THE WOMAN IN WHITE.
PART THE SECOND. HARTRIGHT’s NARRATIVE. V.

THE story of my first inquiries in Hampshire is soon told.

My early departure from London enabled me to reach Mr. Dawson’s house in the forenoon. Our interview, so far as the object of my visit was concerned, led to no satisfactory result. Mr. Dawson’s books certainly showed when he had resumed his attendance on Miss Halcombe, at Blackwater Park; but it was not possible to calculate back from this date with any exactness, without such help from Mrs. Michelson as I knew she was unable to afford. She could not say from memory (who, in similar cases, ever can?) how many days had elapsed between the renewal of the doctor’s attendance on his patient and the previous departure of Lady Glyde. She was almost certain of having mentioned the circumstance of the departure to Miss Halcombe, on the day after it happened—but then she was no more able to fix the date of the day on which this disclosure took place, than to fix the date of the day before, when Lady Glyde had left for London. Neither could she calculate, with any nearer approach to exactness, the time that had passed from the departure of her mistress, to the period when the undated letter from Madame Tosco arrived. Lastly, as if to complete the series of difficulties, the doctor himself, having been ill at the time, had omitted to make his usual entry of the day of the week and month when the gardener from Blackwater Park has called on him to deliver Mrs. Michelson’s message.

Hopeless of obtaining assistance from Mr. Dawson, I resolved to try next if I could establish the date of Sir Percival’s arrival at Knowlesbury. It seemed like a fatality! When I reached Knowlesbury the inn was shut up; and bills were posted on the walls. The speculation had been a bad one, as I was informed, ever since the time of the railway. The new hotel at the station had gradually absorbed the business; and the old inn (which we knew to be the inn at which Sir Percival had put up), had been closed about two months since. The proprietor had left the town with all his goods and chattels, and where he had gone I could not positively ascertain from any one. The four people of whom I inquired gave me four different accounts of his plans and projects when he left Knowlesbury.

There were still some hours to spare before the last train left for London; and I drove back again, in a fly from the Knowlesbury station, to Blackwater Park, with the purpose of questioning the gardener and the person who kept the lodge. If they, too, proved unable to assist me, my resources, for the present, were at an end, and I might return to town.

I dismissed the fly a mile distant from the park; and, getting my directions from the driver, proceeded by myself to the house. As I turned into the lane from the high road, I saw a man, with a carpet-bag, walking before me rapidly on the way to the lodge. He was a little man, dressed in shabby black, and wearing a remarkably large hat. I set him down (as well as it was possible to judge) for a lawyer’s clerk; and stopped at once to widen the distance between us. He had not heard me; and he walked on out of sight, without looking back. When I passed through the gates myself, a little while afterwards, he was not visible—he had evidently gone on to the house.

There were two women in the lodge. One of them was old; the other, I knew at once, by Marian’s description of her, to be Margaret Porcher. I asked first if Sir Percival was at the park; and, receiving a reply in the negative, inquired next when he had left it. Neither of the women could tell me more than that he had gone away in the summer. I could extract nothing from Margaret Porcher but vacant smiles and shakings of the head. The old woman was a little more intelligent; and I managed to lead her into speaking of the manner of Sir Percival’s departure, and of
the alarm that it caused her. She remembered her master calling her out of bed, and remembered his frightening her by swearing—but the date at which the occurrence happened was, as she honestly acknowledged, "quite beyond her."

On leaving the lodge, I saw the gardener at work not far off. When I first addressed him, he looked at me rather distrustfully; but, on my using Mrs. Michelson's name, with a civil reference to himself, he entered into conversation readily enough. There is no need to describe what passed between us: it ended, as all my other attempts to discover the date had ended. The gardener knew that his master had driven away, at night "some time in July, the last fortnight or the last ten days in the month"—and knew no more.

While we were speaking together, I saw the man in black, with the large hat, come out from the house, and stand at some little distance observing us.

Certain suspicions of his errand at Blackwater Park had already crossed my mind. They were now increased by the gardener's inability (or unwillingness) to tell me who the man was; and I determined to clear the way before me, if possible, by speaking to him. The plainest question I could put, as a stranger, would be to inquire if the house was allowed to be shown to visitors. I walked up to the man at once, and accosted him in those words.

His look and manner unmistakably betrayed that he knew who I was, and that he wanted to irritate me into quarrelling with him. His reply was insolent enough to have answered the purpose, if I had been less determined to control myself. As it was, I met him with the most resolute politeness; apologised for my involuntary intrusion (which he called a "trespass"), and left the grounds. It was exactly as I suspected. The recognition of me, when I left Mr. Kyre's office, had been evidently communicated to Sir Percival Glyde; and the man in black had been sent to the park, in anticipation of my making inquiries at the house, or in the neighbourhood. If I had given him the least chance of lodging any sort of legal complaint against me, the interference of the local magistrate would no doubt have been turned to account, as a cog on my proceedings, and a means of separating me from Marian and Laura for some days at least.

I was prepared to be watched on the way from Blackwater Park to the station, exactly as I had been watched, in London, the day before. But I could not discover at the time, and I have never found out since, whether I was really followed on this occasion or not. The man in black might have had means of tracking me at his disposal of which I was not aware—but I certainly saw nothing of him, in his own person, either on the way to the station, or afterwards on my arrival at the London terminus, in the evening. I reached home, on foot; taking the precaution, before I approached our own door, of walking round by the loneliest street in the neighbourhood, and there stopping and looking back more than once over the open space behind me. I had first learnt to use this stratagem against suspected treachery in the wilds of Central America—and now I was practising it again, with the same purpose and with even greater caution, in the heart of civilised London!

Nothing had happened to alarm Marian during my absence. She asked eagerly what success I had met with. "When I told her, she could not conceal her surprise at the indifference with which I spoke of the failure of my investigations, thus far.

The truth was, that the ill-success of my inquiries had in no sense daunted me. I had pursued them as a matter of duty, and I had expected nothing from them. In the state of my mind, at that time, it was almost a relief to me to know that the struggle was now narrowed to a trial of strength between myself and Sir Perci-
val Glyde. The vindictive motive had mingled itself, all along, with my other and better motives; and I confess it was a satisfaction to me to feel that the surest way—the only way left—of serving Laura's cause, was to fasten my hold firmly on the villain who had married her. I acknowledge that I was not strong enough to keep my motives above the reach of this instinct of revenge. But I can honestly say that no base speculation on the future relations of Laura and myself, and on the private and personal concessions which I might force from Sir Percival if I once had him at my mercy, ever entered my mind. I never said to myself, "If I do succeed, it shall be one result of my success that I put it out of her husband's power to take her from me again." I could not look at her and think of the future with such thoughts as those. The sad sight of the change in her from her former self, made the one interest of my love an interest of tenderness and compassion, which her father or her brother might have felt, and which I felt, God knows, in my inmost heart. All my hopes looked no farther on, now, than to the day of her recovery. There, till she was strong again and happy again—there, till she could look at me as she had once looked, and speak to me as she had once spoken—the future of my happiest thoughts and my dearest wishes ended.

These words are written under no prompting of idle self-contemplation. Passages in this narrative are soon to come, which will set the minds of others in judgment on my conduct. It is right that the best and the worst of me should be fairly balanced, before that time.

On the morning after my return from Hampshire, I took Marian up-stairs into my working-room; and there laid before her the plan that I had matured, thus far, for mastering the one assailable point in the life of Sir Percival Glyde.

The way to the Secret lay through the mystery, hitherto impenetrable to all of us, of the woman in white. The approach to that, in its turn, might be gained by obtaining the assistance of Anne Catherick's mother; and the only ascertainable means of prevailing on Mrs. Catherick to act or to speak in the matter, depended on the chance of my discovering local particulars and family particulars, first of all, from Mrs. Clements. I had thought the subject over carefully; and I felt certain that the new inquiries could only begin, to any purpose, by my placing myself in communication with the faithful friend and protectress of Anne Catherick.

The first difficulty, then, was to find Mrs. Clements.

I was indebted to Marian's quick perception for meeting this necessity at once by the best and simplest means. She proposed to write to the farm near Limmeridge (Todd's Corner), to inquire whether Mrs. Clements had communicated with Mrs. Todd during the past few months. How Mrs. Clements had been separated from Anne, it was impossible for us to say; but that separation once affected, it would certainly occur to Mrs. Clements to inquire after the missing woman in the neighbourhood of all others to which she was known to be most attached—the neighbourhood of Limmeridge. I saw directly that Marian's proposal offered us a prospect of success; and she wrote to Mrs. Todd accordingly by that day's post.

While we were waiting for the reply, I made myself master of all the information Marian could afford on the subject of Sir Percival's family, and of his early life. She could only speak on these topics from hearsay; but she was reasonably certain of the truth of what little she had to tell.

Sir Percival was an only child. His father, Sir Felix Glyde, had suffered, from his birth, under a painful and incurable deformity, and had shunned all society from his earliest years. His sole happiness was in the enjoyment of music; and he had married a lady with tastes similar to his own, who was said to be a most accom-
plished musician. He inherited the Blackwater property while still a young man. Neither he nor his wife, after taking possession, made advances of any sort towards the society of the neighbourhood; and no one endeavoured to tempt them into abandoning their reserve, with the one disastrous exception of the rector of the parish.

The rector was the worst of all innocent mischief-makers—an over-zealous man. He had heard that Sir Felix had left College with the character of being little better than a revolutionist in politics and an infidel in religion; and he arrived conscientiously at the conclusion that it was his bounden duty to summon the lord of the manor to hear sound views enunciated in the parish church. Sir Felix fiercely resented the clergyman's well-meant but ill-directed interference; insulting him so grossly and so publicly, that the families in the neighbourhood sent lettres of indignant remonstrance to the park; and even the tenants on the Blackwater property expressed their opinion as strongly as they dared.

The baronet, who had no country tastes of any kind, and no attachment to the estate, or to any one living on it, declared that society at Blackwater should never have a second chance of annoying him; and left the place from that moment. After a short residence in London, he and his wife departed for the Continent; and never returned to England again. They lived part of the time in France, and part in Germany—always keeping themselves in the strict retirement which the morbid sense of his own personal deformity had made a necessity to Sir Felix. Their son, Percival, had been born abroad, and had been educated there by private tutors. His mother was the first of his parents whom he lost. His father had died a few years after her. Either in 1825 or 1826. Sir Percival had been in England, as a young man, once or twice before that period; but his acquaintance with the late Mr. Fairlie did not begin till after the time of his father's death. They soon became very intimate, although Sir Percival was seldom, or never, at Limmeridge House in those days. Mr. Frederick Fairlie might have met him once or twice in Mr. Philip Fairlie's company; but he could have known little of him at that or at any other time. Sir Percival's only intimate friend in the Fairlie family had been Laura's father.

These were all the particulars that I could gain from Marian. They suggested nothing which was useful to my present purpose, but I noted them down carefully, in the event of their proving to be of importance at any future period.

Mrs. Todd's reply (addressed, by our own wish, to a post-office at some distance from us) had arrived at its destination when I went to apply for it. The chances, which had been all against us, hitherto, turned, from this moment, in our favour. Mrs. Todd's letter contained the first item of information of which we were in search.

Mrs. Clements, it appeared, had (as we had conjectured) written to Todd's Corner; asking pardon in the first place, for the abrupt manner in which she and Anne had left their friends at the farm-house (on the morning after I had met the woman in white in Limmeridge churchyard); and then informing Mrs. Todd of Anne's disappearance, and entreaty that she would cause inquiries to be made in the neighbourhood, on the chance that the lost woman might have strayed back to Limmeridge. In making this request, Mrs. Clements had been careful to add to it the address at which she might always be heard of; and that address Mrs. Todd now transmitted to Marian. It was in London; and within half an hour's walk of our own lodging.

In the words of the proverb, I was resolved not to let the grass grow under my feet. The next morning, I set forth to seek an interview with Mrs. Clements. This was my first step forward in the investigation. The story of the desperate attempt to which I now stood committed, begins here.

VI.

THE address communicated by Mrs. Todd
took me to a lodging-house situated in a respectable street near the Gray's Inn-road.

When I knocked, the door was opened by Mrs. Clements herself. She did not appear to remember me; and asked what my business was. I recalled to her our meeting in Limmeridge churchyard, at the close of my interview there with the woman in white; taking special care to remind her that I was the person who assisted Anne Catherick (as Anne had herself declared) to escape the pursuit from the Asylum. This was my only claim to the confidence of Mrs. Clements. She remembered the circumstance the moment I spoke of it; and asked me into the parlour, in the greatest anxiety to know if I had brought her any news of Anne.

It was impossible for me to tell her the whole truth, without, at the same time, entering into particulars on the subject of the conspiracy, which it would have been dangerous to confide to a stranger. I could only abstain most carefully from raising any false hopes, and then explain that the object of my visit was to discover the persons who were really responsible for Anne's disappearance. I even added, so as to exonerate myself from any after-reproach of my own conscience, that I entertained not the least hope of being able to trace her; that I believed we should never see her alive again; and that my main interest in the affair was to bring to punishment two men whom I suspected to be concerned in luring her away, and at whose hands I and some dear friends of mine had suffered a grievous wrong. With this explanation, I left it to Mrs. Clements to say whether our interest in the matter (whatever difference there might be in the motives which actuated us) was not the same; and whether she felt any reluctance to forward my object by giving me such information on the subject of my inquiries as she happened to possess.

The poor woman was, at first, too much confused and agitated to understand thoroughly what I said to her. She could only reply that I was welcome to anything she could tell me in return for the kindness I had shown to Anne. But as she was not very quick and ready, at the best of times, in talking to strangers, she would beg me to put her in the right way, and to say where I wished her to begin. Knowing by experience that the plainest narrative attainable from persons who are not accustomed to arrange their ideas, is the narrative which goes far enough back at the beginning to avoid all impediments of retrospection in its course, I asked Mrs. Clements to tell me, first, what had happened after she had left Limmeridge; and so, by watchful questioning, carried her on from point to point till we reached the period of Anne's disappearance.

The substance of the information which I thus obtained, was as follows:

On leaving the farm at Todd's Corner, Mrs. Clements and Anne had travelled, that day, as far as Derby; and had remained there a week, on Anne's account. They had then gone on to London, and had lived in the lodging occupied by Mrs. Clements, at that time, for a month or more, when circumstances connected with the house and the landlord had obliged them to change their quarters. Anne's terror of being discovered in London or its neighbourhood, whenever they ventured to walk out, had gradually communicated itself to Mrs. Clements; and she had determined on removing to one of the most out-of-the-way places in England, to the town of Grimsby in Lincolnshire, where her deceased husband had passed all his early life. His relatives were respectable people settled in the town; they had always treated Mrs. Clements with great kindness; and she thought it impossible to do better than go there, and take the advice of her husband's friends. Anne would not hear of returning to her mother at Wellingham, because she had been removed to the Asylum from that place, and because Sir Perci-
val would be certain to go back there and find her again. There was serious weight in this objection, and Mrs. Clements felt that it was not to be easily removed.

At Grimsby the first serious symptoms of illness had shown themselves in Anne. They appeared soon after the news of Lady Glyde's marriage had been made public in the newspapers, and had reached her through that medium.

The medical man who was sent for to attend the sick woman, discovered at once that she was suffering from a serious affection of the heart. The illness lasted long, left her very weak, and returned, at intervals, though with mitigated severity, again and again. They remained at Grimsby, in consequence, all through the first half of the new year; and there they might probably have stayed much longer, but for the sudden resolution which Anne took, at this time, to venture back to Hampshire, for the purpose of obtaining a private interview with Lady Glyde.

Mrs. Clements did all in her power to oppose the execution of this hazardous and unaccountable project. No explanation of her motives was offered by Anne, except that she believed the day of her death was not far off, and that she had something on her mind which must be communicated to Lady Glyde, at any risk, in secret. Her resolution to accomplish this purpose was so firmly settled, that she declared her intention of going to Hampshire by herself, if Mrs. Clements felt any unwillingness to go with her.

The doctor, on being consulted, was of opinion that serious opposition to her wishes would, in all probability, produce another and perhaps a fatal fit of illness; and Mrs. Clements, under this advice, yielded to necessity, and once more, with sad forebodings of trouble and danger to come, allowed Anne Catherick to have her own way.

On the journey from London to Hampshire, Mrs. Clements discovered that one of their fellow-passengers was well acquainted with the neighbourhood of Blackwater, and could give her all the information she needed on the subject of localities. In this way, she found out that the only place they could go to which was not dangerously near to Sir Percival's residence, was a large village, called Sandon. The distance, here, from Blackwater Park was between three and four miles—and that distance, and back again, Anne had walked, on each occasion when she had appeared in the neighbourhood of the lake.

For the few days, during which they were at Sandon without being discovered, they had lived a little away from the village, in the cottage of a decent widow-woman, who had a bedroom to let, and whose discreet silence Mrs. Clements had done her best to secure, for the first week at least. She had also tried hard to induce Anne to be content with writing to Lady Glyde, in the first instance. But the failure of the warning contained in the anonymous letter sent to Limmeridge had made Anne resolute to speak this time, and obstinate in the determination to go on her errand alone.

Mrs. Clements, nevertheless, followed her privately on each occasion when she went to the lake—without, however, venturing near enough to the boat-house to be witness of what took place there. When Anne returned for the last time from the dangerous neighbourhood, the fatigue of walking, day after day, distances which were far too great for her strength, added to the exhausting effect of the agitation from which she had suffered, produced the result which Mrs. Clements had dreaded all along. The old pain over the heart and the other symptoms of the illness at Grimsby returned and Anne was confined to her bed in the cottage.

In this emergency, the first necessity, as Mrs. Clements knew by experience, was to endeavour to quiet Anne's anxiety of mind; and, for this purpose, the good woman went herself the next day to the lake, to try if she could find
Lady Glyde (who would be sure, as Anne said, to take her daily walk to the boat-house), and prevail on her to come back privately to the cottage near Sandon. On reaching the outskirts of the plantation, Mrs. Clements encountered, not Lady Glyde, but a tall, stout, elderly gentleman with a book in his hand—in other words, Count Fosco.

The Count, after looking at her very attentively for a moment, asked if she expected to see anyone in that place; and added, before she could reply, that he was waiting there with a message from Lady Glyde, but that he was not quite certain whether the person then before him answered the description of the person with whom he was desired to communicate. Upon this, Mrs. Clements at once confided her errand to him, and entreated that he would help to allay Anne's anxiety by trusting his message to her. The Count most readily and kindly complied with her request. The message, he said, was a most important one. Lady Glyde entreated Anne and her good friend to return immediately to London, as she felt certain that Sir Percival would discover them, if they remained any longer in the neighbourhood of Blackwater. She was herself going to London in a short time; and if Mrs. Clements and Anne would go there first, and would let her know what their address was, they should hear from her and see her, in a fortnight or less. The Count added, that he had already attempted to give a friendly warning to Anne herself, but that she had been too much startled by seeing that he was a stranger, to let him approach and speak to her.

To this, Mrs. Clements replied, in the greatest alarm and distress, that she asked nothing better than to take Anne safely to London; but that there was no present hope of removing her from the dangerous neighbourhood, as she lay ill in her bed at that moment. The Count inquired if Mrs. Clements had sent for medical advice; and, hearing that she had hitherto hesitated to do so, from the fear of making their position publicly known in the village, informed her that he was himself a medical man, and that, he would go back with her, if she pleased, and see what could be done for Anne. Mrs. Clements (feeling a natural confidence in the Count, as a person trusted with a secret message from Lady Glyde) gratefully accepted the offer; and they went back together to the cottage.

Anne was asleep when they got there. The Count started at the sight of her (evidently from astonishment at her resemblance to Lady Glyde). Poor Mrs. Clements supposed that he was only shocked to see how ill she was. He would not allow her to be awakened; he was contented with putting questions to Mrs. Clements about her symptoms, with looking at her, and with lightly touching her pulse. Sandon was a large enough place to have a grocer's and druggist's shop in it; and thither the Count went, to write his prescription and to get the medicine made up. He brought it back himself; and told Mrs. Clements that the medicine was a powerful stimulant, and that it would certainly give Anne strength to get up and bear the fatigue of a journey to London of only a few hours. The remedy was to be administered at stated times, on that day, and on the day after. On the third day she would be well enough to travel; and he arranged to meet Mrs. Clements at the Blackwater station, and to see them off by the midday train. If they did not appear, he would assume that Anne was worse, and would proceed at once to the cottage.

As events turned out, however, no such emergency as this occurred. The medicine had an extraordinary effect on Anne, and the good results of it were helped by the assurance Mrs. Clements could now give her that she would soon see Lady Glyde in London. At the appointed day and time (when they had not been quite so long as a week in Hampshire, altogether), they arrived at the station. The Count was waiting there for them, and was talking to an elderly lady, who appeared to be going to
travel by the train to London also. He most kindly assisted them, and put them into the carriage himself; begging Mrs. Clements not to forget to send her address to Lady Glyde. The elderly lady did not travel in the same compartment; and they did not notice what became of her on reaching the London terminus. Mrs. Clements secured respectable lodgings in a quiet neighbourhood; and then wrote, as she had engaged to do, to inform Lady Glyde of the address.

A little more than a fortnight passed, and no answer came.

At the end of that time, a lady (the same elderly lady whom they had seen at the station) called in a cab, and said that she came from Lady Glyde, who was then at an hotel in London, and who wished to see Mrs. Clements for the purpose of arranging a future interview with Anne. Mrs. Clements expressed her willingness (Anne being present at the time, and entreat ing her to do so) to forward the object in view, especially as she was not required to be away from the house for more than half an hour at the most. She and the elderly lady (clearly Madame Fosco) then left in the cab. The lady stopped the cab, after it had driven some distance, at a shop, before they got to the hotel; and begged Mrs. Clements to wait for her for a "few minutes, while she made a purchase that had been forgotten. She never appeared again.

After waiting some time, Mrs. Clements became alarmed, and ordered the cabman to drive back to her lodgings. When she got there, after an absence of rather more than half an hour, Anne was gone.

The only information to be obtained from the people of the house, was derived from the servant who waited on the lodgers. She had opened the door to a boy from the street, who had left a letter for "the young woman who lived on the second floor" (the part of the house which Mrs. Clements occupied). The servant had delivered the letter; had then gone down stairs; and, five minutes afterwards, had observed Anne open the front door, and go out, dressed in her bonnet and shawl. She had probably taken the letter with her; for it was not to be found, and it was therefore impossible to tell what inducement had been offered to make her leave the house. It must have been a strong one—for she would never stir out alone in London of her own accord. If Mrs. Clements had not known this by experience, nothing would have induced her to go away in the cab, even for so short a time as half an hour only.

As soon as she could collect her thoughts, the first idea that naturally occurred to Mrs. Clements, was to go and make inquiries at the Asylum, to which she dreaded that Anne had been taken back.

She went there the next day—having been informed of the locality in which the house was situated by Anne herself. The answer she received (her application having, in all probability, been made a day or two before the false Anne Catherick had really been consigned to safe keeping in the Asylum) was, that no such person had been brought back there. She had then written to Mrs. Catherick, at Welling ham, to know if she had seen or heard anything of her daughter; and had received an answer in the negative. After that reply had reached her, she was at the end of her resources, and perfectly ignorant where else to inquire, or what else to do. From that time to this, she had remained in total ignorance of the cause of Anne's disappearance, and of the end of Anne's story.
Novelist. Attended a private school in Highbury. Admitted at Lincoln's Inn, 1846; called to the bar, 1851; interest lay in writing, rather than in law. First signed story appeared in Douglas Jerrold's Illuminated Magazine, 1843; later contributed to Bentley's Miscellany, Cornhill, Cassell's, Temple Bar, Belgravia, Canadian Monthly, and other periodicals. In 1848 published memoir of his father, William Collins the artist; in 1850, Antonina, the first of his some thirty works of fiction. Achieved fame as writer of sensation and detective novels; turned to writing propaganda novels; wrote also plays.

Collins met Dickens in 1851 and became, stated Forster, for all the rest of the life of Dickens, one of his dearest and most valued friends" (Life, Book VI, sect. v). Collins came to share in many of Dickens's activities. He took part in theatricals, which included presentations of his plays The Lighthouse (in 1855) and The Frozen Deep (in 1857). He was Dickens's companion for convivial evenings, as well as for holiday excursions at home and on the Continent. He was a frequent guest at Dickens's home.

In their literary association, the two writers collaborated on stories and plays; they consulted each other about their writings, Dickens frequently giving Collins helpful advice and criticism. Most critics agree that each influenced the writing of the other, though some contend that Dickens's writing was not influenced by Collins's. Collins held a high opinion of some of Dickens's novels; others he thought badly written. A Tale of Two Cities he mentioned in his preface to The Woman in White as "the most perfect work of constructive art that has ever proceeded from [Dickens's] pen". Marginalia in his copy of Forster's Life record his opinion that Martin Chuzzlewit was in some respects Dickens's finest novel, Barnaby Rudge his weakest; that Oliver Twist, though badly constructed, was admirable for its character of Nancy; and that the latter half of Dombey "no intelligent person can have read without astonishment at the badness of it" (Robinson, Wilkie Collins, p. 258). Collins dedicated Hide and Seek, 1854, to Dickens as a token of admiration and affection". Dickens thought it a very remarkable book", "in some respects masterly" (to Georgina Hogarth, July 22, 1854). He had similar high praise for other of Collins's novels. The literary kinship that Dickens felt with Collins, as also his affection for him, appears in a letter of October 14 1862. Having learned that Collins, while working on No Name, had become seriously ill, Dickens offered to take over the writing at any moment that Collins might ask him to: "Absurdly unnecessary to say that it would be a (makeshift! But I could do it at a pinch, so like you as that no one should find out the difference". Certain of Dickens's friends found the close friendship and literary association of the two men difficult to explain, seeing in it a kind of degradation of Dickens to the level of a man whom they considered his inferior. (Some commentators on Dickens have held the same attitude.)
Sala, after Dickens's death, expressed the hope that either Forster or Collins (would write the authorized biography of Dickens. Both writers, he stated, "had opportunities of studying and of judging: the personal character of Charles Dickens—opportunities possessed by none other of his contemporaries" (Charles Dickens, p. 95). Collins began to contribute to H.W. the year after he had become acquainted with Dickens. Dickens valued him highly as a writer for that periodical and for its successor; various of his letters mention Collins's industry, his dependability, his capacity for taking pains. And Dickens was eager to retain Collins as a H.W. contributor as Collins's reputation, in time, brought him offers from other periodicals. In a letter to Wills, April 1 1856, Dickens instructed him to pay Collins fifty pounds for "A Rogue's Life", explaining: "I think it [the payment] right, abstractedly, in the case of a careful and good writer on whom we can depend for Xmas Nos. and the like. But further, I know of offers for stories going about—to Collins himself for instance—which make it additionally desirable that we should not shave close in such a case". The letter implies that Dickens considered the amount a generous payment; actually, it was a few shillings less than the standard rate of a guinea a page. After Collins had been a H.W. contributor for four and a half years, Dickens induced him to join the editorial staff. His salary was to be five guineas a week. The offer was not, as Collins saw, a very advantageous one to him; he accepted it only on the agreement that a novel by him be serialized in H.W., with his authorship announced. The Dead Secret was so announced, first on December 6 1856 (in the Christmas number "The Wreck of the Golden Mary"). After October 25 of that year the Office Book records no further payment to Collins for individual items. Toward the end of 1857, Dickens increased Collins's salary by an "extra Fifty" per year. "... I have no doubt of his being devoted to H.W., and doing great service", he wrote to Wills, October 2. Collins's principal work as staff member was to write original material for the periodical, sometimes—as in "Highly Proper!"—articles on subjects suggested by Dickens. What his other duties were the Dickens-Wills correspondence does not specify. The fact that the Office Book does not list his name jointly with the names of outside contributors implies that revising contributed material was probably not part of his work. "Highly Proper!", dealing with social prejudice in private schools, is assigned in the Office Book to Collins alone. "Highly Proper!", however, was an actual collaboration of Dickens and Collins; each narrated a part of their uneventful "tour", and each contributed a story to the account. Certain of the Christmas numbers were also collaborations of Dickens and Collins. The original idea of "The Perils of Certain English Prisoners" was Collins's; Collins wrote the second chapter of the story, Dickens writing the first and third. "Each revised the work of the other" (Robinson, p. 118). For "The Wreck of the Golden Mary" and "A House to Let" Dickens devised the framework. In the working out of his idea, in the actual writing of the framework, and in fitting into it the stories that form a part of the numbers, Collins was his close collaborator, as Dickens's letters make clear. (Of these two Christmas numbers, as also of the 1854 and
1855 Christmas numbers, certain sections that the Office Book assigns to Collins alone are reprinted by Stone, in Charles Dickens' Uncollected Writings, as in part by Dickens). Among Collins's H.W. stories for which Dickens had high praise were "Sister Rose" and "The Diary of Anne Rodway". "The Diary" moved him to tears. Among Collins's non-fiction items that Dickens particularly liked were "The Cruise of the Tomtit", "To Think, or Be Thought For?", "A Petition to the Novel Writers" and "The Unknown Public".

At least two of Collins's H.W. contributions brought a remonstrance to the editorial staff: Harriet Martineau, in her indignant letter to Wills, cited "The Yellow Mask" (which she had not herself read) as an instance of H.W.'s vicious anti-Catholic policy that in part motivated her determination no longer to write for H.W. (Autobiography, II, 94-95); and a son of the theatrical manager Robert William Elliston wrote to Dickens in protest against the epithets that Collins, in his article "Douglas Jerrold" had applied to Elliston (My Miscellanies, II, 85-86n). The articles "To Think, or Be Thought For?" and "Dramatic Grub Street", stated Collins, provoked "some remonstrance both of the public and the private sort" (My Miscellanies, II, 193n). A complimentary reference to Collins appeared in H.W. the month before he became a contributor. In "If This Should Meet His Eye," Dixon mentioned him and "his pleasant book" on Cornwall—i.e., Rambles beyond Railways. Later, in addition to the announcement of Collins's authorship of The Dead Secret, there appeared thirteen advertisements for the novel "By WILKIE COLLINS" as a 2-volume Bradbury & Evans publication. (A Child's History of England and Hard Times were the only other books so advertised in H.W.). On the cessation of H.W., Collins served for a time on the staff of A.Y.R. Some years later he assisted Wills for a time in editorial work during Dickens's American reading tour. Collins wrote for A.Y.R., aside from short items, The Woman in White, No Name, and The Moonstone. Dickens had high praise for the first two novels and also, on his reading its opening chapters, for The Moonstone. It was undoubtedly an estrangement between him and Collins (see Charles Collins) that prompted Dickens's later comment that the construction of The Moonstone was "wearisome beyond endurance" and that the "vein of obstinate conceit" in the novel made enemies of its readers (to Wills, July 26 1868). Actually, according to Tinsley (Random Recollections, I, 114-15), both The Woman in White and The Moonstone did much to increase the circulation of A.Y.R. Collins contributed an occasional item to A.Y.R. under the editorship of Charles Dickens, Jr. Of the items listed below as not reprinted, one of those that appeared in H.W. after Collins's brother had begun to write for the periodical is assigned in the Office Book merely to "Collins" and is not referred to in Dickens's letters as by Wilkie Collins. This is "A Sermon for Sepoys". The fact that no payment is recorded for the item indicates that it is by Wilkie Collins and not by his brother. Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature attributes the item to Wilkie Collins. "A Column to Burns" also listed below among items not reprinted, is not included in the Office Book. It consists of a letter from a H.W. reader in Glasgow, introduced by a paragraph of editorial comment. The motivation for the letter was Collins's article on Burns in a preceding number. Since Collins was on the staff, it is logical to assume that correspondence concerning his own article should have been referred to him and that he should have written the editorial comment prefaced to the Glasgow letter. Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature attributes the item to him. Harper's reprinted "A Terribly Strange Bed" without acknowledgment to H.W.; it reprinted "The Fourth Poor Traveller" as "A Lawyer's Story. By Charles Dickens." According to the Dickensian (June 1916, pp. 143-
44), a Philadelphia publisher reprinted "Sister Rose", probably in the year of its publication in H.W., as a work by Dickens.

Author: Anne Lohrli; © University of Toronto Press, 1973.

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
The Wilkie Collins Pages

Genre(s):
- Prose: Serial Fiction
  Fictional narrative 'published in successive instalments' (OED) of a periodical, i.e. involving publication in anything more than a single instalment.
- Prose: Leading Article
  The article published first in any given magazine issue, below the masthead.

Subject(s):
- Family Life; Families; Domestic Relations; Sibling Relations; Kinship; Home;
- Fraud; Forgery; Deception; Betrayal—Fiction
- Friendship
- Psychology; Psychiatry; Mental Health; Mind-Body Relations (Metaphysics)

Citation (MHRA): Collins, Wilkie, 'The Woman in White [xxx]', All the Year Round, III, 16 June 1860, 217-222

N.B. The layout of prose articles exported to PDF follows the two-column format of the original, but does NOT preserve the original line breaks. The layout of poems exported to PDF follows the original line breaks, but does NOT attempt to replicate the original indentation or stanza structure. For all these features please refer to the facsimile pages on DJO.