

**The Eagle and the Dove:  
Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell and the Publishing Culture of the Mid-Nineteenth Century**

**Alan Shelston**

**Dickens, Gaskell and *Household Words***

1. The kind of papers of which I stand most in need are *short stories*. ... All social evils, and all home affections and associations, I am particularly anxious to deal with well.' (Dickens to Mary Howitt, February 1850, seeking her support for *Household Words*)

2. We have considered what an ambition it is to be admitted into many homes with affection and confidence; to be regarded as friend by children and old people; to be thought of in affliction and in happiness ... We know the great responsibility of such a privilege ... the pictures that it conjures up in hours of solitary labour, of a multitude moved by one sympathy; the solemn hopes which it awakens in the labourer's breast, that he may be free from self-reproach in looking back at last upon his work, and that his name may be remembered ... in time to come, and borne by the dear objects of his life with pride. ('A Preliminary Word', *Household Words* Vol. 1, No. 1)

3. I do not know what your literary vows of temperance or abstinence may be, but as I *do* honestly know that there is no living English writer whose aid I would desire to enlist, in preference to the authoress of *Mary Barton* (a book that most profoundly affected and impressed me). I venture to ask you whether you can give me any hope that you will write a *short* tale, or any number of tales, for the projected pages.

No writer's name will be used – neither my own, nor any others – every paper will be published without any signature; and all will seem to express the general mind and purpose of the Journal, which is, the raising up of those that are down, and the general improvement of our social condition. I should set a value on your help, which your modesty can hardly imagine; and I am perfectly sure that the least result of your reflection or observation in respect of the life around you, would attract attention and do good. (Dickens to Gaskell, January 1850)

4. *Let me particularly beg you not to put the least constraint upon yourself as to space*. Allow the story to take its own length, and work itself out. I will engage to get it in, very easily, whatsoever the extent to which it may go./ Your design as to its progress and conclusion are undoubtedly the best. The inventor's, I consider *must be*.' (Dickens to Gaskell, March 1850)

5. My Dear Mrs Gaskell/ I have read the Ms you have had the kindness to send me, with all possible attention and care. I have shut myself up for the purpose, and allowed nothing to divide my thoughts. It opens an admirable story, is full of character and power, has a strong suspended interest in it (the end of which, I don't in the least foresee), and has the very best marks of your hand upon it. If I had had more to read, I certainly could not have stopped, but must have read on.

Now, addressing myself to the consideration of its being published in weekly portions, let me endeavour to shew you as distinctly as I can, the divisions into which it must fall. According to the best of my judgement and experience, if it were divided in any other way – reference being always had to the weekly space available for the purpose in *Household Words* – it would be mortally injured.

I would end No.1 – With the announcement of Mr. Lennox at the parsonage

I would end No. 2 – with Mr. Hale’s announcement to Margaret, that Milton-Northern is the place they are going to. This No. therefore would contain Lennox’s proposal, and the father’s communication to his daughter of his leaving the church.

I would end No. 3 – With their fixing on the watering-place as their temporary sojourn.

I would end No. 4 – With Margaret’s sitting down at night in their new house, to read Edith’s letter. This No. therefore, would contain the account of Milton, and the new house, and the Mill Owner’s first visit.

I would end No.5 – With the Mill-Owner’s leaving the house after the tea-visit. This No. therefore would contain the introduction of his mother, and also of the working father and daughter – the Higgins family.

I would end No. 6 – With Margaret leaving their dwelling, after the interview with Bessy when she is lying down.

These Nos. would sometimes require to be again divided into two chapters, and would sometimes want a word or two of conclusion. If you could be content to leave this to me, I could make those arrangements of the text without much difficulty. The only place where I do not see my way, and where the story – always with a special eye to this form of publication – seems to me to flag unmanageably, without an amount of excision that I dare scarcely hint at, is between Nos. 2 and 3, where the Dialogue is long – is on a difficult and dangerous subject – and where, to bring the murder out at once, I think there is a necessity for fusing two Nos. into one. This is the only difficult place in the whole 114 sides of foolscap.

As nearly as I can calculate, *about* 18 sides of your writing would make a weekly No. On *about* this calculation, the MS I have, would divide at the good points I have mentioned, and pretty equally. I do not apologize to you for laying so much stress on the necessity of its dividing well, because I am bound to put before you my perfect conviction that if it did not, the story would be wasted – would miss its effect as it went on – *and would not recover it when published complete*. The last consideration is strong with me, because it is based on my long comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of the periodical form of appearance.

I hope these remarks will not confuse you, but you will come out tolerably clear after a second reading, and will convey to you the means of looking at your whole story from the weekly point of view. It cannot, I repeat, be disregarded without injury to the book. All the MS that I have – with the exception I have mentioned and allowing a very reasonable margin indeed for a little compression here and there – might have been expressly written to meet the exigencies of the case.

Saturday Seventeenth June.

That my calculations might be accurate, I thought it well to stop my note and send eighteen of your sides to the Printer’s (I took them out at random) to be calculated. Their estimate exactly accords with mine. I have therefore no doubt of its correctness.

Is there is anything else I can tell you, or anything else you want to ask me? Pray do not entertain the idea that you can give me any trouble I shall not be delighted to encounter. \* \*

Have you thought of a name? I cannot suggest one without knowing more of the story. Then perhaps I might hit upon a good title if you did not./Ever My Dear Mrs. Gaskell| Faithfully Yours/Charles Dickens. (Dickens to Gaskell June 1854)

6. My Dear Mrs. Gaskell/ I have just received from Wills, in proof, our No. for the 9<sup>th</sup> of September containing the Second Part of North and South, as it originally stood, and *unaltered by you*. This is the place where we agreed that there should be a great condensation, and a considerable compression, where Mr Hale states his doubts to Margaret.<sup>1</sup> The mechanical necessities of Household Words oblige us to get to press with this No. *immediately*. In case you should not already have altered the proof and sent it to Wills (which very possibly you have: and in that case forgive my troubling you) will you be so kind as to do so at once. What I would recommend – and did recommend – is, to make the scene

between Margaret and her father relative to his leaving the church and their destination being Milton-Northern, as short as you could find it in your heart to make it. (Dickens to Gaskell, August 1854)

7. I am sorry to hear the sale dropping [i.e. of *HW*], but I am not surprised. Mrs Gaskell's story, so divided, is wearisome in the last degree. It would have had scant attraction if the casting [i.e. word-count] had been correct; but thus wire-drawn it is a dreary business. (Dickens to W.H. Wills, October 1854)

8. My dear Sir,/I was very much gratified by your note the other day; *very* much indeed. I dare say I shall like my story, when I am a little further from it; at present I can only feel depressed about it, I meant it to have been so much better. I send what I am afraid you will think too large a batch of it by this post. What Mr Wills<sup>ii</sup> has got already *fills up* the No for January 13, leaving me only two more numbers, Janry 20, & Janry 27<sup>th</sup> so what I send to-day is meant to be crammed & stuffed into Janry 20<sup>th</sup>; & I'm afraid I've nearly as much more for Janry 27.

It is 33 pages of my writing that I send to-day. I have tried to shorten & compress it, both because it was a dull piece, & to get it into reasonable length, but there were [*sic*] a whole catalogue of events to be got over: and what I want to tell you now is this, – Mr Gaskell has looked this piece well over, so I don't think there will be any carelessnesses left in it, & so there ought not to be any misprints; therefore I never wish to see it's [*sic*] face again; but, *if you will keep the MS for me, & shorten it as you think best for H W*. I shall be very glad. Shortened I see it must be. (Gaskell to Dickens, December 1854)

9. My Dear Mrs. Gaskell./Let me congratulate you on the conclusion of your story; not because it is the end of a task to which you had conceived a dislike (for I imagine you to have got the better of that delusion by this time), but because it is the vigorous and powerful accomplishment of an anxious labor. It seems to me that you have felt the ground thoroughly firm under your feet, and have strided on with a force and purpose that **MUST** now give you pleasure.

You will not, I hope, allow that non-lucid interval of dissatisfaction with yourself (and me?) which beset you for a minute or two once upon a time, to linger in the shape of any disagreeable association with Household Words. I shall still look forward to the large sides of paper, and shall soon feel disappointed if they don't begin to reappear. (Dickens to Gaskell, January 1855)

10. I am afraid he [Dickens] is making some arrangement whereby they can take my story; as Mr Dickens happens to be extremely unpopular just now, - (owing to the well-grounded feeling of dislike to the publicity he has given to his domestic affairs,) & I think they would be glad to announce my name on the list of contributors. And I would much rather they did not. (Gaskell to Charles Eliot Norton, March, 1859)

11. I beg to decline your proposal of writing for a new weekly periodical. I am not in the habit of writing for periodicals, except occasionally (as a personal mark of respect & regard for Mr Dickens) in Household Words ... But half a dozen papers in H.W. are all I ever wrote for any periodical as I dislike & disapprove of such writing for myself as a general thing. (Gaskell to an unknown correspondent, December 1862)

12. That I hold the advantages of the mode of publication to outweigh its disadvantages may be easily believed of one who revived it in the Pickwick Papers after long disuse, and has pursued it ever since. (Dickens, Postscript to *Our Mutual Friend*, 1865)

*"Familiar in their Mouths as HOUSEHOLD WORDS."*—SHAKESPEARE.

# HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

N<sup>o</sup>. 1.]

SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 1850.

[PRICE 2d.]

## A PRELIMINARY WORD.

THE name that we have chosen for this publication expresses, generally, the desire we have at heart in originating it.

We aspire to live in the Household affections, and to be numbered among the Household thoughts, of our readers. We hope to be the comrade and friend of many thousands of people, of both sexes, and of all ages and conditions, on whose faces we may never look. We seek to bring into innumerable homes, from the stirring world around us, the knowledge of many social wonders, good and evil, that are not calculated to render any of us less ardently persevering in ourselves, less tolerant of one another, less faithful in the progress of mankind, less thankful for the privilege of living in this summer-dawn of time.

No mere utilitarian spirit, no iron blinding of the mind to grim realities, will give a harsh tone to our Household Words. In the bosoms of the young and old, of the well-to-do and of the poor, we would tenderly cherish that light of Fancy which is inherent in the human breast; which, according to its nurture, burns with an inspiring flame, or sinks into a sullen glare, but which (or woe betide that day!) can never be extinguished. To show to all, that in all familiar things, even in those which are repellent on the surface, there is Romance enough, if we will find it, out;—to teach the hardest workers at this whirling wheel of toil, that their lot is not necessarily a moody, brutal fact, excluded from the sympathies and graces of imagination; to bring the greater and the lesser in degree, together, upon that wide field, and mutually dispose them to a better acquaintance and a kinder understanding—is one main object of our Household Words.

The mightier inventions of this age are not, to our thinking, all material, but have a kind of souls in their stupendous bodies which may find expression in Household Words. The traveller whom we accompany on his railroad or his steamboat journey, may gain, we hope, some compensation for incidents which these later generations have outlived, in new asso-

ciations with the Power that bears him onward; with the habitations and the ways of life of crowds of his fellow creatures among whom he passes like the wind; even with the towering chimneys he may see, spiring out fire and smoke upon the prospect. The swart giants, Slaves of the Lamp of Knowledge, have their thousand and one tales, no less than the Genii of the East; and these, in all their wild, grotesque, and fanciful aspects, in all their many phases of endurance, in all their many moving lessons of compassion and consideration, we design to tell.

Our Household Words will not be echoes of the present time alone, but of the past too. Neither will they treat of the hopes, the enterprises, triumphs, joys, and sorrows, of this country only, but, in some degree, of those of every nation upon earth. For nothing can be a source of real interest in one of them, without concerning all the rest.

We have considered what an ambition it is to be admitted into many homes with affection and confidence; to be regarded as a friend by children and old people; to be thought of in affliction and in happiness; to people the sick room with airy shapes 'that give delight and hurt not,' and to be associated with the harmless laughter and the gentle tears of many hearths. We know the great responsibility of such a privilege; its vast reward; the pictures that it conjures up, in hours of solitary labour, of a multitude moved by one sympathy; the solemn hopes which it awakens in the labourer's breast, that he may be free from self-reproach in looking back at last upon his work, and that his name may be remembered in his race in time to come, and borne by the dear objects of his love with pride. The hand that writes these faltering lines, happily associated with some Household Words before to-day, has known enough of such experiences to enter in an earnest spirit upon this new task, and with an awakened sense of all that it involves.

Some tillers of the field into which we now



come, have been before us, and some are here whose high usefulness we readily acknowledge, and whose company it is an honour to join. But, there are others here—Bastards of the Mountain, draggled fringe on the Red Cap, Panders to the basest passions of the lowest natures—whose existence is a national reproach. And these, we should consider it our highest service to displace.

Thus, we begin our career! The adventurer in the old fairy story, climbing towards the summit of a steep eminence on which the object of his search was stationed, was surrounded by a roar of voices, crying to him, from the stones in the way, to turn back. All

the voices we hear, cry Go on! The stones that call to us have sermons in them, as the trees have tongues, as there are books in the running brooks, as there is good in everything! They, and the Time, cry out to us Go on! With a fresh heart, a light step, and a hopeful courage, we begin the journey. The road is not so rough that it need daunt our feet: the way is not so steep that we need stop for breath, and, looking faintly down, be stricken motionless. Go on, is all we hear, Go on! In a glow already, with the air from yonder height upon us, and the inspiring voices joining in this acclamation, we echo back the cry, and go on cheerily!

### LIZZIE LEIGH.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

WHEN Death is present in a household on a Christmas Day, the very contrast between the time as it now is, and the day as it has often been, gives a poignancy to sorrow,—a more utter blankness to the desolation. James Leigh died just as the far-away bells of Rochdale Church were ringing for morning service on Christmas Day, 1836. A few minutes before his death, he opened his already glazing eyes, and made a sign to his wife, by the faint motion of his lips, that he had yet something to say. She stooped close down, and caught the broken whisper, 'I forgive her, Anne! May God forgive me.'

'Oh my love, my dear! only get well, and I will never cease showing my thanks for those words. May God in heaven bless thee for saying them. Thou'rt not so restless, my lad! may be—Oh God!'

For even while she spoke, he died.

They had been two-and-twenty years man and wife; for nineteen of those years their life had been as calm and happy, as the most perfect uprightness on the one side, and the most complete confidence and loving submission on the other, could make it. Milton's famous line might have been framed and hung up as the rule of their married life, for he was truly the interpreter, who stood between God and her; she would have considered herself wicked if she had ever dared even to think him austere, though as certainly as he was an upright man, so surely was he hard, stern, and inflexible. But for three years the moan and the murmur had never been out of her heart; she had rebelled against her husband as against a tyrant, with a hidden sullen rebellion, which tore up the old land-marks of wifely duty and affection, and poisoned the fountains whence gentlest love and reverence had once been for ever springing.

But those last blessed words replaced him

on his throne in her heart, and called out penitent anguish for all the bitter estrangement of later years. It was this which made her refuse all the entreaties of her sons, that she would see the kind-hearted neighbours, who called on their way from church, to sympathise and console. No! she would stay with the dead husband that had spoken tenderly at last, if for three years he had kept silence; who knew but what, if she had only been more gentle and less angrily reserved he might have relented earlier—and in time!

She sat rocking herself to and fro by the side of the bed, while the footsteps below went in and out; she had been in sorrow too long to have any violent burst of deep grief now; the furrows were well worn in her cheeks, and the tears flowed quietly, if incessantly, all the day long. But when the winter's night drew on, and the neighbours had gone away to their homes, she stole to the window, and gazed out, long and wistfully, over the dark grey moors. She did not hear her son's voice, as he spoke to her from the door, nor his footstep as he drew nearer. She started when he touched her.

'Mother! come down to us. There's no one but Will and me. Dearest mother, we do so want you.' The poor lad's voice trembled, and he began to cry. It appeared to require an effort on Mrs. Leigh's part to tear herself away from the window, but with a sigh she complied with his request.

The two boys (for though Will was nearly twenty-one, she still thought of him as a lad) had done everything in their power to make the house-place comfortable for her. She herself, in the old days before her sorrow, had never made a brighter fire or a cleaner hearth, ready for her husband's return home, than now awaited her. The tea-things were all put out, and the kettle was boiling; and the boys had calmed their grief down into a kind of sober cheerfulness. They paid her every attention they could think of, but received little notice on her part; she did not resist—she rather submitted to all their

that it was the peacefullest man's face ever beheld there. Many added that he looked sublime and prophetic.

One of the most remarkable sufferers by the same axe—a woman—had asked at the foot of the same scaffold, not long before, to be allowed to write down the thoughts that were inspiring her. If he had given any utterance to his, and they were prophetic, they would have been these:

"I see Barsad, and Cly, Defarge, The Vengeance, the Juryman, the Judge, long ranks of the new oppressors who have risen on the destruction of the old, perishing by this retributive instrument, before it shall cease out of its present use. I see a beautiful city and a brilliant people rising from this abyss, and, in their struggles to be truly free, in their triumphs and defeats, through long long years to come, I see the evil of this time and of the previous time of which this is the natural birth, gradually making expiation for itself and wearing out.

"I see the lives for which I lay down my life, peaceful, useful, prosperous and happy, in that England which I shall see no more. I see Her with a child upon her bosom, who bears my name. I see her father, aged and bent, but otherwise restored, and faithful to all men in his healing office, and at peace. I see the good old man, so long their friend, in ten years' time enriching them with all he has, and passing tranquilly to his reward.

"I see that I hold a sanctuary in their hearts, and in the hearts of their descendants, generations hence. I see her, an old woman, weeping for me on the anniversary of this day. I see her and her husband, their course done, lying side by side in their last earthly bed, and I know that each was not more honoured and held sacred in the other's soul, than I was in the souls of both.

"I see that child who lay upon her bosom and who bore my name, a man, winning his way up in that path of life which once was mine. I see him winning it so well, that my name is made illustrious there by the light of his. I see the blot I threw upon it, faded away. I see him, foremost of just judges and honoured men, bringing a boy of my name, with a forehead that I know and golden hair, to this place—then fair to look upon, with not a trace of this day's disfigurement—and I hear him tell the child my story, with a tender and a faltering voice.

"It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to, than I have ever known."

THE END.

We purpose always reserving the first place in these pages for a continuous original work of fiction, occupying about the same amount of time in its serial publication, as that which is just completed. The second story of our series

we now beg to introduce to the attention of our readers. It will pass, next week, into the station hitherto occupied by *A Tale of Two Cities*. And it is our hope and aim, while we work hard at every other department of our journal, to produce, in this one, some sustained works of imagination that may become a part of English Literature.

## THE WOMAN IN WHITE.

### PREAMBLE.

THIS is the story of what a Woman's patience can endure, and of what a Man's resolution can achieve.

If the machinery of the Law could be depended on to fathom every case of suspicion, and to conduct every process of inquiry, with moderate assistance only from the lubricating influences of oil of gold, the events which fill these pages might have claimed their share of the public attention in a Court of Justice.

But the Law is still, in certain inevitable cases, the pre-engaged servant of the long purse; and the story is left to be told, for the first time, in this place. As the Judge might once have heard it, so the Reader shall hear it now. No circumstance of importance, from the beginning to the end of the disclosure, shall be related on hearsay evidence. When the writer of these introductory lines (Walter Hartright, by name) happens to be more closely connected than others with the incidents to be recorded, he will describe them in his own person. When his experience fails, he will retire from the position of narrator; and his task will be continued, from the point at which he has left it off, by other persons who can speak to the circumstances under notice from their own knowledge, just as clearly and positively as he has spoken before them.

Thus, the story here presented will be told by more than one pen, as the story of an offence against the laws is told in Court by more than one witness—with the same object, in both cases, to present the truth always in its most direct and most intelligible aspect; and to trace the course of one complete series of events, by making the persons who have been most closely connected with them, at each successive stage, relate their own experience, word for word.

Let Walter Hartright, teacher of drawing, aged twenty-eight years, be heard first.

THE NARRATIVE OF WALTER HARTRIGHT, OF CLEMENT'S INN, LONDON.

I.

It was the last day of July. The long hot summer was drawing to a close; and we, the weary pilgrims of the London pavement, were beginning to think of the cloud-shadows on

