (Oxford: 1978) p. 464.

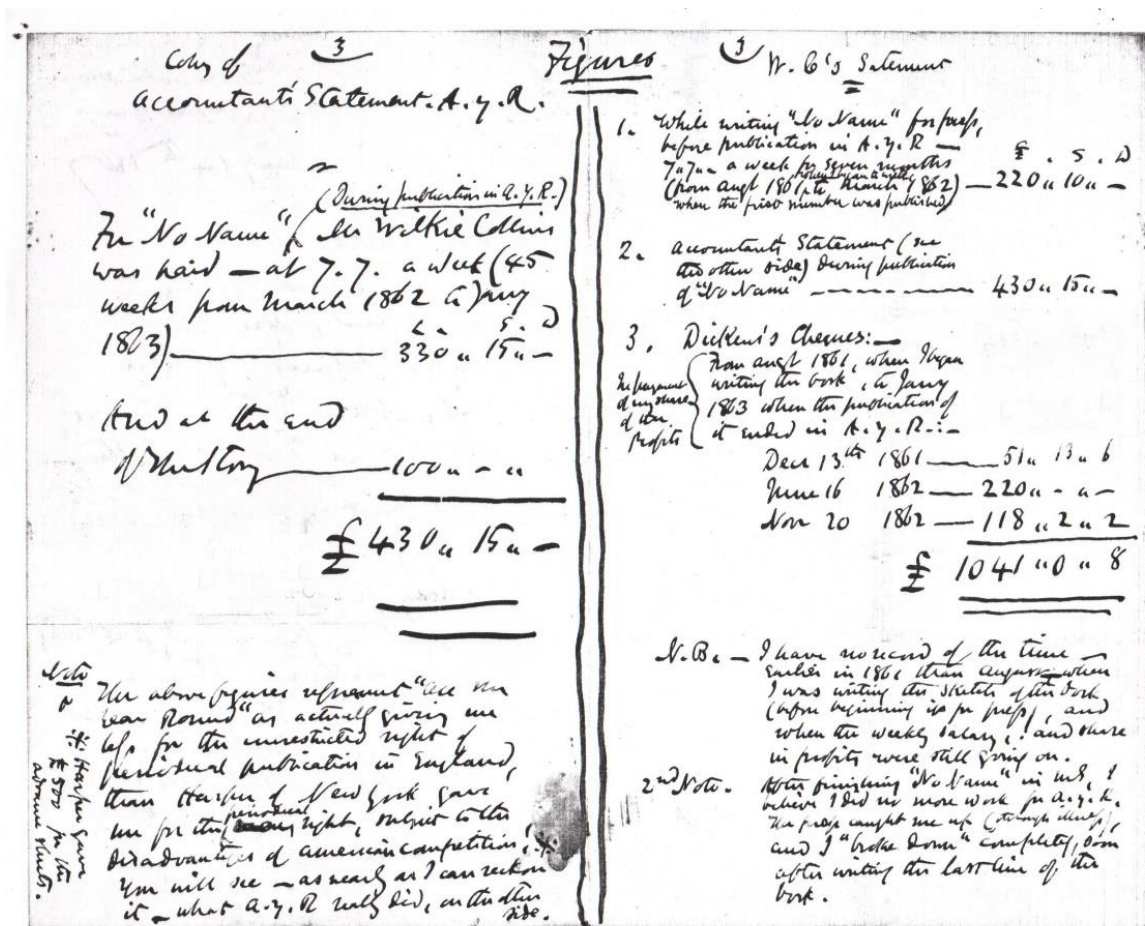
<sup>2</sup> [0429] to Harriet Collins, 31 July 1861 (Baker, Gasson, Law, and Lewis, *The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins*, Charlottesville: Intalex, 2018). Each begins with a permanent identifying number assigned by the editors.

<sup>3</sup> CD to WC 10 January 1866, Pilgrim XI, p. 135 (*The Letters of Charles Dickens*, Pilgrim Edition. General editors: Madeleine House, Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson. 12 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965-2002).

**London serial**

And that is what happened. Wilkie's next great novel, *The Moonstone*, was published in *All the Year Round*.<sup>4</sup> W. H. Wills was Dickens's sub-editor and partner and the man of business in the relationship. So it was to him that Collins suggested basing the fee for *The Moonstone* on what he had been paid for *No Name*. Wills consulted an accountant. At the time Wilkie wrote *No Name* he was on the staff at *All the Year Round* on £7-7s a week and the accountant worked out that Collins was paid £430-15s for *No Name* made up of £7-7s a week for the 45 weeks the serial was published plus a £100 bonus paid at the end. It seems likely Wills offered him in the region of £450 to £500.<sup>5</sup> But Collins demanded more. In a detailed memorandum he set out his version of what he had been paid for *No Name* and said he hoped the figures

will suggest to you a proposal for the right of periodically publishing my forthcoming Story.<sup>6</sup>



[0750] Wilkie Collins to W H Wills, 14 May 1867 (University of Illinois, Urbana).

<sup>4</sup> See illustration on front cover,

<sup>5</sup> In a PS to [0749] to W. H. Wills, 13 May 1867, Collins points out that Wills's offer based on the accountant's figures which came to £431-15s has omitted several items.

<sup>6</sup> [0750] to W. H. Wills, 14 May 1867.

It was a complex calculation. First, Wilkie added on his pay for 30 weeks of writing and preparation time before the serial began. Second, from July 1860 he was also paid separately by Dickens a one-eighth share of the profits of *All the Year Round*.<sup>7</sup> This was in recognition of the large rise in circulation that *The Woman in White* had achieved, tripling the profits of which three quarters went to Dickens and a quarter to W H Wills. Collins's one eighth share came direct from Dickens, reducing his three quarters to five eighths. Adding up the weekly pay while he was preparing and writing the story to the accountant's figure came to £651-5s. But when the profit share for the relevant period was added on the total came to £1041-0-8d.

We have no record of how the negotiations went, but we do know Collins was paid £850 for the serial rights in *All the Year Round*. One plausible calculation suggests that is the full amount of his pay and bonus for *No Name* plus half the profit share – a total of £846-2s-10d, rounded up to £850.

No payment of £850 appears in Wilkie's accounts.<sup>8</sup> But one of £1000 from W H Wills does appear on 16 August 1867. That was a dual payment of £850 for *The Moonstone* and £150 as the first half payment of £300 for writing the Christmas number *No Thoroughfare* with Dickens. Half of that was paid when the writing began together with the whole payment for *The Moonstone*.

### **American serial**

No sooner had Collins accepted the deal with Wills, he wrote from the All the Year Round Office to Harper & Brothers in New York.<sup>9</sup> Unlike most American publishers who simply stole the work of English authors, Harper paid well. The deal was that Harper was sent proofs or manuscript in time for simultaneous publication of the serial in New York and London thus keeping ahead of the pirates who had to wait for the London publication to cross the Atlantic. Harper agreed swiftly in a letter dated 2 July to pay Wilkie £750 for *The Moonstone*. It was published, with illustrations, in *Harper's Weekly* in New York as it was in London in 32 parts from 4 January to 8 August 1868.<sup>10</sup> Along with the manuscript Wilkie sent suggestions to the artist about which scenes might usefully be illustrated, for example writing "Complete Weekly Part 16 to print from sent with this, and subjects for artists."<sup>11</sup>

Wilkie wrote to his mother

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<sup>7</sup> Paul Lewis, *What Wilkie Earned from All the Year Round*, Wilkie Collins Society, August 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Wilkie Collins opened a bank account at Coutts on 23 August 1860 with the first payment he received from Sampson Low for the book publication of *The Woman in White*. The annual summaries of his account are in the archives of Coutts Bank and I am grateful to Wilkie's heir, Faith Clarke, for permitting access and to the bank and its archivist Tracey Earl for making them available. All references to Wilkie's accounts are to this source.

<sup>9</sup> [0754] to Harper & Brothers, 18 June 1867.

<sup>10</sup> See inside front cover for the opening part.

<sup>11</sup> [0828] to Harper & Brothers, 29 February, 3 March 1868.

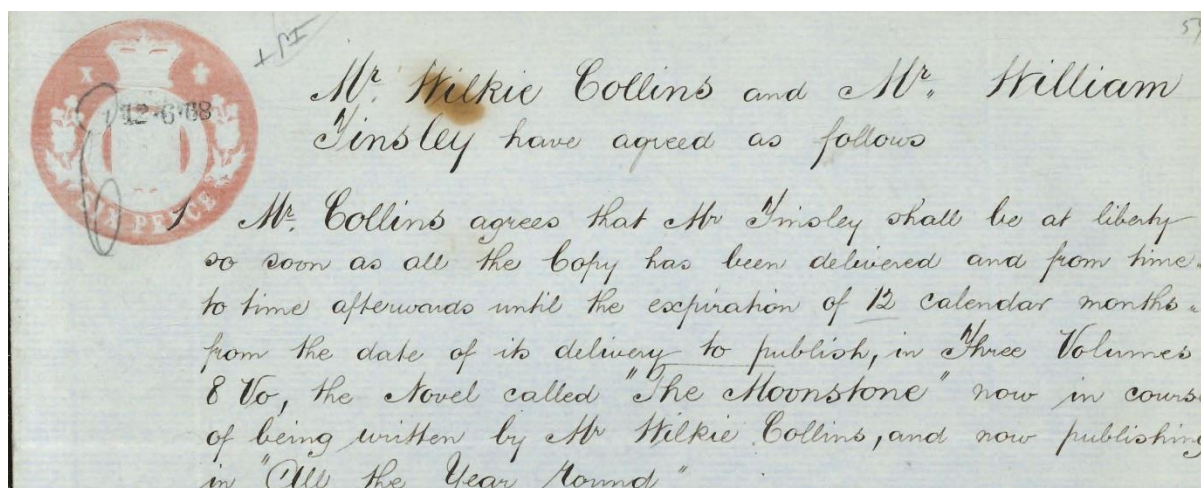
A bargain with America for the advance-proofs (£750!) – making with “All the Year Round” £1600 for the periodical use of the story only.<sup>12</sup>

The total confirms the £850 fee for *All the Year Round* and the £750 from Harper. The agreement specified that Harper would pay the fee in two halves – the first on receipt of half the manuscript and the second on receipt of the final half.<sup>13</sup> In the event Harper paid him £500 in a letter dated 19 February which was credited to Wilkie’s account two months after receipt on 6 May 1868.<sup>14</sup> The balance of £250 was paid into his account on 4 September.

### The three-volume novel

Then came the book rights. Collins was restless about publishers and was always looking for the best deal. He felt he could not ask Smith, Elder who had published *Armada* and he may have rejected an offer from Chapman and Hall.<sup>15</sup> He decided to go with William Tinsley who had a great success publishing Mary Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* in 1862. It was not a happy relationship. The agreement was drawn up by Wilkie’s solicitor Edward Benham and signed on 10 June 1868.<sup>16</sup> It was a modest document of 425 words in five paragraphs over one and a half sides of paper, though Edward Downey, a writer who later worked for Tinsley, claimed Tinsley told him it was

a regular corker; it would pretty well cover the gable of an ordinary-sized house.<sup>17</sup>



Agreement between William Tinsley and Wilkie Collins to publish “The Moonstone”, 10 June 1868 (Huntington HM10783).

<sup>12</sup> [0757] to Harriet Collins, 18 July 1867.

<sup>13</sup> [0758] to Harper & Brothers, 20 July 1867.

<sup>14</sup> See [0828] to Harper & Brothers, 29 February, 3 March 1868 for Wilkie’s reaction to this early payment.

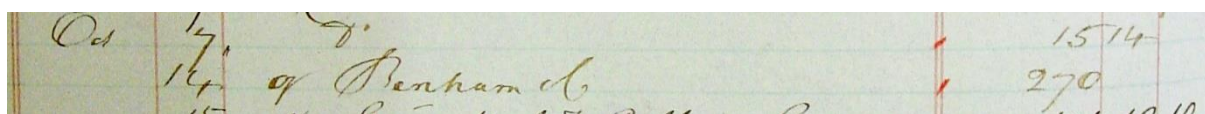
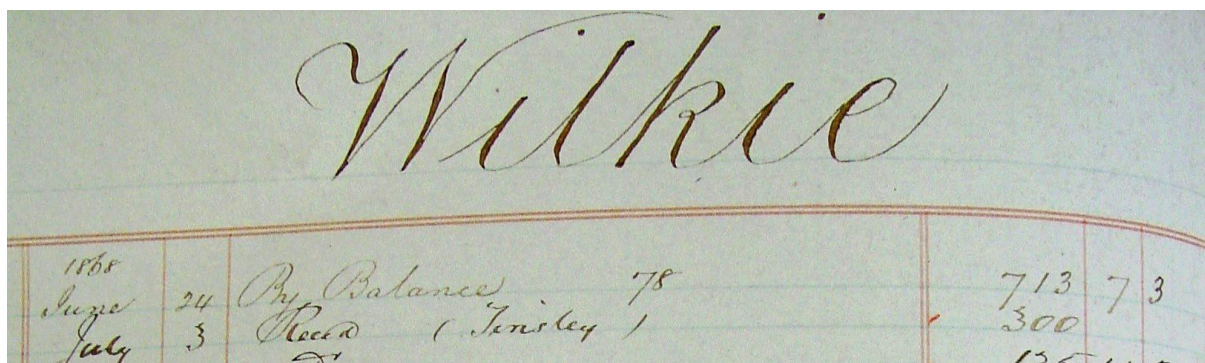
<sup>15</sup> Catherine Peters, *The King of Inventors*, London 1991 p. 307.

<sup>16</sup> It is held at The Huntington, San Marino, California (HM10783). Staff there kindly supplied images of it.

<sup>17</sup> Edmund Downey, *Twenty Years Ago*, London 1905, pp. 24-25. He worked for Tinsley from 1879 to 1884.

It gave Tinsley a twelve month right to publish the book in three volumes in exchange for a payment of £600 for the first edition of 1500 copies with extra payments for further copies – £250 up to 500, another £250 for the next 500 and £300 for the next 500 copies. This clause has led to a mistaken view that Wilkie was promised £1400 by Tinsley for *The Moonstone*.<sup>18</sup> That is not correct.

The first payments were made as agreed – £300 on the delivery of the final parts of the manuscript, credited to Wilkie’s account on 3 July.<sup>19</sup> Wilkie duly paid Benham his 10% fee of £30 on 6 July. The second payment was due three months later and was credited to Wilkie’s account by Benham on 14 October as £270 which was net of his 10% fee.



Wilkie Collins, Coutts account 1868-69, Income, July and October 1868.  
Shows 'Recvd (Tinsley) £300' and 'of Benham & Co. £270'

Tinsley had insisted on just 1500 copies for the first edition even though *No Name* had sold 4000 of its first edition.<sup>20</sup> His caution was due to his belief that the market for the expensive three volume novels at 10s 6d per volume was weakening. In the event all 1500 sold quickly. Tinsley recalled

I did very well out of my agreement for the first edition of "The Moonstone." I sold the fifteen hundred copies all out;<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See for example 'Tinsley could only afford to give the writer £300 of the £1400 promised in the contract in cash'. (John Sutherland, *Victorian Novelists and Publishers*, London 1976, pp. 46-47). In fact, staged payments were normal and there was no commitment in the contract for any payment beyond the £600 for the 1500 copies of the first edition.

<sup>19</sup> Under the contract, Tinsley had had one week from the delivery of the ms to publish it. The book was first mentioned in the Publishers' Circular of 1 July 1868 'Messrs Tinsley Brothers have just ready *The Moonstone*, by Wilkie Collins' (p.357), but it was not in the fortnightly list of new works until the issue of 15 July 'New Works published from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> of July' (p. 388).

<sup>20</sup> Wilkie wrote 'The "No Name" figures were 1st Edition. Four thousand copies, all sold. 2nd Edition. Five hundred copies. This proved to be over-printing. The 500 copies hung on hand, and diminished, instead of adding to, the profits.' See [0845] to William Tinsley, 11 July 1868.

<sup>21</sup> William Tinsley, *Random Recollections*, London: 1900, vol. I p. 115.

Of course, the question then arose of a second edition. Tinsley wanted to print it in small numbers and pay Collins as they sold. Wilkie demurred but Tinsley pointed out that although the contract said he had to pay £250 for any number of extra copies up to 500 he did not in fact have to print any more at all beyond the 1500 if he chose not to. Wilkie was outraged, writing to his solicitor

Tinsley's proposal is (I quite agree with you) not to be thought of for a moment. Is it possible that the agreement allows him to propose his own terms of payment to us? I suppose the truth is, that he may or may not – at his own sole discretion – publish a new edition. In this case, he has us at his mercy.<sup>22</sup>

Eventually Wilkie agreed to a payment of £200 for a second edition of 500 copies with Tinsley paying Wilkie as they were sold. Tinsley was clearly pleased with himself for besting Wilkie in this negotiation. He wrote later

I heard afterwards, on the best authority, that Charles Dickens had a hearty laugh about this disagreement with Collins over "The Moonstone." In fact, Mr. W. H. Wills told me that Mr. Collins was rather a hard bargain-driver over his serial rights.<sup>23</sup>

The first £50, net of Benham's commission, was paid to Wilkie on 11 November 1868, and the second edition was advertised in the Publishers' Circular on 10 December.<sup>24</sup> Other payments are harder to trace and Tinsley was a reluctant payer with Wilkie chasing the payments on several occasions.<sup>25</sup> Although some other payments are only tentatively identified, a later letter from Collins confirms that all were made at some point

He gave £600 for the 1500 of *The Moonstone* – and then 500 copies more for £200 more.<sup>26</sup>

### Foreign editions

As soon as the book was published Wilkie sold the rights to publication in English in Europe for £60 to Tauchnitz of Leipzig, who specialised in reprinting English authors untranslated for sale to English-speaking travellers. The money was credited on 17 July and the edition was published in two volumes on 6 August.<sup>27</sup> Wilkie was also getting offers for translations. He sold the rights for a German translation to Emil Lehmann,

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<sup>22</sup> [0852] to Edward Benham, 9 September 1868.

<sup>23</sup> William Tinsley, *Random Recollections* (London: 1900), vol. I pp. 115-116.

<sup>24</sup> *The Publishers' Circular*, XXXI, 10 December 1868, p. 780.

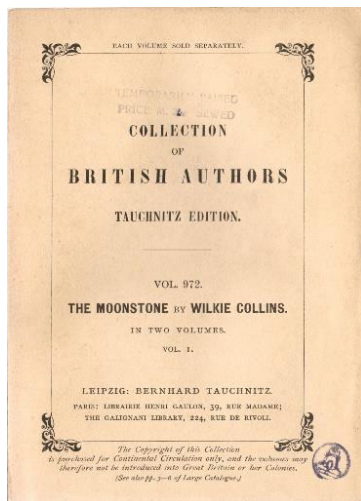
<sup>25</sup> See for example [0871] 21 February 1869, [0885] 6 May 1869, and [0890] 10 June 1869 all to Benham.

<sup>26</sup> [0970] to William Tindell, 8 May 1870.

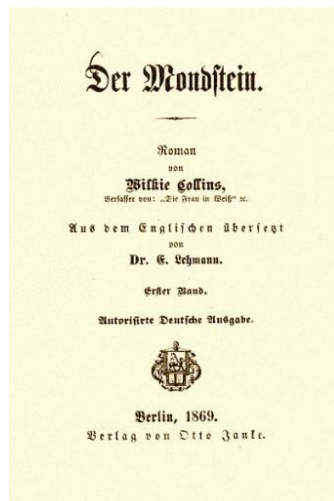
<sup>27</sup> *The Moonstone – A Romance*, 6 August 1868, 2 vols. 972 and 973, William Todd and Ann Bowden, *Tauchnitz International Editions in English*, (New York: 1988), p. 184.



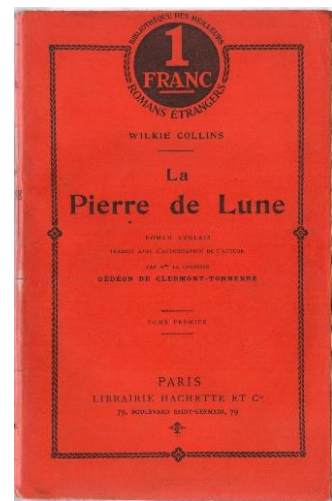
the brother of his friend Fred Lehmann, for £35.<sup>28</sup> The Paris publisher Hachette offered him £40 if the book had been registered in Paris – which meant Hachette could have an exclusive right to it – or £20 if not.<sup>29</sup> It had not been registered and the £20 was credited to Wilkie’s account on 14 May 1869. Hachette did not actually publish it until 1872.<sup>30</sup> Other translations appeared but no payments for them can be identified in Wilkie’s accounts and he may not have been paid for any of them.<sup>31</sup>



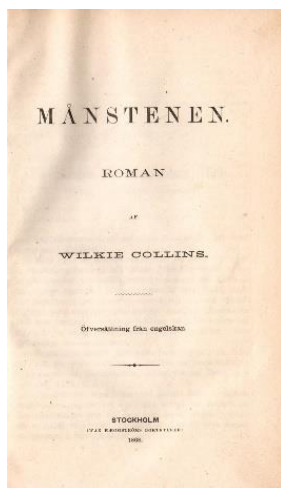
Tauchnitz, Leipzig 1868



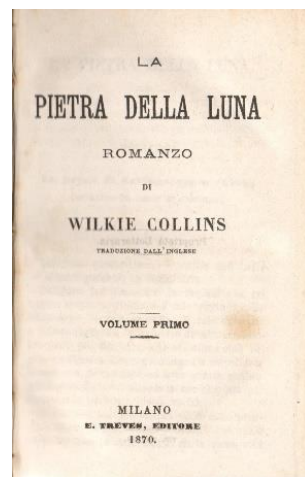
Janke, Berlin 1869



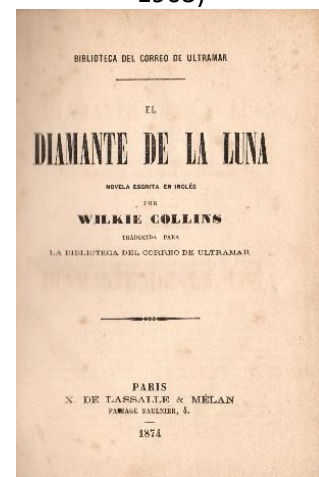
Hachette, Paris 1872 (cover 1903)



Hægströms, Stockholm 1868



Treves, Milano 1870



de Lassalle, Paris 1874

<sup>28</sup> [0779] to Emil Lehmann, 26 October 1867. *Der Mondstein*, trans. Dr E Lehmann, Otto Janke, Berlin, 1869.

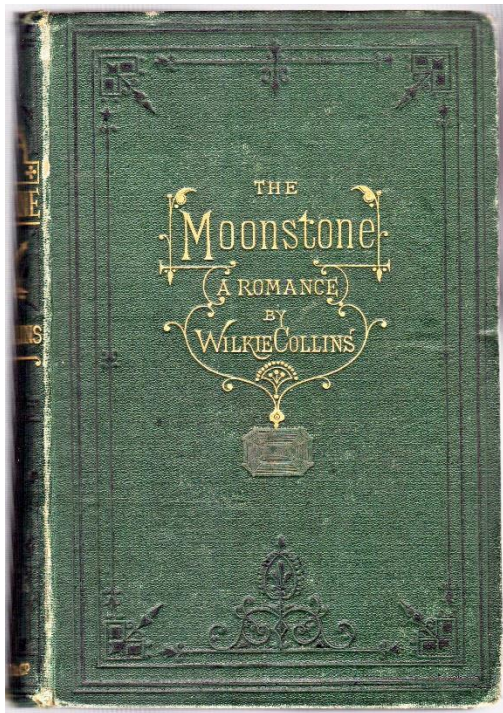
<sup>29</sup> [0885] to Edward Benham, 6 May 1869.

<sup>30</sup> *La Pierre de Lune*, trans. Gédéon de Clermont-Tonnerre, two vols, Hachette, Paris 1872.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew Gasson *Wilkie Collins Bibliography* (forthcoming) identifies contemporary Danish, Dutch, Italian, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish editions. Around this time there are several anonymous payments into Wilkie’s account but there is no indication they relate to these.

## One-volume editions

Wilkie's mind now turned to the one-volume English edition.



Tinsley's behaviour had ruled him out as the publisher, though he did put in an offer which Wilkie declined. Instead, the business went to Smith, Elder who brought out an attractive edition in May 1871.

George Smith had bought the rights to several of Wilkie's works but the edition of *The Moonstone* was different from the others in a dark green cloth. Wilkie sold Smith the rights to the one-volume *The Moonstone* together with those for the one-volume edition of his next novel *Man and Wife* and wrote to Smith to thank him for a payment of

£173..6..8. In consideration of this payment, you have my authority to print and publish cheap editions of "The Moonstone" and "Man and Wife" – such editions extending to 2500 copies of each book, sold at 5/- per copy.<sup>32</sup>

A little later, on 10 June, he received a second payment for the books for £66-16s-8d. The two together amount to £240 and it is probable that he sold the rights for the one-volume editions to Smith for that sum, half of which can be allocated to *The Moonstone*. Nearly two years later Smith was still publishing one-volume editions of several of Wilkie's books. On 4 April 1873 Wilkie wrote to thank him

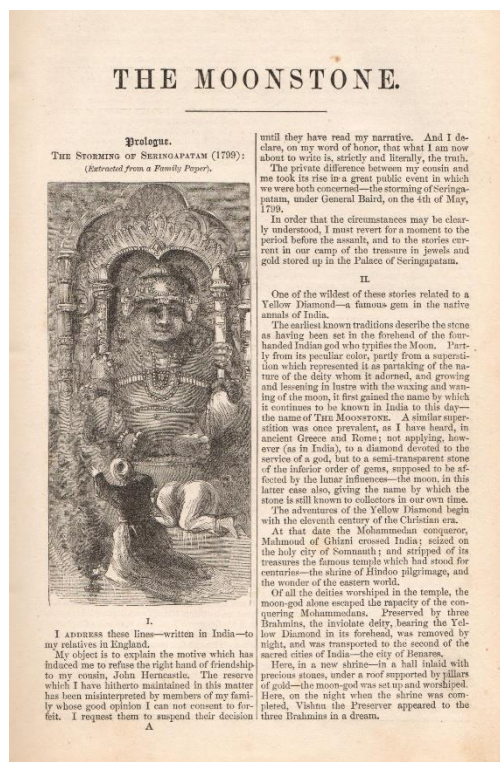
for a cheque for £70..16..8 – being my royalty on newly-reprinted copies of Basil, The Queen of Hearts, Man and Wife, and The Moonstone.<sup>33</sup>

The total was credited to Wilkie's account that day. Although *The Moonstone* and *Man and Wife* were still being published in the five shilling editions not the cheaper two shilling ones, the payment is divided by four to give the share for *The Moonstone* as £17-14s-2d.

<sup>32</sup> [1080] to George Smith, 30 March 1871.

<sup>33</sup> [1314] to George Smith, 4 April 1873

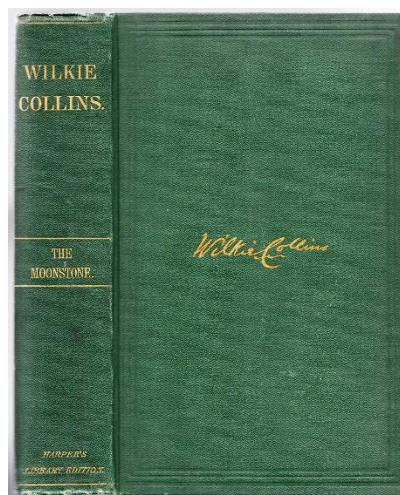
## American book rights



Harper & Brothers, *The Moonstone*, (New York: 1868) p. 1.

In 1873, to coincide with Wilkie's visit to America, Harper began to reissue 17 of his books in a uniformly bound dark green 'Illustrated Library Edition'. *The Moonstone* was published as the eighth in that series in March 1874, just as Wilkie returned to England.<sup>37</sup> It is possible Wilkie was paid for this uniform edition either initially or as royalties but no firm evidence of that has been found.

Wilkie told his mother that he had sold only the serial rights to Harper for £750.<sup>34</sup> Yet Harper published the story in an illustrated, one-volume edition on 11 August 1868, a month after the London three-volume edition appeared.<sup>35</sup> The three histories of Harper & Brothers all say the firm paid £750 for *The Moonstone* with no suggestion there were separate serial and book rights.<sup>36</sup> From 1858-1863 Harper paid Wilkie a 5% royalty on his books and there is some evidence in his accounts that royalty payments continued, but nothing to suggest these were for *The Moonstone*. No agreement for *The Moonstone* is found in the Harper archive at Columbia.



<sup>34</sup> In [0757] to Harriet Collins, 18 July 1867 he says he has made £1600 from Dickens and Harper "for the periodical use of the story only".

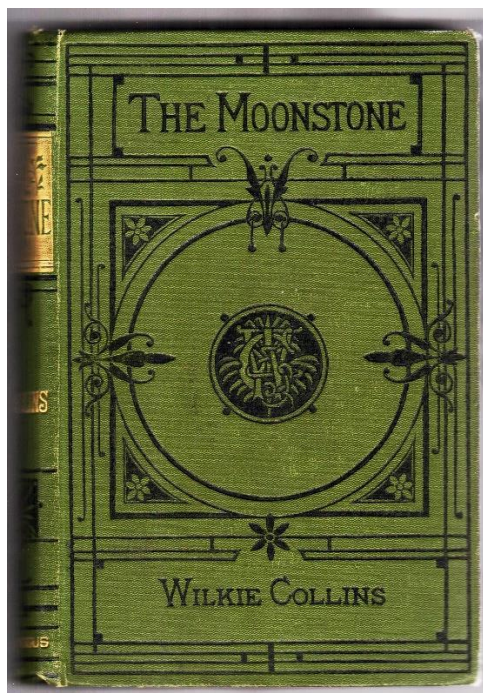
<sup>35</sup> It was advertised in *The New York Times* under New Publications 'Harper & Brothers, New-York, Publish this Day: The Moonstone. A Novel. By Wilkie Collins.' Followed by two glowing reviews from London newspapers (11 August 1868, p. 5g). It was first advertised in *Harper's Weekly* on 22 August – two weeks after the serial ended – top of the list headed 'The New Novels' (p. 543e).

<sup>36</sup> See J Henry Harper *The House of Harper*, 1912, p.114 and Eugene Exman *The Brothers Harper*, 1965, p.339.

<sup>37</sup> The first advert for it in this edition appeared in *Harper's Weekly*, 7 March 1874. Wilkie sailed from Boston for London on that day at 11am. See Susan Hanes, *Wilkie Collins's American Tour, 1873-4*, London 2008, pp. 93-94 and pp. 89 and 109.

## Collected edition

Although Smith, Elder was publishing a number of Wilkie's main titles there was still no collected edition of his works. In 1874 the publisher Andrew Chatto came to him with a proposal to do just that – or as many of them as could be transferred. A contract dated 19 November 1874 gave his firm Chatto & Windus the right to publish thirteen titles, including *The Moonstone*, within 12 months and then for seven years from 31 March 1876 for a payment of £2000.<sup>38</sup>



The money was paid in six instalments from 30 June 1875 to 30 September 1876. The share of *The Moonstone* was thus one thirteenth of that – £153-16s-11d. These books became the famous Piccadilly edition of Wilkie's work. Chatto also became Wilkie's publisher for his new work in the three-volume format and after their publication Chatto paid Wilkie for them to be issued as single volumes in the Piccadilly format. Seven years later when the agreement for the first thirteen novels expired Chatto renewed it but for half the price, £1000, paid in three instalments from 31 July to 24 December 1883.<sup>39</sup> *The Moonstone* share was £76-18s-5½d. And still its work was not done.

Towards the end of his life Wilkie negotiated a final agreement with Chatto selling him the copyright of all the 24 titles published so far in the Piccadilly format.<sup>40</sup> Chatto paid a bargain price of £1800. The share of *The Moonstone* was thus £75. Of the six £300 payments only four were made before Wilkie's death on 23 September 1889. The balance was paid to his executors on 12 October 1889.

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<sup>38</sup> Baker, Gasson, Law, and Lewis, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, London 2005, vol. IV, pp. 397-398.

<sup>39</sup> [2128] to Andrew Chatto, 27 March 1883 and contract dated 27 March 1883, Chatto Archive, University of Reading.

<sup>40</sup> Baker, Gasson, Law, and Lewis, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, London 2005, vol. IV, p. 399.

## The total

The total payment for *The Moonstone* in print comes to £2,958.48 from its first appearance in *All the Year Round* in January 1868 to the final payment twenty-one years later for the Piccadilly edition in 1889.

This total does not include possible royalty payments from Harper & Brothers for the one-volume New York edition nor for the collected edition of Wilkie's works the firm published from 1873. Nor does it include possible payments for foreign translations other than those specifically identified. It is also possible that other payments which relate to the book are hidden within anonymous or unidentified payments in his bank account.

## The play

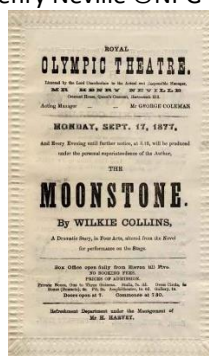
The tally of the money which Wilkie earned from *The Moonstone* is not complete without one final element.

In 1877, after that first Chatto agreement, Wilkie dramatised the story. It was licensed by the Lord Chamberlain on 11 September 1877 and performed 55 times at the Olympic Theatre from Monday 17 September to Saturday 17 November 1877. The manager of the theatre was Henry Neville. He had taken the lead role of Richard Wardour in *The Frozen Deep* at the Olympic in 1866 and Richard Vendale in a revival of *No Thoroughfare* in 1876. He took the lead role of Franklin Blake. Rachel Verinder was played by Bella Pateman. Miss Clack was Laura Seymour, the companion of Wilkie's good friend Charles Reade and an actress Wilkie had long admired.<sup>41</sup>



Henry Neville ©NPG

Bella Pateman



Programmes for first night 17 September 1877 and Saturday matinée performance 27 October 1877

Despite its nine-week run it was not seen as a great success. Critics thought it dull and Neville left the cast shortly before the end of the run as did Laura Seymour.<sup>42</sup> But it

<sup>41</sup> Eleven letters to her and 25 to Charles Reade are known. One of those ends 'With love to Mrs Seymour' ([1646] to Charles Reade, 18 October 1876). This was her last part before her death in 1879.

<sup>42</sup> See [1685] to Laura Seymour, 4 July 1877 (footnotes) and Dutton Cook, *Nights at the Play* (London: 1883), pp. 341-343.

was popular enough for an extra Saturday matinée performance on 27 October.<sup>43</sup> Neville made seven payments to Wilkie for the production from 27 September to 12 December 1877 totalling £242-7s. That works out at £4.41 per performance, rather more than the £4.05 Wilkie earned at the same theatre in 1871/72 for each of the 120 performances of *The Woman in White*, which was considered a great success.<sup>44</sup>

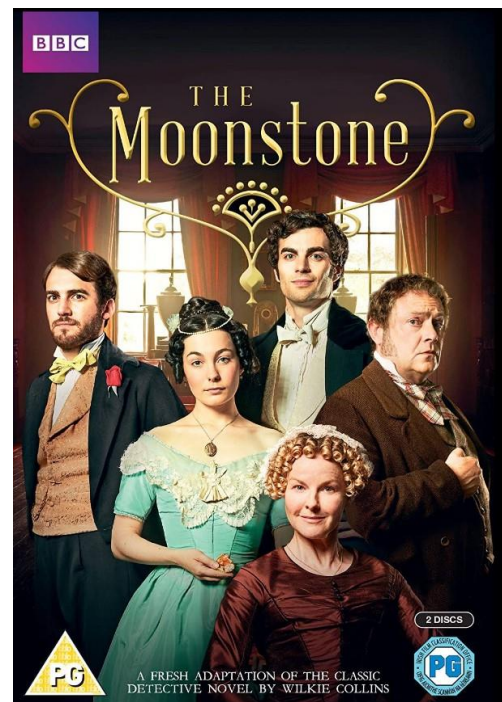
### The final tally

Adding the receipts from the play brings the total earned from *The Moonstone* up to £3200. In today's terms around £320,000. The details are in the Appendix.

Of course, many other people made money from the story. It was published in the USA in numerous pirated editions and translated widely without payment. Since Wilkie's death in 1889 it has never been out of print. It has been dramatized for television, including foreign language versions, and turned into a film several times since 1909.<sup>45</sup>



1934 Monogram Pictures



2016 BBC 5 part series

In the end Wilkie's own return for what T S Eliot called the "the first and greatest of English detective novels"<sup>46</sup> was modest and certainly a very small fraction of the profits the story has generated around the world for more than one hundred and fifty years.

<sup>43</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 13 October 1877, p. 346b.

<sup>44</sup> Paul Lewis, *The Woman in White at the Olympic Theatre*, Wilkie Collins Society August 2009.

<sup>45</sup> A search for 'The Moonstone' as a title on imdb.com produces 14 results and a search on 'Wilkie Collins' finds some foreign language versions.

<sup>46</sup> 'Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens'. *Times Literary Supplement*, 4 August 1927, p. 525c, reprinted in *Selected Essays: 1917-1932* (London: 1932), pp. 422-432.

APPENDIX  
MONEY EARNED BY WILKIE COLLINS FROM *THE MOONSTONE*

<b>Edition</b>	<b>Amount*</b>	<b>First payment</b>	<b>Last payment</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<i>All the Year Round</i> serial London	£850.00	16 Aug 1867	–	1	
<i>Harper's Weekly</i> serial NY	£750.00	6 May 1868	4 Sep 1868	2	
Tinsley 3-vol. 1 <sup>st</sup> edition	£600.00	3 Jul 1868	14 Oct 1868	2	
Tinsley 3-vol. 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition	£200.00	11 Nov 1868	???	4	
Emil Lehmann (German trans.)	£35.00	25 Oct 1867	–	1	Letter
Tauchnitz (Continental)	£60.00	17 Jul 1868	–	1	
Hachette (French)	£20.00	14 May 1869	–	1	
Smith, Elder London one vol.	£120.00	30 Mar 1871	12 Jun 1871	2	£240 for 2 titles
Smith, Elder London one vol.	£17.71	4 Apr 1873	–	1	£70.83 for 4 titles
Chatto & Windus Piccadilly	£153.85	30 Jun 1875	30 Sep 1876	6	£2000 for 13 titles
Chatto & Windus Piccadilly	£76.92	31 Jul 1883	24 Dec 1883	3	£1000 for 13 titles
Chatto & Windus Piccadilly	£75.00	3 Apr 1889	12 Oct 1889	6	£1800 for 24 titles
	<u>£2,958.48</u>				
H G Neville (play)	<u>£242.35</u>	27 Sep 1877	12 Dec 1877	7	55 perfs
	<u>£3,200.83</u>				

Notes:

\*Amounts are gross with any commission added back or not deducted. All are converted to decimals.

Other payments may have been made by Harper for book editions, and other small unlabelled payments in the accounts may have related to *The Moonstone*.

Sources: Coutts account for Wilkie Collins analysed by the author; *Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins*, op. cit.

This edition of  
MILKING THE MOONSTONE  
Is limited to 200 copies

