

*Presentation Copy. Opinions of the Press.*

# OLYMPIC THEATRE



## WOMAN IN WHITE

DRAMATISED BY  
WILKIE COLLINS.

The dramatic version of *The Woman in White* ran at the Olympic Theatre for twenty weeks from Monday 9 October 1871 to Saturday 24 February 1872. The original cast consisted of George Vining as Fosco, Wybert Reeve as Walter Hartright, Ada Dyas in the dual roles of Laura Fairlie and Anne Catherick, and Mrs Viner as Marian Halcombe. The theatre programme featured an introduction by Collins which began:

Mr WILKIE COLLINS begs leave briefly to submit to the Public the objects which he has had in view in altering his novel, called "THE WOMAN IN WHITE," for representation on the stage. In the first place, he has endeavoured to produce a work which shall appeal to the audience purely on its own merits as a play. In the second place, he has refrained from making the interest of his drama dependant on mechanical contrivances, and has relied in the play, as he relied in the novel, on the succession of incident, on the exhibition of character, and on the collision of human emotion rising naturally from those two sources.

The play attracted huge interest and large audiences and was widely reviewed in newspapers and periodicals. These reviews were collected in this presentation copy of *Opinions of the Press* which seems to have been issued by the theatre management early in the run of the play.

The reviews are divided into four topics and include unfavourable comments as well as good ones. But Collins could not resist including a letter he wrote to the Editor of *The Daily Telegraph* in response to criticism in that paper of George Vining's portrayal of Count Fosco. It was published in *The Daily Telegraph* on 12 October 1871 as well as being added to later issues of the programme.

An illustration of Vining as Fosco appears on the back cover. The front cover reproduces the poster for the play by Frederick Walker (1840-1875).

February 2010



THE  
**WOMAN IN WHITE,**

(Altered from the Novel for performance on the Stage),

BY

**WILKIE COLLINS.**

Produced at the OLYMPIC THEATRE, Monday, October 9th, 1871.

**SPECIMENS OF CRITICISM**

EXTRACTED FROM

Notices of "THE WOMAN IN WHITE," in the Press.

I.—ON THE PLAY IN GENERAL.

(Verdict—Unanimous.)

*From THE TIMES, October 12th.*

Mr. Wilkie Collins, by his drama, *The Woman in White*, introduces an entirely novel method of putting upon the stage a subject that in a narrative form has already been made familiar to the public. His novel bearing the same title, when published in Mr. Charles Dickens' "All the Year Round" about ten years ago, stood prominent among other works of fiction as "le livre du jour;" it was read by everybody who read new novels at all; and, reprinted in a separate form, it is still widely circulated. Had an ordinary dramatist taken the novel in hand, his first care would have been to make his play resemble it as closely as possible. Assuming a knowledge of the story on the part of the audience, he would not have troubled himself much about the clear development of his plot, but he would have selected a number of exceptionally remarkable scenes and personages, and if these made a strong impression on the public, he would have deemed his work accomplished. Far different is the method of Mr. Wilkie Collins. Instead of going to his novel, with a view of adapting it to the stage, he flings it aside, and taking up the story, which lies at its foundation, constructs this story into a drama. Thus the drama, though it is written long after the novel, and though the same characters, the same

outline, and sometimes the same words appear in both, is anything but an "adaptation," in the ordinary sense. As he states in an explanatory address printed in the programme, Mr. Wilkie Collins has, as a dramatist, expanded into situations, which more than once occupy an entire act, scenes which, when writing as a novelist, he dismissed in a few lines; and, on the other hand, has, in some cases, abridged, or altogether omitted as unsuitable to the play, passages carefully elaborated in the book. He has firmly grasped the rarely appreciated truth, that situations which appear dramatic to a reader, are not necessarily dramatic when brought to the ordeal of the footlights, and he rigidly abstains from all those mechanical contrivances which often render a non-dramatic story effective by purely non-dramatic means.

His play consists of a "prologue" and four acts, the latter being grouped into two "parts," respectively entitled "Formation of the Plot," and "Execution of the Plot," and containing two acts each. Dismissing the "prologue," which shows us Sir Percival Glyde in the act of tearing the leaf from the parish register, which is observed by Anne Catherick, we may say that the first "part" of *The Woman in White* is a model of dramatic skill. All the elements of interest that belong to the corresponding portion of the novel are preserved; all our old friends, with Count Fosco, the most urbane of villains, walk and talk before us in bodily shape, and yet everything looks fresh. Events that, with their causes, occupy many chapters in the narrative are, in the drama, brought about with surprising rapidity, and, at the same time, in a manner perfectly satisfactory and consistent. People who are familiar with the book, and consequently know, in the main, what is coming, will be astonished at the novel fashion in which their predictions are fulfilled. We may especially point to the end of the first "part" (that is to say, of the second act) as a marvel in the way of dramatic concentration. The stirring situation in which Miss Halcombe overhears the conversation between Sir Percival and Count Fosco, is brought to an unexpected climax when, immediately after the retirement of the lady, the Count reveals the sleeping form of Anne Catherick, and thus elucidates his scheme to Sir Percival, who almost fancies that his wife is before him. The curtain fell amid acclamations of amazed delight.

*From THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, October 11th.*

When one of our very first novelists—and a novelist who possesses, in a higher degree than any of his brethren, the brilliant dramatic power in which stage writers are singularly deficient—takes to writing for the stage, the stage is sincerely to be congratulated. True it is that Mr. Wilkie Collins has been seen on the stage before; but it has been for a long time a subject of general regret that a writer of such singular intensity; an author who possesses the power of grasping his readers as in a vice; a novelist whose every novel looks as if it were constructed with a view to dramatic representation, should be seen before the footlights so very seldom. It was very fairly a subject for

regret to hear lavish praise heaped upon the Sardous, the Augiers, and the Dumas of another country; to hear them criticised as if their art were unknown in England; to sit out the unfortunate translations of their really admirable works, when we had in our midst an author who, in power and dramatic mechanism, can surely take his stand very fairly beside them. It will be urged possibly that Mr. Wilkie Collins is known as a novelist, and not as a dramatist; but take "The Woman in White," "The Moonstone," "Armada," and the recent successful novel "Man and Wife," and surely it will be allowed that the stage should claim Mr. Wilkie Collins. At last we have got a stage version of "The Woman in White," which makes us appreciate more than ever the dramatic force of its author. Mr. Wilkie Collins has been allowed to handle his own work. A drama of extraordinary power was this wonderful story; but, knowing every line of the book as we all do, we are actually able to be as excited—if not more—over the play than over the novel. The book has been turned inside out; and probably a more masterly instance of adaptation for the stage from a story has seldom been seen. \* \* \*

Nothing can possibly interfere with the success of the drama, which, if judged by its merits, or looked at as a chance for exhibiting acting in certain characters of which we ought to be proud, should outrun all the modern successful dramas. The mounting of the drama is as good as it can be; and, when we say *The Woman in White* is well worth seeing, and most creditable all round, we feel sure our verdict will be endorsed by the public.

*From THE STANDARD, October 11th.*

In adapting the marvellously interesting story of *The Woman in White* for the stage, Mr. Wilkie Collins premises that his intention has been "to produce a work which shall appeal to the audience purely on its merits as a play," and in order to carry out this laudable intention to the utmost, has not hesitated to make considerable alteration from the original contour of the novel, while preserving the story intact. And so, folks who have read the book—and who has not?—will find additional attraction in watching the remarkably clever and artistic manner in which the story is now presented. There cannot be two opinions as to the result. Mr. Collins has produced a play of intense interest and great ingenuity, which, simply upon its intrinsic merits as a dramatic work, is worthy of the highest and most unqualified praise. It is naturally to be regretted that all that was so charming in the novel cannot find its way on to the stage; and the peculiar quaintness in continuing the story by different personal narratives is, of course, lost in the play; but the plot is evinced in a most distinct manner, which, although it deprives the piece of that delightful mystery which was only cleared up in the concluding chapter of the book, yet invests it with the attributes of clearness and power. The action is divided into a prologue and four acts—rather a lengthy affair, it may be thought, but never for a moment does the action flag or the interest diminish. \* \* \*

The drama may be pronounced a gigantic success, put together with an ingenuity worthy of the author, and placed upon the stage as few plays ever have been before. The piece abounds with strong situations, and appeals to our sympathies, our risible faculties, and our emotions in turn. There can be no doubt of *The Woman in White* occupying a prominent place in public favour for a long succession of representations. Mr. Wilkie Collins received a veritable ovation at the conclusion, and upon calls being made for Miss Dyas and Mrs. C. Viner, they appeared before the curtain, led on by the author, while the enthusiasm of the call for Mr. Vining was hardly less universal than that which greeted Mr. Collins.

*From THE MORNING POST, October 11th.*

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The acted prologue with which the four acts of the drama proper is precluded foreshadows the coming events, and reveals to the spectators certain springs of action in the plot which are concealed from most of the personages upon the stage. Without pausing to discuss the obvious question whether this practice, so common among modern playwrights, of taking the audience into their confidence, to the exclusion of the "characters," may not forestall the interest of the story and dull the edge of curiosity, it must be admitted that in the present instance the prologue is cleverly contrived, and carried out with singular address. The romantic vision of the "Woman in White" wandering, like another Lady of Avenel, through the graves of a country churchyard; the sudden invasion of her solitude by Sir Percival Glyde; the stormy interview in the vestry of Old Welmingham Church between Mrs. Catherick and the baronet; the tampering with the parish registry by the latter, and his horror on finding that the "daft" damsel has been a mute witness of his villanous proceedings, are all represented with true dramatic expression and lifelike effect. Nor are the expectations of coming enjoyment to which these exciting and picturesque incidents give rise doomed to immediate disappointment; on the contrary, the tide of interest grows deeper and more vehement during the first two acts, which abound in romantic situations and scenes of highly wrought passion. \* \* \* \* \* The pathetic interview between Lady Glyde and Marian Halcombe in the madhouse—splendidly acted by the two artists engaged in the representation—brings down the curtain amid a storm of applause.

*From THE DAILY NEWS, October 11th.*

This theatre re-opened for the season on Monday evening, when a new dramatic version of "The Woman in White," from the pen of the author of that popular novel, was performed for the first time. Some years ago a play, based upon the same story, was produced at the Surrey Theatre; but in this Mr. Wilkie Collins had no hand. Indeed, the piece was produced not only without his sanction, but in defiance of his wishes, our copyright laws permitting, as it appeared, this manifest injustice towards writers of narrative fiction. Happily, no law



forbids a novelist dramatising his own book because others have anticipated him; and in this instance, at least, this is fortunate for the playgoing public, for *The Woman in White* at the Olympic, though based on the same theme, is a very different sort of work from that of the playwright in the employment of the Surrey management. By those of the audience who remembered the old version, this, indeed, was perceived almost from the rising of the curtain, and it became still more manifest as the play progressed. Mr. Collins handles his subject with true dramatic instinct—wasting no words; putting no unnecessary strain on the spectator's attention; and keeping an eye steadily to dramatic effect and the logical development of his plot. As an example of the boldness with which he has renounced the novelist's habit for that of the stage, it may be here remarked that he dismisses at once the whole element of mystery which is cultivated so carefully in the novel, and takes the audience into his confidence as to the true name of the Woman in White, and the cause of that ceaseless persecution from the wicked Sir Percival, which, in the story, is a secret studiously kept with a view to pique the curiosity of the reader. In this he is certainly well advised; for there is scarcely any principle better established than the difficulty of basing a drama upon a secret carefully reserved through act after act. \* \* \*

The prologue is short and decisive, and it lays the foundation of the play with no ordinary skill.

*From THE PALL MALL GAZETTE, October 11th.*

Mr. Wilkie Collins's famous novel "The Woman in White" appeared upon the stage of the Surrey Theatre some ten years ago, but the adaptation then presented had not the benefit of the author's supervision or even of his sanction. Mr. Collins has now prepared for the Olympic Theatre an elaborate dramatic version of his story. The work is in four acts, with a prologue or introductory scene, while a falling curtain subdivides the later portions of the play into tableaux after a fashion that has long prevailed on the Parisian stage.

Mr. Collins has on previous occasions manifested his dramatic skill, and done much to disprove an opinion too generally entertained that a novelist is of necessity disqualified as a candidate for theatrical honours. No doubt certain fables are better suited for publication in a book than for representation on the stage; but the novelist and the dramatist both deal in fiction, and the main distinction between their occupations consists in regard for the requirements of the reader on the one hand and of the spectator on the other. The story of a novel may be also told upon the stage, only it is indispensable that it should be told upon a different plan. \* \* \*

Mr. Collins has fully appreciated this view of the case, and has been heedful to present his story from first to last in an intelligible form. For the audience there is at no time any mystery; a series of complications is submitted to them, but a clue to the maze of incidents is always in their hands. Very free manipulation of the original work is thus involved, and indeed the drama of *The Woman*

*in White* has claims to be regarded rather as an independent production than as an adaptation of an ordinary kind.

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There can be little doubt that *The Woman in White* at the Olympic will enjoy a considerable measure of popularity. If somewhat repellent in character, the force and ingenuity of the work are not to be denied. No pains have been spared in the production of the drama, the scenic illusions being most artfully managed, while the general representation is open to little objection.

*From THE SATURDAY REVIEW, October 28th.*

The remarkable success which has attended the production of a dramatic version of *The Woman in White* at the Olympic Theatre, suggests that the prospects of literary, as distinguished from merely spectacular, entertainment at the English theatres, are not so hopeless as sometimes appears.

We have spoken at some length of this play because it furnishes ground for hope of improvement in the dramatic literature of the day. The manager, of course, anticipates a long run for the piece, and he is reasonably entitled to the fulfilment of his hopes.

*From THE ECHO, October 11th.*

Mr. Collins has overcome his chief difficulties in a most satisfactory manner. While keeping the main incidents unaltered, he has, by a skilful disposition of the scenes and an occasional change of arrangement, presented us with a complete drama, which requires no additional knowledge of the novel for its comprehension.

*From THE ERA, October 14th.*

We have no hesitation in saying, that to an audience utterly ignorant of "The Woman in White" as a novel, *The Woman in White* as a play would be found equally exciting, intense, and affecting as to those familiar with the story.

So ended this remarkable play, having excited, during its performance, an enthusiasm which we have never seen surpassed. The outline we have given, though necessarily omitting many minor incidents, is sufficient, we hope, to show of what striking and dramatic materials *The Woman in White* is composed. No drama has been produced for many years so full of intense and absorbing scenes as this. The breathless attention with which the most striking situations are followed; the absolute roar of applause with which, every time the curtain falls, the performers are greeted as they are recalled; and the prodigious effect of the scene where Count Fosco first unfolds to Sir Percival his infamous design, its innocent victim lying meanwhile unconscious before their eyes, must be seen to be believed. A success so unqualified we have rarely had the pleasure to record, a success greatly increased also by the excellence of the acting, and the beauty and ingenious arrangement of the scenic effects.



*From THE SUNDAY TIMES, October 15th.*

It may safely be conceded by the strongest upholders of the French school of drama, that rarely in Paris even has a work so dramatic in construction, so striking in situation, and so interesting in story as the play Mr. Wilkie Collins has produced from his own novel of "The Woman in White" been seen upon the stage.

*From THE ORCHESTRA, October 14th.*

The dramatisation by Mr. Wilkie Collins of his own novel, "The Woman in White," will, we hope, form a precedent. As now played at the Olympic Theatre, where it was produced on Monday night, it has been excellently effected. Mr. Collins has set himself to the task in no mere adapter's spirit; he has brought not only an original mind to the work, but has proceeded with original manipulation.

*From LAND AND WATER, October 14th.*

It is a new thing to get a novel adapted for the stage by its author. Mr. Wilkie Collins, apparently roused to desperation by unauthorised adventures on his preserves, has tried his own hand at a drama founded on "The Woman in White." Amongst all the adaptations we have had of late this appears to us quite the best. It would take good rank as a play had the novel never been written, or at least published, and no higher praise than this need be wished.

*From THE ILLUSTRATED TIMES, October 14th.*

The Olympic has also reopened most successfully. Instead of having another adaptation of Dickens or Scott, "reverently treated" by the adapter, Mr. Wilkie Collins has been allowed to adapt his own novel, "The Woman in White," and he has done it superlatively well. I do not suppose such a skilful adaptation from a novel has ever been seen.

*From THE WEEKLY DISPATCH, October 14th.*

It is so seldom that a novel is placed upon the stage in a truly dramatic form, with an intelligible story and due development of character, that we feel bound to award to Mr. Wilkie Collins all the credit he claims in the manifesto put forward in Mr. Liston's advertisements—to quote his own words, "he has endeavoured to produce a work which shall appeal to the audience purely on its own merits as a play."  
\* \* \* \* \* Instead of slavishly following the scenes laid down in the book, he has, as it were, from the same plot worked out an entirely new production.

*From THE COURIER, October 14th.*

Although nearly four hours in representation, yet we cannot say it is too long; nor can we indicate any place where curtailment would be either judicious or necessary. There does not seem to be a sentence or word too many, and the details of the drama are made so clear and epigrammatic that to lose any portion of them might break the thread of the plot, now so perfect and unique for the stage.

## II.—ON THE END OF THE PLAY.

(Difference in the Critical Opinions.—“Who shall Decide when Doctors Disagree?”)

*Opinion of THE TIMES.*

Strange to say, the weakest point in the whole work is the incident which brings it to a close. Count Fosco, having, in a very clever scene, made the required confession to Walter Hartright, is left alone, having been warned by his generous foe that he has incurred the vengeance of the Carbonari. He retires to a room behind the decoration, and closes the door. A cry is heard, the Countess Fosco, entering, opens the door, discovers—nothing, and the curtain falls. It is hard to conjecture why an author who, throughout his second and at the end of his third act has shown such mastery in the contrivance of dramatic situations, should have brought his play to such a lame and impotent conclusion.

*Opinion of THE DAILY TELEGRAPH.*

Then came the fourth act, concerning which there will be a considerable difference of opinion. It is quite clear, of course, that it was impossible for Mr. Collins to terminate his drama in the old conventional fashion, with all the characters in a row and a rhymed tag.  
\* \* \* The scene between Walter and Fosco at the St. John's Wood Villa, is in essence intensely dramatic, and thousands of successful French plays have terminated in as ghastly a manner. The end may, of course, be guessed. When Walter has departed from St. John's Wood with his life and his proofs safe, Fosco is murdered in an anteroom, and the curtain falls on Madame Fosco's despair.

\* \* \* \* \* We must give up all thoughts of getting really sound dramatic work from Mr. Collins, or any one else, if the most obvious truths are to be explained—if everything, and every one, is to be made happy—and if the audience is to be thanked for attending and applauding.  
\* \* \* \*

*Our own opinion is that Mr. Wilkie Collins is perfectly right from the art point of view.* He has, moreover, hundreds of precedents in his favour.

*Opinion of THE DAILY NEWS.*

It is with some reluctance that we are compelled to record a certain feebleness in the mode in which the author brings the drama to a conclusion; for here, as throughout the piece, he has evinced a desire to avoid the mere conventionalities of the stage, which is praiseworthy in the highest degree.

*Opinion of THE WEEKLY DISPATCH.*

On the eve of flight the Italian opens his study door that he may caress his birds, the emissaries are on the watch for him; a scream is

heard, and silence ensues for some seconds, then Madame Fosco knocks at the drawing-room door—finding no answer, she enters, and in the study is shocked by the sight of her husband's dead body. On this novel situation the curtain falls, and the play is over. There can be no question that such an ending is consistent with true art, and highly dramatic.

*Opinion of THE MORNING POST.*

Here we have no *dénouement* worthy of the name. The plot simply falls in, collapsing like a house of cards.

*Opinion of LAND AND WATER.*

At the end of act three there is a terrible climax, and one quite expected that after that there would be nothing but mere winding up of the story. Not a bit of it. The fourth act—though the hero, or one of the heroes, is dead—is the most interesting, the best of the lot.

*Opinion of BELL'S WEEKLY MESSENGER.*

This is the *dénouement* of the drama, and must be confessed to be somewhat bald and ineffective.

*Opinion of THE ORCHESTRA.*

We should be sorry to see Mr. Collins be forced to alter the *dénouement*, and supply a commonplace tag.

### III.—ON THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PLAY.

(Mr. VINING'S performance of Fosco.—More Difference of Opinion.)

THE TIMES.

Count Fosco, whose name is sure to occur first to the memory when the *Woman in White* is recalled to mind, is not easy to portray, but the part is one of those which adequately played is likely to bring much reputation to the performer. No one, we think, will be disappointed by the portly figure, the dauntless self-reliance, and the mask of urbanity, the only defect of which is that it is almost servile, presented by Mr. George Vining, as the wily Italian.

THE DAILY NEWS.

It is painful to be compelled to record the fact, that the Fosco of Mr. Vining, admirable as that actor is in many ways, is one of the most elaborate failures, in the way of dramatic art, which have been seen in recent times.

## THE STANDARD.

Had we not read Mr. Wilkie Collins's fine word-picture of Fosco, we should be inclined to think that it is one of the best impersonations Mr. Vining has given us—indeed, as it is, all that art can do he presents us with. Mr. Vining was immensely popular, and received the most flattering reception.

## THE DAILY TELEGRAPH.

Mr. George Vining is too good an actor to seriously injure Count Fosco, but we want the soft voice and a certain colouring which Mr. Vining cannot give. He certainly looked the character thoroughly, but it was not Count Fosco. Mr. Vining appeared to be hampered with the foreign accent, and, when he was acting best, the accent was for the moment put aside.

## THE ECHO.

The character of Count Fosco, one of the most fanciful and, at the same time, most elaborately worked out of any Mr. Collins has ever drawn, finds a very clever delineator in Mr. Vining. His get-up is excellent, and he has so carefully studied the most minute characteristics of his part, and so thoroughly entered into its spirit, that it is unquestionably one of the best he has ever taken.

## ILLUSTRATED TIMES.

Mr. Vining's Fosco at the Olympic is as bad as it can be; but no Foscos, or bad Foscos, can prevent the masterly adaptation from making its mark.

## SUNDAY TIMES.

Mr. Vining's Fosco was ruggedly powerful and was highly popular.

## THE MORNING ADVERTISER.

The very difficult character of Count Fosco, requiring so much delicacy, subtlety of expression, high finish, and repose for its adequate delineation, found but a coarse and commonplace interpreter in Mr. Vining.

## THE ERA.

Of the acting we must first of all select the Count Fosco of Mr. Vining to commend as one of the most finished and remarkable impersonations. All the peculiarities so amusingly described in the novel are here reproduced with a fidelity truly astonishing.

## THE ORCHESTRA.

Mr. Vining is strident, rough, and speaks with an obtrusive foreign accent.

## THE SATURDAY REVIEW.

This play owes its interest chiefly to the character of Count Fosco, for whom the author has been fortunate in finding an excellent representative in Mr. Vining.

## THE AUTHOR'S OPINION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE DAILY TELEGRAPH.

SIR,—I have just read the article in your journal which reviews my dramatic version of "The Woman in White," with such generous appreciation of the merits of the play. While I feel gratefully sensible of what your critic has said of the author, may I own, at the same time, that I have read with regret the sentence which pronounces Mr. Vining to be "not Count Fosco."

I have no wish to intrude on your valuable space with any critical theories of my own. I only ask you to let me remind the writer of the notice that the difficulties in the way of presenting this character on the stage are enormous. Knowing those difficulties as I do, it seems only due from me to Mr. Vining to say, that I carefully considered what I was trusting to him when I asked him to play "Fosco," and that his representation of the part thoroughly satisfies me.—I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

October 11.

WILKIE COLLINS.

## IV.—OF THE ACTING IN GENERAL, AND OF THE SCENERY.

(Unanimity again!—"All's Well that Ends Well.")

THE TIMES.

For obvious reasons Laura Fairlie and Anne Catherick are sustained by one actress, and a very difficult task is accomplished with much propriety and truthful feeling by Miss Ada Dyas, the half-witted girl being necessarily a more telling personage than the sane young lady. The masculine sense and feminine devotion of Miss Halcombe are thoroughly appreciated by Mrs. Charles Viner; and the subjugation of the Countess to the all-ruling Fosco is made manifest by Miss Maria Daly. Of that very ungenial gentleman, Sir Percival Glyde, the most is made by Mr. Billington, to whom a slight outburst of contrition—not, we believe, to be found in the novel—must be a welcome boon; and Mr. F. Robson gets an opportunity for showing a "little bit" of character from the Italian professor, Pesca.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH.

With pleasure we see Miss Ada Dyas return to London, where she has always been missed, and welcome the re-appearance of Miss Cleveland, now Mrs. Charles Viner. Most courteous was it of Mr. Wilkie Collins to lead on with some amount of triumph these clever ladies, and it was not difficult to see how sincerely he recognised their ability.

For Miss Ada Dyas a work of no ordinary difficulty was prepared. This young actress was required to "double" (as it is called) the characters of Laura Fairlie and Anne Catherick, in order to secure the precise likeness requisite. Most brilliantly did the actress triumph over the difficulty. The acting of Miss Ada Dyas as the neglected wife in *Hunted Down*, and as the cold, mysterious servant in *Lady Audley's Secret*, showed sufficiently well some time ago how valuable is her aid; but we question if the audience was prepared to see promise so emphatically fulfilled. Miss Dyas did not content herself with playing one character in two dresses. Her art is far more subtle. We see the same face, but two distinct women, two manners, and occasionally, we almost fancied, two distinct voices. The effect upon the audience was startling; and we need only point to the fine exit of Anne Catherick after the interview with Walter, and her pathetic appeal to Fosco for protection, as examples of the intensity of the actress, who surely appears to be sufficiently valuable to retain in London, however many good actresses we may possess. Mrs. Charles Viner also gave a representation of Marian Halcombe which was really almost faultless. Easy, firm, and eminently ladylike throughout, the actress showed us a fascinating woman with a powerful mind; and in the situation which closes the third act Mrs. Viner rose to the occasion, and won all the house. The paralysed look of the poor sick woman, when, expecting to see and question Anne, she looks on Laura, the stagger as if she had been shot, the trembling clutch of the hands, and the wild shriek, will not be forgotten when we recall this admirable performance.

\* \* \* Miss Maria Daly was careful, at any rate, as Fosco's wife, and Mr. Billington bore up manfully against an ungrateful character. Mr. Wybert Reeve, though a little too slow and measured in his tones, showed considerable feeling, and has not hitherto appeared to such advantage. Mr. F. Robson was well made up, and a little fiery burst in the last act pleased the audience very much.

#### THE STANDARD.

Mr. Billington infused some force into the ungrateful part of Sir Percival. Miss Ada Dyas "doubled" the parts of Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie, and with very nice distinction. Her acting was graceful, tender, and interesting; in fact, no better exponent of the part of the Woman in White could possibly have been found. Miss Dyas has made a great and legitimate success. Mrs. Charles Viner also played as Marian Halcombe with a great deal of spirit. Miss Maria Daly was Countess Fosco, and Mrs. J. Irving, the Matron of the Asylum. The scenery was really superb. The opening view of Welmingham Church and churchyard is a beautifully painted landscape, and the "set" is wonderfully ingenious. Here are no wing flats jutting out from the sides of the stage in all their blatant unreality; the perspective seems to melt away into the distance. The presentation of the mansion at Blackwater Park by moonlight is a veritable marvel of stage mechanism and scenic construction. The dining-room and



library, with the lawn in front, and the bed-rooms above that have real floors upon which the people are seen walking about, must be seen to be believed.

#### THE MORNING POST.

Miss Ada Dyas "doubles" the characters of Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie, performing both with rare ability. Her ideal of each part is vigorous and original, and her bye-play, particularly as the Woman in White is subtle and minute. Mrs. Charles Viner (late Miss Cleveland) deserves high praise for her ladylike and impressive impersonation of Marian Halcombe; and the alternate jealousy and tenderness of Fosco's too subservient wife could hardly be depicted more truthfully than in Miss Maria Daly's highly-finished portrait of the Countess. Mr. Billington makes good his claim to the favour he has long enjoyed with the audience by his judicious and spirited performance of Sir Percival Glyde.

#### THE DAILY NEWS.

Mr. Collins is greatly indebted to the performers. The difficulty of finding a representative of the Woman in White who could sustain the imaginations of an audience as the pale figure of the book sustains that of the reader, might appear even to those who are fairly acquainted with the resources of our stage to be insurmountable. It is not, however, too much to say that Miss Ada Dyas succeeds even in deepening the impression of the original. Her child-like weakness and uncontrollable wandering of mind, her restlessness and vague terror, and all those more ethereal attributes with which the mind of the imaginative reader clothes the shadowy form which steals upon the young drawing-master on the moonlight highway, are embodied in this actress, who has thus almost unexpectedly displayed qualities of a very high order. It is a necessity, as the programme remarks, that both this character and that of Laura Fairlie, whom she is supposed to greatly resemble, should be played by the same lady. Ordinarily these double performances are eminently unsatisfactory—a fact which generally arises from the impossibility of forgetting for a moment the identity of the performer. This objection, however, is entirely removed in this instance by the skill of the actress, who never seems identical, but only strikingly like her counterpart. This happy result is not merely due to the concealing effect of a flowing wig of fair hair which is worn by the half-crazy girl, or to the change of attire, or any other mechanical contrivance; it lies in the very movements of the actress, and, above all, in the expression of her features, which in the one character is grave, tender, earnest, while in the other her face is alternately lighted up with the happy smiles of a mind too weak for settled sorrow, or convulsed with terror and the sudden remembrance of the persecution that pursues her. Mr. Wybert Reeve is quietly impressive in the part of Hartright; and Mrs. Charles Viner sustains the character of Marian Halcombe with taste and feeling.

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The drama has been put upon the stage with the greatest care. The set scenes are many, and are in the highest degree effective. Neither in this way, nor in the appointments or general arrangement of the "business" of the stage does a single opportunity for picturesque effect appear to have been lost.

#### THE ECHO.

Mrs. Charles Viner (Miss Cleveland) was good as Marian. Her acting throughout was careful and impressive. In the scene where she discovers Laura in the madhouse, suppressed passion, wild excitement, and almost frantic joy are equally well portrayed. Miss Ada Dyas as Laura Fairlie and Anne Catherick was simple and unaffected, and Mr. Wybert Reeve was quite equal to a somewhat difficult part. He has correctly hit off that quiet, earnest style of acting, which is best adapted to the sort of character he took. Mr. Billington as Sir Percival, and Mr. Robson as Pesca, satisfactorily filled the characters allotted to them: while Miss Daly displayed considerable ability as the Countess Fosco. At the close of the performance, on Monday evening, the Author, Mr. Vining, Miss Ada Dyas, and Mrs. Viner were called before the curtain, and greeted with long-continued rounds of applause.

#### THE ERA.

Equal in interest and ability was the delineation of the two characters Laura and Anne Catherick, by Miss Ada Dyas, whose acting throughout the play, and especially in the scene where Anne, half crazed, gives Walter Hartright the letter for Laura, proved her a complete mistress of her art, and gained her the warmest expressions of approval. The scene with Sir Percival, where Laura objects to sign the contract, was also rendered with great spirit, and contrasted admirably with the shrinking timidity assumed a moment before; and the rapid change from the bewildered Anne Catherick to the bright and fascinating Lady Glyde revealed remarkable skill. Miss Maria Daly was an excellent Countess Fosco, displaying with much judgment that subservience to the Count which is remarked in the story. The Marian Halcombe of Mrs. Charles Viner (late Miss Cleveland) rose at times to the grandeur and intensity of high tragedy, while in the lighter moods she acted with much tenderness and grace. Nothing could exceed the intensity of her attitude and expression when discovering Lady Glyde in the asylum. It was a performance of a high class in every way. Mrs. J. Irving played the Mistress of the Asylum with much care and skill. We can hardly praise too highly Mr. F. Robson's rendering of Professor Pesca; and Mr. Wybert Reeve made Walter Hartright a thoroughly interesting and manly hero. Mr. Billington was completely at home as Sir Percival Glyde, portraying the vehement and passionate temper of the baronet with perfect truth and great vigour. Mr. Garden, as Mr. Kyrle, the lawyer, was also thoroughly efficient. Miss Marie Henderson only appears as Mrs. Catherick

in the prologue, but the scene was rendered adequately. We have only to repeat that *The Woman in White* is one of the most unqualified successes we can remember.

#### THE SUNDAY TIMES.

As Marian Halcombe, Mrs. Charles Viner, formerly known as Miss Cleveland, showed herself an actress of a very high stamp. Her expression of devotion was admirable throughout, and her conduct in her desperate duel with Count Fosco was remarkably fine. Not often on the English stage has a situation been more adequately and impressively rendered than was that in the third act, when Marian Halcombe visited the asylum expecting to see Anne Catherick and found instead the friend whose death she had mourned. Her denunciation of the Count and her cry of recognition of her more than sister was equally fine. In the doubled part of Anne Catherick, and Laura Fairlie, Miss Ada Dyas was excellent. She contrived to preserve the identity of the two characters she presented, and by her admirable exposition of both, rendered fully comprehensible the intricate action to which the resemblance gave rise. Miss Ada Dyas is an actress of no ordinary intelligence, power, and intensity. Miss Maria Daly (Countess Fosco) had merit. \* \* \*

Mr. Billington acted with much care and moderation the part of Sir Percival. Mr. Wybert Reeve's representation of Walter Hartright was intelligent but deficient in colour. Mr. F. Robson was well got up as Professor Pesca, a part of very few opportunities.

#### THE ORCHESTRA.

The acting, too, is excellent. No better representative of the two women, Laura and Anne, could be imagined than Miss Ada Dyas; she makes of each a separate individuality, like only in feature, but unlike in soul, habit, expression, and character. Miss Dyas is welcome in London in the dearth of intelligent actresses; and we hope London will retain her. Mrs. Charles Viner as Marian Halcombe is another decided gain. She portrays in admirable fashion all the mental strength of that true-souled woman, not losing sight of the delicacy and attractiveness of the lady. \* \* \* Miss Maria Daly strove her best to render Madame Fosco. Mr. Wybert Reeve made a good impression in Walter Hartright; Mr. F. Robson renders Professor Pesca; and Mr. Billington is Sir Percival Glyde, a part whose brutality is excessive, leaving no room for *nuances*. The drama is very carefully mounted, and the set scenes are elaborate and picturesque; at the same time the play is made no peg to hang extensive pictorial display upon, but is a good drama itself, in which scenery is an effective auxiliary, nothing more.

#### ILLUSTRATED TIMES.

His play is also remarkable for the first-rate acting of Miss Ada Dyas and Mrs. Charles Viner, who, in the characters of Laura Fairlie

and Marian Halcombe, are almost beyond praise. I should have mentioned that Miss Ada Dyas takes, in addition, the part of Anne Catherick, the mad woman, and thus has an opportunity of exhibiting such subtlety as is seldom seen. I would advise those who consider that acting in England is a lost art to see *The Woman in White* at the Olympic.

JOHN BULL.

Mrs. Charles Viner was thoroughly successful in depicting the honest strong sense of right and of the power of right in Marian Halcombe; and Miss Ada Dyas, who played both the heroines—Laura and Ann Catherick—presented them with distinctions that were characteristic and effective. The double personation was extremely good. Mr. Billington as Sir Percival and Mr. Wybert Reeve as Walter filled their places in the picture creditably; whilst the Madame Fosco of Miss Maria Daly was a genuine bit of quiet acting. Too great praise could scarcely be given to the manner in which *The Woman in White* is placed upon the stage. The scenery, about which nothing is said in the bills, is excellent, and a piece so elaborate, with dialogue that depends so much upon accuracy and correctness for its effect, and in the course of which the slightest apparent carelessness, either in word or action, could not but prove highly detrimental to success, must have been thoroughly rehearsed under the most judicious direction to have produced it in so perfect a state.

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# MR VINING



AS  
COUNT FOSCO,