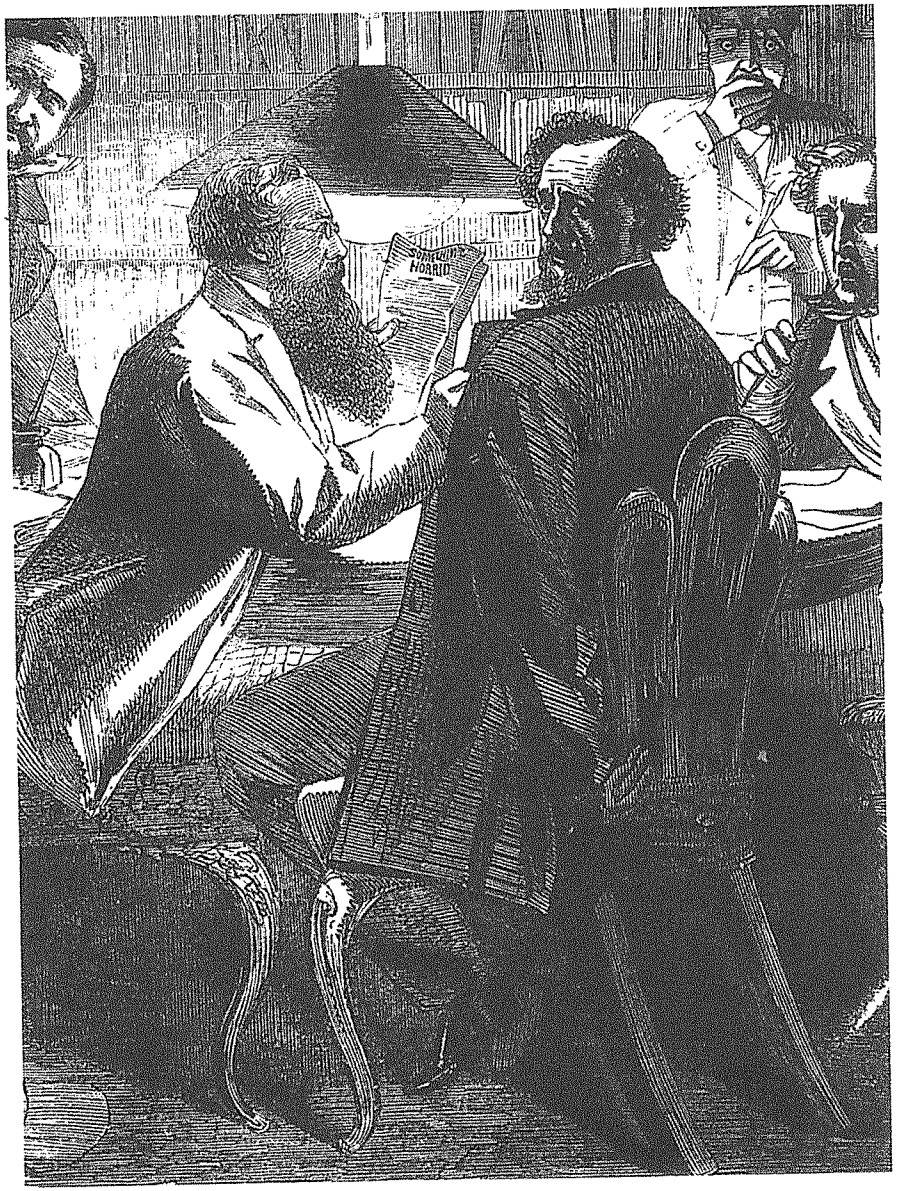

Detail of "'Tom Tiddler's Ground.'—The Committee of Concoction," *Queen* 1, 16 (21 December 1861). By permission of the British Library, LD45.

UNEQUAL PARTNERS

Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and Victorian Authorship

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CHAPTER 4

Class Consciousness and the Indian Mutiny:

The Collaborative Fiction of 1857

Toward the end of November 1857, three months after his last performance as Richard Wardour in *The Frozen Deep,* Dickens wrote to Angela Burdett-Coutts describing the Christmas Number he and Collins had just finished writing for *Household Words:* "It is all one story this time, of which I have written the greater part (Mr. Collins has written one chapter), and which I have planned with great care in the hope of commemorating, without any vulgar catchpenny connexion or application, some of the best qualities of the English character that have been shewn in India" (Pilgrim, 8:482–83). In speaking of the "best qualities" shown by the English in India, Dickens refers to their "heroic" resistance against the native sepoys, who had begun to mutiny in May of that year. The sepoys had political and economic grievances, but the immediate cause of their revolt was religious. The British had introduced Enfield rifles into the army, and the sepoys had to bite off the ends of the greased cartridges before they were loaded. Suspecting that the cartridges were greased with cow and pig fat, and hence sacrilegious to Hindus and Muslims, the sepoys concluded that the British were forcing them to commit sacrilege and rebelled. Some murdered their officers as well as English women and children.[1] Every day, accounts of Indian atrocities and examples of British martyrdom were reported in the British press: the sale of Englishwomen to Indians in the

1. For discussions of the Indian Mutiny from different vantage points, see Wayne G. Broehl Jr., *Crisis of the Raj: The Revolt of 1857 through British Lieutenants' Eyes* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1986); Pratul Chandra Gupta, *Nana Sahib and the Rising at Cawnpore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); Christopher Hibbert, *The Great Mutiny: India 1857* (New York: Penguin, 1980); Thomas Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt: India, 1857–1870* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964); and Vinayak Savarkar, *The Indian War of Independence, 1857* (Bombay: Phoenix Press, 1947).

streets of Cawnpore, for example.[2] Predictably enough, these accounts elicited calls for repression and retribution. "No episode in British imperial history raised public excitement to a higher pitch than the Indian Mutiny," Brantlinger observes.[3]

Dickens shared in this so-called "excitement." Like many of his contemporaries in 1857, he called for the extermination of the Indian race. His genocidal response to the mutiny is recorded in a letter written to Burdett-Coutts on 4 October 1857. But as this letter makes clear, Dickens's racism was generated by domestic as well as imperial anxieties, since class tensions in England, not only racial hostilities in India, were brought to the fore by the mutiny:

> When I see people writing letters in the Times day after day, about this class and that class not joining the Army and having no interest in arms—and when I think how we all know that we have suffered a system to go on, which has blighted generous ambition, and put reward out of the common man's reach—and how our gentry have disarmed our Peasantry—I become Demoniacal.
>
> And I wish I were Commander in Chief in India. The first thing I would do to strike that Oriental race with amazement (not in the least regarding them as if they lived in the Strand, London, or at Camden Town), should be to proclaim to them, in their language, that I considered my holding that appointment by the leave of God, to mean that I should do my utmost to exterminate the Race upon whom the stain of the late cruelties rested; and that I begged them to do me the favor to observe that I was there for that purpose and no other, and was proceeding, with all convenient dispatch and merciful swiftness of execution, to blot it out of mankind and raze it off the face of the Earth. (Pilgrim, 8:459)

Dickens addresses what appear to be two separate concerns in this letter—the disinterest of working-class men in joining the army and the need to punish the sepoys for their "cruelties." Yet these two concerns are inseparable in his thinking. Not only did racial conflict in India expose class differences in England; the image of the treacherous sepoy enabled Dickens to imaginatively resolve those very differences. In the summer and fall of 1857, the London *Times* had printed letters complaining of the reluctance of working-class men to join the fight against the sepoys as well as letters justifying their reluctance and calling for easier promotion from the ranks. If one out of three commissions went to noncommissioned officers or privates, a writer argued on 2 October, the

2. *Examiner* (5 September 1857); quoted by William Oddie, "Dickens and the Indian Mutiny," *Dickensian* 68 (January 1972): 4.

3. Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 199.

"prospect of promotion would be added to the motive from righteous indignation at atrocities greater than any which are known to have been perpetrated since the world began."[4] Addressing this problem in his letter to Burdett-Coutts, Dickens justifies the resentment of "the common man" and his reticence to fight the sepoys, since the army system reinforces class differences by "blight[ing] . . . ambition" and "put[ting] reward out of . . . reach." He then goes on to attack the Indian mutineers in a way that resolves these differences—by defining the otherness of the "Oriental" against the sameness of all Englishmen, regardless of their class: the Indians are "not in the least" to be viewed "as if they lived in the Strand, London, or at Camden Town." Conveying his sense of English solidarity rhetorically, Dickens puts himself in the shoes of the common man and wishes for a promotion himself ("I wish I were Commander in Chief").

Like Dickens, Collins was interested in the relationship between class identity and nationalism, and understood that representations of racial difference often serve a unifying and nationalistic end. From nearly the start of his literary career, he considered the tension between class and national allegiances and its consequences for imperialism. Drawing on a number of historical sources in *Antonina; or, the Fall of Rome,* Collins attributes Rome's fall to class divisions at the heart of the ancient empire. Rather than joining the fight against the invading barbarians, the discontented character Probus, angered by the political and economic abuses of the aristocrats ruling his own country, welcomes them to Rome:

> Goths! . . . Is there one among us to whom this report of their advance upon Rome does not speak of hope rather than of dread? Have we a chance of rising from the degradation forced on us by our superiors until this den of heartless triflers and shameless cowards is swept from the very earth that it pollutes? . . . Do you wonder now that . . . I say to the Goths—with thousands who suffer the same tribulation that I now undergo—"Enter our gates! Level our palaces to the ground! Confound, if you will, in one common slaughter, we that are victims with those that are tyrants!"[5]

4. *Times* (London), 2 October 1857, 4. Shortly before the mutiny, Dickens himself published an article criticizing the "snail-like" pace of "promotion from the ranks" during the Crimean War and contrasting the English army system with the French system of "promotion by merit": "Once in the ranks, always in the ranks, is the maxim in the English army; and the man who accepts the shilling from the recruiting-sergeant . . . bids adieu to all hope of rising in the military profession." See [Reeves], "Promotion, French and English," *Household Words* 15 (24 January 1857): 91. Similarly, "Why We Can't Get Recruits" argues that no "educated man of the English working classes" will join the army because he "hope[s] to better himself" (*All the Year Round* 14 [9 December 1865]: 464). Dickens continued to publish articles on the English army system, criticizing the priority given to "money" over "merit." See, for example, "Money or Merit?" *All the Year Round* 3 (21 April 1860): 30–32; and "Pay For Your Places," *All the Year Round* 4 (27 October 1860): 67–69. Brian Bond discusses the Indian Mutiny and the problem of army recruitment in the 1850s, as well as the reforms to which the crisis gave rise, in "Prelude to the Cardwell Reforms, 1856–68," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* 106 (1961): 229–36, and "Recruiting the Victorian Army, 1870–92," *Victorian Studies* 5 (June 1962): 331–38.

Although Collins's novel is set in antiquity, its recurring refrain—"in Ancient Rome, as in Modern London"—makes it a warning parable for those governing the British Empire in the 1850s.[6] Indeed, Collins's image of citizens failing to defend "their" empire from barbarians because they feel "exile[d]" from their own "country's privileges" recurs in Dickens's letter to Burdett-Coutts as well as those written to the *Times* in 1857.[7] Without the promise of promotion from the ranks, the common man in Victorian England, like Collins's ancient Probus, will never feel the "righteous indignation" necessary to fight the sepoys and may identify with the mutinous barbarians instead.

The problem of the army system and the disaffection of the common man inform the two stories conceived by Dickens and coauthored by Collins in 1857—"The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices," serialized in *Household Words* in October, and "The Perils of Certain English Prisoners," published in December as the Christmas Number. While "The Perils" has been identified as Dickens's story about the Indian Mutiny, "The Lazy Tour" has not. Yet Dickens responds to the mutiny in both works, although in a rather surprising way: by seeking to repair class relations. In fact, the class divisions revealed by recruitment efforts in England during the mutiny prove to be a more pressing concern for Dickens than race relations themselves, and he uses racial conflict as one of several ways in which to overcome the class differences and class resentment that were exposed to view by events in India. In "The Lazy Tour," Dickens elides class differences by imagining an England in which all labor is suspended, in which "all degrees of men, from peers to paupers," are members of an idle class.[8] In "The Perils," he displaces the class resentment of English privates with racism, transforming their socially subversive feelings of class injury into a socially quiescent hatred of natives.

In his own contributions to these stories, Collins both complies with and resists Dickens's aims; his response marks the political differences between the

5. Wilkie Collins, *Antonina; or, the Fall of Rome,* vol. 17 of *The Works of Wilkie Collins,* 30 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 1970), pp. 81–82.

6. Ibid., p. 481.

7. Ibid., p. 80.

8. Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins, "The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices," in *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices and Other Stories* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1890), p. 89; subsequent references to "The Lazy Tour" are cited parenthetically in the text.

two writers as well as the changing terms of their relationship. Since the publication of Nuel Pharr Davis's *Life of Wilkie Collins,* critics have noted that Collins's response to the mutiny differed markedly from Dickens's and that the virulent racism that characterizes Dickens's remarks about Hindus—"low, treacherous, murderous, tigerous villains . . . who would rend you to pieces at half an hour's notice" (Pilgrim, 8:473)—is notably absent from Collins's writing, or expressed by figures we are meant to distrust. In "A Sermon for Sepoys," published in *Household Words* in 1858, Collins points to "the excellent moral lessons" provided by "Oriental literature" and advocates the moral reform of Indians rather than their extermination.[9] Less anxious to elide class differences than Dickens, Collins has no *need* for the virulent racism that Dickens expresses. As his portrait of Probus in *Antonina* suggests, Collins is willing to imagine—and justify—an alliance between the members of an imperial underclass and those of a subject race, and he does so in the works that follow the Indian Mutiny as well as in those that precede it.

In the 1857 stories, Collins more clearly stakes out his own position and questions that of Dickens than he had in such works as "The Seven Poor Travellers" and "The Wreck of the Golden Mary." He was encouraged to do so by his growing professional success and by his increasingly important role as Dickens's companion and confidante. In 1857, Dickens's marital unhappiness and his romantic pursuit of the young actress Ellen Ternan left him in a state of "restlessness" (Pilgrim, 8:423), and he often sought the companionship and support of the younger writer, whose own unconventional relationship with Caroline Graves dates from that year: "Any mad proposal you please, will find a wildly insane response in. Yours Ever," Dickens concludes his letter of 11 May 1857 (Pilgrim, 8:323). "On Wednesday Sir—on Wednesday, if the mind can devise any thing sufficiently in the style of Sybarite Rome in the days of its culminating voluptuousness," Dickens tells Collins on 22 May, "I am your man" (Pilgrim, 8:330). A staff member rewarded for his "devot[ion]" and "great service" to *Household Words* with an annual pay raise of fifty pounds (Pilgrim, 8:440, 457), Collins remained well aware of the value placed on his "submission" to Dickens, but he was also newly conscious of Dickens's vulnerability to public opinion and of his own crucial importance to his famous friend.

Thus when Catherine Peters describes Collins in 1857 as "a willing instrument and extension of Dickens" (*King,* 168), her portrait is incomplete. In "The Lazy Tour" and "The Perils," Collins proves considerably less compliant than Peters suggests and challenges as well as supports Dickens's strategies and aims. Writing as Thomas Idle in "The Lazy Tour," Collins accepts a role that obscures his subordination to Dickens at *Household Words,* playing the part of a fellow apprentice whose obscurity is due to a disinclination for work, not to the suppression of his name in publications. But while embracing the idleness that Dickens ascribes to his fictional persona, Collins also identifies it as a mark of Idle's gentility and develops its meaning as a class privilege in his interpolated tale. Using the 1857 mutiny to ally the apprentices, whatever their differences may be, Dickens refers to India as a place "which Idle and Goodchild did not [like]" (6). By contrast, Collins parodies the rhetoric intended to unify Englishmen against threatening others, comically deriding the "smouldering treachery" of "equine nature" (102) rather than that of the "Oriental race."

In his chapter of "The Perils," similarly, Collins deflates the elevated tone of Dickens's narrative, debunking the martyrdom allegedly suffered by the English at Indian hands. Dickens seeks to "commemorat[e] . . . the best qualities of the English character shewn in India," but Collins takes a more equivocal position. He treats the rebel leader as a mirror image of "dandies . . . in London," reminding his readers that the mutiny was caused, in part, by the excesses of English officers who abused their Indian subordinates.[10] Allying the English privates and sailors with the natives alongside whom they labor, Collins suggests that working-class Englishmen may have more in common with mutinous sepoys than Dickens allows. In a story about mutiny, Collins exhibits his own penchant for insubordination, although his resistance to Dickens often takes subtle and compromised forms.

I

Drawing the names of their protagonists from William Hogarth's sequence of engravings entitled *Industry and Idleness* (1747) in "The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices," Dickens and Collins describe the adventures of Francis Goodchild and Thomas Idle as they travel into the north of England in September 1857, with Dickens writing from Goodchild's perspective and Collins from that of Idle. In the opening section, Dickens explains that the apprentices, "exhausted by the long, hot summer, and the long, hot work it had brought with it," have run away from their employer—whom he identifies as "lady . . . Literature"—in the hopes of "making a perfectly idle trip, in any direction" (3). In the first chapter, Dickens recounts their departure from London

9. [Wilkie Collins], "A Sermon for Sepoys," *Household Words* 17 (27 February 1858): 244.

10. Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins, "The Perils of Certain English Prisoners," in *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices and Other Stories,* p. 269; subsequent references to "The Perils" are cited parenthetically in the text.

and their stay in Carlisle and Heske, while Collins describes their ascent of Carrock Fell, on which Idle sprains his ankle. In the second chapter, Dickens brings the apprentices to Wigton and then to an unnamed Cumberland town, where they meet Dr. Speddie and his assistant Mr. Lorn. Taking up the narrative, Collins writes an interpolated tale related by Dr. Speddie, in which a poor young man pronounced dead one afternoon returns to life that evening. In chapter 3, Dickens describes the apprentices' arrival in Allonby, while Collins recounts the disasters caused by Idle's attempts at industry. Dickens concludes the chapter by taking the characters from Allonby to an intermediate railway station, and on to Lancaster. Chapter 4, written solely by Dickens and set in Lancaster, is largely taken up with an interpolated tale narrated by a ghost who describes forcing his young bride to die by the power of his will and murdering her male defender, and who confesses to being hanged for his crimes in the previous century. In the final chapter, Dickens describes the apprentices as they travel through Leeds to Doncaster, arriving during race week for the running of the St. Leger, while Collins explains Idle's dislike of "equine nature."[11]

As Dickens's letters from September 1857 make clear, the plotline of "The Lazy Tour" generally follows the itinerary of the two writers as they made their way from London to Doncaster, composing weekly installments of the story as they went from place to place, and each of the chapters selectively describes events they experienced on their travels. Collins badly sprained his ankle on Carrock Fell, for example, and Dickens went to the St. Leger in Doncaster, although the fact that he accompanied Ellen Ternan to the races goes unmentioned in the story.[12]

Dickens first refers to the story that became "The Lazy Tour" in a letter written to Collins on 29 August 1857, soon after his last performance in *The Frozen Deep:*

11. Generally speaking, critics agree on how to divide the literary labors of Dickens and Collins in "The Lazy Tour." Using the 1890 Chapman and Hall edition of the story, Nuel Pharr Davis attributes its authorship as follows: chapter 1, Dickens, pp. 1–11, Collins, pp. 11–19; chapter 2, Dickens, pp. 20–28, Collins, pp. 28–49; chapter 3, Dickens, pp. 50–55, Collins, pp. 55–65; chapter 4, Dickens, pp. 66–86; chapter 5, Dickens, pp. 87–96, Collins, pp. 97–103, Dickens, pp. 103–4. Davis mistakenly attributes a portion of chapter 3 to Collins (the description of the railway station, which Dickens authored [see Pilgrim, 8:454]), but otherwise his attributions agree with my own. Frederic G. Kitton is less accurate in his analysis of "The Lazy Tour"; citing Forster, he mistakenly attributes all of chapter 5 to Collins. Yet as the Pilgrim editors explain, Forster purposely misattributed chapter 5 to Collins to "avert . . . attention from the revealing passages" that describe Goodchild's infatuation with a young woman modeled on Ellen Ternan (Pilgrim, 8:448 n. 1). See Davis, *The Life of Wilkie Collins* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), p. 326 n. 24; and Kitton, *The Minor Writings of Charles Dickens* (London: Elliot Stock, 1900), p. 134.

12. Claire Tomalin discusses Dickens's meetings with Ellen Ternan in Doncaster, noting that Dickens chose it as his destination because he knew that the Ternans were scheduled to perform there. See *The Invisible Woman: The Story of Nelly Ternan and Charles Dickens* (New York: Knopf, 1991), pp. 102–5.

> Partly in the grim despair and restlessness of this subsidence from excitement, and partly for the sake of Household Words, I want to cast about whether you and I can go anywhere—take any tour—see any thing—whereon we could write something together. Have you any idea, tending to any place in the world? Will you rattle your head and see if there is any pebble in it which we could wander away and play at Marbles with? We want something for Household Words, and I want to escape from myself. (Pilgrim, 8:423)

Citing this letter, critics and biographers discuss Dickens's need to "escape from [him]self" in the fall of 1857—or, rather, his desire to escape from his wife Catherine—arguing that his growing sense of marital unhappiness and his interest in Ellen Ternan lay "behind his ostensibly 'lazy tour' with Collins."[13] Wishing for a separation from Catherine, but fearing "it is impossible" (Pilgrim, 8:434), Dickens planned a trip that would bring him to Doncaster when Ellen and her family members were scheduled to perform at the Theatre Royal, traveling with Collins, whom he knew would not find his extramarital interests at all offensive. Indeed, Dickens refers to Collins's own aversion to matrimony in his portion of chapter 3—when he describes Idle's desire to "eat Bride-cake without the trouble of being married" (64–65)—and both writers complain of the caprices and difficulties of women in their interpolated tales.

But if Dickens's tour enabled him to escape from the confinement of his marriage, the story itself is escapist in another sense. Deborah Thomas notes that "The Lazy Tour" can be read as "a kind of creative game" that Dickens and Collins played together, a work that expresses a "holiday *jeux d'esprit.*"[14] Yet this holiday spirit serves a serious social end. Representing his characters as the members of an all-inclusive idle class, a nation gone on holiday, Dickens solves the problem of resentment in the rank and file.

The social anxieties that underlie "The Lazy Tour" are suggested by the context in which the story first appeared as well as by its own treatment of class relations. Its first installment in *Household Words* was immediately followed by "Indian Recruits and Indian English," an article describing the "lesson written in fire and blood" by the treacherous sepoys, "a horde of blood-thirsty enemies," but that begins by acknowledging the scarcity of army volunteers back home: "In Europe, the task of recruiting-sergeant is anything but a sinecure. In

13. Deborah A. Thomas, *Dickens and the Short Story* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), p. 113. Like Thomas, Harry Stone reads "The Lazy Tour" as an "intensely and avowedly autobiographic" work that registers "Dickens' troubled flight away from self." See *Dickens and the Invisible World: Fairy Tales, Fantasy, and Novel-Making* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), pp. 288, 291.

14. D. Thomas, *Dickens and the Short Story*, pp. 80–81.

fact, scarcely any nation relies on any other than forced conscription to replenish its armies. England alone seems able to furnish an adequate number of volunteers, and even in England, the demand is often much beyond the supply."[15]

In Dickens's opening section of "The Lazy Tour," as in this *Household Words* article, the recruiting-sergeant makes his appearance, in a scene reminding us that volunteers are scarce. "Through all the . . . bargains and blessings" offered during market morning in Carlisle, Dickens observes, "the recruiting-sergeant watchfully elbowed his way, a thread of War in the peaceful skein. Likewise on the walls were printed hints that the Oxford Blues might not be indisposed to hear of a few fine active young men; and that whereas the standard of that distinguished corps is full six feet, 'growing lads of five feet eleven' need not absolutely despair of being accepted" (8). To Dickens's original readers, his passing references to the recruiting sergeant, on the one hand, and to the Oxford Blues (or Royal Horse Guards), on the other, would have brought to mind the problem of the army system as he describes it to Burdett-Coutts. Directed by the commander in chief of the army and headed by aging aristocrats who had last fought at Waterloo, the Horse Guards were notoriously elitist and anachronistic in the 1850s. "The spirit of persistence in old blunders is certainly not national, but is of the Horse Guards, local, and only of the old school military," an article later published by Dickens explained.[16] Because commissions in the Horse Guards were among the most expensive, the regiment made the class divisions in the army and the elitism of its officers particularly apparent. Whereas a commission in the infantry cost £450 in 1821, the purchase price for a commission in the Horse Guards was £1,200.[17] By the time "The Lazy Tour" was published, the elitism of cavalry officers had become a familiar subject of political cartoons, which represented them as "wasp-waisted" dandies.[18] Although the "hints" printed on Carlisle's market walls in "The Lazy Tour" suggest that those "few . . . fine men" who wish to join the Horse Guards "need not absolutely despair of being accepted," Dickens's readers understood that the common man, pursued by the recruiting-sergeant, had little interest in joining the ranks.

15. [E. Townsend and Alexander Henry Abercromby Hamilton], "Indian Recruits and Indian English," *Household Words* 16 (3 October 1857): 320, 319.

16. "Tape at the Horse Guards," *All the Year Round* 6 (6 March 1862): 568. "Soldier's Law," similarly, speaks of the "brute inert opposition [to reform] on the part of the ancient generals at the Horse Guards" (*All the Year Round* 16 [28 July 1866]: 55), as does "The Horse Guards Rampant" ([Henry Morley], *Household Words* 8 [31 December 1853]: 428–31). "At the horse guards," the military historian Correlli Barnett notes, "old men . . . stultified progress" (*Britain and Her Army, 1509–1970* [New York: William Morrow, 1970], p. 282).

17. Edward M. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815–1914* (London: Longman, 1980), p. 11.

18. Jerome J. McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 195.

Having alluded to the class tensions underlying his story, Dickens goes on to relieve them—not by advocating reform in the army system but by eliding class distinctions. Transforming industry into idleness and work into play, Dickens represents Englishmen as members of a leisure class, whether they are high or low born, wealthy or impoverished. For example, "the working young men" of Carlyle idle about town with "their hands in their pockets" and "nothing else to do" (7). The fishermen in Allonby "never fish," but "g[e]t their living entirely by looking at the ocean" (53). Although the appearance of workers in Wigton is "partly of a mining, partly of a ploughing, partly of a stable character," they do not labor in mines, fields, or stables. Instead they "look . . . at nothing—very hard": "Their backs are slouched, and their legs are curved with much standing about. Their pockets are loose and dog's-eared, on account of their hands being always in them" (23).

In "The Lazy Tour," such idleness is not a symptom of economic depression or unemployment but a feature of an idyll in which men earn their keep without labor and in which objects themselves deny their use value. Thus in the drawing room of the inn at Heske, as Dickens describes it, the furniture and dishes pass themselves off as purely ornamental, as "nick-nack[s]" rather than tools. "The copper tea-kettle . . . took his station on a stand of his own at the greatest possible distance from the fire-place, and said: 'By your leave, not a kittle, but a bijou.' The Staffordshire-ware butter-dish . . . got upon a little round occasional table in a window, with a worked top, and announced itself . . . as an aid to polite conversation, a graceful trifle in china to be chatted over by callers, as they airily trifled away the visiting moments of a butterfly existence" (10). In Dickens's portions of "The Lazy Tour," virtually everyone shares this "butterfly existence." The apprentices travel "deep in the manufacturing bosom of Yorkshire" but see no signs of factory life, and they soon arrive at Doncaster during race week to find "all work but race-work at a stand-still; all men at a stand-still" (89). It is September, and harvest time, but the crops are "still unreaped" (8): "No labourers [are] working in the fields" (91) because the business of play engages "all degrees of men, from peers to paupers" (89).

This suspension of labor is all the more striking when "The Lazy Tour" is compared to the story that Nuel Pharr Davis identifies as its literary source—Collins's "A Journey in Search of Nothing," published in *Household Words* on 5 September 1857.[19] In this story, Collins's narrator is a professional author whose "weary right hand ache[s] . . . with driving the ceaseless pen."[20] Told that he has "been working too hard" by his doctor, who orders him to "do

19. Davis, *Life of Wilkie Collins*, p. 204.

20. Wilkie Collins, "A Journey in Search of Nothing," *Household Words* 16 (5 September 1857): 217–23; *My Miscellanies*, vol. 20 of *The Works of Wilkie Collins*, p. 26.

nothing" as a cure, he travels to retired country villages but discovers that he cannot escape from labor.[21] Each town to which he travels, no matter how remote or leisurely it appears, reminds him of the "necessities of work."[22] Observing "the sons of labor" in these villages, "cadaverous savages, drinking gloomily from brown mugs," he contrasts romantic depictions of such figures with "modern reality," debunking the pastoral idealizations of workers in the poetry of Keats and the paintings of Claude and Poussin: "Where are the pipe and tabor that I have seen in so many pictures; where are the simple songs that I have read about in so many poems?"[23]

In "A Journey in Search of Nothing," Collins restores the realities of labor to the poetry and paintings of the romantics, but in "The Lazy Tour" Dickens asks him to do the reverse—to imagine the English as members of a nationalized leisure class. Dickens's escape from material realities takes its most personal form in his representation of himself and Collins as Goodchild and Idle—"misguided young men" who have run away from their "employer," "a highly meritorious lady (named Literature), of fair credit and repute" (3). As the conductor of *Household Words,* Dickens and not "lady . . . Literature" was Collins's employer, and the two writers set off for Cumberland, in part, because copy was needed for the journal. But Dickens identifies Goodchild and Idle as fellow apprentices on vacation, obscuring the authority he wields in their working relationship as well as the labor they performed during their tour. In his letters from Doncaster, Dickens speaks of "fall[ing] to work for HW," and recounts the daily routine that he and Collins followed in order to produce the necessary amount of copy (Pilgrim, 8:448). "Collins is sticking a little with his story," Dickens told Wills on 17 September, "but I hope will come through it tomorrow" (Pilgrim, 8:448). Such difficulties are eliminated in "The Lazy Tour," however, in which the vacationing apprentices produce only "lazy sheets" from "lazy notes" (70).

If any work is accomplished on the tour, Dickens claims, it is performed by Goodchild, who has no real idea of idleness. "You *can't* play," Idle complains to Goodchild in Dickens's narrative: "You make work of everything" (66). Whereas "Goodchild was laboriously idle," Dickens explains, and "had no better idea of idleness than that it was useless industry," Idle "was an idler of the unmixed Irish or Neapolitan type; a passive idler, a born-and-bred idler, a consistent idler, who practices what he would have preached if he had not been too idle to preach" (4). Justifying the inequities between himself and his staff

21. Ibid., pp. 24–25.
22. Ibid., p. 46.
23. Ibid., pp. 39, 29–30.

member and the discrepancies in their recognition and rewards, Dickens models Goodchild on the "industrious apprentice" of Hogarth's series and Collins's Idle on his foil, while also suggesting that *true* idleness—the "born-and-bred" variety—is not English but "Irish or Neapolitan."

Whereas Dickens attributes idleness, in its purest form, to racial others, Collins identifies it as English—and upper class. Like his aristocratic taste for "sedan-chair[s]" (100), the idleness embraced by Collins's Idle is the sign of a specific class identity. In Collins's narrative, Idle lies on the sofa, crippled by his exertions on Carrock Fell, and wistfully remembers "that the current of his life had hitherto oozed along in one smooth stream of laziness, occasionally troubled on the surface by a slight passing ripple of industry" (56). Resolving "never to be industrious again" (60), he recounts the "disasters" that resulted from his "activity and industry" in the past, efforts that he made at public school, on the cricket field, and in the legal profession: places that define his class identity. Idle's industry results in disaster, Collins suggests, because it violates what he facetiously describes as "the great do-nothing principle" of English gentlemen (59). Playing the part of Idle, Collins undoubtedly enjoyed imagining himself as a "do-nothing" gentleman defined against a hopelessly industrious Dickens. While enjoying this fantasy, however, Collins also used it to a subversive end: to illustrate class privilege in a story designed to obscure class differences.

Collins more fully develops the social meaning of idleness in the interpolated tale he contributed to chapter 2 of "The Lazy Tour," a short story later anthologized in *The Queen of Hearts* (1859) as "The Dead Hand." Narrated by Dr. Speddie, who is called in to treat Idle's sprained ankle, the tale recounts the experiences of an impoverished man pronounced dead in an inn one afternoon but brought back to life that night by the doctor, in the presence of the young man occupying the same double-bedded chamber as the "corpse." Compared to Collins's melodrama *The Red Vial* (1858), in which a body in a morgue is revitalized, "The Dead Hand" is generally disparaged as an exercise in the macabre or as a way in which Collins "padded out" his contribution to *Household Words.*[24] But in portraying the privileged figure who discovers signs of life in his roommate—a wealthy gentleman of leisure named (appropriately) Arthur Holliday—Collins reworks the central theme of "The Lazy Tour," undermining the social idyll constructed in the larger story.

Like the workers in Carlyle and the fishermen in Allonby, whom Dickens describes in his portions of "The Lazy Tour," Collins's Arthur Holliday has no need to work for a living. Unlike the leisure of Dickens's idle figures, however, Holliday's idleness marks his class privilege. The son of a wealthy manufacturer,

24. Kenneth Robinson, *Wilkie Collins: A Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), p. 116.

he is "comfortably conscious of his own well-filled pockets" (31). Sauntering into Doncaster during race week without having troubled to reserve a room, he is amused by "the novelty of being turned away into the street, like a penniless vagabond" (29). But instead of endorsing Arthur's "holiday" spirits, Collins attributes them to the callous complacency of the leisure class and contrasts them with the bitterness of the poor man brought back to life only to perform whatever work "will put bread into [his] mouth" (42).

The interpolated tale that Dickens contributed to "The Lazy Tour" also calls attention to the sufferings of those who labor but does so in a safely distanced way, by criticizing the slave trade of Lancaster merchants in the previous century.[25] Having inherited the wealth of his dead bride, the ghostly narrator of Dickens's tale invests it in the "dark trade" at "Twelve Hundred Per Cent" (80). But like the slave merchants to whom Dickens refers when he first describes Lancaster, the narrator fails to benefit from profits derived from "wretched slaves":

> Mr. Goodchild concedes Lancaster to be a pleasant place. A place . . . possessing staid old houses richly fitted with old Honduras mahogany, which has grown so dark with time that it seems to have got something of a retrospective mirror-quality into itself, and to show the visitor, in the depth of its grain, through all its polish, the hue of the wretched slaves who groaned long ago under old Lancaster merchants. (65)

In this passage, Dickens assumes the role of a social critic who exposes hidden wrongs—the past sufferings of the "wretched slaves" whose labor brought wealth to Lancaster but whose exploitation is largely invisible and forgotten. However, Dickens obscures as much as he exposes here: perhaps most notably, the industrial "slavery" of the Lancashire operatives, who are themselves hidden from view in "The Lazy Tour," yet compared to slaves of African descent by Victorian social reformers.[26] In *The Pickwick Papers*, published twenty years earlier, Dickens himself complains that the people of Muggleton condemn slavery

25. A story in which an older man forces his young wife to die by the power of his will, Dickens's interpolated tale usually interests critics because of its disturbing autobiographical elements and the way it conflates hostility toward an "encumbering wife" with the desire to shape and control a young woman named "Ellen" in the narrative (D. Thomas, *Dickens and the Short Story*, p. 113). See Stone, *Dickens and the Invisible World*, pp. 288–94; and Michael Slater, *Dickens and Women* (London: J. M. Dent, 1983), pp. 142–43.

26. For a discussion of this analogy as it was developed by chartists and abolitionists in the 1830s, see Betty Fladeland, "'Our Cause being One and the Same': Abolitionists and Chartism," in *Slavery and British Society, 1776–1846*, ed. James Walvin (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), pp. 69–99.

abroad while condoning its practice in the English mills; they have presented "no fewer than one thousand four hundred and twenty petitions against the continuance of Negro slavery abroad, and an equal number against any interference with the factory system at home."[27] But in "The Lazy Tour," Dickens avoids such analogies; the factory workers themselves never appear in the story, and the Lancaster slave merchants of the eighteenth century are compared not to the mill owners of Dickens's own day but to the mythical Eastern oppressors who figure in *The Arabian Nights* and whose "money turned to leaves" (65).

Furthermore, Dickens's "retrospective" look at the slaves who "groaned long ago" under Lancaster merchants implies that England's history of racial exploitation is just that: a thing of the past. Referring to "Uncle Tom" and "Miss Eva" in "The Lazy Tour" (9), Dickens reminds his readers that slavery is practiced by Americans in 1857, not by the English, whose role is to liberate rather than enslave. As one *Household Words* article asserts, "It is England's proudest boast that wherever her flag is unfurled, wherever her supremacy is established, there she carries the blessings of liberal institutions: she conquers but to set free. The same justice which is provided for the proudest son of Albion, is sent forth across the waters to attend on the meanest swarthy subject of Her Majesty, in distant India."[28]

In 1857, such claims about the "blessings" of English liberalism and the freedom bestowed through conquest were challenged on two fronts: by common men unwilling to join the army and by sepoys in open revolt. In "The Lazy Tour," Dickens responds to this crisis by evading it, imagining working men as gentlemen of leisure and referring to India only briefly, to dismiss the subject: "There was a lecture on India for those who liked it," he notes, "which Idle and Goodchild did not" (6). While Collins does not defend the sepoys in his portions of "The Lazy Tour," he proves less evasive in his treatment of the mutiny than Dickens does and suggests that the exploitation of the "subject races" by the English is hardly a thing of the past.

Writing at a time when calls for retribution against the sepoys were commonplace, Collins parodies the rhetoric used to describe them in his final section of the story, which represents the comic musings of Idle on the "treachery" of "equine nature." Idle's stereotype of the horse echoes that of the mutinous Indian, satirizing the racist hysteria that reduced the sepoys to ungrateful and dangerous beasts:

27. Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers*, ed. Robert L. Patten (1972; reprint, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p. 161.

28. [John Capper], "Law in the East," *Household Words* 5 (26 June 1852): 347.

I prefer coming at once to my last charge against the horse, which is the most serious of all, because it affects his moral character. I accuse him boldly, in his capacity of servant to man, of slyness and treachery. I brand him publicly, no matter how mild he may look about the eyes, or how sleek he may be about the coat, as a systematic betrayer, whenever he can get the chance, of the confidence reposed in him. . . . When he had made quite sure of my friendly confidence . . . the smouldering treachery and ingratitude of the equine nature blazed out in an instant. . . . What would be said of a Man who had requited my kindness in that way? (99, 102)

Informing this passage is the standard British explanation of the mutiny, which reduced a religious and political movement to yet another example of the innate treachery of "that Oriental race." A number of the articles that Dickens published on the subject of the mutiny explain it in this way: "Hindoo Law," for instance, describes the "savage cruelty" of the seemingly "mild" Hindus, which has broken out "like a long-smouldering flame," and Dickens himself defines "the Oriental character" for Emile de la Rue as "low, treacherous, murderous, tigerous" in a letter of 23 October 1857 (Pilgrim, 8:473).[29]

Using this language in his account of "equine nature" to describe a pony that fell while carrying Idle and a horse that shied, Collins makes it sound grossly overblown and suggests its failure to explain the sepoys' behavior. His comic account of the "revolt" of various animal species "overtaxed" by humankind suggests, too, that the sepoys have reason to rebel; "the cow that kicks down the milk-pail," for example, "may think herself taxed too heavily to contribute to the dilution of human tea and the greasing of human bread" (102). Even more pointedly, Collins repeatedly speaks of Idle's fears of "losing caste" at public school (56–57), referring to what those sympathetic to the sepoys understood to be the immediate cause of their revolt—not the innate treachery of their race but their fear that the British were forcing them to commit sacrilege. "You will soon lose your caste altogether," a low-caste Hindu allegedly told the first sepoy mutineer; "the Europeans are going to make you bite cartridges soaked in cow and pork fat."[30]

Collins's parody of mutiny rhetoric in "The Lazy Tour," and his suggestion that the English as well as the Hindus have a "caste" system, look ahead to his treatment of the sepoy revolt in "The Perils of Certain English Prisoners"—and, later, in *The Moonstone* as well. While Dickens uses the image of the treacherous sepoy to elide class differences in "The Perils," Collins puts English privates and sailors in the position usually occupied by those subject to colonial rule, acknowledging the social inequities obscured by his collaborator.

29. [Henry Richard Fox Bourne], "Hindoo Law," *Household Words* 18 (25 September 1858): 337. See also Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, pp. 202–3.

30. Hibbert, *Great Mutiny*, p. 63.

II

While "The Lazy Tour" was running in *Household Words,* Dickens began to conduct research for the upcoming Christmas Number, which Collins agreed to coauthor. On 18 October, Dickens wrote to Morley, whose articles often focused on South and Central America. Explaining that he "particularly want[s] a little piece of information, with a view to the construction of something for Household Words," Dickens asks him to "consider and reply to the following question":

> Whether, at any time within a hundred years or so, we were in such amicable relations with South America as would have rendered it reasonably *possible* for us to have made, either a public treaty, or a private bargain, with a South American Government, empowering a little English Colony . . . to work a Silver-Mine (on purchase of the right). And whether, in that suppositious case, it is reasonably *possible* that our English Government at home would have sent out a small force, of a few Marines or so, for that little Colony's protection; or (which is the same thing), would have drafted them off from the nearest English Military Station.
>
> Or, can you suggest, from your remembrance, any more probable set of circumstances, in which a few English people—gentlemen, ladies and children—and a few English soldiers, would find themselves alone in a strange wild place and liable to hostile attack?
>
> I wish to avoid India itself; but I want to shadow out in what I do, the bravery of our ladies in India. (Pilgrim, 8:468–69)

Morley responded by sending Dickens Carl Scherzer's *Travels in the Free States of Central America: Nicaragua, Honduras, and San Salvador* (1857). Forwarding the book to Collins on 22 October, Dickens referred him to specific passages on silver mining, told him that they must "come to some conclusion, right or wrong," about their story, and scheduled a meeting with him for the next afternoon (Pilgrim, 8:470).

Although Dickens tells Collins that the material he has received "complicates" his plans for the story (Pilgrim, 8:470), his conception of its plot and aims, as described to Morley, is largely realized in the finished work, which he and Collins completed by the end of November. Consisting of three chapters—the first and third by Dickens and the second by Collins—"The Perils" brings together English gentlefolk and English soldiers in "a strange wild place."

Narrated by Gill Davis, a private in the Royal Marines, it describes an attack on a "very small English colony" in Central America; the colony is an island off the coast of Honduras, where the silver taken from a mine on the mainland is temporarily stored. The British governor of Belize, acting on orders from home, sends twenty-four marines stationed in his settlement to "Silver-Store" to protect it against a "cruel gang of pirates." Along with a crew of sailors, they arrive there on the *Christopher Columbus,* a sloop that brings supplies to the island once a year, and then transports the annual accumulation of silver to Jamaica for sale and distribution "all over the world" (240). After a large party of marines and sailors is lured out to sea, the pirates raid the island for the silver, attacking English women and children as well as soldiers and male civilians, and killing some of them. These mutineers are a heterogeneous band and include "Malays, . . . Dutch, Maltese, Greeks, Sambos, Negroes, and Convict Englishmen from the West India Islands . . . some Portuguese, too, and a few Spaniards" (264). They are aided by a character named Christian George King, a composite of a black "sambo" and an American Indian, who betrays his English benefactors and is ultimately killed by them in reprisal. In the first chapter, Dickens depicts the leisurely life on the island before the attack and ends with the victory of the pirates over the colonists and their defenders, who are transported to the mainland. In the second, Collins recounts the difficult six-day march of the English through the forest, where they are imprisoned in a crumbling Indian ruin but eventually escape. In the third, Dickens describes their moonlit journey on rafts down a dangerous river and their eventual victory over their captors.

Dickens sets "The Perils" in Central America in 1744 rather than India in 1857, but many of its characters and events have obvious mutiny prototypes, and its earliest reviewers read it in the way that Dickens hoped they would—as a patriotic story "commemorating . . . some of the best qualities of the English character . . . shewn in India" (Pilgrim, 8:482–83). The reviewer in the London *Times* of 24 December, for example, felt that Dickens had captured "the salient traits so recently displayed by his countrymen and countrywomen":

> Their intrepidity and self-confidence, their habit of grumbling at each other without occasion and of helping each other ungrudgingly when occasion arises, the promptitude with which they accommodate themselves to any emergency and the practical ability with which they surmount every embarrassment . . . in short, the spirit of mutual reliance, of reciprocal service and sacrifice, which they have exhibited in fact Mr. Dickens has striven to reproduce in fiction.[31]

31. *Times* (London), 24 December 1857, 4.

Recent critical approaches to "The Perils" call the reputed heroism and sacrifice of the English colonists into question, but they too emphasize the story's connection to the Indian Mutiny. The treacherous "sambo" Christian George King, critics point out, is based on Nana Sahib, an Indian leader responsible for massacres at Cawnpore, and the bureaucratic bumbler Commissioner Pordage on "Clemency Canning," the lenient lieutenant governor of India in 1857.[32]

In their readings of "The Perils," critics emphasize Dickens's concern with imperial affairs. Brantlinger notes that Dickens "was deeply disturbed by the news from India," and Oddie argues that the mutiny made such "a deep . . . impression" on him that it inspired *A Tale of Two Cities* as well as "The Perils."[33] In Oddie's view, the representation of class revolution in *A Tale of Two Cities* is informed by the sepoy rebellion: "Behind the fevered intensity of Dickens's evocations of French atrocities must lie also his feelings about the massacre of English victims in India."[34] Yet it is equally true that Dickens's fear of class conflict informs his treatment of the mutiny—that his representation of native insurrection in "The Perils" both disguises and resolves the anxieties about class relations that underlie his portions of the story. His two chapters are characterized by a series of displacements that enable the narrator, an illiterate private in the Royal Marines, to abandon his feelings of class hatred and to recognize his *real* enemies—his racial "inferiors" rather than his social superiors.

When Gill Davis first arrives at the English colony, Dickens characterizes him as a man consumed by feelings of class consciousness and animosity toward his social superiors. A "foundling child" starved and beaten by his father and neglected by the parish beadle, Davis resents the "idle class" living on the island and criticizes what he sees as the unjust separation of capital and labor:

> I had had a hard life, and the life of the English on the Island seemed too easy and too gay to please me. "Here you are," I thought to myself, "good scholars and good livers; able to read what you like, able to write what you like, able to eat and drink what you like, and spend what you like, and do what you like; and much *you* care for a poor, ignorant Private in the Royal Marines! Yet it's hard,

32. Oddie, "Dickens and the Indian Mutiny," 7–9. In the most recent study of "The Perils" to date, Laura Peters examines Dickens's debt to press coverage of the mutiny in the *Illustrated London News,* considers the ways in which he "stoke[s] the fires of empire" (126) in his portions of the story, and discusses his "imperial role" as editor of *Household Words.* See "'Double-dyed Traitors and Infernal Villains': *Illustrated London News, Household Words,* Charles Dickens and the Indian Rebellion," in *Negotiating India in the Nineteenth-Century Media,* ed. David Finkelstein and Douglas M. Peers (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 110–34.

33. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness,* p. 206; Oddie, "Dickens and the Indian Mutiny," 15.

34. Oddie, "Dickens and the Indian Mutiny," 15.

too, I think, that you should have all the halfpence, and I all the kicks; you all the smooth, and I all the rough; you all the oil, and I all the vinegar." (241)

As his portrait of the dissatisfied private reveals, Dickens writes "The Perils" with the topical issue of the unjust army system in mind; he begins the story by presenting a common man who feels that the system has cheated him and put reward out of his reach. Davis is conscious of his merits and feels that they go unrecognized and unrewarded. He asserts that *he,* the private, deserves to be officer rather than such "delicate" gentlemen as Lieutenant Linderwood and Captain Maryon: "I thought I was much fitter for the work than they were, and that if all of us had our deserts, I should be both of them rolled into one" (241).

Furthermore, Dickens repeatedly distinguishes between the commissioned and the noncommissioned officers, revealing the inequities between them, and implicitly criticizing the elitism of the army system. Unlike Lieutenant Linderwood and Captain Maryon, Corporal Charker and Serjeant Drooce have risen from the ranks. But even as officers who have demonstrated their merit, they remain subordinates. When it is believed that the pirates are hiding on the mainland, Drooce and Charker are excluded from the pursuit by their commissioned superiors and left to supervise the presumably compliant native population on the island: "Because it was considered that the friendly sambos would only want to be commanded in case of any danger (though none at all was apprehended there), the officers were in favour of leaving the two non-commissioned officers, Drooce and Charker. It was a heavy disappointment to them" (253).[35]

In spite of such inequities and disappointments, however, these characters do not act on their feelings of resentment in Dickens's chapters and claim their "deserts." Instead, their class consciousness is assaulted—first by the nationalism of Miss Maryon, the sister of Captain Maryon, and then by the "mutiny" itself. Miss Maryon appeals to the Englishness of Davis and Charker, implicitly asking them to put aside their sense of class consciousness in the name of national brotherhood and sisterhood. Defining herself as "an English soldier's daughter" rather than as a "lady," Miss Maryon suggests that she and they have a common genealogy. Offering to show the "English soldiers how their countrymen and countrywomen fared, so far away from England" (242), she takes them on a tour of the living quarters in the colony.

Shortly after Miss Maryon identifies private Davis and Corporal Charker as Englishmen rather than as members of the working class, the pirate attack occurs. The most striking and curious feature of this attack is that it more closely resembles a class revolt than it does the Indian Mutiny. In "The Perils," Dickens uses the treacherous Christian George King and the band of pirates to represent the Indian mutineers. Like the allegedly merciless sepoys, they lay siege to the English fort and commit atrocities, killing English women and children. Yet the pirate band is made up of Europeans as well as the members of "subject races," and their motives as well as their origins set them apart from the mutinous sepoys as Dickens elsewhere describes them. In *Household Words,* the mutiny is generally attributed to the "tigerish" and "treacherous" nature of the Oriental, but Dickens's pirates act for economic reasons, attacking the colonists because they want the silver in their possession. Like a proletarian mob—Dickens describes them as the "scum of all nations" (317)—they seize the capital of the colony, a treasure produced by a labor force that is never identified or described in Dickens's narrative. In effect, the pirates take the place of this absent labor force, their attack substituting for the mutiny threatened by Davis and his sense of class injury.

As the colonists and privates defend themselves against the pirates in chapter 1, the distinctions among them dissolve. Dickens unites Davis with his officers—in part, by underscoring their common manhood as they protect the treasure of the island, which includes the sexual resources of the Englishwomen as well as the mineral resources of the colony, as Dickens's full title reveals: "The Perils of Certain English Prisoners, and Their Treasure in Women, Children, Silver, and Jewels." Like other works of mutiny fiction, Dickens's narrative represents the mutineers as rapists and Englishmen as chivalric defenders of an imperiled female virtue.[36] "I want you to make me a promise," Miss Maryon tells Davis: "That if we are defeated, and you are absolutely sure of my being taken, you will kill me." "I shall not be alive to do it, Miss," Davis replies. "I shall have died in your defence before it comes to that" (260).

As this image of the chivalric English private suggests, Dickens unites Davis with his superiors by obscuring their class differences as well as highlighting their common manhood. During the siege, the lower-class private demonstrates his nobility while the gentlefolk demonstrate their ability to labor. In "The Lazy Tour," Dickens elides class differences by representing the English as members of a nationalized idle class, but in "The Perils" he does so by identifying them all as workers. The English ladies and gentlemen whom Davis had disdained for

35. As the writer of "Why We Can't Get Recruits" notes, officers "have an intense dislike to any scheme which narrows the gulf between the commissioned and non-commissioned ranks" (466).

36. For a detailed analysis of "the colonial rape narrative" generated by the Indian Mutiny, and the political functions it served, see Nancy L. Paxton, "Mobilizing Chivalry: Rape in British Novels About the Indian Uprising of 1857," *Victorian Studies* 36, 1 (fall 1992): 5–30.

their delicacy prove to be determined and effective laborers rather than members of the idle class:

> What I noticed with the greatest pleasure was, the determined eyes with which those men of the Mine that I had thought fine gentlemen, came round me with what arms they had: to the full as cool and resolute as I could be, for my life—ay, and for my soul, too, into the bargain! . . . Steady and busy behind where I stood . . . beautiful and delicate young women fell to handling the guns, hammering the flints, looking to the locks, and quietly directing others to pass up powder and bullets from hand to hand, as unflinching as the best of tried soldiers. (259, 261)

While class distinctions are weakened during the attack, racial differences are strengthened and defined by Dickens in their threefold character: Christian George King, Dickens tells us, is "no more a Christian than he [is] a King or a George" (241). In aiding the pirates, the ostensibly faithful native proves to be not only un-Christian, un-aristocratic, and un-English—he is subhuman as well. While the pirate attack illuminates the nobility of the private and the energy and endurance of English gentlefolk, it also exposes the bestiality of the native. At the outset of the story, the English colonists accept Christian George King as one of their own. Miss Maryon tells Davis that King is "very much attached" to the colonists and "would die" for them (243), and he cries "in English fashion" when the ship springs a leak (245). But in the third chapter, Dickens unmasks him as an ungrateful and vicious animal, when he is shot in the jungle:

> Some lithe but heavy creature sprang into the air, and fell forward, head down, over the muddy bank.
>
> "What is it?" cries Captain Maryon from his boat. . . .
>
> "It is a Traitor and a Spy," said Captain Carton. . . . "And I think the other name of the animal is Christian George King!" (324)

Throughout "The Perils," Davis is troubled by his sense of being other than the gentlefolk around him, and he repeatedly tells Miss Maryon that "England is nothing to [him]": "England is not much to me, Miss, except as a name" (315). But just as Dickens displaces Davis's mutinous feelings onto the pirates, so he displaces his otherness onto Christian George King. In exposing the native as a false Englishman, Dickens identifies the private as a true one, a point underscored when King is shot through the combined efforts of Davis and his superior, Captain Carton; although the captain pulls the trigger, the private loads the gun. Appealing to the racial hatred generated by the Indian Mutiny and demonstrating the need to "exterminate" the treacherous "animals," Dickens unifies the English characters in his chapters of the story and thus solves the problem of class resentment in the rank and file. At the expense of the native, he compensates the common man, who has been alienated by a system that promotes class differences and puts reward out of his reach.

Collins offers the common man a different sort of compensation in his portion of "The Perils," however, and proposes a more radical solution to the problem of class conflict than Dickens does. In his chapter of the story, Collins reworks the allegiances established by Dickens in the opening section, highlighting class differences among the English characters, associating the privates and sailors with native laborers, and criticizing imperial practices instead of defending them.

In their discussions of "The Perils," Collins's critics and biographers contrast the high seriousness of Dickens's chapters with the facetiousness of his own, noting that the younger writer did not share Dickens's racist view of the mutiny. Nuel Pharr Davis argues that Collins makes "a burlesque out of Dickens' philippic against the sepoys," and Nicolas Rance reiterates the point: "Collins was unable to rise to the hysterical pitch of the editor of *Household Words*. The cool and sardonic tone of the part of the narrative by Collins is not conducive to identifying with the prisoners in their plight."[37] In chapter 1, Dickens presents the pirate captain as a sadistic figure who threatens to sexually violate the Englishwomen and who takes pleasure in mutilating his prisoners. By contrast, Collins compares his "flourish with his sword" to "the sort that a stage-player would give at the head of a mock army" (279) and portrays the English prisoners struggling to suppress their laughter as "the Don" plays his guitar "in a languishing attitude . . . with his nose conceitedly turned up in the air" (231). "As for the seamen," Collins writes, "no stranger who looked at their jolly brown faces would ever have imagined that they were prisoners, and in peril of their lives" (277).

Unlike Dickens, Collins approaches the mutiny and the imprisonment of the English as a comic rather than a tragic subject, and he reworks Dickens's opening chapter in other ways as well, redefining prototypes and dramatizing the plight of native laborers. While identifying the pirate captain as a Portuguese ruffian, Dickens models him on the stereotype of the sadistic sepoy; he speaks in broken English and "laugh[s] in a cool way" as he commits violent acts, hitting Davis crosswise with his cutlass "as if [the private] was the bough of a tree

37. Davis, *Life of Wilkie Collins*, pp. 207–8; Nicholas Rance, *Wilkie Collins and Other Sensation Novelists: Walking the Moral Hospital* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1991), p. 131.

that he played with: first on the face, and then across the chest and the wounded arm" (267). Collins, too, depicts the pirate captain in racially charged terms—as "lean, wiry, brown" and "cat-like" (269, 271). But he also describes him speaking English "as if it was natural" to him (270) and dressing in "the finest-made clothes," like one of "the dandies in the Mall in London" (269). Portrayed by Collins as a "gentleman-buccanier," he parades among his camp followers in stiffened coat-skirts and lace cravat, recalling the arrogant English officers notorious for their extravagant living and their inhumanity toward their Indian servants. Abusing the natives, the pirate captain in Collins's chapter speaks of "Indian beasts" whose "dirty hides shall suffer" for burning his food (304), and he uses the back of a "nigger" under his command as a writing desk, complaining of the man's stench, and covering his nose with "a fine cambric handkerchief" scented and edged with lace (270–71).[38] A parodic mirror image of dandified English officers, Collins's pirate leader conflates their abuses with the lawlessness attributed to the sepoys. At times, Collins uses racist language in his narrative—when he refers to the "black bullock bodies" of the "Sambos" (270), for example. But he also declines to make martyrs of the English colonists and instead suggests that their wrongdoing was partly responsible for the mutiny.

Furthermore, Collins questions the celebrated unity of the English by developing the tie between the "Sambos" and Indians on the one hand, and the English privates and sailors on the other. Thus Collins puts Davis in much the same position as the "nigger" used by the pirate captain as a writing desk, as Miss Maryon "place[s a] paper on [his] breast, sign[s] it, and hand[s] it back to the Pirate Captain" (274). Facing forward rather than backward, Davis seems less dehumanized than the native, yet the connection between them is clear. It is reinforced during the march through Honduras, when the pirates eat meat from a store of provisions they have brought from the English colony, but Davis and his companions eat beans and tortillas, "shar[ing] the miserable starvation diet . . . with the Indians and the Sambos" (281). Instead of considering the natives their enemies, as they do in Dickens's chapters, the English prisoners see them as allies. "Dread the Pirate Captain, Davis, for the slightest caprice of his may ruin all our hopes," Collins's Miss Maryon proclaims, "but never dread the Indians" (302).

38. Hibbert briefly discusses the physical and verbal abuse of Indian servants by the English in *The Great Mutiny*, pp. 30–31. In using the term "nigger" to describe his native subordinates, Collins's pirate captain resembles the young officers criticized in the *Illustrated London News* in August 1857 and held accountable for the mutiny. Ignorant and arrogant, these officers referred to "proud and sensitive high-caste Brahmins as 'niggers' with whom it was degrading to associate" (quoted by L. Peters, "'Double-dyed Traitors,'" 113).

Indeed, the working-class Englishmen and the Central American Indians prove to have much in common in Collins's chapter. Despite their racial differences, both groups constitute a labor force that the pirate captain hopes to command and exploit in restoring the ruined Mayan palace he claims as his headquarters. As Davis and his companions prepare to enter the forest, the private is surprised to see "a large bundle of new axes," which he assumes the natives will use to cut through overgrown forest paths. But when the group arrives at the edge of the woods, the Indians use their machetes instead, and the sight of the axes, as yet unused, begins to "weigh . . . heavily" on Davis's mind (286). We soon learn that Davis has good cause for his anxieties, since the captain has only kept the soldiers alive because he wants "[their] arms to work for [him]," chopping down a forest of trees and making planks "to roof the Palace again, and to lay new floors over the rubbish of stones" (295). By having the English privates perform the manual labor assigned to "Negroes" and "Caribs" in the colonies of Central America,[39] Collins points to the regressive social ends of empire building. Whereas the resentful Probus welcomes the Goths to the gates of Rome in *Antonina*, hoping they will "level our palaces to the ground," Collins's English privates are forced to restore a dilapidated palace and, in the process, to rebuild the ruins of an ancient empire.

Collins brings us from the flourishing English colony of Silver-Store to the ruins of the Mayan empire; in so doing, he raises pressing questions about imperial decline and fall. In Collins's chapter, Davis finds himself in a "mysterious ruined city" built "by a lost race of people" (288), a place that Collins models on the ancient Mayan ruin of Copan, first explored by an Englishman in 1839:[40]

> A wilderness of ruins spread out before me, overrun by a forest of trees. In every direction . . . a frightful confusion of idols, pillars, blocks of stone, heavy walls, and flights of steps, met my eye; some, whole and upright; others, broken and scattered on the ground; and all, whatever their condition, overgrown and clasped about by roots, branches, and curling vines. . . . High in the midst of this desolation . . . was the dismal ruin which was called the Palace; and this was the Prison in the Woods which was to be the place of our captivity. (289)

Among Victorians, the discovery and excavation of the ruins of ancient empires, whether Egyptian, Greek, Roman, or Mayan, brought the stability of

39. E. G. Squier, *The States of Central America; Their Geography, Topography, Climate, Population, Resources, Productions, Commerce, Political Organization, Aborigines, Etc., Etc.* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1858), p. 199.

40. As a source for his descriptions, Collins probably relied on the well-known account of the Mayan ruins provided by John Lloyd Stephens in *Incidents of Travel in Central America*, a work first published in 1841. Stephens visited Copan in the company of the English artist Frederick Catherwood in 1839.

their own to mind and suggested that no empire is invulnerable. "Comparisons have often been drawn between the Roman and the British empires," one article in *All the Year Round* notes, "and the question asked: Will Britain lose its strength and fade away, as Rome faded?"[41] This question seemed especially troubling in 1857, when the hitherto faithful sepoys revealed their allegedly treacherous nature. Rather than holding unruly natives responsible for imperial decline, however, Collins suggests that social inequities among the colonizers themselves may bring about an empire's fall. He conveys this point by staging scenes in which English privates and sailors are forced to labor like Indians and plot their own rebellion among the "dismal ruin[s]" of a once-powerful empire.

Whereas Dickens resolves the problem of class resentment in the rank and file by pitting privates against natives, Collins, in a scene that mirrors the pirate raid but casts the thieves as heroes, represents English workers seizing the goods they have produced. Davis and his companions are industrious in felling trees but only because they mean to profit from their own labor. As the sailor Short explains, they can use the timber for their own purposes, to build rafts and escape captivity:

> When we began to use the axes, greatly to my astonishment, [Short] buckled to at his work like a man who had his whole heart in it; chuckling to himself at every chop. . . . "What are we cutting down these here trees for?" says he.
>
> "Roofs and floors for the Pirate Captain's castle," says I.
>
> "*Rafts for ourselves!*" says he, with another tremendous chop at the tree, which brought it to the ground—the first that had fallen. . . . "Pass the word on in a whisper to the nearest of our men to work with a will; and say, with a wink of your eye, there's a good reason for it." (296–97)

In Dickens's two chapters, Davis is angered by the separation of capital from labor but learns to see such distinctions as insignificant. Having defined those who "have all the half-pence" against those who have "all the kicks" (241) in the first chapter, he declines to accept the "purse of money" he is offered by his superiors in the third. By the time Mr. Fisher, one of the English mine owners, tells Davis that he "heartily wish[es] all the silver on our old Island was yours" (314), Davis no longer wants to possess it, and the wealth of Silver-Store is not redistributed when the treasure hoard is finally recovered at the end of the story. In Collins's narrative, by contrast, the English soldiers and sailors seize what they produce, even though the dandified pirate captain claims to own it all.

41. "Touching Englishmen's Lives," *All the Year Round* 15 (30 June 1866): 582.

The subversive implications of their act of seizure in Collins's chapter are wholly muted by Dickens in the third, which rewards Davis for his bravery but does so by putting him in his proper place. Having proved his nobility, the private is rewarded, though not with a share of the silver he has helped to protect nor with a promotion to the rank of sergeant; instead, he is transformed into a subservient vassal, who pledges himself to his lady, Miss Maryon, in chivalric fashion:

> "I think it would break my heart to accept of money. But if you could condescend to give to a man so ignorant and common as myself, any little thing you have worn—such as a bit of ribbon—"
>
> She took a ring from her finger, and put it in my hand. And she rested her hand in mine, while she said these words:
>
> "The brave gentlemen of old—but not one of them was braver, or had a nobler nature than you—took such gifts from ladies, and did all their good actions for the givers' sakes. If you will do yours for mine, I shall think with pride that I continue to have some share in the life of a gallant and generous man." (325)

Despite the reference to Davis's "noble . . . nature," Dickens's narrative valorizes his feudal subordination and conforms to the dual pattern of imperial literature as Brantlinger describes it, justifying both aristocratic and imperial rule.[42] At the end of "The Perils," Dickens places the common man in a state of utter dependence on his social superiors. After his return to England, Davis becomes the object of their charity, living on the estate of Admiral Carton and his wife, the former Miss Maryon. Although Dickens initially contrasts the noble private with the bestial native, he brings them into an analogous relationship with the English ruling class. Offering a socially regressive solution to the problem of the army system and the class divisions it promotes, Dickens places the private in the position reserved for the faithful native at the beginning of the story; the difference between the two is that Davis deserves the charity of the gentlefolk while Christian George King does not.

In proving his nobility, Davis paradoxically learns to accept his state of dependence and see himself as an "ignorant and common" man: "It may be imagined what sort of an officer of marines I should have made, without the power of reading a written order," he says in Dickens's narrative, thinking back on his earlier social presumption. "And as to any knowledge how to command the

42. Brantlinger discusses the "regressive" patterns of imperial literature throughout *Rule of Darkness*, but see pp. 35–39 in particular. See also Abdul R. JanMohamed's analysis of "racial romance," which serves "to justify the social function of the dominant class and to idealize its acts of protection and responsibility" (72), in "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," *Critical Inquiry* 12, 1 (autumn 1985): 59–87.

sloop—Lord! I should have sunk her in a quarter of an hour!" (241–42). While Captain Carton is promoted and becomes "Admiral Sir George Carton, Baronet," Davis is not. Yet Dickens makes it clear that the private has not been unfairly overlooked. Davis is not promoted because he, like the native, has inherent limitations, and not because he is oppressed by the system: "I was recommended for promotion, and everything was done to reward me that could be done; but my total want of all learning stood in my way. . . . I could not conquer any learning, though I tried" (326). In Collins's chapter, Davis watches as a native, forced to his knees, serves as a desk upon which the pirate captain writes, and then provides a similar service for Miss Maryon; "knowing how to write" (271) thus appears a class privilege and illiteracy a mark of class injury. But in Dickens's portions of "The Perils," illiteracy is innate, and Davis cannot learn, although he is given the chance. Unable to read or write, he needs Lady Carton's help to tell his story. As she puts his oral account of the pirate attack into writing, Dickens inscribes the regressive social ideal of "The Perils" into its narrative form.

At the conclusion of "The Perils," Davis appears wholly dependent on the former Miss Maryon for support and expression, yet she, too, has been put in her proper place. Dickens's treatment of Miss Maryon demonstrates that imperial fiction, like chivalric romance, idealizes the subordination of women while seeming to dramatize their strength. Resembling the mutiny novels discussed by Nancy L. Paxton, which "mobilize" chivalry to conservative social ends, Dickens's narrative naturalizes Victorian gender norms as well as imperial relations, countering "demands for women's greater political and social equality."[43] Although Dickens claims that his story will "shadow out . . . the bravery of our ladies in India" (Pilgrim, 8:469), their bravery, as he represents it, consists largely of endurance. Miss Maryon "handl[es] the guns, hammer[s] the flints, [and] look[s] to the locks" during the siege (261), but her primary function is maternal in Dickens's narrative: "Miss Maryon had been from the first with all the children, soothing them, and dressing them . . . and making them believe that it was a game of play, so that some of them were now even laughing" (259). Rather than taking up arms herself, she gives Davis "the strength of half a dozen men" through her dependence, encouragement, and praise of the "brave soldier" (260).

Dickens justifies Miss Maryon's dependence by illustrating the dangers of letting her think for herself. He holds her womanly misperception of the natives partly responsible for the imperial crisis at hand and in so doing models her on

43. Paxton, "Mobilizing Chivalry," 6.

the English ladies of whom he complained to Emile de la Rue in October 1857; these women "know nothing of the Hindoo character" yet unwisely "rush[ed] after" visiting "Indian Princes" three years before: "Again and again, I have said to Ladies, spirited enough and handsome enough and clever enough to have known better[,] . . . 'what on earth do you see in those men to go mad about? You know faces, when they are not brown; you know common expressions when they are not under turbans; Look at the dogs—low, treacherous, murderous, tigerous villains who despise you while you pay court to them, and who would rend you to pieces at half an hour's notice'" (Pilgrim, 8:472–73). Like these ladies, Miss Maryon "pay[s] court" to "treacherous" natives in Dickens's portion of "The Perils," much to Davis's surprise:

> "Under your favor, and with your leave, ma'am," said I, "are [the Sambos] trustworthy?"
>
> "Perfectly! We are all very kind to them, and they are very grateful to us."
>
> "Indeed, ma'am? Now—Christian George King?—"
>
> "Very much attached to us all. Would die for us."
>
> She was, as in my uneducated way I have observed very beautiful women almost always to be, so composed, that her composure gave great weight to what she said, and I believed it. (243)

When it comes to natives, Dickens suggests, the knowledge of "uneducated" Englishmen exceeds that of Englishwomen, however well born.

In his collaborations with Collins, stereotypes of women and their failings sometimes serve Dickens well, providing common ground for the two writers—when they joke about the female contributors to *Household Words,* for example, or jointly illustrate the dangers of female emancipation in "The Wreck of the Golden Mary." But increasingly, gender issues became a source of contention for the two writers, as the history of *The Frozen Deep* makes clear, and their portraits of Miss Maryon, like those of Nurse Esther, diverge. Without minimizing the class privileges enjoyed by Miss Maryon, Collins suggests that gender norms unduly restrict her. Like Davis, she demands her own fair share—not of wealth or property but of "work" and "risk": "It is time that the women, for whom you have suffered and ventured so much, should take their share," she tells the private in Collins's narrative (302). Unlike the ill-judging woman who fails to see the natives for what they are in Dickens's first chapter, Collins's Miss Maryon carefully observes the pirate guards and their routine, discovering the means of drugging their food and making possible the prisoners' escape. "I have resolved that no hands but mine shall be charged with the work of kneading [the poison] into the dough," she asserts (302).

In such passages, Collins gives new meaning to women's work, using Miss Maryon to subvert the gender norms that his characters generally accept but that Davis comes to question:

> "How can a woman help us?" says Short, breaking in on me.
> "A woman with a clear head and a high courage and a patient resolution—all of which Miss Maryon has got, above all the world—may do more to help us, in our present strait, than any man of our company," says I. (298–99)

Courageous and resolved as well as patient—perhaps more effective "than any man"—Collins's Miss Maryon looks back to Lucy Crayford in his draft of *The Frozen Deep* and ahead to Marian Halcombe in *The Woman in White*. But she also anticipates the mountaineering heroine who figures in the next and final work that Collins and Dickens coauthored, "No Thoroughfare," in which the dangers of female autonomy and strength again prove a subject of debate between the two writers.

CHAPTER 5

"No Thoroughfare":

The Problem of Illegitimacy

In the summer of 1861, as he was working on his novel *No Name*, Collins found himself at a pivotal point in his career. Writing to his friend Charles Ward, Collins promises "news that will astonish you." He goes on to explain that he has decided—"with Dickens's full approval"—to resign from the staff of *All the Year Round*, since a much more lucrative offer has come his way: "Smith & Elder have signed agreements to give me *Five Thousand Pounds*, for the copyright of a new work, to follow the story I am now beginning. . . . No living novelist (except Dickens) has had such an offer as this for *one* book. If I only live to earn the money, I have a chance at last of putting something by against a rainy day, or a turn in the public caprice, or any other literary misfortune."[1] "Prepare yourself for an immense surprise," Collins tells his mother before regaling her with this "literary business": "Smith & Elder have *bought* me away from All The Year Round under circumstances which *in Dickens's opinion* amply justify me in leaving. . . . Five thousand pounds, for nine months or, at most, a year's work—nobody but Dickens has made as much. . . . If I live & keep my brains in good working order, I shall have got to the top of the tree, after all, before forty."[2]

In the ten years between the publication of "The Perils of Certain English Prisoners" and "No Thoroughfare," Collins came into his own. After the remarkable success of *The Woman in White*, rival publishers bid against each other

1. Autograph letter signed (ALS) to Charles Ward, 22 August 1861. The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. MA 3151.27. *The Letters of Wilkie Collins*, ed. William Baker and William M. Clarke, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1999), 1:200.

2. ALS to Harriet Collins, 31 July 1861. The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. MA 3150.61. *The Letters of Wilkie Collins*, 1:197–98.