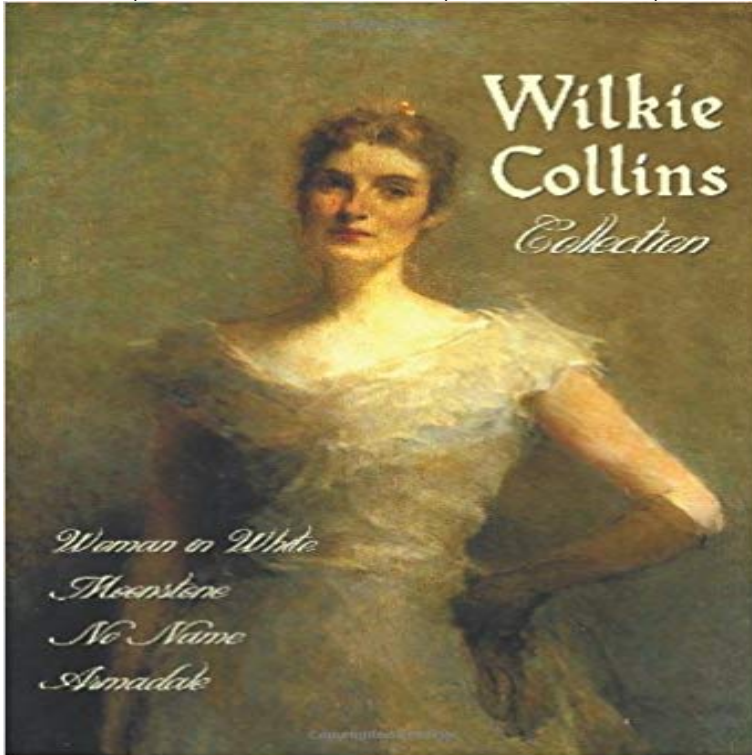


Wilkie Collins Collection (Complete and Unabridged): The Woman in White, the Moonstone, No Name, Armadale



Wilkie Collins (1824-1889) is best known as the innovator of the detective novel. He was a prolific writer, with 30 novels, more than 60 short stories, 14 plays, and more than 100 non-fiction pieces to his name. He was a close friend of Charles Dickens and one of the best known and loved Victorian Fiction writers. After his death, his popularity diminished as Dickens grew. Now, Collins is once again becoming popular with most of his books in print and film, television and radio adaptations being made. There is much still to be discovered about this great author and this volume contains his four most popular novels.

The *Woman in White* is an engrossing and haunting read. It was the first novel to combine Gothic horror with psychological realism - haunting dreams, asylums, kidnappings and illnesses. A convoluted plot that requires the confessions of several fascinating characters in order to solve the mystery.

Moonstone is another page-turner - another engrossing mystery. The story centres around the theft of an enormous diamond and takes us on a spellbinding journey of romance, theft and murder. In *No Name* Magdalen Vanstone and her sister discover that their parents, who have died suddenly were not married at the time of their birth. Stigmatised, disinherited and ousted from their country estate, the two young women struggle to survive. Norah becomes a governess, accepting her lot. But Magdalen has different ideas, determined to regain her inheritance and willing to use her beauty and cunning she seeks revenge. A series of trials ensue leading to the final decision, will she trade herself in marriage to the man she hates? At the time the book was rejected as immoral, but today is seen as a story with stunning social insight.

Armadale is another penetrating social commentary into the plight of women in the Victorian Era. Armadale has son who is in disgrace and so he decides to disinherit

him, and so starts the story, as convoluted and thrilling as any of Collins stories. In the introduction he says, In Armadale it is for once the men, rather than the women, who struggle to identify themselves - to themselves as well as to others - in relation to the name. The strongest character in the book is a woman - Lydia Gwilt - who defiantly keeps her original name, and hence her identity. Her character rejected at the time as unwomanly and unrealistic, and too wicked to be English. It was apparently impossible for any English woman to be jealous, murderous, bigamous, deceptive, intelligent, and sympathetic all at the same time. Collins clearly disagreed.

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