The Woman in White

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF WILKIE COLLINS

Born in London in 1824, Wilkie Collins was the son of the well-known landscape painter William Collins and grandson of the famous Scottish painter, David Wilkie. Collins travelled in Italy and France as a child but returned to England in 1838 to attend boarding school. He took a job as a clerk after finishing school but was unenthusiastic about the profession and spent much of his time writing stories. Collins' father pushed him to have an income, and Collins tried his hand at studying law but was consistently distracted by his writing. His father died in 1847, and although Collins finished his studies, he did not go on to become a lawyer. Collins had many friends in London and was involved in the artistic, literary, and theatrical scene. He published his first novel, *Antonia*, in 1850 and became close friends with the famous Victorian novelist Charles Dickens in 1851. Dickens took a great interest in Collins' writing. The two collaborated on several pieces, and Collins published stories and serialized novels in Dickens' literary journal, *Household Words*. In terms of his personal beliefs, Collins was very critical of marriage as an institution. He began a relationship with a shopkeeper named Caroline Graves in 1858. The pair lived together but never married, and in 1868 Collins married Martha Rudd, although he continued to split his time between her and Caroline for the rest of his life. In the 1860s Collins wrote his most famous novels, including *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*, but his health began to decline a decade later, and he became addicted to laudanum, which impacted his writing career. Collins died in 1889 and was buried in London; his tombstone is dedicated to "the author of *The Woman in White*."

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Woman in White is set in Victorian Britain and reflects many of the social conventions and anxieties of the period. Collins use of characters from various class backgrounds, and his attack on upper-class people who do not use their wealth and power to contribute to society reflects the rise in social mobility during this period. Britain was strictly divided by class in the eighteenth century, but advances in technology and the innovations of the Industrial Revolution led to an increase in wealth among lower- and middle-class people, who could now get jobs in shops, factories, and the century's developing leisure industries, such as public houses and hotels. Greater social mobility presented a challenge to the class system, as it undermined the ability of people who had inherited their wealth to automatically claim the highest social position. Collins' novel presents social mobility as a new and exciting, but also a frightening prospect, for the Victorians. There was a great deal of social reform in the Victorian period, from child labor laws to the beginnings of women's suffrage, as well as advances in knowledge about how to treat the mentally ill. *The Woman in White* demonstrates this expansion of sympathy towards individuals who do not fit easily into conventional society and the burgeoning interest in women's rights and the rights of lower-class employees like servants. Collins' suspicious about foreigners in the novel reflects Britain's racial attitudes in the Victorian period (the period of the greatest expansion in the British Empire) and also reflects political unrest in European countries such as Italy, which was not yet unified into a single country. Collins also references the Great Exhibition, a famous event organized by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1851, which showcased the most elaborate technological inventions of the Industrial Revolution.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The Woman in White is considered one of the first mystery novels, known as "sensation novels," in the nineteenth century and is similar to the modern-day thriller. It is also considered an early example of detective fiction because of Walter Hartright's use of private detection to solve the various crimes that abound in the novel. Collins would later write *The Moonstone*, in 1868, which is considered the first detective novel. This style of detective novel was later made famous by Collin's fellow Victorian novelist Arthur Conan Doyle, in his Sherlock Holmes series, and this style influenced twentieth-century crime writers such as Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and Agatha Christie. *The Woman in White* is also very similar to many Victorian social realist novels which were popular in the mid-nineteenth century, such as the work of the Bronte sisters, and the novels of Charles Dickens, with whom Collins was friends. Like those novels, *The Woman in White* combines a realistic, contemporary setting with elements of mystery and romance, and deals with themes like class, gender, inheritance, and social identity. *The Woman in White* is written in an epistolary style, combining different points of view and compiled as though it is a series of documents. This style is very popular in eighteenth-century Gothic novels, such as *Pamela*, written by Samuel Richardson in 1740. *The Woman in White*'s fortune-hunting Sir Percival Glyde, who disguises himself as a Baronet to claim an inheritance which isn't his, also illustrates a common trope in Gothic novels, such as Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). The use of manuscripts, letters, and other fictional documents to tell the story is a technique that early nineteenth-century Scottish writer Walter Scott employs in his *Waverley Novels*, which were extremely

influential on Victorian fiction.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Woman in White*
- **When Written:** 1859
- **Where Written:** London, England
- **When Published:** 1860
- **Literary Period:** Victorian
- **Genre:** Sensation novel, mystery novel
- **Setting:** London, Cumberland, and Hampshire in England.
- **Climax:** The protagonist, Walter Hartright, discovers the secrets of and brings about the demise of two men, Count Fosco and Sir Percival Glyde, who have conspired against and stolen the fortune of Laura Fairlie, the woman Walter loves.
- **Antagonist:** Sir Percival Glyde and Count Fosco
- **Point of View:** First person (epistolary, or a novel told through letters)

EXTRA CREDIT

School Bully. During his time at boarding school, Collins was picked on by a classmate who used to make Collins tell him stories before he went to sleep. Although this was a form of torment at school, Collins enjoyed making up stories and felt that this experience encouraged his subsequent career as a writer.

Political Activism. Like his friend and mentor Charles Dickens, Collins was horrified by the social injustices which he witnessed in Victorian England and used his novels to argue the necessity of social reforms, such as the rights of women and the treatment of mentally ill. His interest in these social issues, and his attacks on institutions like marriage, which he felt prevented reform, are particularly clear in *The Woman in White*.

PLOT SUMMARY

Walter Hartright, a young drawing teacher who lives in London, needs a job and an escape from the city for the autumn months. One night he goes to visit his mother and sister, Sarah, and is surprised to find his friend Professor Pesca, a cheerful Italian whom Walter once saved from drowning, waiting for him at the Hartright's family home. Pesca tells Walter that he has found a job for him teaching art to a pair of young ladies in Cumberland, at a place called Limmeridge House, in the employment of a man named Mr. Fairlie. Walter is somewhat uneasy about the job but accepts.

On his last night in London, Walter visits his mother's house to say goodbye and walks home across Hampstead Heath. On the road he meets a young woman dressed head to toe in **white clothes**. She asks him the way to London and walks with Walter to the city. On the way, she asks Walter if he knows many powerful men there, and mutters something about a certain Baronet. Walter tells her he is only a drawing master and does not know anyone of rank. He tells her that he has just taken a job at Limmeridge House and is surprised to learn that the woman has been there and that she speaks fondly of the late Mrs. Fairlie. The woman asks Walter if he will help her find a cab once they get to the city; Walter agrees, and he finds one quickly when they reach London. As the cab drives off, another carriage passes Walter, and the man inside leans out and shouts to a nearby policeman. He asks him if he has seen "a woman in white," as this woman has recently "escaped from an asylum."

Walter travels to Limmeridge House to start his job. He does not like Mr. Fairlie, who is a pretentious man, but gets on well with his pupils, Marian Halcombe and Laura Fairlie. Immediately, Walter notices that Laura reminds him of someone. He also tells Marian about the woman in white, as Marian is the late Mrs. Fairlie's daughter, and Marian looks through her mother's letters to see if she can find any reference to this woman. One night, when Walter and Marian are in the drawing room and Laura is outside, Marian discovers that one of her mother's letters describes a little girl who came to the school at Limmeridge, where Mrs. Fairlie taught. Mrs. Fairlie's letter notes that she thought this girl, Anne Catherick, was strange but very sweet and gave her some white dresses to wear. At this moment, Laura comes inside from the garden, and Walter suddenly realizes that Laura looks like the mysterious woman in white.

Walter and Laura begin to fall in love. This seems to make Laura very sad, and one day, Marian takes Walter aside and tells him that Laura is engaged to marry a Baronet named Sir Percival Glyde. She kindly tells Walter that he should leave Limmeridge because Sir Percival is expected to arrive in the next few days to make plans for the wedding. Walter is heartbroken but reluctantly agrees. While they are talking, a maid summons Marian back to the house because Laura is very upset—she has received an anonymous letter warning her not to marry Sir Percival. Marian and Walter ask around in the village to see if anyone knows who sent the note, and they discover a woman in white has been seen near Mrs. Fairlie's grave. Knowing this must be Anne Catherick, Walter decides to hide in the churchyard that night so he can speak to her if she comes back to Mrs. Fairlie's grave. His plan works, and he manages to speak with Anne, but she becomes extremely angry when Walter mentions Sir Percival's name. Unable to calm her, Walter leaves Anne with her companion, an older woman named Mrs. Clements, and the next day he returns to London.

Sir Percival Glyde comes to Limmeridge House to arrange his wedding. Laura is reluctant to marry him, but she has promised her father on his deathbed and feels too guilty to break the

engagement. Sir Percival seems charming and considerate, but Marian still does not like him. She finds him bad tempered with the servants, and Laura's friendly dog always barks at him, which seems to be a measure of his character. Hoping to get out of the engagement, Laura tells Sir Percival that she does not love him, and that she loves someone else, and offers him the chance to break off the engagement; however, Sir Percival delights in her honesty, confesses his undying love for her, and the wedding goes ahead as planned. In the days that follow, Mr. Gilmore, Laura's lawyer, arranges the marriage settlement. This settlement states that, if Laura dies without an heir, Sir Percival will receive twenty thousand pounds and Limmeridge House, while Laura's aunt, Madame Fosco, will receive ten thousand pounds. After the wedding, Laura and Sir Percival set off on their honeymoon to Europe, where they plan to meet up with Laura's aunt and her Italian husband, Count Fosco. Marian arranges to meet the newlyweds on their return at Sir Percival's house at Blackwater, where she will live with them.

Many months later, Laura and Sir Percival arrive home at Blackwater with Sir Percival's friend Count Fosco and his wife. Marian and Laura both deeply dislike the Count and are very afraid of him. His wife behaves suspiciously too and submissively does everything the Count says. Marian also finds that Sir Percival's demeanor has completely changed; instead of the charming (albeit off-putting) man who sauntered around Limmeridge declaring his undying love for Laura, Sir Percival is now extremely irritable and bad tempered, especially toward his new wife. At one point, he tries to force Laura to sign a document without telling her what it is (he has folded the paper so that only the signature line is visible), and becomes aggressive when Laura refuses to sign. Sir Percival's combative mood is made worse when he hears that Anne Catherick is in the area, and he becomes determined to find her. One day, on a walk to the boathouse near the lake in the grounds, Laura meets Anne Catherick, who tells her that she knows a secret about Sir Percival. Laura agrees to meet Anne the next day. When she tries, however, Sir Percival follows her, drags her home, and locks her in her room. He tries to force her to sign the document again but Count Fosco stops him. Meanwhile, Marian has become deeply suspicious about Sir Percival and Count Fosco's motives towards her sister. She tries to write to Mr. Fairlie and Mr. Kyrle (the girls' new lawyer) for help on several occasions, but Madame Fosco intercepts the letters. One night, Marian overhears Sir Percival and Count Fosco in the garden and hears them discuss plan to murder Laura for her fortune. Unfortunately, Marian gets soaked in a rain shower while crouching on the roof to listen and becomes ill with typhus.

While Marian is ill, Count Fosco and Sir Percival continue their hunt for Anne Catherick. One day, the housekeeper, Mrs. Michelson, sees Count Fosco come in from a walk and Sir Percival asks if he has found her, at which Count Fosco smiles. Sir Percival sends Mrs. Michelson away to look at seaside houses for him to rent and, when she returns, she is told that Marian has been sent to Limmeridge, and that Laura will follow suit the next day. All the servants are to be dismissed, and the house is to be shut up. Mrs. Michelson is shocked but takes Laura to the station and sees her off on the train to London. When she arrives back at Blackwater, she discovers that Marian is still at the house and that Laura has been tricked. When Laura gets to London, she is taken to stay with Count Fosco, but dies the next day from heart failure.

Several months later, Marian hears that Anne Catherick has been returned to the asylum and goes to visit her to see if she can find out about Sir Percival's secret. When she arrives, she discovers that it is not Anne in the asylum but Laura, who has been disguised against her will as Anne. Marian breaks her sister out of the asylum, and they return to Limmeridge, but find that everyone there believes that Laura is dead. In the churchyard, where Anne has been buried in Mrs. Fairlie's tomb, they meet Walter Hartright, who has returned to mourn for the woman he loves.

Marian and Walter move to London, and Walter decides to investigate Sir Percival Glyde to see if he can uncover his secret. He visits Mrs. Clements, and she tells him that it has something to do with his being caught "in the vestry of the church" in Welmingham with Mrs. Catherick. Walter then visits Mrs. Catherick, Anne's mother, and, when he mentions the vestry to her, can see from her reaction that the secret is in fact hidden there. He goes to Welmingham and finds that the church marriage register has been forged: Sir Percival's parents were never married, making him an illegitimate child, and he is not a Baronet at all. Walter runs to the nearby village to check this information in the second copy of the marriage register, and the forgery is confirmed. When he returns to the church that night, Walter is startled to find that it is on fire, and that Sir Percival, of all people, is trapped inside. He has accidentally set the church alight while trying to destroy the forgery and is killed in the blaze. After Sir Percival's death, Mrs. Catherick writes to Walter and tells him that Anne never knew the secret, but that Sir Percival locked her in the asylum just in case she did know it. In the midst of all of this chaos, Walter and Laura marry.

Now that Sir Percival is dead, Walter goes after Count Fosco. He tracks him down one night at the opera and takes Pesca with him to see if Pesca, who was once involved in Italian politics, recognizes the Count. Pesca does not, but the Count recognizes Pesca instantly and flees the opera house in fear. He is followed by a foreign man who had been watching Walter and Pesca carefully during the opera. Walter questions Pesca and Pesca confesses that he was a member of a secret political organization in Italy in his youth and suspects that the Count is a traitor to this same organization.

That night, Walter writes Pesca a letter with Count Fosco's

address and tells him to come to this address and kill Count Fosco if he does not hear from Walter before the morning. Walter then goes to the Count's house and blackmails him into writing a confession of the conspiracy against Laura. The Count agrees to do this if Walter will let him go and intercept the letter to Pesca. The Count then writes a confession which proves that Laura is the real Laura Fairlie, and that Anne Catherick is the woman who died at his house. The Count promptly leaves London, and Walter returns to Laura and Marian with his proof. They can now restore Laura's identity and prove to her relatives that she is alive. Some months later, Walter gets a job which takes him to Paris. While he is there, he passes the Paris Morgue and sees Count Fosco's body there. He has been stabbed by the foreign man who saw them at the opera, who is a member of the political organization Count Fosco betrayed. Walter and Laura have a son and, when Mr. Fairlie dies, they move back to Limmeridge House and Walter's son becomes the heir to the property.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Walter Hartright – Walter Hartright is a drawing teacher who takes a position at Limmeridge house as the tutor of Marian Halcombe and her half-sister, Laura Fairlie, whom he later marries. Walter's dedication to Laura motivates him to investigate her fiancé, Sir Percival Glyde, and his friend Count Fosco, discovering that the two shady men plan to murder Laura to gain her inheritance. Walter is the hero of the story and the driving force behind the investigation, which eventually brings about the deaths of Sir Percival and Count Fosco, and which restores Laura's public identity, fortune, and place in society. Walter is a brave, daring, and honest man. At times he is impulsive and careless with his own life, such as when he pursues Count Fosco alone at the end of the novel. Walter has a generous nature and is sympathetic to vulnerable people who have been cast out by society, which he demonstrates through his kindness to Anne Catherick when he helps her escape during their first encounter. Walter is also a loyal friend to Laura and Marian and is a kind and attentive to his mother, Mrs. Hartright, and his sister, Sarah. Walter's good nature is reflected in his name "Hartright," which suggests his heart is in the right place. Walter is also an industrious and hardworking man and takes on various types of employment throughout the novel. Walter is associated with Victorian middle-class values of industry and decency, as well as the inherent energy and virtue of the "self-made man," which was a popular concept in the nineteenth century. On several occasions, he says that he is grateful for his lowly status in society as it forces him to work harder and "act for himself," and this means that he accomplishes more than he would if he relied on other people. Walter is also an extremely intelligent man, which he demonstrates through his thorough understanding of evidence and the law and in his ingenious solutions to the problems and deceptions which Count Fosco and Sir Percival throw in his way.

Laura Fairlie – Laura Fairlie is the half-sister of Marian Halcombe, the daughter of Mr. Philip Fairlie, and the niece of Mr. Fairlie. She is the rightful heir to Limmeridge House and eventually marries Walter Hartright and has a son with him. For the bulk of the novel, though, she is married to the despicable Sir Percival Glyde, who deigns to steal her fortune by murdering her with the help of his equally vile friend, Count Fosco. Laura is a reserved, thoughtful, and slightly timid woman who bears a striking physical resemblance to Anne Catherick, the titular woman in **white**. Anne Catherick is, in fact, Laura's half-sister (the daughter of Mr. Philip Fairlie and Anne's mother, Mrs. Catherick), and this explains the physical likeness between them. Sir Percival and Count Fosco use this likeness to their advantage; instead of killing Laura, they send her to an asylum in Anne's place, and when the sickly Anne dies, they pass her death off as Laura's and inherit her fortune. Although Marian helps her escape from the asylum, Laura remains traumatized by her experience there and the total loss of her identity, as no one but Marian and Walter believes she is the real Laura. Laura is an innocent victim in the conspiracy and in her marriage to Sir Percival Glyde. Her name reflects this as it suggests someone who is treated unfairly, and also a woman who is fair. She has a sensitive personality and loves art and beauty, which attracts her to Walter and gives them common ground. Although she tries to defend herself against Sir Percival—like when she refuses to sign her fortune over to him—Laura is one of the least active characters in the novel and is rescued from her situation by the efforts of Marian and Walter.

Marian Halcombe – Marian is the half-sister of Laura Fairlie, and the daughter of the late Mrs. Fairlie. She is also close friends with Walter Hartright, the girls' drawing teacher, and helps Walter in his efforts to thwart Sir Percival Glyde and Count Fosco's plan to steal Laura's inheritance to pay off their own debts. After Laura and Sir Percival are married, Marian lives with Laura at Blackwater, Sir Percival Glyde's home, and goes to live with Laura again when Laura eventually marries Walter at the novel's conclusion. Marian is an outspoken, energetic, and intelligent woman, setting her apart from her gentle and demure half-sister. She is aware that she does not meet the conventions that women were expected to meet in the nineteenth century and confidently jokes about this with the male characters. On several occasions throughout the novel, Marian wishes that she was a man or begs to be treated with the same respect given to a man, imploring male characters to share information with her which they would usually keep from a woman. Marian proves her daring and her bravery throughout the novel. She puts herself in serious danger to prevent a plot against Laura, when she climbs out of

her bedroom window to listen to Sir Percival and Count Fosco, who are planning to murder Laura for her fortune. Marian is extremely frightened of Count Fosco and rightly believes he is a ruthlessly intelligent and powerful man who will stop at nothing to protect himself and avoid punishment for his crimes. This shows she is a good judge of character and, although her confidence is shaken by the experience, her instincts about people are always correct throughout the novel. The Count is attracted to Marian because of her intelligence and vigor, which he believes is equal to a man's and, almost, equal to his own. Although she is repulsed by the Count's advances towards her, Marian cannot help but admire Count Fosco when she first meets him. It is implied that Marian will never get married, and is a self-confessed "spinster," because she is too independent for a husband, which reflects nineteenth-century conventions surrounding gender.

Sir Percival Glyde – Sir Percival Glyde is an acquaintance of the deceased Mr. Philip Fairlie and engaged to Mr. Philip Fairlie's daughter, Laura Fairlie. He is also the accomplice of the devious Count Fosco, who is married to Mr. Philip Fairlie's sister, Madame Fosco. A quick-tempered, aggressive and dishonest man, Sir Percival Glyde is an illegitimate fortune hunter who has secretly forged his parents' marriage certificate to give himself the false title of the Baronet of Blackwater. He has run up enormous debts and seeks to repay them by marrying Laura and claiming her inheritance, even if this means murdering her. Despite his criminality, Sir Percival has a guilty conscience, which makes him extremely paranoid and causes him to act violently and erratically throughout the novel. He is terrified that someone will discover his "Secret," and will do anything to prevent his crime's detection. As a testament to his ruthlessness, he locks Anne Catherick in an asylum for life because he believes that she knows his secret, which involved her mother (Mrs. Catherick was the one who gave him the key to the vestry, allowing him to forge his parents' marriage certificate and give himself a falsely elevated title). During his time at Limmeridge, before he marries Laura, Sir Percival acts like a noble, charming gentleman, though he doesn't fool Marian. The abrupt change that his personality undergoes when Laura and Marian come to Blackwater highlights his manipulative nature, as he has hidden his own personality to manipulate Laura into marriage. However, Sir Percival is manipulated himself by Count Fosco, who is the more intelligent and self-controlled of the two gentleman and who manages Sir Percival's temper and encourages his debauchery. Near the end of the novel, Sir Percival dies in a fire while trying to erase the evidence of his forgery in the church vestry.

Count Fosco – Count Fosco is an Italian spy who is married to Laura Fairlie's aunt, Madame Fosco, and the criminal accomplice of Sir Percival Glyde in his plot to steal Laura's fortune. Count Fosco has an incredibly powerful personality. He overwhelms the people around him with his vigor, energy, charm, and intellectual prowess. Despite his age and size (Count Fosco is an elderly man and seriously overweight), he moves quietly and stealthily. He is an enormously intelligent and fearless man. He constantly remains one step ahead of Walter Hartright in his investigations, until Walter stumbles upon the Count's political secret with the help of his friend, Professor Pesca. The Count is also the mastermind behind the plan to switch Laura's identity with Anne Catherick's and to fake Laura's death. Count Fosco has a talent for "taming" wild creatures—he keeps a family of white mice and several birds—and uses this analogy to refer to both animals and women. He has "tamed" his wife, Madame Fosco, who used to be an independent, outspoken woman and who is now an obedient servant to her husband and bases her every opinion on his advice. Count Fosco seems to enjoy the power he wields over people and easily controls and manipulates the people around him, including Sir Percival. He is a master of disguise, a literal political spy, and maintains a façade of genteel delicacy and refinement to hide his truly ruthless character. Count Fosco's one weakness is his attraction to Marian, whom he respects for her vigor and intellect, which he feels is the equivalent "of a man's" and, almost, of his own. However, although the Count lets Marian and Laura escape him because of his sincere affection for Marian, it is likely that he views Marian as a challenge to be conquered (in the way that he has conquered his wife, who seemingly used to be similar to Marian in temperament) rather than admiring her as an equal whom he would treat with respect.

Madame Fosco – Madame Fosco is the wife of the Italian spy, Count Fosco, and seemingly a spy herself under the orders of the Count. She is the sister of Mr. Philip Fairlie and the aunt of Laura Fairlie, whom she comes to live with at Blackwater with her own husband and Laura's husband, Sir Percival Glyde. Madame Fosco has been written out of the family will for marrying a foreigner and will only receive her share of the inheritance if her niece Laura dies before her. In her youth, Madame Fosco was a loud, uncontrollable, and opinionated woman who supported the "rights of women," but she has changed drastically since her marriage to the Count. She spends most of her time rolling the Count's cigarettes and does nothing without receiving his permission or instructions first. It is impossible to tell whether Madame Fosco is happy or not with this arrangement. The Count is extremely kind to her in public, and she displays extreme jealousy to any woman who talks to him, and extreme hatred of anyone who contradicts his opinions. Madame Fosco is not a pleasant woman; she is described as "viperish" and willingly breaks the law and conspires against her nieces to aid the Count and Sir Percival. After the Count's death, at the hands of the Italian political organization which he has betrayed, Madame Fosco dedicates the rest of her life to writing books about Count Fosco and his political exploits. She seems to have had her spirit broken by the Count and ends up nothing but an extension of his own will

and personality.

Mr. Fairlie – Mr. Fairlie is the hypochondriac uncle of Laura Fairlie and the guardian of her and her half-sister, Marian Halcombe. He is the current owner of Limmeridge House, which will pass to Laura in the event of his death, as he is the brother of Laura's late father, Mr. Philip Fairlie. Mr. Fairlie is a self-centered, pampered, and idle man. He rarely leaves his rooms, is paranoid about becoming ill, and never troubles himself to help or go out of his way for anyone, even his own family. Marian appeals to him for help several times throughout the novel, but he ignores her and leaves her and Laura at the mercy of the men who plot against them, Count Fosco and Sir Percival Glyde. Mr. Fairlie is also a snob and believes himself to be superior to everyone because of his noble birth. He treats, and openly refers to his servant, Louis, as an inanimate object and is rude about the residents of Limmeridge and to the servant girl, Fanny, who visits him to bring a message from Marian. Mr. Fairlie pretends to be obsessed with art and spends all his time examining pieces in his room. He believes that his refined taste and interest in culture mark him out as a man of superior intellect and aristocratic bearing. However, underneath all this, Mr. Fairlie is lazy, has no serious opinions on art, and does nothing to help anybody else throughout his life. His death does not cause his nieces grief but, instead, is a joyful event because it allows them to move back to Limmeridge House and allows Laura to inherit her property. This demonstrates that Mr. Fairlie has made no impact on his family in life and has left no friends or acquaintances to mourn him because he has been totally self-absorbed and unfeeling.

Anne Catherick ("The Woman") – Anne Catherick is a poor, unfortunate and mentally fragile young woman who is locked in an asylum by Sir Percival Glyde because he thinks that she knows the secret of his false identity, as the Baronet of Blackwater—a title which is not his own. Anne is the daughter of Mr. Philip Fairlie and Mrs. Catherick (a maid whom he seduced before his marriage) and the half-sister of Laura Fairlie. She bears a striking physical resemblance to Laura, which Sir Percival and Count Fosco use to their advantage. Count Fosco kidnaps Anne, whom he knows has a heart disease and is emotionally fragile after years locked up in an asylum, and keeps her at his house until her death, publicly passing it off as Laura's. Meanwhile, he and Sir Percival place Laura back in the asylum, which Anne escaped from, under Anne's name. Anne is the titular "woman in white" and always dresses in **white clothes** because Mrs. Fairlie, Laura's mother, whom Anne spent some time with as a child and to whom she was very attached, liked little girls to wear white and gave her some white dresses. Anne is a gentle and innocent woman who is mercilessly exploited by the Count and cruelly imprisonment because of Sir Percival's paranoia and ruthless climb up the social ladder. Anne's mother, Mrs. Catherick, later reveals to Walter that Anne never even knew Sir Percival's secret. In life, Anne is proud and hates being called an "idiot," and she demonstrates that she is caring and generous through her multiple attempts to warn Laura not to marry Sir Percival. Anne is a tragic figure in the novel and the wish she makes at Mrs. Fairlie's tomb—that she could be in the tomb with her—is sadly fulfilled when Anne dies of stress-induced heart disease and her body is passed off as Laura's.

Professor Pesca – Professor Pesca is an enthusiastic and lively Italian man and a close friend of Walter Hartright. It is Pesca who gets Walter the job teaching art at Limmeridge House and, therefore, introduces him to Laura Fairlie and involves him in the conspiracy against her. At the beginning of the novel, Pesca is a comical figure, who has thrown himself into English life and English customs in a way which is both endearing and a little ridiculous. He is a very affectionate and loyal friend to Walter, whom he feels indebted to since Walter once saved him from drowning. However, it is revealed that Pesca has hidden depths towards the end of the novel. Although he tells Walter that he left Italy "for political reasons," it is unveiled at the novel's end that Pesca is a member of the same political organization to which Count Fosco belonged and betrayed. It is, therefore, revealed that the seemingly mild-mannered Pesca has, in fact, been involved in violent political action and has possibly killed for his country. Pesca helps Walter foil Count Fosco as, when Walter follows the Count to the opera, the Count recognizes Pesca and panics, inadvertently leading the political organization to him and bringing about his own demise. Pesca, although he is not involved in the main action of the story, is a crucial part of resolving the plot and defeating Count Fosco.

Mr. Gilmore – Mr. Gilmore is the Fairlie family's lawyer and has been with the family for a long time, since Laura Fairlie was a child. He is in charge of arranging the Laura's marriage settlement during her engagement to Sir Percival Glyde. He is charged with helping Laura to organize her will and decide to whom she will leave her inheritance: the thirty thousand pounds she will receive when she comes of age, and Limmeridge House, which she will become heir to in the event of Mr. Fairlie's death. Mr. Gilmore is a kindly and decent man who wants the best for Laura and Marian. At first, he is taken in by Sir Percival Glyde and believes that he is a noble, honest man who Laura should be grateful to marry. Mr. Gilmore is a little conservative and old fashioned in his outlook and thinks that Laura is perhaps just being capricious or teasing Sir Percival when she insists on postponing the wedding. However, once Mr. Gilmore has spoken to Laura, and sees how genuinely upset the prospect of this marriage makes her, he feels very sorry for her and wishes that there was something he could do to help. When Mr. Gilmore draws up Laura's marriage settlement and sends it to Mr. Merriman, Sir Percival's lawyer, he is concerned about the reply he gets. He comes to believe that Sir Percival is marrying Laura for her money and that her life may be in danger. He goes to speak to Mr. Fairlie and insists

that he cancel the wedding, but Mr. Fairlie is characteristically unfeeling and dismisses the lawyer, who leaves in a rage. Ultimately, there is nothing he can do since Laura herself agrees to the wedding in and end. Mr. Gilmore becomes ill shortly after this and is replaced by Mr. Kyrle as the Fairlie's lawyer.

Mrs. Catherick – Mrs. Catherick is the mother of Anne Catherick and the co-conspirator of Sir Percival Glyde; in her youth, she helped him cover up the forgery he made on a church register which suggested that his parents were married when they were not. Mrs. Catherick is a vain, bitter, and spiteful woman who cares little about her daughter and allows Sir Percival to place Anne in the asylum so that the girl will never reveal his secret (though Anne doesn't actually know what the secret is—she just knows that there is one.) Mrs. Catherick also removes Anne from Mrs. Clements' care even though she knows that her daughter had a strong bond with the old lady. Mrs. Catherick agrees to help Sir Percival forge the marriage register because he promises to buy her a gold watch, which shows she is a shallow, materialistic individual. She is also a devious and dishonest woman and marries her husband, Mr. Catherick, because she is pregnant with Anne—by Mr. Philip Fairlie, Laura Fairlie's father—and wants to cover up the child's illegitimacy. Sir Percival blackmails Mrs. Catherick to stay in the village where the scandal took place because he knows that here, she will be an outcast and will have no friends to share his secret with. Mrs. Catherick withstands this cruelty through her sheer malice and determination and is slightly appeased by the fact that Sir Percival pays her to live in the village. Through strength of will and perseverance, Mrs. Catherick remodels herself in the eyes of the local community so that she is seen as a respectable woman. When Walter pays her a visit, he notices that even the minister bows to her when he passes. Mrs. Catherick hates Sir Percival and insinuates to Walter that she would like him to kill him. Mrs. Catherick, however, is quite loyal to Mr. Philip Fairlie, who she still feels was too good for Mrs. Fairlie, despite the fact that he wronged her when she was still a young woman.

Mrs. Clements – Mrs. Clements is a servant who was employed by Mrs. Catherick and who took care of Anne Catherick for part of her childhood. Later in life, she also takes care of Anne and accompanies her on her secret journeys to Limmeridge and Blackwater, after Anne has escaped from the asylum. Mrs. Clements lived in Old Welmingham and was present when the scandal between Mrs. Catherick and Sir Percival Glyde took place (when Sir Percival broke into the vestry to forge the marriage certificate of his parents, who were never really married). Although Mrs. Clements does not know what the scandal was about, she tells Walter that the secret has something to do with the vestry of the church, which leads to Walter's discovery of Sir Percival's secret. This also indirectly contributes to Sir Percival's demise as Walter's investigation motivates Sir Percival to break into the vestry to destroy the evidence, where he accidentally starts a fire and is killed. Mrs. Clements loves Anne Catherick like a daughter and is devastated by the news of her death. She is Anne's closest friend and a mother figure to her throughout the novel.

Mrs. Michelson – Mrs. Michelson is the housekeeper at Blackwater. She is a proud, religious woman—the widow of a Protestant minister, as she enjoys telling people—and takes pride in her role in the household. At times, Mrs. Michelson seems slightly self-righteous and self-important. She is extremely taken in by Count Fosco, who flatters Mrs. Michelson by paying her attention and respecting her role in the house. She is adamant that the Count is innocent of the conspiracy acted against Laura Fairlie—Count Fosco and Sir Percival switch her identity with that of Anne Catherick, who dies in London, and lock Laura in an asylum in Anne's place in order to steal her fortune—and blames the whole thing on Sir Percival Glyde. It is Mrs. Michelson who innocently takes Laura to the train station and sees her off to London, where she is met by Count Fosco and taken to the asylum. Mrs. Michelson suspects that there is something strange going on at Blackwater but cannot say what it is. She feels sorry for Laura and Marian and is convinced that they are being tricked or mistreated. Mrs. Michelson's testament provides evidence that Laura is tricked into going to London—Sir Percival tells her that Marian has already left Blackwater and that Laura is travelling to meet her—because when she returns from taking Laura to the station, she finds that Marian is still at the house and has been hidden in a separate wing. Mrs. Michelson is horrified by this and only remains in Sir Percival's service to care for Marian, who is extremely ill.

Mr. Kyrle – Mr. Kyrle is the Fairlie's family lawyer, who takes over the job when Mr. Gilmore becomes ill. Marian contacts Mr. Kyrle for help while she and Laura are at Blackwater, but her letters are intercepted by Count Fosco and his wife, Madame Fosco. Thus, Mr. Kyrle is unable to intervene in Sir Percival Glyde and the Count's plot against Laura, in which they plan to switch her identity with that of Anne Catherick and lock her in an asylum in order to steal her fortune. After Laura has escaped the asylum, with Marian's help, Walter Hartright—the young man who is in love with Laura and who compiles the evidence about the plot—approaches Mr. Kyrle with the information he has gathered for his case against Count Fosco and Sir Percival. Mr. Kyrle is a pragmatic man who frankly tells Walter that Walter cannot possibly afford to furnish a trial of this length and complexity. He does help Walter at the end of the novel, however, when Walter provides fresh evidence about the case, which is enough to legally restore Laura's identity.

The Clerk – The Clerk is the warden of the church at Old Welmingham, where evidence of the forgery that Sir Percival Glyde committed—claiming that his parents were married when they really were not—is stored in the vestry. The Clerk is

a talkative, forgetful and slightly pompous old man. He helps Walter Hartright when Walter visits the church to examine the marriage register, which Walter rightly suspects contains Sir Percival's secret, and is present again during the fire which Sir Percival accidentally starts when he breaks into the vestry to destroy the forgery and in which he is killed.

Mrs. Rubelle – Mrs. Rubelle is a foreign spy and accomplice of Count Fosco. Disguised as a nurse for Marian, Mrs. Rubelle is brought to Blackwater Park in order to help Sir Percival Glyde and Count Fosco complete their plan to switch Laura's identity with Anne Catherick's and lock Laura in an asylum in order to steal her fortune. Mrs. Rubelle seems to be a self-absorbed and unscrupulous individual who helps the Count and Sir Percival for personal gain—they pay her for her service—without questioning the motives or morality of her actions.

Mr. Dawson – Mr. Dawson is the doctor who attends Marian during her illness at Blackwater. At first it seems that Mr. Dawson is a competent doctor, and that Count Fosco is trying to get rid of him because he wants to keep Marian ill so that he and Sir Percival Glyde may more easily carry out their plan against Laura—to switch her identity with Anne Catherick and lock her in an asylum in order to steal her fortune—without Marian's interference. However, later in the novel, Count Fosco admits that Mr. Dawson was incompetent and gave Marian the wrong medicine, which allowed her fever to transform into deadly typhus, while Count Fosco was genuinely acting in Marian's best interests to try and save her life because of his love for her.

Mr. Merriman – Sir Percival Glyde's lawyer. Mr. Merriman is involved in negotiating the marriage settlement between Sir Percival and Laura Fairlie, through Laura's lawyer, Mr. Gilmore. Mr. Gilmore finds Mr. Merriman almost impossible to deal with because he such a stubbornly cheerful man and uses this façade to cover up his ruthless legal acumen. His name, "Merriman," ironically reflects this aspect of his personality. He is also involved in searching for Anne Catherick when she escapes the asylum and in helping Sir Percival track down Walter Hartright to have him followed in London.

Mrs. Vesey – Mrs. Vesey is Laura Fairlie's elderly servant at Limmeridge and is removed from Laura's service when she is married to Sir Percival Glyde and moves to his home at Blackwater Park. Mrs. Vesey is a sleepy and placid woman who does not seem to have any opinions of her own but is very affectionate towards Laura. She is heartbroken when she believes that Laura is dead.

Margaret Poacher – A servant employed by Sir Percival Glyde at Blackwater Park. Margaret Poacher is stupid and seemingly sadistic—at one point in the novel, she seems to enjoy the suffering of the injured dog that Marian brings home. She is charged with guarding Laura's door when Sir Percival locks her in her room and is kept on when the other servants are dismissed because she is pliable and malicious.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Hester Pinhorn – The servant who is present in Count Fosco's house when the woman she believes to be Laura Fairlie, but who is really Anne Catherick, dies from heart disease.

Jane Gould – The civil servant who attends the body of Laura Fairlie, which is actually Anne Catherick.

Mr. Goodricke – Mr. Goodricke is the doctor who goes to Count Fosco's house when a woman, whom he believes to be Laura Fairlie, but who is really Anne Catherick, dies from heart failure.

Fanny – A servant girl at Blackwater whom Marian gives letters to carry to Mr. Fairlie, which beg him to help Laura and Marian, who are trapped at Blackwater with the scheming Count Fosco and his accomplice, Sir Percival Glyde.

Mr. Philip Fairlie – The deceased father of Laura Fairlie and Anne Catherick and the stepfather of Marian Halcombe. Mr. Philip Fairlie was Mrs. Catherick's lover before he was married, hence his relation to Anne, and Mrs. Catherick still remembers him fondly.

Monsieur Rubelle – Mrs. Rubelle's husband and a foreign spy.

Mr. Catherick – Mrs. Catherick's husband who leaves her because he suspects her of having an affair with Sir Percival Glyde.

John Owen – The man who owns the cab firm which Count Fosco used to transport Laura Fairlie from the train station in London to the place he hid her before taking her to the asylum.

Mrs. Todd – The woman who lives at Todd's Corner in Limmeridge, where Anne Catherick and Mrs. Clements stay on their visit there.

Major Donthorne – The owner of Varneck Hall, which is where Mrs. Catherick worked as a maid in her youth, and where Mr. Philip Fairlie, Laura and Anne's father, met and seduced her.

Louis – The poorly treated foreign servant of Mr. Fairlie.

Mrs. Hartright – The mother of Walter Hartright and Sarah.

Sarah – Walter Hartright's sister and Mrs. Hartright's daughter.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

EVIDENCE AND LAW

The law is presented as a flawed institution in Wilkie Collins' novel *The Woman in White*. In the

novel, Walter Hartright, a young drawing teacher who is in love with Laura Fairlie, tries to expose her husband, Sir Percival Glyde, and his accomplice Count Fosco, for trying to steal Laura's inheritance. The case also concerns the mystery of the "woman in **white**," a young woman named Anne Catherick who has escaped from an asylum and who strongly resembles Laura. When Anne dies, Count Fosco confines Laura in the asylum under Anne's name, in order to fake her death and lay claim to her fortune. Although Walter uses certain legal methods, such as the compilation of written evidence, to build his case against Sir Percival, the law itself is depicted as a limited institution that is easily influenced by powerful individuals. Therefore, law is presented as a force that can easily be abused and used against vulnerable people like Laura and Anne. In Collins' novel, it is the effort of individuals like Walter, rather than the institution of the law itself, that discovers the truth and triumphs over corruption and conspiracy.

The structure of *The Woman in White* suggests that the collection of written evidence is an effective way of reaching a fair verdict in a court of law—at least in theory. The story of *The Woman in White* is presented to the reader as a series of documents collected by Walter, which narrate the events of the story from the perspective of several witnesses. In this sense, the novel deliberately mimics the process of providing evidence to a jury in order to ascertain the facts of a case. Walter states that he will only describe the events for which he was present; the rest will be told through the written testimony of others, through letters, diaries, and legal documents. Walter's disclaimer mimics the objectivity that is achieved when evidence is set before an unbiased jury. By distancing himself from parts of the narrative, Walter is unable to influence the opinion of his readers, who will play the role of the "judge" in examining the case of the conspiracy. Walter believes that the reader will be able to compare the different written accounts of events and successfully decide which characters are innocent and which are guilty in the story. A comparison of written evidence further aids Walter in the novel when he is able to compare Sir Percival Glyde's forged copy of the church register with the unbiased one kept by a clerk, which does not include the entry of Sir Percival's parents' marriage (because they were never married) and proves that Sir Percival is not really the Baronet of Blackwater as he claims to be. This incident, and the overarching structure of the novel, suggests that the legal structure of a court case, in which evidence is presented to an unbiased jury, can be an effective method of judging guilt in a crime.

However, although Collins suggests that legal methods work well in theory, in reality the law is not unbiased, and the characters in the novel are repeatedly let down by the legal system. Walter acknowledges that the case he has carefully compiled is never put before a court. Although he is convinced that a jury would support his case, "the machinery of the Law" is still "the pre-engaged servant of the long purse." This suggests that people with money wield the most legal power in nineteenth-century England. This is demonstrated when Walter approaches Mr. Kyrle, the Fairlie's lawyer, with the evidence he has compiled. Mr. Kyrle will not help Walter take his case against Sir Percival and Count Fosco to court because he knows that—without Laura's inheritance, which has been stolen—Walter will not have enough money to fund a lengthy trial. This demonstrates that poor people like Walter and Laura do not get a fair hearing in the justice system as lawyers are unlikely to take on poorer clients. This is further implied by the fact that the narrative contains no evidence from either Anne or Laura's perspective. Those who are poor and vulnerable like Anne, or socially vulnerable like Laura (who is a woman and has fewer legal rights and protections than men), are voiceless in the nineteenth-century justice system, revealing the legal system to be ineffective and flawed.

Rather than helping vulnerable individuals, the law and legal evidence can be used against them by powerful individuals, such as Sir Percival Glyde, who are able to gain the support of the law, or defy it entirely, because of their money and privilege. For instance, Sir Percival Glyde marries Laura because he knows that he can legally claim her fortune if he can convince her to sign it over to him before her death, which he and Count Fosco conspire to fake. Although Marian, Laura's half-sister, appeals to her lawyer, Mr. Gilmore, to help Laura break her engagement to Sir Percival, Mr. Gilmore is easily won over by Sir Percival's charming facade and reputation as a wealthy and noble man. Although Mr. Gilmore feels sympathetic towards Laura, he does not (at first) suspect Sir Percival. Mr. Gilmore's inaction suggests that powerful individuals like Sir Percival cannot easily be stopped as they are able to use their wealth to bring the law round to their side. When Count Fosco succeeds in his plan to fake Laura's death, both the legal evidence of Laura's death certificate and the written testimony on the tombstone, which bears Laura's name, legally bar Laura from retrieving her identity or inheriting her fortune, which goes to Sir Percival and is split with Count Fosco instead. This situation—and the novel as a whole—reveals that while examining written evidence can be a reliable system of fathoming truth, the system of judging this evidence must be unbiased, otherwise it will be exploited by powerful individuals and wielded against those who are poor or vulnerable.

MORALITY, CRIME, AND PUNISHMENT

Justice is self-regulating in *The Woman in White*, as the characters who commit crimes are fittingly punished, while the virtuous characters receive suitable rewards in exchange for their efforts. The characters in *The Woman in White* are morally nuanced, however, and "good" characters are often willing to commit immoral or illegal acts if they are necessary to protect their loved ones, while "bad"

characters sidestep punishment for long periods of time. Collins uses Walter and Marian to highlight how one can break the law while still being good and virtuous—what matters most is the intention underpinning the crime, and if one's intentions are good, then they aren't worthy of punishment. Meanwhile, if one commits a crime with malicious intent—like Count Fosco and Sir Percival do, on several accounts—those crimes are not only worthy of punishment but actually bring about their own punishment.

Although the virtuous characters are rewarded for their behavior, they are not passively virtuous throughout the action of the plot. Instead, they actively strive to do what's morally right, even if they must break the law in the process. For instance, Marian breaks the law to free Laura from the asylum, where she has been unjustly imprisoned by Count Fosco under the identity of Anne Catherick. Marian's actions are done with good intentions, to free her sister from false imprisonment, rather than for personal gain, which is why her law-breaking is positioned as virtuous rather than immoral. Walter is also willing to break the law to protect Laura and Marian. He is prepared to violently assault or murder Sir Percival before he finds that Sir Percival is trapped by a fire inside a church. Walter also blackmails Count Fosco into providing him with a full confession of the conspiracy that he concocted to steal Laura's inheritance. However, like Marian, Walter's seemingly immoral behavior reflects his good intentions and his willingness to act daringly and bravely to achieve justice and to see those who have committed crimes punished. By rewarding Marian and Walter at the end of the novel, Collins sharply distinguishes between behavior that is self-serving and corrupt—such as the behavior practiced by the Count and Sir Percival—and behavior that is noble and necessary, even if the only distinguishing feature between these two behaviors is the reason that underpins it.

Although Walter is prepared to commit these well-intentioned crimes if necessary, Collins spares him the necessity of doing this to demonstrate that crimes bring about their own punishment, and that morally corrupt people who commit crimes knowingly for personal gain, like Count Fosco and Sir Percival, often bring about their own demises. During a conversation at Blackwater, Count Fosco makes fun of Laura and Marian for suggesting that "crimes cause their own detection." Count Fosco, who has lived a long life of crime without being punished, is complacent in his ability to evade punishment and feels that Laura and Marian are naïve in their belief. However, Count Fosco is proven wrong, and both he and Sir Percival Glyde unwittingly destroy themselves—Count Fosco by becoming too complacent and failing to disguise himself properly to evade the detection by the political organization he betrayed, and Sir Percival by becoming paranoid about his crimes and seeking to destroy evidence. Although it is Walter who helps bring about the men's destruction—he leads his friend Pesca (who used to be caught up in the same dangerous political organization that Fosco betrayed) to the opera and reveals Fosco to his pursuers, and he fans Sir Percival's paranoia by investigating him—the punishments the two antagonists receive are in fact the direct result of their crimes, and not the result of Walter's direct intervention. Walter, therefore, is active in destroying the Count and Sir Percival, but is saved from having to commit violence and evade the punishment of the law himself. In *The Woman in White*, virtuous characters strive against crime and injustice to aid in its detection. Collins suggests that these actions, taken by people with good intentions, such as Walter and Marian, support both the capture and punishment of criminals and support systems of natural justice, in which "crime causes its own detection" and criminals bring about their own demise.

By the end of *The Woman in White*, most of the characters have arrived in situations that reflect their respective behaviors throughout the novel. Those who have acted with good intentions, like Walter and Marian, are rewarded for their morality, while characters who have acted with evil intentions, like Sir Percival and Count Fosco, are punished. Sir Percival causes his own death in a fire while trying to destroy the evidence of a forgery he has committed and which he has unlawfully used to claim inheritance and borrow money. Meanwhile, Count Fosco is murdered by the Italian political organization that he swore allegiance to and then promptly betrayed. These punishments fit the nature of the men's crimes and support Collin's central message that "crimes cause their own detection." Walter, Marian, and Laura, in contrast, end the novel happily because their intentions have been moral throughout the novel. Laura and Marian have been victims in the conspiracy of Sir Percival and Count Fosco, while Walter has acted consistently with the Fairlies' best interests in mind. Even Anne Catherick, who seems to have been punished, through her untimely death, meets a fate that is fitting for her character. Anne is a tragic figure, who has been outcast and mistreated by society her whole life. Her fondest memory is her time spent with Mrs. Fairlie at Limmeridge—a time she dreams of returning to. After Sir Percival and Count Fosco switch Anne and Laura's identities, Anne's wish is tragically fulfilled, as she is buried in Mrs. Fairlie's tomb, because everyone thinks she is Laura. The resolution of the novel, in a way which reflects the behavior and degrees of virtue among the characters, is very typical of the nineteenth-century novel, in which virtue is richly rewarded and malevolence aptly punished.

IDENTITY AND APPEARANCE

Identity and external appearance are presented as fluid and deceptive in *The Woman in White*, which centers around a mysterious and deadly case of switched identities. In the novel, identity is closely bound up

with public recognition, to the point where loss of public identity is equated with a total loss of self. It is also implied that people develop their identities based partly on how society treats them because of their external appearance. Collins criticizes a society in which public appearance and social identity are viewed as essential aspects of a person's character. Collins argues instead that external appearances do not necessarily align with or reflect a person's character.

In *The Woman in White*, there are sharp contradictions between the way that people look and the way that they behave, revealing that external appearances can be deceiving and do not necessarily offer insight into someone's personality. When Walter Hartright first meets Marian, for instance, he remarks upon her "graceful" figure. When Marian turns around, however, Walter is shocked because he finds her "ugly." This undermines the reader's expectation that Marian will be the beautiful heroine. Marian's character contradicts this description of her as "ugly"; when Walter gets to know her, he discovers that she is a brave and intelligent woman and does not have an "ugly" personality. Through this discrepancy between Marian's internal character and external appearance, Collins implies that Marian is far more than she appears to be. The deceiving nature of appearances is especially true of Count Fosco and Sir Percival Glyde, who deliberately present themselves in a certain way to disguise their true characters and identities. The Count, who is a huge, intimidating man, makes a show of caring for vulnerable animals like mice and birds to disguise the fact that he is ruthless and malicious. Sir Percival, who is very handsome, similarly presents himself as charming and polite but is secretly brutish and cruel. Collins repeats this pattern of contradiction between internal character and external appearance to emphasize that a person may not be who they claim or pretend to be, and that deciding a person's character based off of their appearance can be extremely dangerous.

Although appearances do not necessarily reflect character, identities are closely connected with reputation within society. Collins highlights how reputation is just as unhelpful and misleading in discerning one's true character as appearances are. For instance, Sir Percival Glyde has concealed his true identity because he is an illegitimate child and not really a member of the nobility, as he pretends to be. He has created a false identity for himself as a Baronet, and as far as anyone in society knows, he *is* a Baronet. It is only through the discovery of "the Secret" of the forged marriage register that Sir Percival's identity can be challenged. Sir Percival assumes the appearance of a charming and polite nobleman to create an identity which is far from the truth. Through Sir Percival's false claim to nobility, Collins critiques those who tie their identity to their name or reputation, arguing that reputation does not adequately reflect one's real character. Furthermore, Sir Percival's desperation to protect his constructed identity, and his terror that the secret will be discovered, implies that the loss of public identity is a significant loss in nineteenth-century society. Without his name and reputation as a nobleman, Sir Percival will be reduced to a poor, nameless nobody and will lose the privileges enjoyed by the aristocracy. Sir Percival's anxieties reveal that he's not the only one who tries to center his identity around reputation; in the nineteenth century, British society was largely based on reputation and social status. Sir Percival's use of a false identity—and the fact that few people question the validity of his identity—suggests that nineteenth-century society is easily taken in by the external appearance of rank and importance, even though those things aren't adequate markers of one's true character.

Furthermore, identity is presented as something that is not only important to society but is partly formed based on societal expectations. This is demonstrated by Mrs. Catherick's determination to retain her public identity as a respectable lady, although the community knows Anne's father was not Mrs. Catherick's husband. By steadfastly maintaining her appearance as a respectable woman, though, Mrs. Catherick begins to be treated as such by the people in the town. When the minister bows to Mrs. Catherick as he passes by her house, it becomes clear that people in the town now perceive Mrs. Catherick as a respectable woman even if the reader knows that, by nineteenth-century standards, she is not. It is a shift in the public's perception of Mrs. Catherick that remade her public image, and thus it doesn't reflect a change in her underlying personality. Similarly, when Count Fosco places Laura in the asylum, everyone around her treats her as though she really is Anne Catherick. By the time Marian frees Laura, Laura has picked up traits that belonged to Anne and is barely distinguishable from Anne in her physical appearance. This change in Laura's appearance is brought on by the emotional strain of being confined in the asylum, rather than a change in her own nature; it is the expectations of people at the asylum that change Laura's character. The idea that people will develop similar personality traits if they are treated in the same way suggests that society is partly responsible for forming the habits of individuals and that, if society is too preoccupied by the external appearance of virtue and nobility, rather than with evidence of it through actions, it can easily be fooled by individuals who construct their identities in order to bend to and benefit from social expectations. This ultimately supports Collins' belief that public identity is constructed, relies on performance, and does not necessarily communicate anything about the internal nature of a person or how they behave in private.

MARRIAGE AND GENDER

Marriage is presented as a great risk for women in *The Woman in White*. Women in nineteenth-century Britain had fewer rights than men because of the

societal belief that women were inferior to men. It was still very difficult for women to challenge their husband's authority or to maintain control over their own assets once married. Throughout the novel, Collins is critical of marriage, as the female characters in the novel stand to lose everything by it, while the male characters stand to gain from marriage and use this to their own advantage. While marriage for love is still depicted as a favorable outcome when it is based on mutual love and respect—like Laura and Walter's marriage at the end of the book—many of the marriages in *The Woman in White* highlight the unfair balance of power between men and women in the nineteenth century.

In the novel, marriage is presented as something that is potentially dangerous to women because it strips them of their rights, power, and individual freedoms. Laura's marriage to Sir Percival Glyde threatens her identity, fortune, and even her life. Although Laura is a wealthy woman, she has had little say in the distribution of her inheritance; if Laura dies, her fortune will go to her husband and to her aunt, Madame Fosco, who is conveniently married to Sir Percival's co-conspirator, Count Fosco. This situation seals Laura's fate, as it gives her future husband a financial incentive to murder her. Furthermore, like many wealthy women in the period, Laura has no say over who she marries. Before his death, Laura's father selected Sir Percival for her, and Laura feels that she must obey her father's dying wish. This gives the reader the impression that Laura has no power over her situation and is emotionally pressured into marrying Sir Percival, whom she does not love (let alone even like), by nineteenth-century conventions, which stated that women must obey the wishes of their male relatives. Once Laura is married to Sir Percival, she loses whatever personal freedoms she previously enjoyed. She must ask Sir Percival's permission for her sister, Marian, to live with her and must live in Sir Percival's house at Blackwater. Sir Percival is also physically aggressive towards Laura and tries to keep her locked up against her will. Although Marian reminds Sir Percival that there are laws to protect women against brutal treatment, Laura is effectively powerless against the plots of her husband because of her lack of agency—a situation that firmly positions marriage as a severe danger to women.

The novel highlights that while women lose power through their marriages, men become more powerful through marriage. This increases the risk of marriage for women, as men are incentivized to marry women who are likely to receive a large inheritance; the husbands of these women will be able to control this inheritance, as they have more financial rights than their wives. Sir Percival stands to gain enormously from his marriage to Laura; if she dies, her will leaves 20,000 pounds and Limmeridge House to Sir Percival, who is heavily in debt. Although the novel presents an extreme scenario—that Sir Percival is willing to murder Laura in order to access her fortune—Collins suggests that marriage leaves women vulnerable to predatory forces because of their lack of rights in Victorian society, and incentivizes men to prey on wealthy women for their fortunes, which marriage gives them access to. Similarly, Count Fosco has benefitted from his marriage to Madame Fosco. Once an outspoken young woman who "advocated for the Rights of Women," Madame Fosco has been transformed into an obedient and unquestioning accomplice for the Count. The Count has destroyed her independent spirit and sense of self to the point where she is like an extension of the Count with no will of her own. Count Fosco also stands to benefit financially through Sir Percival's marriage as, if Laura dies, he will be in control of the 10,000 pounds that his wife, Laura's aunt, is set to inherit. The descriptions of Madame Fosco as a young woman mirror Marian in her outspokenness and determination to be treated like a man. However, while Madame Fosco's marriage quashes her spirit, Marian does not plan to marry and describes herself as a "confirmed spinster." This supports Collins' criticisms of marriage as an institution that stamps out the potential of bright, outspoken women who strive to be treated as equal to men.

However, the novel doesn't present marriage as entirely bad. In certain cases, marriage can create a fulfilling bond between two people, like with Walter and Laura, as long as these people are equals and are committed to each other through love and respect. Walter's marriage to Laura is the happy conclusion of *The Woman in White*. Although Walter, as a lower-middle-class man, stands to gain financially by marrying Laura, he proves that he is interested in her and not her wealth through his unwavering dedication to her throughout the novel. At one point in the novel, Walter leaves Limmeridge for Honduras, even though he is deeply in love with Laura, because he wants to give Laura the chance to be happy with her new husband and to forget Walter, even though she is in love with him too. When he returns from South America and finds that Laura is changed by her time in the asylum and that she has lost her fortune, Walter remains faithful to her and does not pressure her to marry him while she is emotionally fragile. Instead Walter supports Laura financially and works tirelessly to help restore her identity and fortune, even though he believes this effort will come to nothing. Ultimately Walter's marriage to Laura supports the idea that marriage can be a happy occurrence when a man has earned the trust and respect of the woman he wants to marry. However, Walter's devotion to Laura is treated as a rare occurrence in the novel and Collins suggests that, despite this one-off happy ending, most marriages are a dangerous trap for nineteenth-century women and often result in them losing what little financial, legal, and social power that they have.

CLASS, INDUSTRY, AND SOCIAL PLACE

Collins' novel *The Woman in White* praises industry, hard work, and the "self-made" man. Nineteenth-

century British society was rigidly organized by class, but social mobility was made possible through the rise of the middle class and the self-made man, meaning a man without family connections or land who became wealthy through his own efforts. *The Woman in White* reflects British, middle-class values of the nineteenth century: the virtuous, hard-working protagonist, Walter Hartright, triumphs over dishonest social climbers like Sir Percival Glyde. However, Walter is only able to transcend his class because of his noble character and industrious efforts. The conclusion of the novel—the marriage between Laura Fairlie and Walter—blends what many Victorians believed to be the inherently noble qualities of the upper classes (virtue, refinement, and an interest in culture) with the industry and innovation of the self-made man, who was encouraged to better himself and grow wealthy in order to emulate the noble classes.

Although nobility is implicitly linked with virtue in the novel, some upper-class characters like Count Fosco and Mr. Fairlie are associated with laziness and duplicity. Mr. Fairlie presents himself as frail and incapable; an affectation common among the aristocracy of the eighteenth century that was meant to demonstrate their extreme delicacy and genteelness of character through their physical helplessness. Mr. Fairlie ignores Marian's pleas for help throughout the novel and is a parody of aristocratic pretensions and eccentricities, which had fallen out of fashion by the mid nineteenth century among the British public. Count Fosco, similarly, presents himself as affectedly genteel and sensitive. Like Mr. Fairlie, Count Fosco cultivates a love for the arts—such as the opera, which he attends at the novel's close—and uses this presentation of himself to suggest that he has an unusually refined and aristocratic temperament. Mr. Fairlie and Count Fosco have a lot in common and even get on fairly well when they meet in person because of these shared affectations. Mr. Fairlie represents the other extreme of Count Fosco: he is utterly useless in his excess, while Fosco is wildly corrupt in his. Collins suggests that Mr. Fairlie and Count Fosco are not examples of true nobility, as they use outdated affectations to show off their rank in society and, underneath this, are self-serving and corrupt.

In contrast, the novel celebrates hardworking, middle-class characters, like Walter, who earn the right to transcend their place in society, which potentially makes them more deserving than those born to nobility. The novel contains first-person accounts from several servants, such as Mrs. Michelson, and middle-class people like lawyers, as well as the perspective of the upper-class characters like Marian and Mr. Fairlie. By placing the testimony of people from various classes alongside one another, Collins suggests that people of all ranks contribute to society and showcases the social mobility and mixing between classes which was beginning to take place in nineteenth-century society. Professor Pesca, who is an Italian friend of Walter's and is revealed to belong to the same political organization that Count Fosco has betrayed, represents Count Fosco's opposite, or foil, within society. While the Count is untrustworthy, Pesca is warm, loyal, and industrious. Although Collins demonstrates a tendency towards distrusting foreigners in his novel, which reflects his nineteenth-century values of British exceptionalism, he undermines this tendency in his presentation of Pesca as an asset to British society because of his hardworking personality and enthusiastic embrace of British values. Sir Percival Glyde is also presented as the opposite of Walter; while Walter is a hardworking, middle-class man, who values industry and activity over wealth and rank, Sir Percival Glyde tries to evade work by forging his parents' marriage certificate in order to inherit a fortune that he is not entitled to. While Walter is rewarded for his hard work, Sir Percival Glyde is punished for attempting to exceed his social rank without earning this privilege through industry. This demonstrates Collins' belief in the superiority of "self-made men" like Walter over those who seek titles and rank for their own sake through dishonest means.

Despite its praise for hardworking middle-class characters, the novel's resolution supports the nineteenth-century belief that the upper classes are an important and aspirational part of British society. It is never questioned that Laura is entitled to and deserving of her inheritance. She is presented from the beginning to the end of the story as a virtuous person and an innocent victim of Count Fosco and Sir Percival Glyde, who wish to steal her rightful place in society. This suggests that Collins, and his middle-class audience, generally supported the social order that the class system imposed in the nineteenth century. Walter, for his part, is motivated to work hard, and to pursue the mystery of the woman in **white** for himself because he cannot afford to pay a lawyer. He feels that his poverty has been a good thing in this sense because "the law never would have obtained an interview with Mrs. Catherick," which is the key to discovering Sir Percival's secret. Collins therefore feels that a certain level of poverty is beneficial in society as it incentivizes people to work harder and allows new ways of thinking to enter the establishment. While Sir Percival is punished for trying to transcend his social position undeservingly, Walter is rewarded because he has not tried to achieve upward mobility dishonestly but instead has earned his elevated status (by marrying Laura) through his own efforts and virtue. Although the class system was changing in the nineteenth century, there was a general sense among the middle class that, despite the benefits of these changes, some type of social order should still be preserved.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

WHITE CLOTHES

White clothes are associated with Anne Catherick, who is the titular "woman in white." The white clothes that Anne wears are symbolic of Anne's innocence and highlight her victimhood throughout the novel. Anne's determination to wear white is representative of her fragile mental health but also of her sweet, loyal nature. She believes that she must always wear white because of her time spent at Limmeridge (Laura's family home) as a child, and the close bond that she formed with Mrs. Fairlie during this time. Believing little girls look best in white, Mrs. Fairlie gave Anne white clothes to wear, and Anne, who always remembers Mrs. Fairlie's kindness, lives by this until the end of her days. At one point in the novel, Anne is saddened when Mrs. Clements makes her wear a dark cloak to disguise her identity, and this further symbolizes the erasure of Anne's identity, as well as her anonymity and lowly social status in society because of her lack of social power as a woman and someone who is mentally ill. Later, when Count Fosco places Laura in the asylum in Anne's place, Laura is given Anne's white clothes to wear. Like Anne, Laura is also associated with purity, innocence, and victimhood. Anne's innocence is further established when Walter learns that Sir Percival imprisoned her in the asylum solely because he believed that she had learned his secret. However, on speaking with Anne's mother, Mrs. Catherick, Walter discovers that Anne only knew that there *was* a secret, not what the secret was about, which shows that she was literally innocent and knew nothing of Sir Percival's crimes.

THE SUMMER HOUSE

The summer house at Limmeridge symbolizes the innocent state of happiness that Walter Hartright and Laura Fairlie enjoy when they first meet at Limmeridge, long before they learn about the conspiracy and the machinations of Count Fosco and Sir Percival Glyde. Walter first meets Laura, whom he eventually falls in love with, in the summer house. This connects Walter and Laura's relationship with summer, which is generally associated with youth, joy, lightheartedness, and love. When Walter discovers that Laura is engaged to Sir Percival and that he must leave Limmeridge, he and Laura are cast out of the summer house and must live through the long, dark period of their lives (which can be associated with winter or a lack of summer) in which they are separated by Sir Percival and Count Fosco, the villains of the story. Throughout the novel, Walter relates his memories of the happy time that he spent with Laura to the summer house, and these happy memories are the only ones that Laura can bear to recall after Marian rescues her from the asylum. The pair remain cast out of Limmeridge House, and away from the summer house, until the end of the novel, when Laura's identity as the heir of Limmeridge House is restored and the lovers are free to move back into the family home. The return of Laura and Walter to Limmeridge, and to the proximity of the summer house, suggests the return of joy and lightheartedness to their lives after the long metaphorical winter imposed on them by Count Fosco and Sir Percival Glyde.

THE FOUNTAIN

The fountain outside Sir Percival Glyde's house at Blackwater has a "statue of a monster on a plinth" in its center. The fountain symbolizes the true, monstrous character of Sir Percival Glyde at the heart of his noble façade and, similarly, the ruthless and merciless character of Count Fosco beneath his veneer of gentility. The fountain also reflects Laura and Marian's position when they are trapped at Blackwater. They are in the lair of the monster and, like the monster in the heart of the fountain, surrounded by water, are unable to cross the threshold of the grounds and escape from Blackwater or from Count Fosco and Sir Percival's clutches. Madame Fosco's habit of walking around the fountain in circles reinforces this metaphor. Although this seems to be an innocent activity, Madame Fosco uses this position outside the front door of the house, where the fountain stands, to keep watch over Marian and Laura's comings and goings. This allows Madame Fosco to pass on information to her husband and to intercept the letters the girls send out, begging for help.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin edition of *The Woman in White* published in 1860.

The First Epoch: Part 1, Chapter 1 Quotes

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

Related Characters: Walter Hartright (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

Walter Hartright, a young drawing master who gets caught up in the mysterious events surrounding the woman in white, opens the novel with this statement. This opening sentence foreshadows certain aspects of the story and supports Collins's interest in the theme of gender throughout the novel.

Walter's assertion that women are "patient" and that men

are "resolved" reflects conventional nineteenth-century beliefs about gender. Women are believed to be "patient" and enduring because these traits are passive rather than active, and an ideal woman in the Victorian era was one who passively submitted to social expectations and to patriarchal control. Men, on the other hand, were considered "resolved" and capable of achieving things because their role was active rather than passive.

Although he opens the novel like this, Collins undermines these perceptions of gender throughout the novel. Characters like Marian Halcombe, who would like to be active but is constrained by social expectations, challenge these assumptions and suggest that women can be just as active and resolved as men when they are given the chance. However, Collins was also writing for a middle-class audience who expected certain gender conventions to be fulfilled. Therefore, while Collins includes active female characters, he also places Walter Hartright in the role of hero and sets up a romance between Walter and the passive heroine, Laura Fairlie.

❝ 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.

Related Characters: Walter Hartright (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

Walter Hartright opens the novel with a statement about the events he is going to narrate. He addresses the reader and uses this opening declaration to foreshadow some of the major ideas of the novel, such as the themes of law and legal corruption.

Walter suggests that a crime has been committed and that "the events which fill these pages" contain evidence of a "case of suspicion" that could easily be tried in a "Court of justice." It is clear therefore that something has prevented legal justice in this case, as Walter's evidence has never come before a court. Walter suggests that the legal system "cannot be depended upon" to give equal attention to every case and that, therefore, the justice system is an unreliable way of preventing and detecting crime.

Walter claims that the reason that certain crimes get more attention than others is the amount of money the client has to pay for lawyers and to build a case which can be taken before a court. Most lawyers, Walter implies, are interested in money and will, therefore, always take a rich's man's case over a poor man's case, even if the rich man is guilty and the poor man is innocent. This shows that the legal system is susceptible to corruption and does not always represent things in an unbiased way. Rich people also have more legal power than poor people and can bribe lawyers with the "lubricating influence" of money.

The First Epoch: Part 1, Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ My sister Sarah, with all the advantages of youth, was, strangely enough, less pliable. She did full justice to Pesca's excellent qualities of heart; but she could not accept him implicitly, as my mother accepted him, for my sake. Her insular notions of propriety rose in perpetual revolt against Pesca's constitutional contempt for appearances; and she was always more or less undisguisedly astonished at her mother's familiarity with the eccentric little foreigner. I have observed, not only in my sister's case, but in the instances of others, that we of the young generation are nothing like so hearty and so impulsive as some of our elders.

Related Characters: Walter Hartright (speaker), Mrs. Hartright, Sarah, Professor Pesca

Related Themes:

Page Number: 14

Explanation and Analysis

Walter goes to visit his mother and his sister, Sarah, and is surprised to find his friend Professor Pesca, an enthusiastic Italian, with them. Pesca is extremely excited to see Walter and Walter senses that, while his mother likes Pesca and is entertained by his enthusiasm, his sister, Sarah, disapproves of Pesca because he does not live up to British standards of propriety.

Collins contradicts stereotypes and social expectations throughout the novel. Walter observes here that it is usually thought to be older people who are more conservative and concerned with social expectations., while young people are generally believed to be more liberal and socially free. However, the behavior of Sarah and Walter's mother suggests that these are stereotypes and may not reflect

reality.

British society in the nineteenth century was preoccupied by concepts of propriety and social etiquette which dictated how people should behave in public. It was considered improper to show any type of emotion, and there was a general "insular notion" that British society was superior to other countries and cultures because it maintained these standards of behavior. Collins suggests that this is an unpleasant and incorrect worldview, however, and that British society cares more about appearances than it does about morality and truth. Collins undermines the view that foreign societies are uncivilized as, although Pesca, who is Italian, does not meet British standards of propriety, he is a kind-hearted person and an affectionate and loyal friend to Walter throughout the novel.

The First Epoch: Part 1, Chapter 5 Quotes

❝ But the idea of absolute insanity which we all associate with the very name of an Asylum, had, I can honestly declare, never occurred to me, in connection with her. I had seen nothing, in her language or her actions, to justify it at the time; and, even with the new light thrown on her by the words which the stranger had addressed to the policeman, I could see nothing to justify it now. What had I done? Assisted the victim of the most horrible of all false imprisonments to escape; or cast loose on the wide world of London an unfortunate creature, whose actions it was my duty, and every man's duty, mercifully to control?

Related Characters: Walter Hartright (speaker), Anne Catherick ("The Woman")

Related Themes:

Page Number: 31-32

Explanation and Analysis

On his way back to London after visiting his mother and sister, Walter meets a woman on the road who is dressed all in white. Walter walks with the woman to London and helps her find a cab. After he has done this, another cab passes by and he overhears the driver ask a policeman if he has seen a woman in white on the road; this woman has escaped from an asylum.

Walter is not totally surprised to hear that the woman is mentally unwell, as her strange behavior has already led him to this conclusion. However, Walter is surprised when he hears that the woman has been in an asylum. Walter clearly has a stereotypical idea of what an "insane" person is like and the woman in white's behavior has challenged this perception and made him question whether she belongs in an asylum, which were notoriously awful at the time.

Walter's thoughts reflect contradictory nineteenth-century attitudes towards the treatment of mentally ill people. While there was a widespread fear of mentally ill people, there was also growing interest in psychology and the exploration of new treatments. Walter demonstrates a sympathetic attitude towards mental illness, and mirrors Collins's own view that mentally ill people need to be helped, not locked away from society. Collins's portrayal of Anne Catherick, the woman in white, throughout the novel also contradicts the typical portrayal of mentally ill people as violent or dangerous.

The First Epoch: Part 1, Chapter 8 Quotes

❝ To associate that forlorn, friendless, lost woman, even by an accidental likeness only, with Miss Fairlie, seems like casting a shadow on the future of the bright creature who stands looking at us now.

Related Characters: Marian Halcombe, Walter Hartright (speaker), Anne Catherick ("The Woman"), Laura Fairlie

Related Themes:

Page Number: 62

Explanation and Analysis

Walter gets a job as a drawing teacher at Limmeridge House, where his pupils are two half-sisters; Laura Fairlie and Marian Halcombe. He is struck by the likeness between Laura and the woman he met on the road, and is unnerved by this similarity.

The physical similarly between Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie is a central aspect of the novel. When Laura is targeted by fortune hunters, Sir Percival Glyde and Count Fosco, these men exploit the physical similarity between Anne and Laura to fake Laura's death and lock her in the asylum under Anne's name. This supports one of Collins's central arguments, that public recognition is a part of personal identity. Even if someone's private identity remains the same, their public identity, and the way society treats them, can be drastically altered by a change of appearance or of public perception.

Although the women are very similar physically, at the beginning of the novel they are in drastically different circumstances. Anne is poor and vulnerable and has no status or power in society, while Laura is a wealthy heiress.

However, although the women seem worlds apart, Laura is also vulnerable to predatory forces because of her gender. As a woman, Laura has fewer rights than men and, therefore, it is difficult for her to protect herself or keep control of her own money. Walter's horror at conflating the two women suggests that Laura, like Anne, will become a victim of society.

The First Epoch: Part 1, Chapter 10 Quotes

"Crush it!' she said. 'Here, where you first saw her, crush it! Don't shrink under it like a woman. Tear it out; trample it under foot like a man!' The suppressed vehemence with which she spoke; the strength which her will concentrated in the look she fixed on me, and in the hold on my arm that she had not yet relinquished –communicated to mine, steadied me. We both waited for a minute, in silence. At the end of that time, I had justified her generous faith in my manhood; I had, outwardly at least, recovered my self-control.

Related Characters: Walter Hartright, Marian Halcombe (speaker), Laura Fairlie

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 73

Explanation and Analysis

After Walter has spent some time at Limmeridge, he realizes that he is in love with Laura and that she is in love with him. Walter is heartbroken when Marian tells him that Laura is engaged to another man, but Marian encourages him to be strong and to take the news "like a man."

This passage reflects both Collins's subversive attitude to nineteenth-century gender conventions and showcases stereotypes about masculinity more broadly. Victorians generally believed that women were more emotional than men, while men were believed to be "strong" because of their ability to control their emotions. In this scene, Collins switches the traditional gender roles so that Walter behaves in a more feminine way and begins to cry, while Marian behaves in a masculine way.

Collins also suggests that, although men are encouraged to hide their feelings, they are just as capable of experiencing negative emotions, like heartbreak and grief, as women are. On the other hand, Marian is very strong-willed and encourages Walter to "crush" his emotions for the sake of his "manhood." Although Marian defies gender conventions herself, she knows that Walter will be embarrassed if he cries in front of her, so she encourages him to stop for his own sake. However, while this helps Walter "outwardly" appear strong, he admits that he does not feel better inside and so is only masking his emotions rather than crushing them.

The First Epoch: Part 1, Chapter 11 Quotes

I looked along the two rays of light; and I saw down into his inmost heart. It was black as night; and on it were written, in the red flaming letters which are the handwriting of the fallen angel: "Without pity and without remorse. He has strewn with misery the paths of others, and he will live to strew with misery the path of this woman by his side." I read that; and then the rays of light shifted and pointed over his shoulder; and there, behind him, stood a fiend, laughing. And the rays of light shifted once more, and pointed over your shoulder; and there, behind you, stood an angel weeping.

Related Characters: Anne Catherick ("The Woman") (speaker), Sir Percival Glyde, Laura Fairlie

Related Themes:

Page Number: 80

Explanation and Analysis

While she is engaged to Sir Percival Glyde, Laura receives an anonymous note, which is later discovered to be from Anne Catherick. This note describes a dream that Anne had about Laura and Sir Percival's wedding that warns Laura not to marry Sir Percival.

Anne knows Sir Percival's true nature (he is a fortune hunter with a dark secret who locked Anne in an asylum for threatening to expose him), but she does not have any proof for her claims and has no social power that she might use to make Laura listen to her. This, combined with Anne's fragile mental state, leads her to approach Laura anonymously and convey her fears about Sir Percival in the form of an allegorical dream rather than through plain facts. The anonymous note also works as a narrative device because it increases mystery and suspense for the reader.

Sir Percival is portrayed as demonic, which reflects his evil intentions towards Laura. Sir Percival does not care about anyone but himself and has caused "misery" for Anne and her mother, Mrs. Catherick, without showing any "remorse." He is also a threat to Laura, as he is marrying her for her money and may even be willing to kill her for it. The "fiend" is pictured behind him, as he is hiding his true nature behind a

veneer of respectability. Laura, on the other hand, is innocent and will be a tragic victim if Sir Percival gets his way, so the angel weeps for her.

The First Epoch: Part 1, Chapter 13 Quotes

❝ 'Try to compose yourself, or you will make me alter my opinion of you. Don't let me think that the person who put you in the Asylum, might have had some excuse— ' The next words died away on my lips. The instant I risked that chance reference to the person who had put her in the Asylum, she sprang up on her knees. A most extraordinary and startling change passed over her. Her face, at all ordinary times so touching to look at, in its nervous sensitiveness, weakness, and uncertainty, became suddenly darkened by an expression of maniacally intense hatred and fear [...] 'Talk of something else,' she said, whispering through her teeth. 'I shall lose myself if you talk of that.'

Related Characters: Anne Catherick ("The Woman"), Walter Hartright (speaker), Sir Percival Glyde

Related Themes:

Page Number: 104

Explanation and Analysis

Walter meets Anne Catherick in the graveyard at Limmeridge. He has gone to search for her because he suspects that she wrote the anonymous note to Laura. While he is with her, Walter tries to get information out of Anne and makes the mistake of referring to her time in the asylum.

Walter tries to manipulate Anne when he tells her that, if she does not "compose herself," he will believe that she really is mentally deranged. Walter thinks he is being reasonable and that this will help Anne, who is panicked, to calm down. However, the words "die" on Walter's lips because, when he sees Anne's expression, he realizes that he has made a mistake. Anne is not stupid, she knows when she is being manipulated, and she knows that she was placed in the asylum unfairly.

Anne's anger reflects the extreme sense of injustice she feels about being locked up. She clearly knows she is not a danger to anyone, and that Sir Percival has used this perception of her as mentally unstable and dangerous to justify locking her up. Anne's statement that she "will lose herself" also relates to the theme of identity in the novel. Anne is so poor and powerless in society that she is anonymous. Locking her in the asylum is the ultimate avowal of her powerlessness and implies her total loss of self. This same loss of self is later enacted on Laura when she too is locked in the asylum.

The First Epoch: Part 2, Chapter 1 Quotes

❝ It is the great beauty of the Law that it can dispute any human statement, made under any circumstances, and reduced to any form. If I had felt professionally called upon to set up a case against Sir Percival Glyde, on the strength of his own explanation, I could have done so beyond all doubt. But my duty did not lie in this direction: my function was of the purely judicial kind. I was to weigh the explanation we had just heard; to allow all due force to the high reputation of the gentleman who offered it; and to decide honestly whether the probabilities, on Sir Percival's own showing, were plainly with him, or plainly against him. My own conviction was that they were plainly with him; and I accordingly declared that his explanation was, to my mind, unquestionably a satisfactory one.

Related Characters: Mr. Gilmore (speaker), Marian Halcombe, Laura Fairlie, Anne Catherick ("The Woman"), Sir Percival Glyde

Related Themes:

Page Number: 132

Explanation and Analysis

Marian contacts her lawyer, Mr. Gilmore, to investigate the allegations which Anne's note brought against Sir Percival. Sir Percival admits that he did have Anne placed in an asylum and explains why (he was asked to do so by her mother), and Mr. Gilmore is perfectly satisfied with this explanation.

Mr. Gilmore believes that his role in the situation is to be unbiased and to judge the evidence as it is presented to him. This reflects Mr. Gilmore's faith in the "beauty of the Law" and his tendency to think like a lawyer in all things. However, Mr. Gilmore's belief that he is unbiased in his confidence in Sir Percival is undermined here. Although he believes he is impartial, he is really biased in *favor* of Sir Percival and does not feel the need to really challenge him, even though this is what Marian has asked him to do.

Mr. Gilmore believes that he "could" challenge Sir Percival's version of events, with a thorough investigation, if this was necessary, but Mr. Gilmore believes it is not because of Sir Percival's reputation as a respectable man. This makes Sir Percival beyond suspicion in Mr. Gilmore's eyes. However, Mr. Gilmore is wrong about Sir Percival and, if he had investigated further, would have discovered that Sir

Percival's reputation is a façade. This reflects the limitations of the law, its inherent bias towards wealthy and powerful individuals, and its complacency in accepting the most likely explanation rather than investigating all the facts.

The First Epoch: Part 2, Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ As matters stood, my client – Miss Fairlie not having yet completed her twenty-first year – was her guardian, Mr. Frederick Fairlie. I wrote by that day's post and put the case before him exactly as it stood; not only urging every argument I could think of to induce him to maintain the clause as I had drawn it, but stating to him plainly the mercenary motive which was at the bottom of the opposition to my settlement of the twenty thousand pounds. The knowledge of Sir Percival's affairs which I had necessarily gained when the provisions of the deed on his side were submitted in due course to my examination, had but too plainly informed me that the debts on his estate were enormous, and that his income, though nominally a large one, was, virtually, for a man in his position, next to nothing.

Related Characters: Mr. Gilmore (speaker), Laura Fairlie, Sir Percival Glyde, Mr. Fairlie

Related Themes:

Page Number: 151

Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Gilmore is employed to draw up Laura's settlement for her marriage to Sir Percival, which includes setting out the terms about who will receive Laura's inheritance if she dies without an heir. He is surprised to receive a letter from Sir Percival's solicitor, which insists that Laura's money must automatically go to Sir Percival in the event of her death. Mr. Gilmore also discovers that Sir Percival is in a huge amount of debt and has little income.

Mr. Gilmore finally realizes that Sir Percival is not as respectable as he appears, so he writes to Mr. Fairlie about this because Mr. Fairlie is Laura's legal "guardian." As a woman, Laura cannot manage her own finances without permission of a male guardian, until she is twenty-one. Mr. Gilmore now suspects that Sir Percival has a "mercenary motive" for marrying Laura; that he wants to use her inheritance to pay his own debts and protect himself from financial ruin.

Mr. Gilmore has tried to include a "clause" in the marriage settlement which will allow Laura to distribute her money however she wants in her will, and Sir Percival tries to block this. This implies that Sir Percival plans to somehow facilitate Laura's death so that he will receive her fortune. This demonstrates that wealthy women were in danger from predatory men, as these men had a financial incentive to murder their wives. It also shows that the law is not effective at preventing this, as it is generally biased in favor of men.

The First Epoch: Part 3, Chapter 1 Quotes

❝ I answered him – more because my tongue is a woman's, and must answer, than because I had anything convincing to say. It was only too plain that the course Laura had adopted the day before, had offered him the advantage if he chose to take it – and that he had chosen to take it. I felt this at the time, and I feel it just as strongly now, while I write these lines, in my own room. The one hope left, is that his motives really spring, as he says they do, from the irresistible strength of his attachment to Laura.

Related Characters: Marian Halcombe (speaker), Laura Fairlie, Sir Percival Glyde

Related Themes:

Page Number: 175

Explanation and Analysis

This is an excerpt from Marian's diary in which she states that she suspects Sir Percival of trying to manipulate Laura into marriage. Laura has tried to convince Sir Percival to break off the engagement by telling him about her love for Walter. Sir Percival, however, announces that this only makes him love Laura more, because he has seen she is honest. The next day Sir Percival takes Marian aside and Marian tells him that she suspects his motives.

Marian believes many negative stereotypes about women, even though she is a woman herself. Victorian society had a general disdain for femininity and, like Marian, believed that women must always have the last word and speak for the sake of speaking even when they have nothing to say. This idea is undermined by the fact that Marian is quite right in what she says, which suggests that, even if they believe what they have to say is not worth listening to, women are just as astute and articulate as men.

Marian believes that Sir Percival has deliberately gained the upper hand over Laura. Laura "offered him the advantage" when she told him that she would not break off the engagement herself but that she did not love him. While Marian believes a respectable man, with no ulterior

motives, would break off an engagement which clearly causes his fiancée pain, she feels that Sir Percival has a reason for not doing so.

The First Epoch: Part 3, Chapter 2 Quotes

‘It will only involve us in more trouble and more confusion,’ she said. ‘It will set you and my uncle at variance, and bring Sir Percival here again with fresh causes of complaint— ’ ‘So much the better!’ I cried out, passionately. ‘Who cares for his causes of complaint? Are you to break your heart to set his mind at ease? No man under heaven deserves these sacrifices from us women. Men! They are the enemies of our innocence and our peace – they drag us away from our parents’ love and our sisters’ friendship – they take us body and soul to themselves, and fasten our helpless lives to theirs as they chain up a dog to his kennel. And what does the best of them give us in return?’

Related Characters: Marian Halcombe, Laura Fairlie (speaker), Mr. Fairlie, Sir Percival Glyde

Related Themes:

Page Number: 181

Explanation and Analysis

Laura does not want to marry Sir Percival but feels guilty about this and regrets the inconvenience she has caused. She decides to marry him, even though she does not love him, because she has promised her father. Marian is furious about this and feels that Laura is thinking too much about the needs of men and not enough about herself.

Marian is openly hostile to the idea of marriage and many of the patriarchal constructs that oppressed women in the nineteenth century. Women were expected to sacrifice their own needs to please their husbands and to meet the expectations and wishes of their male relatives. Marian feels that women do not get much in return for making these compromises to their own happiness. Married women are expected to uproot their own lives for the sake of their husbands, and move away from their own relatives and friends.

Men are also the “enemies” of women’s “innocence” because they introduce women to sex, which in the nineteenth century incurred great risks because of the dangers of pregnancy and childbirth. They are the “enemies” of women’s peace because, once they are married, women cannot do as they please but must live according to their husbands’ rules. As women were generally viewed as inferior, they had the status of possessions—things which belonged to their husbands—and as women were expected to run the home, they were “chained” to domestic life. This is infuriating to an intelligent, independent, and adventurous woman like Marian.

I hate Sir Percival! I flatly deny his good looks. I consider him to be eminently ill-tempered and disagreeable, and totally wanting in kindness and good feeling. Last night, the cards for the married couple were sent home. Laura opened the packet, and saw her future name in print, for the first time. Sir Percival looked over her shoulder familiarly at the new card which had already transformed Miss Fairlie into Lady Glyde – smiled with the most odious self-complacency – and whispered something in her ear. I don’t know what it was – Laura has refused to tell me – but I saw her face turn to such a deadly whiteness that I thought she would have fainted. He took no notice of the change: he seemed to be barbarously unconscious that he had said anything to pain her.

Related Characters: Marian Halcombe (speaker), Sir Percival Glyde, Laura Fairlie

Related Themes:

Page Number: 191

Explanation and Analysis

Although Marian makes the effort to like Laura’s fiancé, Sir Percival, her resolve collapses when she sees that he does not really care about Laura’s feelings and that he casually says things which obviously upset her.

Although Marian can see that Sir Percival is objectively handsome and attractive, she feels that his inner character (which he hides from the outside world but she suspects nonetheless) is cruel and malicious. Sir Percival knows that Laura is marrying him against her own wishes. It is, therefore, upsetting for her to see her married name in print for the first time. Sir Percival, who has claimed to care deeply about Laura before she agreed to marry him, now seems oblivious of this and does not consider her feelings. Instead, he seems to gloat about his triumph over her.

Although Marian does not hear what Sir Percival says, Laura’s reaction suggests that it is unpleasant or perhaps sexual and, therefore, deliberately shocking to an unmarried woman in this era. Marian feels that this behavior exposes Sir Percival’s true, “barbarous” nature beneath his charming façade. Sir Percival’s intimidation of Laura also foreshadows his abusive treatment of her after their marriage.

The Second Epoch: Part 1, Chapter 1 Quotes

> The bare anticipation of seeing that dear face and hearing that well-known voice to-morrow, keeps me in a perpetual fever of excitement. If I only had the privileges of a man, I would order out Sir Percival's best horse instantly, and tear away on a night-gallop, eastward, to meet the rising sun – a long, hard, heavy, ceaseless gallop of hours and hours, like the famous highwayman's ride to York. Being, however, nothing but a woman, condemned to patience, propriety, and petticoats, for life, I must respect the housekeeper's opinions, and try to compose myself in some feeble and feminine way.

Related Characters: Marian Halcombe (speaker), Mrs. Michelson, Laura Fairlie

Related Themes:

Page Number: 197-198

Explanation and Analysis

Marian waits at Blackwater Park, Sir Percival's home, for his and Laura's return after their honeymoon. Marian is excited to see Laura and feels confined by societal expectations about women, which do not suit her active and adventurous nature or allow her to express her excitement by riding out to meet her sister.

Although men were expected to do the majority of the physical labor in the Victorian period, this seems like a "privilege" to Marian who feels that women's social place is very constrained by comparison. Men were expected to work, but they were also allowed to go where they pleased and use their bodies as they wanted. Women, in contrast, were often not allowed to travel or go out in public without chaperones and were warned against physical exercise and exertion, as this was considered improper and unladylike. This is very difficult for a woman like Marian to cope with, as she longs for a life of adventure, challenge, and physical exertion.

Marian's description of wishing she could go on a "hard, heavy, ceaseless gallop" would probably have been quite shocking for Victorian readers. This sentiment expressed by a male character would have been perfectly acceptable, but these words in a female character's mouth would have seemed improper, and Marian herself knows this. This shows that Collins sympathized with women who were not suited to a "feminine" life of "patience, propriety, and petticoats" and was willing to shock his audience to demonstrate their frustration.

> This is the habitable part of the house, which has been repaired and redecorated, inside, on Laura's account [...] – all very nicely ornamented in the bright modern way, and all very elegantly furnished with the delightful modern luxuries. I was terribly afraid, from what I had heard of Blackwater Park, of fatiguing antique chairs, and dismal stained glass, and musty, frouzy hangings [...] A large circular fish-pond, with stone sides, and an allegorical leaden monster in the middle, occupies the center of the square. The pond itself is full of gold and silver fish, and is encircled by a broad belt of the softest turf I ever walked on.

Related Characters: Marian Halcombe (speaker), Laura Fairlie

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 203-204

Explanation and Analysis

While she is waiting for Laura and Sir Percival to return from their honeymoon, Marian explores her new home: Blackwater Park.

Blackwater Park is an old estate which has, allegedly, been passed down through many generations of Sir Percival's family. It is associated with the old-fashioned décor and rustic discomfort of previous centuries; something that the Victorians rebelled against in their interest in domestic comfort, modern convenience, and material luxury. This type of old-fashioned, crumbling manor is a common setting in Gothic novels and associates Sir Percival with the aristocratic villains of these earlier types of fiction. It also links him to fairy-tale villains such as Bluebeard, who murders his wives in a terrifying castle. It was common in Victorian literature to adapt a fairy tale story to a modern setting. This was a favorite technique of Charles Dickens, for example, who was close friends with Collins.

The modernization of Blackwater Park effectively conceals the corruption beneath. Sir Percival is ruined but has renovated a portion of the house to hide this from Laura, just as he has hidden his true character and motives for marrying her. This is also represented by the monster on the fountain, which symbolizes Sir Percival's true form lurking in the midst of the "soft turf" that surrounds it, just as Sir Percival has put on a soft exterior to try and win Laura over. The monster, in this sense, is literally "allegorical."

The Second Epoch: Part 1, Chapter 2 Quotes

Except in this one particular, she is always, morning, noon, and night, in-doors and out, fair weather or foul, as cold as a statue, and as impenetrable as the stone out of which it is cut. For the common purposes of society the extraordinary change thus produced in her, is, beyond all doubt, a change for the better, seeing that it has transformed her into a civil, silent, unobtrusive woman, who is never in the way. How far she is really reformed or deteriorated in her secret self, is another question. I have once or twice seen sudden changes of expression on her pinched lips, and heard sudden inflexions of tone in her calm voice, which have led me to suspect that her present state of suppression may have sealed up something dangerous in her nature, which used to evaporate harmlessly in the freedom of her former life.

Related Characters: Marian Halcombe (speaker), Madame Fosco

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 216-217

Explanation and Analysis

Marian records her thoughts about her aunt, Madame Fosco, who has returned with Laura,Sir Percival, and her own husband, Count Fosco, to stay at Blackwater. Marian notices that a huge change has come over her aunt since her wedding and that, while she used to be a loud, outgoing woman, she is now very reserved and obedient to her husband.

Madame Fosco is associated with the Gothic, fairy-tale quality of Blackwater, through the implication that she is under an enchantment and has been turned to "stone." This description also associates Madame Fosco with the stone monster on the fountain, as another of the hidden monsters contained at Blackwater. This description is also a metaphor for the transformation which Madame Fosco's marriage has enacted upon her.

Although Marian acknowledges that Victorian society would approve of this change (as it has molded Madame Fosco into an ideally submissive, obedient, and passive wife), she finds the transformation hideous. She feels that, although Madame Fosco broke society's rules and expectations about gender as a young woman, this behavior allowed her to express the adventurous and independent part of herself, which society would prefer her to reign in. Madame Fosco has not gotten rid of this part of herself, but the constant suppression of it has made her bitter and turned it into a nasty quality, which it would not have become had she been allowed to express herself.

And the magician who has wrought this wonderful transformation – the foreign husband who has tamed this once wayward Englishwoman till her own relations hardly know her again – the Count himself? What of the Count? This, in two words: He looks like a man who could tame anything. If he had married a tigress, instead of a woman, he would have tamed the tigress. If he had married me, I should have made his cigarettes as his wife does – I should have held my tongue when he looked at me, as she holds hers.

Related Characters: Marian Halcombe (speaker), Madame Fosco, Count Fosco

Related Themes:

Page Number: 203-204

Explanation and Analysis

Marian notices the extreme change that has come over her aunt, Madame Fosco, since her marriage to Count Fosco. She believes that this change is all the Count's doing, and that he is such an intimidating man that even an independent woman would become obedient to him if he was her husband.

Marian's description of Count Fosco as a magician fits in with the Gothic, fairy-tale tropes associated with Blackwater. Count Fosco is like a "magician" because he is extremely manipulative and can bewitch the people around him to do his bidding. His ability to change the Countess "until her own relatives hardly knew her" foreshadows his plan to switch Laura's identity with Anne's so that Laura will be literally unrecognizable to her own friends and relatives. This use of metaphor suggests that Count Fosco is a highly intelligent criminal; he can perform tricks and create illusions that people will easily be taken in by.

Marian ironically uses the word "wonderful" to describe the transformation wrought on her aunt. Marian is very afraid of Count Fosco because she sees him as a threat to her own freedom and independence, and even her own safety. Marian recognizes that Count Fosco loves to control people and especially loves to control people if it is a challenge to do so. Madame Fosco is compared to a "tigress," which suggests that it would take a very brave and very forceful man to control her, and implies that the Count is both these things.

The Second Epoch: Part 1, Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ 'My bailiff (a superstitious idiot) says he is quite sure the lake has a curse on it, like the Dead Sea. What do you think, Fosco? It looks just the place for a murder, doesn't it?' 'My good Percival!' remonstrated the Count. 'What is your solid English sense thinking of? The water is too shallow to hide the body; and there is sand everywhere to print off the murderer's footsteps. It is, upon the whole, the very worst place for a murder that I ever set my eyes on.'

Related Characters: Count Fosco, Sir Percival Glyde (speaker), Marian Halcombe, Laura Fairlie

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 230-231

Explanation and Analysis

Laura, Marian, Sir Percival, Count Fosco and Madame Fosco go for a walk around the grounds at Blackwater and arrive at the edge of the lake that surrounds part of the property. As they rest in the boathouse there, Sir Percival and Count Fosco begin a sinister conversation about the best way to commit a murder, which seems designed to intimidate the women.

Sir Percival refers to the superstition that the lake "has a curse on it." Although this is not literally true, this connects to the string of Gothic images associated with Blackwater Park. Blackwater is a cursed space in the sense that it is the site of a crime: Sir Percival's forged identity and his theft of a property which is not really his.

Sir Percival means that the lake looks like the "place for a murder" because it is "gloomy," but Count Fosco picks up the thread of this and continues the discussion in a way that seems intended to frighten Marian and Laura. Their different approaches to the conversation also suggest the difference in the men's personalities. While Sir Percival makes this comment in a careless and offhand way, Count Fosco implies that he thinks more deeply about crime and has a lot of experience covering it up. This makes it seem that Sir Percival would be careless and likely to get caught, but that Count Fosco acts with great care and calculates every move.

❝ 'I have always heard that truly wise men are truly good men, and have a horror of crime.' 'My dear lady,' said the Count, 'those are admirable sentiments; and I have seen them stated at the tops of copy-books.' He lifted one of the white mice in the palm of his hand, and spoke to it in his whimsical way. 'My pretty little smooth white rascal,' he said, 'here is a moral lesson for you. A truly wise Mouse is a truly good Mouse. Mention that, if you please, to your companions, and never gnaw at the bars of your cage again as long as you live.'

Related Characters: Count Fosco, Laura Fairlie (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 231

Explanation and Analysis

Laura contradicts Count Fosco's claim that wise criminals do not get caught, saying that wise men do not feel the need to commit crimes. Count Fosco is amused by this and teases Laura for her innocence.

Laura's belief that "good men have a horror of crime" seems naïve to Count Fosco, who is so embroiled in a life of crime that he does not even believe that "good men" exist. Instead, the Count believes that everyone is like him, even if they pretend not to be, and act with selfishly in their own interests. This is contradicted by the actions of characters like Laura, Marian, and Walter, who act with each other's best interests in mind throughout the novel and who avoid committing acts of violence or duplicity as far as possible.

Count Fosco mocks Laura by suggesting that she is naïve about human nature. He implies that it is as natural for men to murder as it is for mice to chew the bars of their cage. Therefore, men will not stop committing crime because they are told to, just as mice will not stop chewing the bars of their cages. Count Fosco has no belief in human virtue or goodness because he is morally bankrupt himself. The idea of human nature was an important one in Victorian society, and there were many theories about whether people could be taught goodness by a moral society, or if morality was something that people were born either with or without.

❝ 'The fool's crime is the crime that is found out; and the wise man's crime is the crime that is not found out. If I could give you an instance, it would not be the instance of a wise man. Dear Lady Glyde, your sound English common sense has been too much for me. It is checkmate for me this time, Miss Halcombe –ha?' 'Stand to your guns, Laura,' sneered Sir Percival, who had been listening in his place at the door. 'Tell him, next, that crimes cause their own detection. There's another bit of copy-book morality for you, Fosco. Crimes cause their own detection. What infernal humbug!'

Related Characters: Sir Percival Glyde, Count Fosco (speaker), Laura Fairlie

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 232

Explanation and Analysis

Count Fosco and Sir Percival continue to make fun of Laura for suggesting that there is no such thing as a wise criminal. Their attitude is very condescending and dismissive of her.

Count Fosco suggests that he could not give an example of a wise criminal because he doesn't know any. This isn't because they do not exist, as Laura suggests, but because wise criminals do not get caught and, therefore, are anonymous. Count Fosco teases Laura and pretends that she has outwitted him by asking for an example of a wise criminal. He makes a reference to chess because he has played chess with Marian the night before and beaten her easily. He implies that he has been intellectually beaten by Laura, while simultaneously believing this is not the case. This shows that the Count is a performative, theatrical personality and does not show his true self.

Sir Percival is equally disdainful of his wife's opinion. This supports his character as a controlling and abusive man who benefits from society's belief that women should be passive and obedient, as he wishes to do as he likes and use women for his own advantage. Although Sir Percival makes fun of Laura when he suggests that "crimes cause their own detection," this statement is proved correct by the resolution of the novel. Sir Percival is so maddened by guilt that he accidentally dies in a fire, which he starts while trying to destroy evidence of his crimes.

❝ The hiding of a crime, or the detection of a crime, what is it? A trial of skill between the police on one side, and the individual on the other. When the criminal is a brutal, ignorant fool, the police, in nine cases out of ten, win. When the criminal is a resolute, educated, highly-intelligent man, the police, in nine cases out of ten, lose. If the police win, you generally hear all about it. If the police lose, you generally hear nothing. And on this tottering foundation you build up your comfortable moral maxim that Crime causes its own detection! Yes — all the crime you know of. And, what of the rest?'

Related Characters: Count Fosco (speaker), Laura Fairlie, Sir Percival Glyde

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 233

Explanation and Analysis

Count Fosco makes it clear that he has no faith in the police or the criminal justice system. He believes that the police are generally unintelligent individuals who will easily be outsmarted by an intelligent criminal but who publicize the crimes they do solve to maintain their reputation as keepers of order in society.

This description of crime as a "trial of skill between the police on one side and the individual on the other" sets up the prototype for the pattern of detective fiction. Wilkie Collins is regarded as one of the inventors of detective fiction because of novels like *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*.

Although *The Woman in White* is not literally a detective novel, its characters behave like detectives and criminals. Walter and Marian use their investigative skills to foil the crimes of Sir Percival and Count Fosco. The trope of the detective who works alone and solves crimes based on his own techniques, rather than the help of the police or the law, is realized in Walter and Marian and would later appear in famous detective novels such as Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* series. Count Fosco believes that the police only promote the crimes they do solve so that people will be afraid of them and incentivized to obey the law. He feels that intelligent men, however, know that the police do not draw attention to all the crimes they cannot solve, which are more numerous than those they do.

Yes! I agree with her. John Bull does abhor the crimes of John Chinaman. He is the quickest old gentleman at finding out the faults that are his neighbors', and the slowest old gentleman at finding out the faults that are his own [...] English society, Miss Halcombe, is as often the accomplice, as it is the enemy of crime. Yes! yes! Crime is in this country what crime is in other countries [...] Is the prison that Mr. Scoundrel lives in, at the end of his career, a more uncomfortable place than the workhouse that Mr. Honesty lives in, at the end of his career? [...] Which gets on best, do you think, of two poor starving dressmakers – the woman who resists temptation, and is honest, or the woman who falls under temptation, and steals?

Related Characters: Count Fosco (speaker), Marian Halcombe, Laura Fairlie, Sir Percival Glyde

Related Themes:

Page Number: 235

Explanation and Analysis

Marian argues that English society is better than others because it tries to prevent crime and protect its subjects. Count Fosco scoffs at this. He believes that English society is hypocritical; it looks down on other countries and other cultures rather than address its own faults and does not look after it's population as well as it pretends, as many of them are poor and forced into crime because of this.

"John Bull" was slang for Britain in the nineteenth century. Marian has compared Britain to China, where she says the government kills their own people, but Count Fosco feels that English society is not much better. Count Fosco's criticism of English hypocrisy and the superior attitude that led to support for colonialism and the expansion of the British Empire is valid, and possibly reflects Collins's own negative opinions of British exceptionalism. However, because these words are put in the mouth of the villainous Count Fosco, Collins's middle-class readers would not be offended by them, as they could attribute them to Count Fosco's corrupt personality.

Collins criticizes British society because, at the time he was writing, there was an increasing awareness of bad living conditions among the poor. Although this was not a phenomenon unique to the nineteenth century, the growth of the middle classes and general rise in living conditions meant that people began to notice the difference in conditions between the classes and use mediums such as the novel to criticize this and demand political reform.

The Second Epoch: Part 1, Chapter 4 Quotes

The Count's firm hand slowly tightened its grasp on his shoulder, and the Count's steady voice, quietly repeated, 'Be good enough, if you please, to remember it, too.' They both looked at each other: Sir Percival slowly drew his shoulder from under the Count's hand; slowly turned his face away from the Count's eyes; doggedly looked down for a little while at the parchment on the table; and then spoke, with the sullen submission of a tamed animal, rather than the becoming resignation of a convinced man.

Related Characters: Count Fosco (speaker), Marian Halcombe, Laura Fairlie, Sir Percival Glyde

Related Themes:

Page Number: 246

Explanation and Analysis

Sir Percival tries to force Laura to sign a document that gives her fortune to him. He will not show her what she signs, so she refuses, and Sir Percival tries to bully her into it. Count Fosco then exerts his influence over Sir Percival and stops him from losing his temper.

The Count is very subtle in his management of Sir Percival, who is clearly reliant on the Count in some capacity and under his control. While Sir Percival uses anger and force to try and get his own way, the Count is extremely controlled and the threats he makes are implied rather than explicit. This is evident in his quiet tone of voice and the fact that he "squeezes" Sir Percival's arm rather than reacting violently to Sir Percival's temper.

This makes Count Fosco seem more threatening than Sir Percival. Sir Percival's temper gives away his bad intentions and makes it easy to refuse him. He cannot control himself and hide his motives as the Count can. Sir Percival is afraid of Count Fosco though, and clearly does not want to make the Count angry. This suggests that, although the Count threatens in a quiet way, he is extremely dangerous when he carries through on these threats. Again, Marian uses the image of Count taming Sir Percival like an "animal" to suggest that Count Fosco has all the power in the relationship.

The Second Epoch: Part 1, Chapter 5 Quotes

"If I do build you a tomb," he said, "it will be done with your own money. I wonder whether Cecilia Metella had a fortune, and paid for hers." I made no reply — how could I, when I was crying behind my veil?

Related Characters: Laura Fairlie, Sir Percival Glyde (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 358-359

Explanation and Analysis

Laura confesses to Marian that Sir Percival has been cruel and abusive throughout their marriage. She tells Marian about an incident on their honeymoon in Rome when they went to visit a famous tomb.

Laura tries to reach out to Sir Percival, whom she does not love and has married out of a sense of obligation to her father. She is touched by the story of Cecilia Metella, whose husband built a tomb in her honor, and mentions this to Sir Percival. He cruelly replies that he will build Laura a tomb "with her own money." This shows Sir Percival's mercenary intentions towards Laura (he plans to steal her money) and shows that, now that he has got his own way and married her, he no longer cares how she feels and does not bother to hide his disinterest in and contempt for her. He has no respect for Laura as a person or as his wife.

His comment about the money also addresses a major theme in the novel; the idea that Laura's wealth makes her vulnerable because of her gender and legal status in society. As a wealthy woman, Laura still has fewer rights and less social and legal power than her husband. She cannot inherit property herself or control her own finances, and this leaves her vulnerable to predatory men like Sir Percival, who exploit these imbalances in the law to take advantage of women.

The Second Epoch: Part 1, Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ He was kneeling by a tomb of white marble; and the shadow of a veiled woman rose out of the grave beneath, and waited by his side. The unearthly quiet of his face had changed to an unearthly sorrow. But the terrible certainty of his words remained the same. 'Darker and darker,' he said; 'farther and farther yet. Death takes the good, the beautiful, and the young – and spares me. The Pestilence that wastes, the Arrow that strikes, the Sea that drowns, the Grave that closes over Love and Hope, are steps of my journey, and take me nearer and nearer to the End.' My heart sank under a dread beyond words, under a grief beyond tears. The darkness closed round the pilgrim at the marble tomb; closed round the veiled woman from the grave.

Related Characters: Marian Halcombe (speaker), Anne Catherick ("The Woman"), Laura Fairlie, Walter Hartright

Related Themes:

Page Number: 274

Explanation and Analysis

Laura and Marian remain at Blackwater and become more and more entangled in Sir Percival and Count Fosco's plot to keep them there and steal Laura's money. Exhausted with worry and wishing that they had a friend nearby to help, Marian falls asleep and has a prophetic dream about Walter Hartright.

Marian's dream predicts events in the novel. This harks back to the prophetic letter written by Anne Catherick, which warns Laura against Sir Percival. Although there are no overtly supernatural elements in the novel, it was common in nineteenth-century novels to hint at supernatural or psychic phenomena to support the main action of their realist plot.

Marian's dream predicts Walter's return from South America. She predicts that he will survive "Pestilence," "Arrows," and shipwreck and will eventually have an encounter with a veiled woman who rises from the dead. When Walter returns from South America later in the novel, the reader learns that he has survived all these things, as Marian's dream suggests. The woman who rises from the dead is Laura. When Anne Catherick dies of heart disease, Count Fosco places Laura in the asylum under Anne's name and convinces everyone that it is Laura who has died. Walter learns of Laura's death when he returns from America and goes to visit her grave at Limmeridge. Meanwhile, Marian has rescued Laura from the asylum and returned to Limmeridge with her. Laura meets Walter at her own grave, and Marian recognizes that her dream has come true.

The Second Epoch: Part 1, Chapter 9 Quotes

❝ Human ingenuity, my friend, has hitherto only discovered two ways in which a man can manage a woman. One way is to knock her down – a method largely adopted by the brutal lower orders of the people, but utterly abhorrent to the refined and educated classes above them. The other way (much longer, much more difficult, but, in the end, not less certain) is never to accept a provocation at a woman's hands. It holds with animals, it holds with children, and it holds with women, who are nothing but children grown up. Quiet resolution is the one quality the animals, the children, and the women all fail in. If they can once shake this superior quality in their master, they get the better of him.

Related Characters: Count Fosco (speaker), Marian Halcombe, Sir Percival Glyde

Related Themes:

Page Number: 14

Explanation and Analysis

Marian climbs out of her bedroom window one evening to listen in on a conversation between Sir Percival and Count Fosco. During this conversation they reveal the details of their plot to kill Laura for her money. Marian also overhears Count Fosco talking about her and describing to Sir Percival the best way to subdue a woman.

Count Fosco does not see women as his equals but as inferior beings who must be controlled and manipulated. Although his attitude partly reflects Victorian attitudes towards gender, it is an extreme view and shows the Count's malicious and brutal personality. The Count displays his snobbery when he notes that "knocking a woman down" is a "low" way of controlling a woman. It also shows he is a hypocrite, as he pretends that it is more refined and gentlemanly to manipulate a woman rather than beat her when, of course, both are forms of abuse.

Count Fosco views women as weak, vulnerable, and easy to control, like "children" or "animals." In his view, even women like Marian, who the Count admires because of her independence, lack the "quiet resolution" of a man. This reflects a typical Victorian viewpoint, as adult women were often considered incapable of looking after themselves. It is ironic that while the Count says this, Marian's actions contradict his words—she is crouched above his head, silently listening to the conversation.

The Third Epoch: Part 1, Chapter 4 Quotes

❝ 'There can be no doubt,' I said, 'that the facts, as you have stated them, appear to tell against us; but—' 'But you think those facts can be explained away,' interposed Mr. Kyrle. 'Let me tell you the result of my experience on that point. When an English jury has to choose between a plain fact, on the surface, and a long explanation under the surface, it always takes the fact, in preference to the explanation.'

Related Characters: Mr. Kyrle, Walter Hartright (speaker), Count Fosco, Sir Percival Glyde, Laura Fairlie

Related Themes:

Page Number: 442

Explanation and Analysis

Laura, Marian, and Walter are reunited and live together in London. Walter begins to compile evidence to try and restore Laura's identity, since everyone believes that Laura is dead and that the real Laura is, in fact, Anne Catherick. Walter takes his evidence to Mr. Kyrle, the lawyer.

Mr. Kyrle is not convinced by Walter's story and feels he does not have enough proof of the conspiracy against Laura. Walter acknowledges that his tale seems unlikely, but hopes that the lawyer can help nonetheless, as his account of events is quite true. Mr. Kyrle contradicts Walter, however, and informs him that the "facts" cannot be "explained away." Although Walter's story is true, there is a lot of evidence against him which seems to prove it is not, such as the death certificate in Laura's name and the inscription on the tombstone where Anne Catherick has been buried.

Even if Mr. Kyrle believes Walter, he insists that an "English jury" will not, because they always accept the evidence that appears most likely, rather than searching beneath the surface for what is true. This suggests that the British justice system is not effective, and that people are often complacent and lazy when it comes to seeking the truth. Mr. Kyrle's words criticize a society that Collins believes is preoccupied by the *appearance* of morality, justice, and truth, but that does not follow through with this by challenging the facts that are brought before them.

The Third Epoch: Part 5, Chapter 1 Quotes

❝ It was strange to look back and to see, now, that the poverty which had denied us all hope of assistance, had been the indirect means of our success, by forcing me to act for myself. If we had been rich enough to find legal help, what would have been the result? The gain (on Mr. Kyrle's own showing) would have been more than doubtful; the loss – judging by the plain test of events as they had really happened – certain. The Law would never have obtained me my interview with Mrs. Catherick. The Law would never have made Pesca the means of forcing a confession from the Count.

Related Characters: Walter Hartright (speaker), Professor Pesca, Mrs. Catherick, Count Fosco, Mr. Kyrle

Related Themes:

Page Number: 620

Explanation and Analysis

Walter defeats Sir Percival and Count Fosco and triumphantly restores Laura's identity and rightful place

among her friends and relatives at Limmeridge. On their way back to London, he thinks that his poverty, which seemed to be a hindrance throughout the case, was really a blessing in disguise, as it encouraged him to act for himself rather than rely on the legal system.

Although the novel acknowledges that poor people are at a disadvantage in society because the law favors rich people, who can exploit their wealth to gain more power and get away with crimes, Walter does not see a certain level of poverty as a bad thing. Walter feels that his poverty has motivated and incentivized him to act for himself. This level of responsibility and self-reliance has spurred Walter on, as he is working for his own interests and those of the people he loves, and knows that no one can achieve these aims but himself.

Although Collins is critical of the crippling poverty endured by some in nineteenth-century Britain, this statement reflects his belief in the positive power of industry, hard work, and social mobility in his society. Walter's opposite exists in the character of Mr. Fairlie, who is so reliant on others that he is basically an invalid, takes no responsibility for himself and, ultimately, contributes nothing to society. Walter represents a new generation of middle-class Victorians who believed that poverty and social rank could be transcended through hard work and virtue.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 1

Walter Hartright, a twenty-eight-year old drawing teacher, addresses the reader and explains that the story they are about to read is about "Woman's patience" and "Man's resolution." He further observes that, if the law could be relied upon to solve every mystery in the world, then his story would be worthy of coming before a court. However, since this is not the case, and the law is still "the servant of the long purse," Walter asks that the reader should act as Judge for the story. Walter explains that he will only narrate the events he was directly involved in, and that nothing in the story is derived from "hearsay evidence" but is all based on the experiences of the individuals involved. After laying out these terms, Walter announces that his own evidence will "be heard first."

Walter's first-person address to the reader sets up the epistolary structure of the novel. He suggests that these events will show that women can be unusually patient and that men can be unusually determined: two commonly held beliefs about gender in the nineteenth century. Walter suggests that his story involves a crime, but that this crime has never been officially recognized as such by a court; this, he says, is because the law is corrupt and works for money rather than for justice. The reader therefore will "judge" the events in the story and make up their own mind about who is innocent and who is guilty. Walter wants to be truthful with the reader and will only narrate events in which he was directly involved. He will use first-hand accounts from other characters for the events at which he was absent. This mirrors the way in which evidence is presented before a court.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 2

It is the last day of July and a muggy evening in London. Walter Hartright, a poor drawing master who is in ill health because of the polluted air in London, leaves his cramped, stuffy room and goes to visit his mother and sister in Hampstead, which he does twice a week. On the way he thinks about his plans for the autumn and how he is going to earn money. His father, who has been dead for several years, was also a drawing master and worked very hard to become successful and have some money to leave to his family. Walter knows he should feel grateful for this, but his mood is gloomy as he approaches his mother's house.

Although living conditions in Victorian cities improved throughout the nineteenth century, middle-class workers like Walter still lived in cramped and unhygienic conditions and the air in cities like London was notoriously polluted with smoke from factories. Walter's father was clearly a hard-working industrial man to save up an inheritance for his family on a middle-class income, and Walter feels pressure to live up to his father's example.

Walter arrives at his mother's house and is greeted enthusiastically by his friend Professor Pesca, an Italian who Walter once saved from drowning. Pesca is an extremely short man who left Italy "for political reasons" and who is so grateful for his political asylum in England that he has thrown himself wholeheartedly into English life and customs. He is profusely grateful to Walter for saving him and constantly looks for a way to repay Walter for his help. Walter reflects that if he had not saved Pesca from drowning, he would never have happened upon the events that he is about to narrate.

Pesca's political history and his reasons for coming to England are unknown and slightly mysterious. Pesca is clearly very happy to have escaped from Italy because he embraces English culture so enthusiastically. This reflects his cheerful and optimistic temperament and shows that he is a grateful person (and would also be comforting to Collins's English readers). He is doggedly loyal to Walter, who once saved his life, and loyal to the country that has given him political asylum. Walter hints that Pesca will play an important role in the story.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 3

Walter's spirits are revived when he sees Pesca. Walter knows that something must have happened because Pesca has tracked him down at his mother's house, but the Professor is so excited that it is impossible to get an explanation from him. Walter greets his mother and sister, Sarah, and notes that, while his mother is charmed by Pesca, Sarah seems to disapprove of his enthusiasm. Walter thinks it is strange that his mother is older and yet more open-minded than Sarah, who is young and yet very conventional.

Sarah disapproves of Pesca because of his excitability and enthusiasm, which is at odds with British standards of propriety and social etiquette. While older people are stereotypically more conventional and traditional than their children, Walter's mother defies this stereotype and is more open-minded and less concerned about propriety than Sarah.

Sarah cleans up the remains of a cup which Pesca has knocked over in his rush to get to the door and Walter's mother tells him that Pesca has some exciting news which he could barely contain until Walter's arrival. Pesca, meanwhile, drags a chair into the center of the room and stands on it to make his announcement. He tells Walter that, while working as a teacher of literature for a rich family, he has heard of a position as a drawing master with another family and has recommended Walter for the job.

Pesca is dramatic and theatrical in temperament and unable to conform to the rules of British propriety, which required people to conceal their emotions. Instead, Pesca creates a scene in his excitement, knocking over a cup and moving furniture around. He has found Walter a job (something he knows he needs) to show his gratitude for Walter saving his life.

Mrs. Hartright and Sarah are delighted with Pesca's news. The offer, which Pesca has acquired for him, tells Walter that the job is at Limmeridge House in Cumberland, that he will be employed by a Mr. Fairlie, and that the work will involve teaching two young ladies to draw for four months. Although Walter needs work and is grateful to Pesca, he feels apprehensive and reluctant to take the position. His mother, Sarah, and Pesca are amazed at Walter's hesitation and insist that the job is a wonderful opportunity and one which his father never had.

For a lower middle-class man, the offer of stable employment with a rich family is an excellent opportunity. Despite this, Walter feels a sense of foreboding about the position. This foreshadows Walter's role in the sinister plot which unfolds around the inhabitants of Limmeridge House. Walter feels pressure to take the job, however, because he feels he must live up to the memory of his father and, as the man of the family, provide financially for his mother and sister.

Walter writes to Mr. Fairlie about the job but secretly hopes that he will be turned down. He is disappointed when his application is accepted but, nevertheless, makes preparations to leave London for Limmeridge. On the night before his departure he walks to Hampstead again to bid his mother and Sarah goodbye.

Walter's anxiety about the position is so strong that he hopes he will be rejected for the job, even though he needs money and is ill because of his unsanitary living conditions in London.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 4

Walter walks home across Hampstead Heath. When he reaches the crossroads, he suddenly he feels a hand on his shoulder and is shocked to find a woman dressed in **white clothes** standing in the road behind him. She asks Walter if the road leads to London. Walter observes that her face is pinched and thin and that there is something watchful and guarded about her manner, which is not that of a lady of noble rank but also not that of a very poor woman. Noting Walter's hesitation, the woman repeats her question and Walter replies that it is the road to London.

Walter guesses that the woman is neither very rich nor very poor based on her mannerisms. This suggests that a person's class can be determined by their behavior, accent, or use of language, among other things. The nineteenth-century class system was heavily based on social etiquette, and upper-class people deliberately behaved in ways which distinguished them from lower-class people.

Walter apologizes to the woman and confesses that he was shocked by her sudden appearance. The woman then asks Walter if he suspects her of "doing wrong" and becomes panicked and fretful. She explains that she has had an accident and shrinks away when Walter tries to calm her. She tells him that she has watched him from the bushes at the side of the road to see "what sort of man he was" before approaching. Concerned for her, Walter asks her if he can do anything to help and the woman asks if he will show her where to get a cab in London on the condition that he does not try to "interfere with her" in any way. Walter agrees and they walk towards London together.

Walter is kind of respectful towards the woman, but she misunderstands him and becomes afraid. This suggests that the woman has a guilty conscience or is hiding something. She seems to be afraid that she will be forcibly detained or imprisoned. Just as Walter can tell the woman's social background, the woman too has judged Walter by his appearance and decided he is safe to approach. The woman is afraid of being approached by the wrong type of man, because some men are a danger to women.

On the way, the woman asks Walter if he knows any noble men in London. Walter tells her that he does not, and the woman responds darkly that there is one Baronet she hopes he does not know. Walter asks for this man's name, but the woman refuses to tell Walter. She then asks Walter about his own station in life and, when he tells her that he is only a drawing teacher, she is relieved and says that she feels she can trust him. She asks Walter if he lives in London and he says that he does but that he will leave the next day for Limmeridge House. The woman is excited by this and seems to know Limmeridge House.

It is implied that the woman is afraid of upper-class men, particularly the "Baronet" she mentions. Upper-class men of rank wielded huge amounts of social power in the nineteenth century and could threaten a poor, or even a wealthy, woman's reputation by spreading lies about her or suggesting that she was sexually promiscuous. Nineteenth-century British society was very patriarchal, and most people would believe a man's word over a woman's, especially a man with a lot of social power. Walter seems unthreatening to the woman because he is at least lower middle-class.

Struck by this coincidence, Walter stops, and the woman becomes frightened and thinks that he has heard someone following then. Walter tries to calm her by asking who she knows at Limmeridge. The woman replies that Mr. Philip Fairlie and Mrs. Fairlie are dead and that their daughter is probably married by now. She does not know who lives there now but says that she "loves them for Mrs. Fairlie's sake." As they reach London, the woman begins to hurry. Although Walter would like to question her more about Limmeridge, she becomes distracted looking for a cab.

The woman reveals that she has connections at Limmeridge House. This adds to the foreshadowing associated with Walter's upcoming journey to Limmeridge and his apprehension about accepting the position there. The woman suggests that the family who once lived at Limmeridge were very good, kind people.

They haven't traveled very far when a cab pulls up nearby and drops off a passenger. Walter makes sure that the cab is going the right way and that the driver is not drunk, and the woman in **white clothes** climbs eagerly into the carriage. The cab drives away, and Walter continues his walk home. Ten minutes later, a carriage passes him, and the driver leans out to address a policeman on the other side of the road. Walter hears the man in the carriage ask the policeman if he has seen a "woman in white." The policeman asks why he is looking for this woman, and the man in the carriage replies that she has "escaped from his asylum."

Walter is protective towards the woman and recognizes that she may be threatened by the male cab driver if he is drunk or seeks to take advantage of her. The shocking revelation that the woman has "escaped from an asylum" reinforces the atmosphere of tension and anxiety which is building around Walter's connection with Limmeridge House. It also contributes to the mystery of the novel, as the reader is left wondering who this woman is and what she will do next now that Walter has helped her escape.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 5

Walter is horrified to hear that the woman in **white clothes** has escaped from an asylum. He thinks back over their conversation and admits that, although she seemed on edge and "unsettled," she gave him no reason to believe she was insane. He agonizes over his actions and wonders whether he has helped an innocent victim who has been unfairly locked up, or whether he has helped a dangerous criminal to escape. He wonders what has become of the woman and is quite relieved to depart from London for Limmeridge the next afternoon.

Walter is unsure whether he has done the right thing by helping the mysterious woman escape. He seems to believe that it is equally possible that the woman is dangerously insane or that she has been imprisoned for some other, unfair reason. This implies that a woman could be committed to an asylum unjustly, suggesting a level of corruption or injustice in the treatment of women and all mentally ill people.

Walter takes the train towards Cumberland and arrives after dark. A carriage is waiting at the station to take him to Limmeridge House, and the servant seems surly but respectable. Walter dines alone when he arrives at the manor and feels strange eating and going to bed in an unknown house where the inhabitants are complete strangers to him.

Walter feels a sense of mystery, dining alone in the house with total strangers. He is curious about how his time at Limmeridge will unfold.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 6

Walter wakes up in Limmeridge House and goes down to breakfast. On entering the dining room, he sees a woman with a beautiful figure standing with her back to him in the parlor. When the woman turns around, however, Walter is shocked to discover that she is "ugly" and that her face does not match her graceful figure. The woman introduces herself in a frank, confident manner and, teasingly, adds that Walter will have to put up with just her at breakfast as her sister has a headache and her uncle, Mr. Fairlie, never comes down. She tells Walter that she is one of his students and that her name is Marian Halcombe.

Walter thinks that Marian's face will match her figure, which he finds beautiful, and is shocked when he discovers that, instead, he thinks she is ugly. Although Marian is self-deprecating and tells Walter he will have to settle for her company, her manner is extremely confident and witty, which is unusual in an upper-class young woman from this period, as wealthy women were encouraged to be reserved and demure in public.

Walter likes Marian's friendly and cheerful manner and listens to her as she tells him about herself and the other inhabitants of Limmeridge House. She tells him that she and her half-sister, Laura Fairlie, are complete opposites—Marian is the daughter of a poor man, while Laura is heir to a fortune—but that they are extremely fond of each other. Marian explains that it is Laura who is interested in drawing and that she, herself, is very bad at art and music but that she can play parlor games. She hopes that between them they will be able to keep Walter suitably entertained and that he will not long for "adventures."

Marian's taste in entertainment is "unfeminine" by British nineteenth-century standards. Women were expected to be proficient in artistic pursuits such as music and art, and were not believed to be good at games. Women were considered less rational and intelligent than men and thought to lack the mental quickness and acumen needed for "parlor games." It was even considered improper for women to enjoy games.

This reference to "adventures" reminds Walter of his meeting with the woman in **white clothes**. He tells Marian about the experience and Marian is shocked to hear that the woman mentioned her mother, Mrs. Fairlie, since she has no idea who the woman in white could be. Walter explains that the woman in white claimed to have been at school in Limmeridge, although not a native of the countryside nearby, and that she knew Laura Fairlie during her time there. Marian is completely baffled by the mystery but does ascertain that her mother, Mrs. Fairlie, ran a school for a while in the village of Limmeridge, after her second marriage to Laura's father.

Marian's interest in "adventures" and her fascination with the story Walter tells her about the woman in white demonstrate her adventurous and enquiring spirit: traits considered masculine in the nineteenth century. Marian implies that the woman in white may have told the truth about her relationship with Mrs. Fairlie, as Mrs. Fairlie ran a school at Limmeridge which the woman may have attended as a young girl.

Marian feels that Walter has done the right thing by helping the woman in **white clothes** to escape as she is sure that she is a poor, persecuted woman rather than a criminal. She tells Walter that she is fascinated by the mystery and that she has a stash of her mother's letters which she will examine for clues. A note arrives from Mr. Fairlie, inviting Walter to visit him, and Walter leaves Marian to her breakfast.

Marian also believes that women are unjustly treated in her society. Women's rights and protests about the unfair treatment of women were a central issue in the 1860s when Collins was writing. Marian demonstrates her sharp intelligence and natural ability for detection when she thinks of a plan to find evidence of the woman's in white relationship with her mother to discover the woman's identity.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 7

A servant leads Walter upstairs to Mr. Fairlie's rooms. He is led into the room very quietly and discovers on entering that the room is very dim, with curtains over the windows, and that it is stuffed with statues and artworks. Mr. Fairlie is a languid, effeminate man who suffers from nerves. He tells Walter that he has grown up abroad and that it has given him a taste for art beyond the usual "English barbarity."

Mr. Fairlie seems to be suffering from a "nervous complaint" and claims that he cannot stand loud noises or bright lights. This type of complaint or neurosis was mostly associated with women and considered a feminine issue in the 1800s. Mr. Fairlie is critical of English tastes and looks down on art that is popular with the British public. This attitude would have been considered insulting to Collins's middle-class readership, as it suggests an allegiance to European culture and classical subjects rather than modern, affordable mediums, such as the novel, which were popular among the middle class in Britain.

Mr. Fairlie commissions Walter to examine a collection of English watercolors that he owns and decide their value, but continually interrupts Walter when he tries to give his opinion on them. Mr. Fairlie then dismisses him, and Walter, feeling offended by Mr. Fairlie's haughty and aristocratic manner, decides not to visit his employer again unless he is explicitly asked for.

Mr. Fairlie treats Walter as though he is a servant rather than an employee who is equal to his employer. This further demonstrates Mr. Fairlie's snobbish and old-fashioned attitude toward members of lower social classes. In the nineteenth century the middle classes grew wealthier and more numerous, and expected more and more to be treated as equals by the upper classes.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 8

Walter goes down for lunch with Marian and meets Laura and Marian's servant, Mrs. Vesey. After lunch, Marian takes Walter for a walk in the grounds and tells him that, although, she has found no evidence yet among her mother's letters of a connection with the woman in white, she intends to keep looking. They reach a "pretty **summer house**" and find Laura there, looking through her sketchbook.

Throughout the novel, Walter associates Laura with the "summer house" because it is the first place they meet and because it represents a happy time in his life; the period in which he falls in love with Laura. This happiness is associated with summer, new life, and joy throughout the book via the symbol of the summer house.


Walter tells the reader that there is a watercolor on his desk where he sits writing—a portrait of Laura that he finished soon after their meeting—and he thinks how much lovelier Laura is in person than in this dull, "mechanical" sketch. On meeting her for the first time, in the **summer house**, Walter is struck by her beauty. At the same time, however, he notices something troubling and familiar about her face.

Walter comments on the limitations of the visual arts. Although the portrait on his desk is very like Laura, it cannot compare to the experience of looking at her in real life and seeing her move and change as real people do. This reflects Collins's belief in the superiority of the novel over visual mediums, as the novel can show people changing and moving across time, whereas, in the 1800s, visual forms were a fixed, static medium.

Laura is too shy to show Walter her drawings, which she feels are very rough. Marian teases them both and suggests that they take a drive in the carriage and let Walter compare their work to the scenery around Limmeridge house. Looking back over this carriage ride while he writes, Walter notes that he remembers every detail of his conversation with Laura on this trip.

It is clear that Walter is attracted to Laura from their first meeting, as he remembers their first conversation so clearly and has obviously replayed it in his mind often. Marian's joke about the comparison of still pictures to the scenery moving by the carriage further supports Walter's observations that art can be contrived and "mechanical" compared with narrative forms.

When they arrive back at the house, Walter goes up to his sitting room and, while alone, begins to feel uncomfortable about his role at Limmeridge as a teacher—as he feels he has been too unguarded with Laura and Marian—and starts to wonder about the strange, familiar quality which he sees in Laura's face. He retires to the drawing room with the ladies after dinner and finds Laura dressed in **white clothes**.

Walter is worried that he will overstep the boundaries of professionalism and become too comfortable with Laura and Marian. As a teacher he must keep a respectable distance between himself and his pupils, but he has already confided in Marian about the woman in white and sees the sisters as his equals and friends.


Laura plays the piano for the group, while Mrs. Vesey dozes in the corner and Marian continues to search through Mrs. Fairlie's letters for mentions of the woman in **white**. It is a moonlit night and they have the drawing room doors open onto the veranda outside. Walter and Laura move out onto the veranda to look at the garden in the moonlight but have only been outside a few minutes when Marian calls Walter back inside.

Walter fits in and gets on well with the two sisters. Marian is clearly tenacious and determined when she is interested in finding something out (a reminder of the "man's resolution" of the novel's opening) and continues to hunt through her mother's letters for mentions of the woman in white.

Walter leaves Laura on the veranda and Marian calls him over to her seat beside the fire. Laura continues to walk back and forth on the terrace, before the open doors, singing softly to herself. Marian reads Walter a letter from her mother to Mr. Philip Fairlie, Laura's father. The letter tells Mr. Fairlie about a new pupil at her school, the daughter of a woman called Mrs. Catherick. The girl's name is Anne Catherick, and Mrs. Fairlie writes that she has developed a strong bond with the girl, who is a little strange, but very affectionate, and who has a habit of sticking very stubbornly to certain ideas once they have entered her mind.

Walter and Marian believe that Mrs. Fairlie's letter, about a pupil with whom she developed a particularly strong bond, may hold a clue to the identity of the woman in white. The girl is described as "strange," which may suggest a tendency towards mental illness (or at least the perception of it) and provide an explanation for her incarceration in the asylum. The fact that she clings very stubbornly to ideas would also explain why she still feels so strongly about Mrs. Fairlie, although she has not seen her since she was a young girl.

Mrs. Fairlie's letter explains that she gave Anne several sets of **white clothes**, feeling that little girls look best in white, and that, when she heard this, Anne vowed always to dress in white. Marian asks Walter if this young girl could be the woman who he met on the road. Walter believes it is possible and Marian reads the rest of the letter, which notes the inexplicable physical similarity between Anne and Mrs. Fairlie's own daughter, Laura. As Marian reads these words, Laura comes to the door of the drawing room and Walter leaps up from his chair, startled suddenly by the realization that Laura, in fact, reminds him of the woman in white.

The letter confirms Walter's suspicion that this girl may be the woman in white. The vow she made to Mrs. Fairlie, to "always dress in white," clearly explains her appearance. The likeness between the woman and Laura becomes evident to Walter as soon as it is pointed out.

Walter begs Marian to call Laura in out of the moonlight to relieve its eerie effect. He feels that this similarity between Laura and the woman in **white** is a bad omen for Laura's future. Marian whispers to Walter that they should keep this discovery from Laura, and they change the subject as Laura returns to the room.

The similarity between Laura and the woman in white unnerves Walter because it associates Laura with thoughts of madness and imprisonment. It also links her to a mystery that Walter feels uneasy about and thinks may involve some kind of conspiracy or injustice. These thoughts bring back the apprehension that Walter inexplicably felt before taking the position at Limmeridge.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 9

As soon as the opportunity arises, Marian asks Laura if she remembers Anne Catherick. Laura does not remember much, except some mentions of her own similarity to Anne. As the weeks pass at Limmeridge House, Walter realizes that he has fallen in love with Laura. He is extremely happy in his life there and looks back on this period as an innocent, peaceful time.

Walter's feelings for Laura grow and develop as he spends more time with her. This represents a time of happy memories for Walter and a period of innocence before the major events of the novel unfold.

Gradually, however, a change begins to come over Laura and, although Walter has tried to hide his love and keep a professional distance from Laura, he realizes that she has fallen in love with him too. Laura's behavior towards him becomes stilted and uncomfortable. Walter also notices that Marian is always watching them, and that she too is aware of how they feel.

Walter knows that Laura has fallen in love with him because she is no longer comfortable and relaxed with him. Their friendship becomes strained because Laura feels self-conscious when Walter is around. Walter suggests that romantic love and friendship cannot coexist between men and women.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 10

One morning Walter comes down to breakfast and finds that Marian is not there. Laura is out on the lawn but there is so much mutual embarrassment between them, because of their feelings for each other, that he does not go out and speak to her. When Marian comes back and Laura comes inside for breakfast, Marian tells Laura that she has had heard from Mr. Fairlie and that the "purple room" is to be prepared. This news makes Laura begin to cry and, as the group get up from the breakfast table, Walter feels a terrible premonition that he is soon to be separated from Laura.

Walter and Laura feel awkward with each other because of their mutual attraction and because they cannot express how they feel about each other. It would be improper for a wealthy woman like Laura to marry a poor drawing master and, therefore, they cannot admit their feelings. Walter then begins to suspect something else is amiss when Marian mentions the guest. His intuition tells him that he will soon be forced to leave Laura.

Marian takes Walter aside as he is leaving the dining room and asks for a private word. They go into the garden, but before Marian has spoken to Walter, a lad approaches them with a letter for Laura, which he tells her was given to him by an old woman at the gate. Marian thinks this is strange but takes it nonetheless and then leads Walter to the **summer house**.

It seems likely that Marian is about to deliver some bad news to Walter about his future with Laura. She takes him to the summer house, which is, ironically, the place where he first met Laura. This highlights the contrast between Walter's previous happiness at Limmeridge and the separation and unhappiness he foresees.

Once inside, Marian tells Walter that she knows he is in love with Laura. She sympathizes with him and knows that he is well intentioned towards her sister, but she feels that she must tell him to leave Limmeridge House because Laura is engaged to be married.

Marian feels that, for the sake of propriety, Walter must leave Limmeridge so that Laura's fiancé does not find out about their feelings for each other.

Walter is heartbroken and begins to cry, but Marian urges him to "crush" his affections for Laura here "where they started" in the **summer house**. She explains that Laura is not in love with her future husband but that she is bound to marry him because she promised her father on his deathbed. Therefore, it will be better for Laura if Walter leaves Limmeridge immediately, since she is unlikely to break off her engagement and go against her father's wishes. The room that she spoke of at breakfast is for Laura's future husband, who will arrive the next week.

Walter behaves in a stereotypically feminine way by giving in to his emotions. Marian, however, demonstrates her ability to separate her emotions from the practical necessity of the situation; something which was considered a masculine trait. She encourages Walter to be strong and to act in Laura's best interests by leaving. Laura feels obliged to fulfil her father's dying wish and it would be painful for her to break off the engagement, even though she does not love her fiancé.

Devastated, Walter agrees that it would be best for him to leave Limmeridge. The pair get up to leave the **summer house** and Laura's maid rushes up to them and begs Marian to come into the house. Walter lingers in the garden feeling depressed and embarrassed, and anticipating his mother's disappointment when he returns early from his job. Marian returns and seems distracted and distressed. She tells Walter that Laura is very upset by the letter she has received.

Walter agrees with Marian that it will be best for Laura if he leaves; it will allow her to focus on her fiancé and forget her feelings for Walter, which can never be acted upon. Walter worries about disappointing his mother because he has lost a good position in a wealthy household: a rare opportunity for a poor, young man.

As they make their way back towards the house, Walter questions Marian about Laura's future husband. Marian tells Walter that he is a gentleman from Hampshire. Walter remembers that Mrs. Fairlie's letter revealed that Anne Catherick came from Hampshire too and he is unnerved by the constant reappearance of the woman in **white** in his circumstances. Marian tells him that the man's name is Sir Percival Glyde. Walter suddenly remembers the woman in white's complaint about a "certain Baronet" and asks Marian what Sir Percival's Glyde's title is. Irritable, and in a hurry to comfort her sister, Marian answers sharply that he is a Baronet.

Walter remembers the woman in white's suspicion of noble men. He is concerned when he hears that Laura's fiancé, also a noble man (and specifically a Baronet), is from the same county as the woman in white because he worries that there may be some connection between Anne (who he and Marian believe may have been falsely imprisoned) and Laura's fiancé. The situation makes him uneasy.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 11

Walter returns to his room and makes preparations to leave Limmeridge. He is overcome by a sense of foreboding about the future and feels that some threat hangs over Laura, Marian, and himself. Before he is ready to leave, Marian arrives at his room and tells him that she is very concerned about the letter which arrived for Laura as it contains allegations against her future husband, Sir Percival Glyde. Laura is extremely upset, and Marian wishes to find out who wrote the letter by asking around in the village if anyone saw the old woman who carried the note.

Walter's growing anxiety increases suspense for the reader as they ponder the unusual connections between the characters. Again, Marian suggests that she and Walter try and solve part of the mystery themselves by questioning people who may have witnessed surrounding events. This technique in Collins's novel influenced the development of the detective novel, particularly fictional detectives like Sherlock Holmes who rely on their own investigative skills and the art of deduction to solve crimes. The fact that Marian suggests that they do this puts Marian on a par with Walter as a protagonist of the novel.

Marian wonders if she should write to their solicitor and shows Walter the letter. It contains a strange message which claims that the writer has a premonition about Laura's wedding. The writer has seen a vision of Laura getting married to a man who looks like Sir Percival Glyde and that, although this man appears charming and handsome, a demon stands behind him and laughs during the ceremony. The writer claims that Mrs. Fairlie was very dear to them—their "best and only friend"—and begs Laura to accept this warning.

The letter has frightened Laura because it describes the writer's dream about her marriage to Sir Percival and seems to suggest that Sir Percival has evil intentions towards her. In the dream, the demon stands behind Sir Percival, suggesting that he is hiding something or has a dark secret. The mention of Mrs. Fairlie again connects the letter to Anne Catherick.

Marian, however, has no reason to suspect Sir Percival or question his reputation, which is allegedly spotless. She and Walter decide to go and enquire in the village and see if they can solve the mystery themselves.

Marian is willing to give Sir Percival the benefit of the doubt until she knows otherwise. She believes that, if he really was a bad man, he would not have the good reputation in society that he does.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 12

Walter and Marian cannot find anyone in the village who knows about the letter's sender, and they end up at the school which Mrs. Fairlie established. Inside is a class full of boys. One is being punished and is forced to stand on a stool separate from the others. The schoolmaster berates the boy for claiming to believe in ghosts. He dismisses the other boys, except the boy on the stool, before he speaks to Walter and Marian.

Walter and Marian arrive at the end of the school day, just before the boys are sent home. The boy who stays behind to be punished is reprimanded for spreading stories about ghosts—both frightening the other children and going against the religious beliefs he would have been taught.

The schoolmaster has not seen the old woman that Marian is looking for. On their way out, Marian stops to question the boy who is being punished for saying that he saw a ghost. The boy says that he saw the ghost night before, in the graveyard behind the school, and that the ghost was all in **white**. Marian asks whose ghost it was, and the boy tells her that it was the ghost of Mrs. Fairlie. Marian is offended by this and thinks that there may be rumors or folk tales circulating about her mother, but the schoolmaster assures her that the boy only has this idea because he claims that he has seen the ghost standing over Mrs. Fairlie's grave.

Ghosts often appear as white specters, but the white garments also link back to Anne Catherick's determination to wear white clothes. Marian is insulted at first as she believes that the villagers have been gossiping about her dead mother. Marian feels that the people in Limmeridge owe her mother a great deal because she set up the school and that they should be grateful to her and respect her memory.

As they leave, Marian asks Walter what he thinks about this. Walter wishes to see Mrs. Fairlie's grave himself. Marian asks him what he suspects, and Walter replies that he believes the figure, dressed all in **white**, was Anne Catherick. Marian tells Walter that she will show him to the grave and then return home because she is worried about Laura. She leads him to the entrance of the church yard and then leaves Walter by himself.

Walter has deduced from the boy's description of the ghost, and from Anne's connection to Mrs. Fairlie, that it is not a spirit that the boy has seen but Anne Catherick.

Walter looks around the grave for signs of interference but there are no footprints around it. However, he does notice that one side of the grave is dirty while the other looks as though it has been recently cleaned.

Walter uses techniques of deduction (such as looking for footprints and examining the grave) which are frequently used by detectives in later crime novels, mysteries, and modern thrillers.

Walter leaves the church yard and, at the cottage next door, comes across an old woman hanging out washing. She tells him that she is married to the man who maintains the church yard but that he has been ill and unable to keep the graves clean. Hearing this and remembering the clean side of the grave, Walter decides to return at sunset and keep watch over the graveyard that night. He returns to his room to wait for dusk and, looking out from his sitting room window, sees Laura walking dejectedly through the grounds.

Walter deduces that, if the man who usually tends the graves is ill, then someone else must have cleaned Mrs. Fairlie's grave. He decides to keep watch in the churchyard as he believes that this person also has a connection to Laura, the mystery of the woman in white, and the anonymous letter that Laura received. Walter can see that Laura is not at all happy or excited about her engagement.

Just before nightfall, Walter returns to the church yard and finds a place to hide, just inside the entrance of the church, where he can safely observe Mrs. Fairlie's grave without being seen.

By taking matters into his own hands and investigating the mystery himself, Walter sets out a blueprint for many famous fictional detectives, such as Sherlock Holmes, Sam Spade, and Hercule Poirot.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 13

Walter feels miserable, looking out across the "dreary" grave yard as the evening draws in. However, before the sun has fully set, he hears a woman's voice and footsteps approaching. Walter hears the woman tell her companion not to "fret" and that she has delivered the letter without being seen. He sees two women pass and move towards Mrs. Fairlie's grave. One of the women, the one speaking, wears a "bonnet and shawl" while the other wears a dark cloak. The hem of a **white dress** is visible beneath this.

Two women approach the grave and Walter suspects that one is Anne Catherick, or the woman in white. The other woman is unknown to Walter, but it's later revealed to be Mrs. Clements.

Walter listens anxiously as the woman with the bonnet tells the other woman that she looks strange wearing **white clothes** all the time, and that the dark cloak suits her. When they reach the grave, this woman assures her companion that she will wait nearby and then makes her way out of the church yard. Walter sees her face as she passes and notes that she is a kindly looking old woman.

This comment from the woman in white's companion suggests that her habit of always wearing white is a part of her personality that others do not understand. It connects to her tendency to fixate on certain memories and ideas, such as the vow she made to Mrs. Fairlie as a child.

Walter decides not to approach her and, instead, he watches the other woman, who begins to clean Mrs. Fairlie's grave with a cloth. After a few moments, Walter approaches the woman slowly. She is startled when she sees him, but he tells her not to be frightened and asks her if she remembers him. The woman gradually recovers from her fright and says that Walter is kind, just as he was kind to her the night they met.

The woman in white has clearly been to Mrs. Fairlie's grave before and has returned to finish cleaning it. She is clearly the figure that the schoolboy saw and mistook for a ghost. Walter is finally able to confirm that this is Anne Catherick and the same woman he met on the road to London.

They stand on either side of the grave, and Walter asks if she will talk to him without becoming frightened. Walter tells her that he has been staying at Limmeridge and the woman, whom he now knows is Anne Catherick, is delighted and feels that he must be terribly happy there. He sees clearly the likeness between Laura and Anne, and this makes him shudder, as it seems to suggest some terrible future change in Laura's circumstances.

Walter's unease about the similarity between Anne and Laura returns. The mystery of why Anne Catherick was locked in the asylum, and Anne's apparent connection with Laura's fiancé, Sir Percival, makes Walter concerned that Laura may be caught up in these events and that her future husband may not be what he seems.

Walter continues to talk with Anne and tries to put her at her ease. He tells her about the men from the asylum who pursued her that night. Anne becomes frightened at the mention of this and asks Walter if he thinks she should be taken back there. Walter says he is pleased she escaped and asks her if she found her friend in London. Anne tells him that she has found her friend, Mrs. Clements, and that Mrs. Clements is very kind to her, although no one is as kind as Mrs. Fairlie.

Anne seems to want to prove her innocence. Her repetition of this question, which she also asked Walter on the night they met, suggests that she does not think she deserved to be locked up and is afraid that others will believe that she does.

Anne tells Walter that she has known Mrs. Clements since she was a little girl. He asks about her mother and father, and Anne says that she does not know her father and does not get on with her mother. Walter wonders if perhaps Anne has been ruined by a lover, who has deserted her, and this is why she was unfairly placed in the asylum. When he asks her this, she answers so innocently that Walter knows this cannot be the case. He wants to find out why Anne implicated Sir Percival Glyde in her letter but does not wish to frighten her away.

Conventions surrounding gender in the nineteenth century meant that it was easy for a man to "ruin" a woman's reputation and then silence her to prevent retaliation. If a man seduced a woman and then refused to marry her, she would often be rejected by society as a "fallen woman." Although men's reputations could be damaged if they behaved in this way, society did not judge men nearly as harshly for having premarital sex. The man's story was more likely to be believed than the woman's and, because women had fewer legal rights than men, it was easy for men to have women imprisoned or to publicly shame them.

Anne tells him that she is staying at a farm near Limmeridge called "Todd's Corner" and that she is very happy there. The only thing she dislikes is that her companions tease her about dressing all in **white clothes** and she knows that Mrs. Fairlie would never do this. This leads Anne to think about Laura, and she asks if Miss Fairlie is well. Walter replies that she is not well because Anne's letter has upset her deeply.

Anne's obsession with Mrs. Fairlie seems to stem from the idea that Mrs. Fairlie took her seriously and treated her with respect, whereas other people mock her and think that her behavior is irrational. Anne's experience in the asylum has enhanced this view, as her incarceration seems to have legitimized the idea that she belongs there and made her desperate to prove that she does not.

Anne is shocked that Walter has seen the letter. She begins to panic and pound on Mrs. Fairlie's grave with her hands. She laments that she is alive rather than in the grave with Mrs. Fairlie, whom she loves. Walter tries to calm her by telling her that Laura will keep her secret. When she refuses to settle down, he asks her not to make him think that whoever put her in the asylum had "some good reason for doing so."

Anne's perceived connection with Mrs. Fairlie is so strong that she wishes to be with her even if this means dying. This idea of following a loved one to the grave is very common in nineteenth century fiction—it also shows just how bleak Anne's life is. Walter tries to manipulate Anne by implying that he can understand why whoever put her in the asylum acted as they did.

At the mention of this person, a change comes over Anne and her face twists with hatred. She asks Walter what he wants, and he says that he wishes to gain information for Laura about Sir Percival Glyde. The use of this name sends Anne into a screaming fit and Walter is certain, beyond a doubt, that it was Sir Percival who imprisoned Anne in the asylum.

The intensity of Anne's reaction lets Walter know that he has made a mistake by trying to manipulate her this way. She clearly feels a great sense of injustice about the way she has been treated. The idea that Laura's fiancé treated Anne this way does not bode well for her future marriage.

When she hears Anne scream, Mrs. Clements rushes back towards the grave and verbally attacks Walter for scaring Anne. Anne recovers slowly and tells Mrs. Clements that Walter is her friend and whispers something in Mrs. Clements' ear. Mrs. Clements leads Anne away and Walter calls after her and apologizes for causing her distress. Anne looks back and tells him that he "will always frighten her" because "he knows too much." Before she leaves the church yard, she runs back and kisses Mrs. Fairlie's grave.

Walter regrets that he has frightened Anne, but Anne is understandably nervous of Walter because he seems to know so much about her circumstances. He is not only involved with her escape from the asylum, but is also in a position to know the man who put her there through his connection to Laura. As a man, Walter could easily use this information against Anne, who is a poor, vulnerable woman, and have her locked up again.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 14

Walter returns to Limmeridge and tells Marian what he has found out: that there is no doubt in his mind that Sir Percival Glyde had Anne Catherick placed in the asylum. Marian agrees to go to Todd's Corner the next day and speak to Anne herself. She intends to find out everything she can about Sir Percival, and pass it on to her lawyer, Mr. Gilmore, before arranging Laura's wedding.

Although Marian does not know the reason that Sir Percival placed Anne in the asylum, she wishes to have all the information to legally protect her sister against the same fate. This suggests that it was reasonably common for men to abuse their power against women, including their wives, in this period, and Marian is doing the right thing by bringing her lawyer into the situation.

The next morning, Walter gives Mr. Fairlie his notice, and Mr. Fairlie haughtily asks him to leave immediately. Walter travels to Todd's Corner with Marian but, when Marian enters the farm, she is told that Anne Catherick and Mrs. Clements left unexpectedly and will not return. Mrs. Todd, who lives at the farm, can tell them nothing except that Anne was seized by a fainting fit the evening before while she was listening to the dairymaid share some local gossip. She'd also had one the day before while reading the marriage section of the local newspaper. Looking at the date on the newspaper, Marian ascertains that this happened on the day that Anne wrote her letter to Laura.

It seems clear to Marian and Walter that Anne has heard something that alarmed her when she was listening to the gossip in the kitchen, and that this has induced her to leave Limmeridge immediately. It also seems that she read about Sir Percival and Laura's engagement in the marriage section of the newspaper, and this inspired her to write to Laura to warn her about her future husband.

Marian and Walter approach the dairymaid and ask her what she was talking about when Anne Catherick took ill. The dairymaid says that she had been talking about Sir Percival Glyde, who would soon be arriving at Limmeridge House.

Once again, Sir Percival seems like a sinister figure before he even arrives, as even his name causes so much distress in Anne.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 15

When they arrive back at Limmeridge, Marian and Walter find that Mr. Gilmore has just arrived to help finalize the paperwork for Laura's wedding to Sir Percival Glyde. Marian greets him, and Walter finds himself extremely curious about the old lawyer. Mr. Gilmore does not have many of the qualities that Walter expects to find in a lawyer and, instead, seems to be a cheerful, healthy, and good-humored person. He leaves Marian and Mr. Gilmore to talk and once more takes in the grounds of Limmeridge House, where he has many fond memories of his time spent with Laura.

Mr. Gilmore does not fit the stereotypical image of a lawyer as a greedy, self-interested, and miserly individual, which was commonly portrayed in the nineteenth century and which Walter expects. Like so many of the characters in the novel, Mr. Gilmore defies the conventions associated with people in his line of work. Wilkie Collins studied to become a lawyer and used his knowledge of the law and legal cases in his fiction.

On his way back along the veranda, Walter bumps into Mr. Gilmore, who has apparently been looking for him. Marian has told Mr. Gilmore about the letter sent to Laura, warning her about Sir Percival Glyde, and has heard about Walter's involvement in tracking down Anne Catherick. Mr. Gilmore thoughtfully recognizes that Walter has Laura's best interests in mind and might wish to know how Mr. Gilmore plans to precede with her case.

Mr. Gilmore is very thoughtful to approach Walter in this way. Although he does not suspect a love affair between Walter and Laura, he can see that Walter has gone out of his way to gather information about Laura's future husband for the sake of assuring that Laura will not be mistreated. Mr. Gilmore thus wishes to assure Walter that he too has Laura's best interests in mind.

Mr. Gilmore tells Walter that he has sent a copy of the letter from Anne Catherick to Sir Percival Glyde's solicitor in London and has kept the original of the letter to show Sir Percival when he arrives at Limmeridge in a few days. Meanwhile, Mr. Gilmore has also sent a servant to look for Anne Catherick and Mrs. Clements and to follow and observe them. Mr. Gilmore is confident that Sir Percival will be able to offer a satisfactory explanation for the letter and for Anne Catherick's accusations. Walter, however, is not so convinced. He is, however, resigned to the fact that there is little more he can do for Laura as he must leave Limmeridge soon.

Mr. Gilmore approaches the subject of Anne's letter as a legal matter. He provides Sir Percival's lawyer with the evidence (the letter) which accuses Sir Percival and feels confident that there will be an acceptable explanation provided that will show that Sir Percival acted within the confines of the law. Walter, however, does not feel that Sir Percival's solicitor will necessarily show them the truth, as Sir Percival's lawyer can obviously be paid by Sir Percival to make him look blameless in the situation.

Walter decides to leave immediately after this conversation with Mr. Gilmore, but Marian convinces him to "depart like a friend" and have one last dinner with them, which Walter agrees to do. It is difficult for him to remain composed in Laura's presence, but Mr. Gilmore's cheerful conversation sees them through the meal.

Mr. Gilmore seems quite oblivious of the situation between Walter and Laura and continues to talk cheerfully throughout dinner despite the strained atmosphere. Mr. Gilmore doesn't seem to observe the people around him very closely outside of his professional role, and doesn't look below the surface appearance of things.

After dinner, the servant that Mr. Gilmore has dispatched returns and tells them that he followed Mrs. Clements and Anne Catherick as far as Carlisle but could trace them no further. Mr. Gilmore, Walter, Marian, and Laura retire to the drawing room and Walter and Laura spend a final, painful evening in each other's company before they will be parted forever. Before Walter goes upstairs, he promises Laura that she has a faithful friend in him and wishes her well for the future. Laura pleads with him to leave her, and this reveals to Walter her desperate love for him. Walter departs from Limmeridge the next morning and concludes the first section of his narrative.

Mr. Gilmore does not appear concerned about losing track of Anne Catherick and seems not to think much more about it. He does not think her allegations against Sir Percival will reveal anything important. Laura can barely stand to be in Walter's presence, apparently, because her love for him is so overwhelming. She begs him to leave because she is afraid that she will act on her feelings, which will break the conventions of propriety.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 2, CHAPTER 1

The narrative is resumed by Mr. Gilmore, who is the lawyer of Marian Halcombe and Laura Fairlie and who is present at Limmeridge house, after Walter Hartright's departure, to arrange the marriage between Laura and Sir Percival Glyde. Mr. Gilmore states that he has been asked to write this account of his time spent at Limmeridge by Walter Hartright. He notes that it is not his job to judge the case of the woman in **white**, which Walter is compiling, but instead, to provide "new links" to continue the chain where "Mr. Hartright has dropped it."

Like Walter in his introduction to the narrative, Mr. Gilmore knows that his purpose is to provide evidence which conveys information to the reader about the events that took place. He does not plan to guess or speculate about anything but only to explain what he witnessed and experienced. This disclaimer serves to make his testimony seems more reliable, as Mr. Gilmore has no reason to lie and cannot mislead the reader by using conjecture to imagine what might have happened. Instead, the reader will be presented only with Mr. Gilmore's point of view and must make up their own mind about the case from the different bodies of evidence provided, just as a jury would in a court of law.

Mr. Gilmore states that he arrived at Limmeridge on Friday night and planned to stay over the weekend to draw up Laura Fairlie's marriage contract, before the arrival of her betrothed, Sir Percival Glyde, on Monday. He notes that Mr. Fairlie, who thought of himself "as an invalid," did not greet him at the house but that he was met by Marian Halcombe. He spends the evening in the drawing room with Laura and Marian and is introduced to Walter Hartright, who he thinks is an honest and agreeable young man but rather awkward around women and in company. Mr. Gilmore also notices, to his dismay, that Laura looks unwell and does not play the piano with her usual skill.

Mr. Gilmore does not suspect any correlation between Walter's awkwardness and Laura's sadness at dinner. Instead, he believes that Walter is shy, and Laura is ill. This again suggests that Mr. Gilmore is not particularly imaginative or empathetic when it comes to other people, and that he prefers to take things at face value as they are presented to him, rather than reading into situations. This is in keeping with his role as a lawyer, as his job is (supposed to be) based in deciphering facts and evidence.

On Saturday, Mr. Gilmore finds that Marian is "out of spirits," while Laura remains in her room. He anticipates that Sir Percival Glyde will be able to give a satisfactory explanation for the accusations leveled against him. Finally, after being kept waiting for several hours, Mr. Fairlie invites Mr. Gilmore to his room to discuss the marriage. Mr. Fairlie considers the wedding a settled thing, as it was sanctioned by Laura's father, Mr. Philip Fairlie, before his death. Mr. Gilmore is slightly surprised at how little interest Mr. Fairlie shows in his niece's wellbeing but remembers that Mr. Fairlie has no children and so has no interest in the inheritance of Limmeridge House or whom the fortune will pass to. Mr. Gilmore notices, however, that Laura seems dejected about her upcoming marriage.

Mr. Fairlie is confident that Sir Percival Glyde is a respectable man who will live up to his good reputation in society and who has nothing to hide. Mr. Fairlie is not interested in Laura's preferences about the wedding because he believes that it is up to Laura's father who she marries, and not up to Laura. Although this was still common in the nineteenth century, Mr. Fairlie is portrayed as old fashioned for feeling that Laura should have no say in her own future. Even Mr. Gilmore, who is a conservative and traditional man, is slightly concerned about Laura's lack of enthusiasm about her marriage. This shows that the perception of women as property to be given to their husbands by their fathers was changing in the 1800s.

Sir Percival Glyde arrives at Limmeridge on Monday morning. Mr. Gilmore finds him an extremely pleasant, easy going and respectable man and cannot see anything to object to in his explanation surrounding Anne Catherick's letter. Sir Percival explains that Anne is the daughter of a friend of his in Hampshire, Mrs. Catherick, whose husband has deserted her. Anne's mental health has always been bad, and, on the request of her mother, Sir Percival paid to secure Anne a place in a private asylum rather than commit her to a public asylum for paupers. Mr. Gilmore admits that, if pressed, he *could* build a legal case to question Sir Percival's claims, but he feels that any story can be challenged with the right evidence and that this is not his job in this instance. He is totally satisfied and surprised to find that Marian still seems unsure.

Mr. Gilmore likes Sir Percival and takes him at face value as a noble and respectable man who is honest in what he says about Anne Catherick. Public asylums were notorious for their horrendous and unsympathetic treatment of mentally ill people, although even in private asylums there was a general lack of knowledge about mental health in the 1800s. It would be considered a source of shame to place a relative in a pauper's asylum during this period, and Mr. Gilmore feels that Sir Percival has spared his friend this shame. Again, Mr. Gilmore demonstrates that he does not like to look to deeply beneath the surface of things and sees no reason to question Sir Percival further when he feels there is no need for it.

Sir Percival perceives Marian's uncertainty about him and encourages her to write to Mrs. Catherick to verify his story. Mr. Gilmore notices, while Marian is doing this, that Sir Percival tries to stroke Laura's Italian greyhound but that the dog cowers away from him. This seems to irritate Sir Percival and Mr. Gilmore sympathizes, acknowledging that he is irritable himself at times.

Sir Percival's willingness to provide an alibi for his story seems to imply that he has nothing to hide and has, therefore, done nothing wrong. Laura's dog seems to have taken an instinctive dislike to him, but Mr. Gilmore feels this is not Sir Percival's fault. He seems eager to sympathize with Sir Percival because of his rank.

When Marian's note is written, Sir Percival asks her if she knows where Anne Catherick stayed when she was in Limmeridge. Marian tells him that Anne stayed at Todd's Corner, and Sir Percival says he will visit the place to try and trace Anne's whereabouts. He is extremely concerned about her because of her poor mental health. He asks if Laura has come into contact with Anne at all and is told that Anne only spoke to Walter Hartright, who was employed as a drawing master at Limmeridge.

Again, it could prove Sir Percival's good nature and good intentions towards Anne that he is so worried about her. He seems to feel that she is vulnerable and needs professional care and is concerned about her wellbeing if she is left unattended. At the same time, he could be concerned because he's worried about what she will say about him.

Despite Sir Percival's assurances, his concern over Anne's wellbeing and the letter sent to Mrs. Catherick, Mr. Gilmore is surprised to find that Marian is still hesitant to accept his story. This strikes Mr. Gilmore as unlike Marian, who has always seemed extremely sensible to him, but she dismisses his worries by explaining that she is worried about her sister and that this prevents her from thinking clearly.

Mr. Gilmore feels that Marian is being paranoid and acting irrationally. As a conventional man, Mr. Gilmore feels that Marian's judgement is impaired because she is a woman and because of her emotional attachment to Laura. It was common in the 1800s for men to assume that they were the more rational sex, while women were more emotional and easily alarmed.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 2, CHAPTER 2

Mr. Gilmore spends the next few days at Limmeridge with Laura, Marian, and Sir Percival, who remains cheerful and lively despite Laura's continued disinterest in him. On Tuesday morning, Sir Percival visits Todd's Corner to enquire about Anne and, on Wednesday, a letter arrives from Mrs. Catherick which corroborates Sir Percival's story about her daughter.

Mr. Gilmore feels that Sir Percival is a patient and good-natured man who tolerates Laura's treatment of him, which Mr. Gilmore feels is sulky and unnecessary. The letter from Mrs. Catherick seems to support this and prove Sir Percival's version of events.

Marian approaches Mr. Gilmore when they are alone in the library and concedes that they have done everything they can to investigate Sir Percival. Mr. Gilmore is irritated that she seems to want more proof of Sir Percival's innocence after what has already been provided, and thinks that Marian just dislikes him. Marian denies this and tells him that Sir Percival has taken her aside and told her that, if Laura wishes to break off the engagement, then she must feel free to do so.

Mr. Gilmore believes that Marian has a personal bias against Sir Percival. He feels that she is looking for evidence, despite the fact that Sir Percival has proved his innocence, to implicate him in an injustice that he did not commit. Mr. Gilmore does not examine his own potential bias in favor of Sir Percival.

Mr. Gilmore insists that this is perfectly reasonable of him. Marian, however, feels that this is an impossible thing to ask of Laura as Laura is an extremely honorable person and will never willingly give up her father's dying wish, which was that she should marry Sir Percival. Mr. Gilmore feels that either Marian and Laura are being flighty and fickle or that they have a secret reason for rejecting the marriage.

Mr. Gilmore feels that Sir Percival has been very patient and transparent with Laura, who he feels is teasing Sir Percival and leading him on unfairly. He believes that he genuinely wants to release Laura from her engagement if she does not wish to marry him. Marian, however, feels that Sir Percival is manipulating Laura. She thinks he is using what he knows about Laura's loyalty to her father against her by implying that if she does not want to marry him, she must go against her father's wishes.

Later that day, Laura decides that she would like to postpone the marriage and sends Marian to speak to Sir Percival on this matter. Mr. Gilmore is put out because he must arrange the marriage settlement with Laura before the wedding and will not easily find another opportunity to come to Limmeridge if the marriage is postponed. Sir Percival, however, accepts Laura's request.

Mr. Gilmore wishes to give Laura as much legal power as possible in her marriage and wants to draw up the marriage settlement with her in person so that she is happy with it. He does not wish to draw the settlement up remotely where he cannot be sure that Laura agrees with what is being arranged for her. This shows that Mr. Gilmore sincerely cares about Laura's happiness and wants to protect her from losing her power in the marriage, which was a significant concern for Victorian women.

Mr. Gilmore goes to speak to Laura alone before he returns to London. He finds her rather melancholy, looking through a sketchbook of drawings in her room, and speaks very kindly to her about her wedding. He tells her that, since he may not be able to come to Limmeridge again, that she should tell him her wishes now, so that he may draw up the marriage settlement remotely if necessary. He tells her that she must decide on arrangements for her inheritance, which she will receive when she comes of age.

The sketchbook belonged to Walter and this suggests that Laura misses Walter and regrets that she cannot be with him. Mr. Gilmore makes it clear to Laura that he is trying to protect her financially as she enters her marriage. As women did not have as many rights as men, it was easy for men to control their wives' money and assets in a marriage.

To his surprise, Laura begs him not to let her be parted from Marian even if she is married. Mr. Gilmore tells her that this is a private matter and that the marriage settlement is for her to decide who she will leave her inheritance to in the event of her death. Laura announces that she wishes to leave it all to Marian and one other person whom she does not name. When Mr. Gilmore presses her on this, she breaks down in tears and he gently tells her that they will drop the subject for the day. Mr. Gilmore then departs for London, feeling that, despite his personal admiration for Sir Percival Glyde, he would rather do anything than allow him to marry Laura Fairlie since the prospect seems to make her so unhappy.

Mr. Gilmore feels that Laura's worries about leaving Marian are unnecessary. He likes Sir Percival and believes he would not wish to separate the sisters, as it would make Laura so unhappy. He also has no power to influence Sir Percival in this matter, as it is not a legal one. Mr. Gilmore is surprised that Laura would like to leave all her money to Marian rather than her husband, and is confused and saddened by Laura's lack of affection towards Sir Percival. Although he likes him personally, Mr. Gilmore would like to protect Laura from marrying a man she clearly does not love.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 2, CHAPTER 3

Mr. Gilmore has been back in London for a week when he receives a letter from Marian announcing that the date of Laura's wedding has been set for December—"three months before Laura comes of age." Although he is slightly disappointed by Marian's brusque tone in the note, Mr. Gilmore acknowledges that his role in Laura's story has nearly reached its end: Marian will take up the narrative after him. However, before he concludes, Mr. Gilmore states that he must inform the reader about the state of Laura's inheritance as it is a "very important part of Miss Fairlie's story" and will help the reader to understand the events still to come.

Mr. Gilmore cares about Laura and wants to feel that she will be happy in her marriage. He is disappointed that Marian does not confirm this in her note and that she does not give him more information about what changed Laura's mind towards her fiancé. Mr. Gilmore's statement about the inheritance foreshadows later events in the novel.

Laura will inherit Limmeridge House when Mr. Fairlie, her uncle, dies. Once she inherits it, the house will bring her an income of three thousand pounds a year and, when she dies, the house will go to her heir if she has a son. If she dies childless, the house will belong to her husband, Sir Percival. Laura is also set to receive a sum of thirty thousand pounds when she comes of age, meaning when she turns twenty-one, as she will in three months. If Laura dies without producing an heir, this money will be split in two. Twenty thousand pounds will go to whoever Laura bequeaths it to and ten thousand will go to her aunt, Madame Fosco.

Before she is twenty-one, Laura is financially reliant on her male relatives. However, once she comes of age, she will be a wealthy woman. Although she cannot own or inherit property herself, because she is a woman, Limmeridge House will belong to her son if she has one. The property will pass, by default, to her husband if she dies childless.

Laura's aunt was disowned by her brother, Mr. Philip Fairlie, Laura's father, because she married an Italian nobleman named Count Fosco, whom Laura's father despised. Mr. Gilmore believes that Laura's father had a hatred for foreigners, and that this is the reason why he kept the inheritance out of his sister's reach. Madame Fosco will only receive ten thousand pounds of inheritance money if Laura dies before her. Given the difference in age between the two women, Mr. Gilmore believes that Laura's father deliberately arranged the will so that his sister would not receive an inheritance.

Mr. Gilmore puts Mr. Philip Fairlie's behavior down to a general dislike of foreigners rather than a personal dislike of Count Fosco. This suggests that racist and xenophobic attitudes were normal and common in the nineteenth century. Mr. Philip Fairlie's decision to deny his sister her inheritance because of her choice of husband demonstrates how much power men had over women's financial and marital circumstances. As Madame Fosco has acted against her brother's will, he has punished her by keeping money from her, and there is nothing she can do legally to protect herself from this.

Mr. Gilmore draws up the marriage settlement for Laura and Sir Percival and includes in it "the knot of the whole case"—a clause which gives Laura the right to make a will. This is so that she can decide who the twenty thousand pounds will go to in the unlikely event of her death. He posts the settlement to Sir Percival's lawyer, Mr. Merriman, and it is sent back with the standard amendments and edits. However, one detail surprises Mr. Gilmore: Mr. Merriman absolutely refuses to entertain Laura's right to make a will and distribute the twenty thousand pounds as she pleases. Instead, the lawyer insists that this money should automatically and unquestionably go to Sir Percival in the event of Laura's death.

The clause Mr. Gilmore describes is the "knot of the whole case" as it is the one aspect of her fortune and circumstances that Laura has direct power over. No one can claim this part of her inheritance unless she specifically wills it to them. Mr. Gilmore, who has so far believed that Sir Percival means well towards Laura, is surprised to find that Sir Percival has ordered his lawyer to try and gain control over this aspect of the will and prevent Laura from deciding what happens with her fortune—so that it will automatically pass to Sir Percival if Laura dies.

Concerned by this rejection of his terms—and suspecting a "mercenary" motive behind it—Mr. Gilmore writes to Mr. Fairlie in the hope that, because he is Laura's legal guardian, he will call off the wedding. Mr. Fairlie writes back dismissing Mr. Gilmore's concerns and implies that Mr. Gilmore is being overly alarmist and is bothering him inconsiderately for no reason.

Mr. Gilmore now questions his earlier judgement about Sir Percival and suspects that he wants to marry Laura for the inheritance she will receive when she is twenty-one and which, as her husband, Sir Percival will be able to control. Although he suspects this, Mr. Gilmore cannot prove it, and although he tries to warn Mr. Fairlie, he cannot compel him to call of the engagement.

Mr. Gilmore has just received this reply—and is disgusted by Mr. Fairlie's disregard for his niece's wellbeing—when Sir Percival's lawyer, Mr. Merriman, arrives at his office to discuss his client's affairs with him. Mr. Gilmore is pessimistic about his ability to deal with Mr. Merriman, as he maintains an outward appearance of extreme friendliness and good humor but is secretly ruthless underneath.

Mr. Gilmore rightly believes that Mr. Fairlie, who is extremely self-absorbed and neurotic, cares more about his own peace and comfort than he does about Laura and will not go out of his way to help his niece. Mr. Gilmore struggles to deal with Mr. Merriman because it is impossible to get a straight answer from him. It is also hard for people to be firm or angry with someone who is being externally pleasant and polite. Mr. Merriman knows this and exploits it to his advantage.

Mr. Merriman tells Mr. Gilmore that he regrets having to reject his clause but that there is nothing he can do; he is simply obeying orders from his client, Sir Percival. Mr. Gilmore tries to negotiate with Mr. Merriman to lower the sum which Sir Percival would receive from the twenty thousand pounds, if Laura were to die, but Mr. Merriman—despite seeming jocular and apologetic—absolutely will not budge. He agrees to give Mr. Gilmore a little more time, however, to work on the contract and to get a final answer from Mr. Fairlie and Laura.

Mr. Merriman denies any responsibility for rejecting the clause and claims that he is simply following orders and cannot contradict the will of his client. This makes him impossible for Mr. Gilmore to negotiate with, as Mr. Merriman insists that it has nothing to do with him, even though he is working for and being paid by Sir Percival and so does bear some responsibility for Laura's wellbeing.

Once they have agreed on this, Mr. Merriman changes the subject and asks Mr. Gilmore, seemingly in passing, if he has heard anything about "the woman who wrote the anonymous letter," Anne Catherick. Mr. Gilmore admits he has not. Mr. Merriman is not too disappointed by this, however, and tells Mr. Gilmore that, although Anne has not been found, Sir Percival has hired people to watch the person who he thinks may be hiding her. Mr. Gilmore asks if this is the old woman that Anne was seen with, but Mr. Merriman replies that the person they suspect is a man.

Although Mr. Merriman seems unconcerned about the fact that Anne Catherick is still missing, it is clear that Sir Percival is still taking a keen interest in her whereabouts, as they are having someone watched and believe that Anne is in hiding with this person.

Mr. Gilmore realizes that he has made no headway with Mr. Merriman. He feels it is pointless to appeal to Mr. Fairlie again in writing and, instead, decides to visit Limmeridge again in person. At the train station he runs into Walter Hartright and is surprised to find the young man strangely altered; he is "pale and haggard" and seems to be extremely on edge, as though he thinks that he is being watched.

Mr. Gilmore still hopes to convince Mr. Fairlie that Sir Percival wants to marry Laura for her inheritance and that, since he will receive part of Laura's fortune after her death, that she may be in danger. Walter's fear that he is being watched implies that Sir Percival believes that Walter is hiding Anne Catherick and has men spying on Walter in London. Sir Percival learned from Marian that Anne had spoken to Walter while at Limmeridge.

Walter tells Mr. Gilmore that he has heard about Laura's wedding and asks him when it will be. Mr. Gilmore thinks that he is displaying more interest than is proper for someone who worked as an employee for the Fairlies, and is rather put off by Walter's prying. When Walter perceives this, he remarks bitterly that he has no right to enquire about Laura's affairs and explains that he has been ill recently and is going away, "a long distance off," to recover. Mr. Gilmore must catch his train and Walter disappears into the crowd, leaving Mr. Gilmore feeling faintly uneasy about the young man's future.

Mr. Gilmore feels that Walter is overstepping social boundaries by asking personal questions about Laura, who is upper-class and of a higher social rank than Walter. Mr. Gilmore is a very typical, conservative nineteenth-century man and, although a member of the middle-class himself, believes in a degree of separation and reserve between people of different classes in the interests of propriety. Despite this, however, Mr. Gilmore is a kind hearted person and worries a little about Walter, who seems strange and out of sorts to him.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 2, CHAPTER 4

Mr. Gilmore arrives at Limmeridge but is told that Mr. Fairlie will not see him until the next day because of his nerves. When Mr. Gilmore is finally invited to Mr. Fairlie's study, Mr. Fairlie provokes him by refusing to send his servant from the room so that they might discuss the matter alone. Mr. Fairlie insists that his servant, who is holding a portfolio of etchings for him to examine, is not a man but a "portfolio stand" and so will not be interested in their conversation, but Mr. Gilmore—frustrated and offended—insists.

Mr. Gilmore demonstrates his belief in the class system again when he refuses to discuss business in front of Mr. Fairlie's servant, which would be considered improper. Mr. Fairlie, however, demonstrates an even more extreme position and does not even feel that they need to treat his servant as a person but, instead, treats him as an inanimate object. Although Mr. Gilmore is portrayed as a traditional person, his attitude is certainly more progressive than Mr. Fairlie, who totally dehumanizes his servant and would have been seen as old-fashioned by middle-class readers.

Mr. Gilmore begs Mr. Fairlie not to allow Sir Percival to marry Laura. Mr. Gilmore now believes that Sir Percival has arranged the marriage for "mercenary means." Mr. Fairlie teases Mr. Gilmore and suggests that he detests Sir Percival because he happens to be a man of rank—a Baronet—and insists that Mr. Gilmore is a political Radical. Offended, Mr. Gilmore loses his temper with Mr. Fairlie, but quickly sees that this method will get him nowhere with the stubborn man and tries to control himself. He begs Mr. Fairlie to reconsider, for Laura's sake, and tells him that anyone would tell him that it is unwise to give a man "an interest of twenty thousand pounds in his wife's death."

Mr. Fairlie is so old-fashioned in his beliefs that he views Mr. Gilmore, who is very conservative and traditional, as a political Radical. This only exposes Mr. Fairlie's outdated attitudes. Although there was still a strict class system, the treatment of and social attitudes towards servants, women, and members of the lower classes were improving. Mr. Gilmore sensibly points out that Sir Percival most likely wants to marry Laura for her money and that he will gain significantly if Laura dies, which may even give him an incentive to cause her death.

Seeing that he has made no progress with Mr. Fairlie, Mr. Gilmore tells Mr. Fairlie that the responsibility lies on him if anything happens to Laura, and Mr. Gilmore angrily leaves Limmeridge House. A week later, he sends the marriage settlement to Mr. Merriman, Sir Percival's lawyer, with the clause regarding the twenty thousand pounds still included.

Mr. Gilmore realizes that there is nothing he can do. Although he can advise Laura legally, Mr. Fairlie is her legal guardian and has a significant say in her future. This makes his self-absorbed attitude all the more frustrating and tragic.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 3, CHAPTER 1

The story is continued through excerpts from the diary of Marian Halcombe. These excerpts begin on the 8th of November, just after Mr. Gilmore's first visit to Limmeridge House when he came to discuss the marriage settlement with Laura. Marian, who feels unusually anxious and uncertain about how to proceed, approaches Laura in her room after Mr. Gilmore has had his discussion with her. Laura is pacing distractedly and tells Marian that she is going to confess "all" to Sir Percival so that he may break off his engagement to her if he wishes. Laura feels that she cannot break off the engagement herself because of the promise she made to her father, but she is resolved to speak to Sir Percival the next morning.

Laura feels too guilty to end the engagement herself and go against her father's wishes. She plans to tell Sir Percival that she is in love with Walter Hartright—she believes that this will force Sir Percival to end the engagement, as he will not wish to marry a woman who is in love with another man. However, this assumes that Sir Percival actually loves her and wants to marry her for something other than money.

Laura seems more relaxed that evening and joins Sir Percival, Marian, and Mrs. Vesey for dinner. After they have eaten, she tells Sir Percival that she wishes to speak to him the next day, after breakfast, and that she will wait for him in the study. Sir Percival turns pale when he hears this and Marian notices that his hands shake slightly. When Marian pops into Laura's room that night to check on her, she finds Laura preparing to sleep with the book of Walter's sketches under her pillow for what she thinks may be the last time.

Laura feels confident that the engagement will end when she tells Sir Percival about her love for Walter, and this eases the anxiety and stress she has been feeling about her wedding. Despite this, Laura sleeps with Walter's sketchbook (which is a keepsake that she uses to feel close to him) as, if Sir Percival does not break off the engagement, she will have to give up her affection for Walter and try to forget him.

The next day Marian receives a worrying letter from Walter Hartright. He writes in reply to a letter that Marian sent him detailing the explanation that Sir Percival provided for the letter sent by Anne Catherick to Laura. Walter bitterly replies that it is not his place to question the actions of noble men like Sir Percival. Marian is concerned that Walter's mental health is deteriorating; he writes that he cannot pursue his normal work and that he feels he is being followed around London. He asks for Marian's help to secure a passage abroad and she readily agrees, feeling that a change will be good for him.

Walter clearly does not believe Sir Percival's explanation and suspects him of treating Anne unjustly. Walter is resentful that he cannot marry Laura and writes bitterly about the class system that prevents him from questioning the behavior of upper-class people like Sir Percival, who are publicly believed to be "better" than lower-class people. It was common in the nineteenth century to associate material wealth and social status with inherent virtue. Marian believes that Walter is paranoid and ill and is not really being followed.

That morning, after breakfast, Marian and Laura wait for Sir Percival in the study. Marian is surprised to find Laura in such a state of calm resolve; she has never seen this side of her sister and feels that they have switched roles. Sir Percival, who did not join them for breakfast, appears and seems very anxious to hear what Laura has to say.

Marian feels that she is usually a confident and determined person, but the uncertainty over Laura's future has shaken her and she now questions her own judgement. The crisis also allows her to see a new side of Laura, who has apparently never been in a position of real responsibility before.

Laura explains to Sir Percival that, although she agreed to the engagement—on her father's wish—with the best intentions, her circumstances have changed since then. She understands that Sir Percival may wish to end the engagement with her, since she is in love with another, but that she does not intend to marry this other man and will remain single for the rest of her life even if Sir Percival will not marry her. She feels the need to tell him and to be honest, as she believes that women should honor and respect their husbands above all, and she does not wish to marry him with a lie on her conscience.

Laura demonstrates that she holds conventional views about gender. Rather than marrying Walter, she will live her whole life unmarried as punishment for breaking off her engagement and acting improperly by falling in love while she is engaged to another man. She also demonstrates to Sir Percival that she is a very honest, open person and will not lie to him.

Rather than rejecting Laura, however, Sir Percival leaps up and announces that she has done nothing but increase his desire to marry her because she has proved herself so honest and good. Marian sees that Laura's honesty, which she hoped would free her from the engagement, has really sealed her fate. Laura insists that although she will marry Sir Percival, she will never love him, but Sir Percival suggests that she may learn to love him in time, and seems delighted to continue the engagement.

Although Laura tries to dissuade Sir Percival from the marriage by insisting that she will never love him, her confession makes him more determined—supposedly because it proves she will be a virtuous and honest wife. Marian, however, feels that Laura has accidentally played right into Sir Percival's hands, as she now has no excuse not to marry him and cannot go against her father's wishes. Her honesty may also look like naivety to Sir Percival and let him think that he can easily manipulate her.

Sir Percival leaves the women alone and Marian watches anxiously as Laura dejectedly resigns herself to what has passed. She cuts out a lock of her hair and places it in Walter's sketchbook. Aware that Marian sometimes corresponds with Walter, Laura begs her to write and tell him that she is happy. If she dies young, however, Laura wants Marian to tell Walter that she loved him. With that she breaks down sobbing and, saddened by the day's events, Marian leaves her to cry herself to sleep and puts Walter's sketchbook out of sight.

Hair was commonly used as a keepsake in Victorian England. It was common for people to have jewelry and ornaments decorated with the hair of their loved ones who were either dead or lived a long way off. Laura clearly loves Walter very much, as she does not wish to upset him by letting him know how unhappy she is. However, if she dies, she does not want him to believe that she had forgotten him. Marian puts Walter's sketchbook away, symbolizing Laura's final separation from him.

The next day, Sir Percival takes Marian aside and assures her of his good intentions towards Laura; he will never mention her confession again and will do his utmost to win her regard as a husband. Marian is deeply aware of how biased she is against Sir Percival and tries to resist speaking her mind. She does tell him, however, that she wishes he had ended the engagement. Again, she feels "disarmed" when Sir Percival responds kindly and begs her to understand that Laura's confession has only strengthened the attachment that he feels towards her.

Although Marian has no evidence to support her dislike of Sir Percival, she instinctively mistrusts him, even when he is being kind to her and seems to have Laura's best interests in mind.

When Marian is still cold towards him, Sir Percival asks if she thinks Laura's future would be better as single woman or as the wife of a noble and devoted man. Marian answers him civilly but, writing in her dairy later that day, feels certain that he has taken advantage of Laura's vulnerability and has used it to further his own ends. She can only hope that his motives are not as monstrous as she suspects and that he truly loves her sister. She also briefly notes that she has reached out to some contacts to get Walter a position abroad, as she is terribly worried about him and what will happen to him if he remains in London.

Sir Percival tries to manipulate Marian. He suggests that Marian does not really want her sister to be happy, as her life as an unmarried woman could not possibly be happier than her life married to him. This demonstrates typical attitudes towards gender and marriage and confirms Marian's suspicions that Sir Percival is behaving kindly but is not really kind under the surface. Although she hopes she is wrong, she believes Sir Percival is marrying Laura for her money.

The next morning, Marian and Sir Percival are called to Mr. Fairlie's room to discuss the date of the wedding. Marian feels that Laura should get to decide when the marriage will take place, but Mr. Fairlie says that Laura has caused enough trouble and that it should be up to Sir Percival. Sir Percival good humoredly refuses this responsibility and Marian says that she will *not* press Laura on the matter. When she sees Laura, however, and describes the interview, Laura despondently says that she has indeed caused everyone enough trouble and gives Sir Percival final say over the timing of the wedding.

Mr. Fairlie again shows his disregard for Laura's wellbeing and views her feelings about the wedding as a huge inconvenience to himself. Laura does not prioritize her own feelings over the men around her—her society does not treat women as equal to men, and doesn't view women's feelings or opinions as valid in comparison to men's.

Marian watches Laura interact with Sir Percival and observes the change that has come over her sister. She feels that, since Walter's departure, Laura has lost all her hope and vivacity but seems quietly determined to keep her promise. Sir Percival wants to marry Laura by the end of the year and Marian acknowledges, bitterly, that there is nothing she can do to stop this. After finalizing the date with Laura, Sir Percival leaves Limmeridge to prepare his house in Hampshire for his new bride.

Laura has decided to marry Sir Percival because of a sense of responsibility to her father and her uncle rather than affection for her husband. This was a common situation for women in the nineteenth century, who were often married off by their male relatives for financial or political reasons. As women could not own property, Laura must go to live at her husband's house rather than remain at Limmeridge, which belongs to her uncle.

Marian decides that a change of scenery will be good for Laura and invites her to visit some friends of theirs in Yorkshire. Laura—in her new "coldly passive" state—agrees. Marian sends a quick note to Mr. Gilmore to inform him about the upcoming wedding. She also hears that a place has been found for Walter on an expedition to Honduras, and, saddened that their dear friend will be so far away, Marian sets out with Laura for Yorkshire.

Laura has become "passive" because she no longer has any power in her situation. She has done her best to escape but now feels that she must go through with it since it is expected of her. The nineteenth century in Britain was a period of expansionism and colonialism, and it was common for British explorers to journey to foreign countries to colonize new territories or carry out scientific or anthropological research.

After a week in Yorkshire, Marian hears that Walter has departed on his expedition to America. The next day she receives a letter from Mr. Fairlie that asks her and Laura to return to Limmeridge house at the request of Sir Percival.

Walter is clearly in a desperate state of mind to undertake such a long and dangerous voyage. He obviously feels that he has nothing to lose without Laura.

THE FIRST EPOCH: PART 3, CHAPTER 2

Marian and Laura are back at Limmeridge House and Marian writes in her diary that her fears have come true; a date has been fixed for the wedding before the end of the year. While they were away in Yorkshire, Sir Percival wrote to Mr. Fairlie and told him that, because of some renovations which need to be carried out on his house in Hampshire, he would like to fix a date for the wedding so that the couple can be settled before this long-term project begins. Mr. Fairlie, therefore, recalls Marian to Limmeridge so that she may negotiate the date with Sir Percival and so that Mr. Fairlie does not have to go to the trouble of arranging it.

The renovation of Sir Percival's house gives him a convincing reason to marry Laura quickly—before she turns twenty-one and takes possession of part of her inheritance.

Just as Marian is about to meet with Sir Percival, Laura momentarily loses her nerve and begs Marian not to set the date for the wedding too soon. Marian says that she will be delighted to postpone the wedding, and that this is a woman's right. However, Laura holds her back and implores Marian to do her best to please Sir Percival; after all, Laura says, she has caused him so much trouble already. Marian becomes enraged and cries furiously that men tear women away from their loved ones and families and then expect women to think of *their* peace of mind and the trouble their wives are causing *them*. Laura soothes Marian, however, and tells her that it is too late and there is no point putting off the inevitable.

Marian is extremely frustrated by the position of women in her society. Although women technically have the right to postpone their weddings, this behavior is frowned upon by society because men's desires are seen as more important than women's. Therefore, women are made to feel guilty for asking for things for themselves or trying to protect themselves, and are pressured into acting against their own best interests for the sake of men's convenience. With this monologue Marian breaks from convention once more.

Before Marian leaves the room, Laura asks her falteringly about a letter she received while they were in Yorkshire. Although Laura does not say it, Marian knows she refers to the letter from Walter announcing his departure. Laura begs Marian not to tell Walter the date of her wedding and Marian conceals from her sister that, even if she did write to Walter again, he would not receive the letter on board his ship or in the heart of the South American jungle where his expedition has taken him.

Marian does not want Laura to know that Walter has gone on a dangerous expedition abroad because Laura might, quite reasonably, fear for his safety and become even more distraught.

Furious about the position that Laura has been placed in, and her inability to do anything to prevent the wedding, Marian storms to Mr. Fairlie's room, bursts inside and shouts at him that Laura agrees to the proposed date—the 22nd of December—then rushes out of the room once more.

Although Marian realizes there is nothing that she can do to stop Laura's wedding, she refuses to accept her powerlessness gracefully, and is openly hostile and rebellious. This is in keeping with Marian's more stereotypically masculine character.

The morning after these events, Marian reads Walter's letter once more and wonders whether she should burn it because it contains evidence about his love for Laura and his interactions with Anne Catherick. She is concerned about his reports of being followed in London and his final note, which insists that the "mystery" of Anne Catherick is not yet cleared up. In his letter, he implores Marian to do her best to solve it if she ever has the opportunity. Marian decides, in the end, to burn the letter.

Marian burns the letter because she is worried that if it is found, it may damage Laura's reputation as a married woman. She is also worried that it may implicate Walter in whatever mystery or crime has been committed against Anne Catherick.

Preparations commence for Laura's wedding and Laura submits to them all with a remote and despondent resignation. Marian thinks sadly about how different Laura would be if she were getting ready to marry Walter instead of Sir Percival. They receive regular updates from Sir Percival about the renovation of his house and his plans to take Laura on a tour of Rome once they are married. Marian knows that she cannot go with them but hopes that the traveling will be good for Laura and bring her renewed hope for the future. Marian feels strange writing about Laura's wedding, as though she is not writing about a wedding at all, but about a death.

Marian now regrets sending Walter away and wishes that Laura could be with him instead. Marian feels an even greater sense of foreboding about her sister's upcoming marriage. She believes that it will separate her from Laura and, therefore, is like a death.

Laura brightens up temporarily at the prospect of the honeymoon tour but is distraught when she learns that Marian will not go with her. She begs Marian to come but Marian wisely insists that, if she upsets Sir Percival before the wedding, he may not let the sisters live together once Laura is his wife. In a hasty note, Marian says that she always writes negatively about Sir Percival and wonders why she is so prejudiced against him. Perhaps Walter's bias as a jaded lover and Anne Catherick's letter have turned her mind unfairly against him. She resolves to try harder to get along with him and see him in a positive light.

Marian is acutely aware of how little power she and Laura have to choose their living arrangements after Laura's marriage. Marian is obliged to keep Sir Percival happy so that he does not refuse to let her live with her sister after he and Laura are married. Since the wedding is now certain, Marian tries to convince herself to see it as a good thing and to give Sir Percival the benefit of the doubt. After all, she still has no real evidence that he has done anything wrong.

As December progresses, the family prepare for the wedding, which will take place in the village church and will be a small private affair with very few guests. Sir Percival arrives on the 17th of December and brings Laura several pieces of jewelry for a wedding present. Marian notices that Laura has developed a dread of being alone or unoccupied. Sir Percival perceives her energy as excitement about the wedding, but Marian can see that her sister is putting on an act and thinks it is horrible to watch.

Laura does not wish to be left alone because she does not want to think about her situation, which she is very unhappy with. She keeps herself occupied all the time so that she will not be miserable. Marian knows her sister well and is able to see through her pretense, while Sir Percival Glyde, who does not know her at all, takes it at face value (or simply doesn't care).

Marian continues her efforts to write only positive things about Sir Percival in her diary. She notes that he is extremely handsome—although she is not attracted to him—and notes that his only flaws seem to be a habit of snapping at the servants and a constant restlessness which puts her on edge.

Marian does her best not to judge Sir Percival too harshly. She dislikes his irritability, however, and worries that it may be a sign of his true nature underneath the polite public persona which he adopts.

Marian wakes up the next morning feeling low, and goes for a walk to clear her head. On her way, she meets Sir Percival, who is marching briskly along. He tells her that he has been to Todd's Corner to enquire after Anne Catherick again. He asks Marian if, by any chance, Walter has heard anything of her. Marian says no and notes that Sir Percival speaks as though he is vexed by this but looks very relieved. Marian tries to convince herself that this is even more evidence of Sir Percival's virtue—that he is so determined to find a lost, vulnerable woman even when he is preparing to marry another.

Marian believes that Sir Percival is very worried about Anne and is dedicated to finding her because she is the daughter of his old friend. Her suspicions are aroused, however, when she notices that Sir Percival says one thing but looks as though he believes another. This suggests that he is putting on an act and what he says does not reflect his true feelings.

Marian writes that she is shocked again by Sir Percival's good nature. She asks him if she will be permitted to live with him and Laura in their new home, and Sir Percival answers enthusiastically that she should. Sir Percival tells Laura and Marian that they will spend part of their honeymoon tour with his friend Count Fosco, the husband of Laura's aunt, Madame Fosco.

Marian still finds no tangible reason to dislike Sir Percival and continues to reassure herself that he may be a genuinely kind and sincere person who means well towards Laura.

Marian is pleased to hear this, as she feels that, perhaps, the friendship between Sir Percival and Count Fosco will heal the family rift between Laura and her aunt. She remembers her aunt—now Madame Fosco—as an outspoken and vivacious woman and wonders if her husband has calmed her at all. She is quite embarrassed that Laura's father objected to Count Fosco simply because he is foreign and wonders what sort of man he is. All she knows about him is that he once saved Sir Percival's life when Sir Percival was attacked in Rome, and that this was the basis of their friendship. She tells herself, determinedly, that she is sure to like him if he is a friend of Sir Percival's, whom she is making a great effort to view as a friend.

Marian is curious to meet her aunt, who she has not seen for a long time. She is embarrassed by her father's xenophobic attitude towards Count Fosco. As she is making an effort to give Sir Percival the benefit of the doubt, she also extends this to his friend and tells herself that Count Fosco must be a good man if he once saved Sir Percival's life.

Marian's good intentions towards Sir Percival collapse, and she opens her diary to write that she hates him. She decides this when a number of cards arrive addressed, not to Laura, but to the future Lady Glyde. While Laura is opening them, Sir Percival whispers something in her ear which stops Laura in her tracks and makes her turn pale. Witnessing this, Marian can no longer suppress her hatred of him.

Marian can no longer deny her instinctual hatred of Sir Percival. Marian is a very honest and open person and she decides to trust her judgement, which she has tried to suppress. She can tell from the interaction between Laura and Sir Percival that he is not kind and well-intentioned, and she suspects that he will be a bad husband for Laura.

As the wedding draws closer, Marian feels her own anxieties—and the anxieties of those around her—increase. She confides in her diary that she has maintained a wild, desperate notion that something will—*must*—happen to prevent the wedding. Strangely enough, she believes that Sir Percival suspects this too; his agitation increases, and he questions servants who come to the house about their intentions. Laura and Marian remain very gloomy, certain that Laura's marriage will bring about a terrible separation between them.

Marian is deeply invested in the idea that the wedding cannot proceed. She can see that Sir Percival, on the other hand, is deeply invested in marrying Laura and is terrified that something will happen to prevent it. This suggests that Sir Percival stands to gain a lot from his marriage to Laura. Marian suspects that his motives are not positive and that eventually the marriage will drive the sisters apart.

On the night before the wedding, Marian looks in on Laura while she is sleeping and thinks, sadly, how "friendless" Laura is despite her fortune and position in society. She also thinks of poor Walter, far away on a ship somewhere, and wishes that he was there to help them. The next morning Laura seems calm and prepared. The marriage flies by in a blur and, after Laura and Sir Percival have left, Marian sets her diary aside, exhausted from crying.

Laura is "friendless" because she has no one to protect her. Although she has women in her life like Marian and Mrs. Vesey, who care about her, she knows no one with the social or legal power to protect her from her future husband or from other predatory forces in the world.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 1

Marian's diary picks up again on the 11th of June, the summer after Laura and Sir Percival's wedding. She is writing from Blackwater Park, which is Sir Percival's home in Hampshire and now the home of the two sisters. Laura and Sir Percival are still in Italy and Marian eagerly awaits their return the next day. Sir Percival and Laura will also bring Count Fosco and Madame Fosco, Laura's aunt, to stay at Blackwater for the summer. Marian does not care who they bring as long as she is reunited with her sister.

There is a time jump as the narrative moves from the first "epoch" (a distinctive period of time) to the second. Marian has relocated to Blackwater Park to live with her sister in Sir Percival's home. She has struggled with the temporary separation from Laura because the bond is so strong between them.

Marian is not very taken with Blackwater Park, which she arrived at the evening before. It is surrounded by dark trees and Marian finds the setting claustrophobic. The servants are friendly, however, and she is pleased with her room. As she writes in her room, she wishes that she was a man so that she could ride out to meet Laura and Sir Percival on the road. Being a woman, though, she must wait patiently at the house for their return. She decides to fill in her diary with the events which have taken place since she last wrote six months ago.

Blackwater Park makes Marian feel trapped and confined and the trees surround it like the bars of a prison. This foreshadows her time spent with Laura here, which is defined by containment and coercion. Again, Marian demonstrates that she is frustrated by her lack of freedom as a woman; particularly her lack of physical freedom to go where she likes and be as active as she chooses.

She has received a note from Walter with news of his safe arrival in Honduras. She has also seen a clipping from a newspaper which announced the start of the expedition into the jungle, but she has heard nothing of him since then. She also hasn't heard anything about Anne Catherick or Mrs. Clements, and even Sir Percival's lawyer, Mr. Merriman, has given up the hunt for them. Mr. Gilmore, Laura and Marian's lawyer, has unfortunately been taken ill and can no longer work. Marian hopes their new lawyer will be as reliable and friendly as he was to deal with. Mrs. Vesey has also been removed from Laura's service, as Laura will have new servants at Blackwater, and has gone to live with her sister in London. Mr. Fairlie is, as usual, immersed in his art and delighted to have the women out of the house.

The move to Blackwater and Laura's marriage have separated Marian and Laura from everyone they are close to. This supports Marian's earlier fears that marriage is like death for women, or the transition to a different world, as women become totally immersed in their husbands' lives and often lose all connection with their own. This was normal in the nineteenth century, but Collins turns this standard social convention into something sinister to suggest the danger that this transition can put women in.

As for news from Laura, Marian has had regular letters from her throughout the trip, but she cannot tell whether Laura is happy or not. She does not discern from the letters that Laura has grown closer to Sir Percival but there is no evidence that he mistreats her either. Laura also writes that she has met with Count Fosco and her aunt and that her aunt is very different from her younger self—she is very quiet and reserved now—but Laura says that the couple did not join them in Rome, as their plans changed at the last minute.

Marriage has been an extreme transition for Marian's aunt as well and seems to have transformed her personality; Marian remembers her as a loud and outgoing person. This also makes Count Fosco seem foreboding, since he has apparently broken his wife's spirit.

Since Laura does not write enthusiastically of Count Fosco, Marian—who trusts Laura's instincts with people—thinks that he must be an unpleasant man. She decides to go to bed, excited about seeing Laura the next day.

Like Marian, Laura is an honest person and a good judge of character. Because of this, she sees through others when they are putting on an act.

Marian gets up the next morning and explores Blackwater Park. She finds that parts of the house—the upper floors and the "old wing"—are ruined and uninhabitable, but that the modern part of the house has been redecorated for the inhabitants to live in. Marian is pleased to see that the "good old times" have been "swept away" by 19th century furnishing and décor. Outside in the drive, there is a **fountain** with a statue of a monster on the plinth in the middle, which Marian passes and observes as she ventures out to explore the grounds.

Marian's delight in the new furniture and decoration reflects nineteenth-century interest in interior design and aesthetics in the home. The industrial revolution and new technology provided Victorian consumers with new goods and materials to furnish their homes and encouraged people to value comfort, personal taste, and leisure when designing their living space. The monster on the fountain reflects and foreshadows the monstrous reality of Laura's marriage and the secret concealed by Sir Percival, the owner of Blackwater Park.

Marian wanders out of the garden and follows a path through the trees which surround the mansion. The path ends suddenly at the water's edge, and she sees the stagnant, murky lake of Blackwater, which is infested with frogs, toads and snakes. A little further along the bank there is a small hut, and Marian rests inside it before the walk home.

The swamp filled with reptiles forebodes the conspiracy that will trap Marian and Laura at Blackwater, hemmed in by its trees and lake. Snakes are associated with lies and evil because of their biblical connotations in the story of Adam and Eve, and Collins's contemporary readers would be aware of this symbolism.

Sitting in the little shed, Marian is startled to hear something breathing nearby. Frightened, she rises and, glancing around, finds a wounded dog huddled underneath the bench. Horrified at the sight of the poor creature in pain, Marian gathers the dog up and rushes it back to the house.

The dog is yet another sinister omen of Laura and Marian's time at Blackwater, as it is an innocent creature that has been deliberately injured.

Marian calls for help from the servants when she arrives with the dog. The first servant who appears is a large, "stupid looking" girl who laughs when she sees the injured dog and says that someone called Baxter has shot it. Marian asks her who Baxter is, hears that he is the groundskeeper, and dismisses the girl. The housekeeper, Mrs. Michelson, whom Marian likes, then arrives to help her.

The servant girl does not seem to have any sympathy or compassion for the dog and is slightly sadistic in her reaction to the sight of the animal's suffering. All this adds to the mood of dread permeating the entire property.

Mrs. Michelson is shocked when she sees the dog and says that the animal belongs to Mrs. Catherick. Mrs. Catherick, Anne Catherick's mother, came to Blackwater to enquire if there was any news about her daughter. While they treat the dog, Marian remembers her promise to Walter that she will try to solve the mystery of Anne Catherick if ever the opportunity arises. She resolves to follow this lead and find out anything she can in this direction.

Marian is surprised by this unexpected connection to Anne Catherick. Marian has been so preoccupied with Laura's marriage that she has put off investigating the mystery of the woman in white.

Marian asks Mrs. Michelson if Mrs. Catherick lives nearby, but the housekeeper tells her that Mrs. Catherick lives twenty-five miles away in Wellingham. Marian asks the housekeeper if she knows Mrs. Catherick well and the housekeeper seems surprised and says that she has never met her before, although she is aware of Sir Percival's kindness to Mrs. Catherick's daughter. Marian wonders if Mrs. Catherick stayed for long on her visit. The housekeeper says that—although Mrs. Catherick seemed to be a strange, yet respectable woman—she was talkative and seemed likely to stay a long time until a man came to the door and asked what time Sir Percival would be back. While the housekeeper was attending to this man, Mrs. Catherick slipped out and told another servant not to mention her visit to Sir Percival.

At first Mrs. Michelson's story seems to corroborate Sir Percival's explanation as to why he placed Anne in the asylum. Sir Percival has clearly spoken openly about Mrs. Catherick and her daughter, and his involvement in their situation, if even the servants are aware of it. However, when Mrs. Michelson tells Marian that Mrs. Catherick left when she heard that Sir Percival was on his way to the house, and that she told Mrs. Michelson to keep her visit a secret, it suggests that they are not close friends at all.

Marian and Mrs. Michelson both think this is very odd, and the housekeeper remarks that Mrs. Catherick did not talk about her daughter much but asked a lot of questions about Sir Percival and his new wife. While they are talking, the dog passes away.

It seems strange that, when her daughter is missing and may be too vulnerable to take care of herself, Mrs. Catherick shows more interest in Sir Percival's new wife. It also seems odd that, considering her interest, Mrs. Catherick does not stay to meet Laura.

Marian returns to her diary in the early evening, still restlessly waiting for Laura's return. She thinks about the poor dog and wishes that this had not happened on her first day at Blackwater, as it feels like a bad omen. Thinking back to her conversation with the housekeeper about Mrs. Catherick, she resolves to sneak out one day and visit her at Wellingham to get information about Sir Percival. While she is writing, she hears a carriage downstairs and rushes away to meet Laura.

Mrs. Catherick's mysterious visit, the sinister appearance of Blackwater Park, and the sad incident with the dog compound in Marian's mind and make her anxious about the future for Laura and herself.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 2

Marian takes up her dairy again two days after Laura and Sir Percival arrive back at Blackwater after their honeymoon. Marian finds Laura changed; both in appearance and in temperament. She finds that she is not as innocent, warm, or girlish as she used to be. Although Marian acknowledges that society will probably think Laura is changed for the better, Marian is sad to see Laura lose these qualities. Marian also finds that Laura will tell her nothing about her marriage—out of respect for her husband—and the subject is forbidden between them. Laura does ask Marian if she has heard from Walter, however, but Marian answers—truthfully—that she has not. Despite her new reserve and secretiveness, Laura is delighted to see Marian and teases her for bringing her old bookcase and her "man's umbrella" with her.

Laura's marriage has introduced her to the world of adult womanhood, and she seems less innocent and more cynical than she used to be. According to nineteenth-century conventions, she also now has a duty to manage her household and represent her husband in society by behaving properly. Laura's old personality comes out when she is alone with Marian and they are playful together. Laura teases Marian because Marian is so unfeminine and chooses to travel with ugly, practical things, like books and an umbrella, rather than pretty or decorative feminine things.

With little more to say about the changes in Laura, Marian observes how the honeymoon has changed Sir Percival. She remarks that he is terse, surly, and much ruder and more irritable than before. Marian feels that people show their real personalities in their own homes and she notes that Sir Percival is rigid about the order of his things at Blackwater and obnoxious towards his servants.

Marian now suspects that Sir Percival's polite and charming personality, which he presented to them at Limmeridge, is an act and that, now that he has persuaded Laura to marry him, he is able to show his true, unpleasant character.

Although Marian dislikes Sir Percival, she is willing to acknowledge that his bad mood seems to have started after their arrival home when the housekeeper told him of the unnamed man who called at the house and asked after him—although why this should upset Sir Percival so much she couldn't say.

Although Marian has long had suspicions about Sir Percival's intentions, she still tries to give him the benefit of the doubt and believe that his bad mood is caused by something specific that has upset him.

Marian then begins to describe her impressions of the Count Fosco and Madame Fosco. Madame Fosco, Marian notices, has drastically changed since her marriage. In fact, Marian has never before seen such a huge shift in someone's personality. While Madame Fosco used to be vain, mischievous, and opinionated, she is now silent and utterly submissive to the Count. She spends all her time listening to him and rolling his cigarettes, and now dresses in a modest fashion, whereas she used to show off her figure. She is also intensely jealous of other women talking to her husband. Marian gets the feeling that the Countess is now hemmed in and bitter, and that her expressive, lively personality used to protect her from becoming like this.

Madame Fosco has been transformed by her marriage. As a young woman, she was the opposite of an ideal nineteenth-century woman; vocal, rebellious, and independent. Through her marriage, she has turned into the opposite: she is submissive, silent, and modest, relies on her husband for everything, and does everything in her power to please him. Although this was commonly thought of as a perfect set of qualities in a wife, Collins undermines this idea by implying that this suppression of her outgoing nature has made Madame Fosco bitter and unpleasant. She is now totally focused on her marriage to the point of caring nothing for anyone else around her.

Marian believes that Count Fosco is a man who "could tame anything." She even believes that, if she were married to him, she would be as obedient as his wife is now. At the same time, she admits that he attracts and fascinates her. She finds that characteristics which she dislikes or finds ridiculous in others, she respects and admires in Count Fosco.

Marian believes that it is Count Fosco's influence which has changed Madame Fosco and molded her into the "ideal" Victorian wife. Count Fosco has not done this to his wife out of love, however, but because he wishes to control her. Marian finds this idea both repulsive and slightly fascinating. Marian is adventurous and attracted to danger because of the challenge it presents. She does not believe she would be a match for the Count, however, and is afraid of him.

For example, Count Fosco is extremely overweight. Marian admits that she distrusts overweight people and dislikes the common stereotype that overweight people are happy or jolly. However, despite this, she trusts the Count. She thinks perhaps she likes him because of his resemblance to Napoleon and the fact that he looks very strange and not at all ordinary or common. She is also impressed by how well he speaks English for a foreigner and is fascinated by the way he moves so quietly and delicately despite his size.

Collins plays with stereotypes here and suggests that just because fat people are often portrayed as jolly and benevolent, does not mean that they are. Napoleon was a French General who tried to conquer all of Europe and who went to war with Britain in the later 1700s. Like Count Fosco, he is associated in the British Victorian imagination with power, control, and foreign forces invading Britain. Count Fosco also confounds expectations because he is light on his feet despite his size.

Count Fosco is extremely fond of animals and keeps a family of white mice and several birds, which he kisses, pets, and trains to do tricks. At the same time, he is fearless with larger animals. Marian has seen him approach a fierce dog in the kennels, lay his hand on its head and laugh at the dog for being a coward and only attacking things that are afraid of it.

Count Fosco's treatment of his pets seems to imply that he has a sensitive nature and is kind to vulnerable things. However, his attitude towards the fierce dog suggests that he is also totally fearless and is confident in his ability to tame anything, as Marian has already discerned. Overall, the Count seems to have a special connection to animals, which adds to his intriguing character.

Marian describes the way that Count Fosco ingratiates himself with the people around him. He senses that Laura dislikes him and so frequently appears with her favorite bunch of flowers and is simpering and attentive with her. "In public" he is extraordinarily kind to Madame Fosco. Marian notes that with herself, he "flatters her" by talking to her about serious subjects as though she is a man. Marian even feels that the Count "manages" Sir Percival and maintains an air of superiority over him, dismissing comments that Sir Percival makes about the Count's odd, "effeminate" habits.

Marian can see that Count Fosco is an extremely powerful personality and is able to manipulate and control everyone around him. He attempts to neutralize Laura's dislike of him by making it impossible for her to say anything unkind about him. He also seems aware that Marian prefers to be treated as an equal and, therefore, does so accordingly. Marian stresses that he is kind to his wife "in public" because she does not know how he treats her in private, and possibly suspects that the Count has used force or violence to change Madame Fosco's personality.

Marian confesses she is confused about Count Fosco's history and past with Sir Percival. She thinks that he may be a political exile, but this seems to be contradicted by the fact that he often receives "official looking" letters from abroad.

There was a great deal of political unrest in Italy during this period, as Italy was not a united country and there was much opposition to unifying the different states. As a result, political exiles from Italy were common.

Although Marian is intimidated by Count Fosco, she cannot help but admire him. She notices that he has this effect on everyone and that Sir Percival even seems afraid of him. Regardless of his past or true nature, Marian observes that it would be very dangerous to make an enemy of the Count.

Marian can tell that the Count is an extremely dominant personality and that he is able to control people around him to get his own way. Therefore, she feels that he would be ruthless if someone tried to prevent him from doing as he pleases. In all, he is a fascinating character and one of Collins's most interesting creations.

The next day, a visitor arrives at lunchtime and demands to see Sir Percival. Count Fosco tells Marian that this is Mr. Merriman, Sir Percival's lawyer, and Marian suspects that something important has happened. Before she has voiced this out loud, however, the Count agrees with her, that something *has* happened and Laura, speaking to Marian later, says she suspects this too.

Count Fosco does not seem to know about Sir Percival's private affairs in detail but, like Laura and Marian, is curious about them. However, unlike Laura and Marian, the Count is in a position of power and seems to have some sway over Sir Percival.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 3

That evening, Marian continues her entry about Sir Percival's unexpected meeting with his lawyer, Mr. Merriman. She went for a walk in the grounds that afternoon and, as she was crossing the hall to go back to her room, she overheard Mr. Merriman in the study talking to Sir Percival. Mr. Merriman said that the business was "up to Lady Glyde" and that she must sign the contract, with a witness, for the transaction to be complete.

Marian is curious about the business they are discussing. She wonders what type of transaction Laura may be made responsible for.

Struck by the mention of her sister's name in this context, Marian conceals herself outside the door to eavesdrop. She hears Mr. Merriman tell Sir Percival that, if Laura will not sign, then the creditors will accept bills for three months instead. Sir Percival angrily dismisses this possibility and hurries the lawyer out and to a waiting carriage.

This suggests that Sir Percival is in debt and that his creditors (the people he owes money to) are growing impatient as they wait for their loans to be repaid. They are willing to extend for three more months, but Sir Percival seems determined that another type of transaction will take place; one that involves Laura.

Marian decides to share what she has heard with Laura and rushes up to Laura's room. Marian is not surprised to find that Laura knows about her husband's debt and financial worries. She and Marian agree that the anonymous man who called at the house—which irritated Sir Percival so much—is someone that Sir Percival owed money to. Marian tells Laura not to sign anything and promises to protect her as far as she can from becoming involved in these affairs.

Marian suspects that Sir Percival wishes her to sign a document making her responsible for paying some of his debts with the money from her inheritance. She does not want her sister's money to be wasted like this, and urges her not to sign anything because it may involve her in something that is not her fault.

They decide to spend the afternoon in the gardens and leave the house by the front door. They pass Madame Fosco, who is walking back and forth by the fountain, and Count Fosco, who bows and sings to them. Once they are out of earshot, Marian tells Laura of her certainty that Count Fosco knows about Sir Percival's financial trouble.

Madame Fosco and Count Fosco seem to be guarding the outside of the house and make it difficult for Marian and Laura to meet and talk in secret.

Laura replies that she deeply dislikes Count Fosco and begs Marian not to ask him about what she heard outside the library. Laura admits that she has no reason to dislike the Count because he is always kind to her, but his presence makes her uneasy and she sees that he has a deep, palpable sway over her husband, Sir Percival.

Although Count Fosco is always kind to Laura, she senses that he has malicious motives for this and does not trust him. She feels that Count Fosco manipulates and controls her husband, just as he manipulates his trained mice.

Marian trust's Laura's judgement. That evening she plays chess with Count Fosco and, perceiving that he is letting her win, challenges him to play properly. He beats her immediately after this.

Marian suspects that Count Fosco is putting on an act and calls his bluff. He rises to this challenge and shows her that he is an extremely intelligent man and a formidable opponent.

The following morning, Laura and Marian are preparing to go out for a walk when Sir Percival joins them and announces that he wants Count Fosco, Madame Fosco, and Laura to join him in the library to transact some business. When they tell him about their plans for a walk, however—which Count Fosco and the Countess will join them in—Sir Percival seems relieved and accompanies them out, agreeing to take care of the business after lunch.

Sir Percival seems reluctant to carry out the business he proposes and is relieved to have an excuse to put it off. He is not as skilled as the Count at manipulating people.

On the walk through the grounds towards the lake, Sir Percival goes off by himself into the plantation, chopping down the grass in front of him with his stick. When they arrive at the boathouse by the lake, they stop to rest and Sir Percival joins them again; though he remains outside and strides restlessly about, while the others sit indoors.

Sir Percival's restlessness and destructive tendencies reflect his inner turmoil and anxiety about his financial situation and the business he wants to take care of that day.

Sir Percival complains about the ugly view of the lake—which he feels is a "blot on a gentleman's property"—and says that his bailiff thinks the spot is cursed. Count Fosco laughs at this. He says that, if a murder was committed here, then the water would not be deep enough to sink the body and the murderer would leave footprints through the marsh. Sir Percival complains sullenly that Count Fosco willfully misunderstands; he says the lake is perfect for a murder because it is gloomy. Count Fosco replies that a "fool" would choose this location for a murder but to a "wise man" it would be the last choice of setting for such a crime.

This conversation is very sinister and seems designed to intimidate Laura and Marian, as it suggests that Sir Percival and Count Fosco regularly plan ways in which they can cover up crimes. Sir Percival appears naïve because he only thinks about one aspect of a murder (the setting) while Count Fosco comes across as truly frightening because he seems to have a deep and detailed understanding of what is necessary to get away with killing someone, which possibly comes from real life experience.

Laura contradicts Count Fosco and says that "wise" men do not commit murders because they know better. Count Fosco ridicules this, speaking to his white mice, which he has brought with him, and suggests that it is as easy to teach men not to murder as it is to teach mice not to gnaw the bars of their cage. Laura insists that there are no truly wise criminals, and the Count retorts that this is because wise criminals do not get caught.

Count Fosco suggests that it is natural and instinctive for men to murder each other because it is part of human nature. Again, Count Fosco comes across as very sinister as he seems to have a deep knowledge of an underworld of crime that escapes the attention or punishment of the law.

Sir Percival sneers at Laura's suggestion and says that she may as well say that "crimes cause their own detection." Laura says softly that she does think this, and when Sir Percival laughs at her, Marian defends Laura and agrees with her. Sir Percival strides away, annoyed by Marian's interference. Count Fosco asks his wife what she thinks, and she tells him that she "waits to be instructed." Marian scoffs at this and reminds Madame Fosco that she used to advocate the rights of women. The Countess ignores her and reverently asks the Count for his opinion.

Although he dismisses the idea, Sir Percival seems worried by the thought that criminals may accidentally reveal themselves because of a guilty conscience or a mistake made while committing a crime. He covers his worry up with a show of annoyance and leaves the conversation. Marian points out the contrast between Madame Fosco's past and her present personality, but her transformation seems complete and she now looks down on women like Marian, whom she used to have so much in common with.

Count Fosco says that epigrams such as "crime causes its own detection" and "murder will out" are simply phrases that are used to comfort people and to make up for the failings of the law and the police, which Count Fosco thinks are very inefficient systems of solving crime. Although the crimes which are solved are the ones which the public hear about, Count Fosco suggests that there are thousands of unsolved crimes which go undetected, and that the act of committing a crime is really a game of wits between the individual criminal and the police. When this individual is intelligent, the Count says, the police generally lose, and society never finds out about the criminal or his crimes.

Count Fosco does not have any faith in the legal or justice system. He believes that the police make a show of the crimes they do solve to distract the public from all the ones they do not, and to make the public feel safe. The Count believes that people are not really safe, as intelligent criminals do not get caught, and he hints that he himself is one of those intelligent criminals. It shows his confidence that he can even boast like this.

Sir Percival saunters back to the shed and agrees with Count Fosco, laughing at Marian and Laura's naivety. Marian admits that there is probably some truth in Count Fosco's opinions but thinks this is no reason for the two men to revel in this as though it is some sort of triumph. Count Fosco laughs good humoredly and says that Marian and Laura clearly understand virtue more than he does and may explain it to him. He, on the other hand, has spent time all over the world and knows that virtue is different depending on which country you are in. For example, in China ideas of virtue are very different to those in England.

Marian is not naïve and understands that the justice system does not always solve crimes. However, she is concerned that Count Fosco and Sir Percival feel this is a good thing, as it suggests that they want *the law to be ineffectual and that they are immoral people. Count Fosco does not believe he is immoral, but that morality is relative and depends on the culture and society one belongs to.*

Marian counters this by complaining that the Chinese government kills thousands of its own citizens, whereas as the English government does nothing of this sort. Count Fosco is amused by this. He says that the English are the quickest to blame others for faults but the slowest to see problems in their own society. There is just as much crime in England as there is anywhere else. In Britain, he says, criminals prosper and are helped by society while "Mr. Honesty" ends his days in the workhouse. Philanthropists in Britain want to help criminals but will not help the poor and, Count Fosco says, women are visited by the minister when they marry wealthy men for their money, even though this transaction is reminiscent of the "vilest of all human bargains."

Count Fosco believes that English society is hypocritical because it criticizes other cultures while denying its own flaws. This is also a veiled critique of British expansion and colonialism in the nineteenth century, which used criticisms of the morality of other cultures to justify invading new territories and imposing their own rule in foreign countries. Count Fosco claims that, under its veneer of propriety and moral righteousness, Britain is morally bankrupt and only cares about the appearance of respectability rather than the actual practice of moral behavior. For example, women are encouraged to marry for money in Britain because it is hard for them to earn their own wealth, and this is considered respectable even though he says it is essentially prostitution. Though these words are coming from a villainous character, they are a sharp criticism of many norms that Collins's readers would hold to.

Count Fosco, therefore, thinks it is a lie that British society abhors and prevents crime. He says that he cannot bear to lie but must rip off the "mask" and show the "bare bones beneath." With that, the Count excuses himself and gets up from the bench. He calls his white mice, which have been playing around them. Suddenly, he realizes that one of the mice is missing and becomes distraught. Laura and Marian—who have been appalled by the Count's cynical opinions about society—cannot help but laugh at the Count's overblown reaction to losing a mouse. Madame Fosco moves reproachfully out of the boathouse and the two young women follow.

Count Fosco uses a violent metaphor to suggest that he hates hypocrisy and feels he must expose it. This is contradicted by the Count's emotional reaction to losing one of his mice, which Marian and Laura view as contrived and false. At the same time, it's possible that he does have a genuine emotional connection to his mice—he does seem to like animals more than people, and he certainly treats people like animals to be "tamed."

Count Fosco locates the mouse under the seat. When he stands up, he is white and shaking, and he shouts for Sir Percival, who has wandered off again along the shore. Sir Percival rushes back and sees that the Count has found a small patch of dried blood under the seat. Laura is frightened by this and glances at Marian, but Marian tells her that it is only the blood of the dog that was killed by the groundskeeper.

Again, it seems strange that Count Fosco, who has spoken so knowledgeably about crime and violence, should be so shaken by a small, unexplained patch of blood. This suggests contradictions within his character, or that the Count is playing the role of someone who abhors violence—or perhaps he is afraid that his beloved mice have been hurt.

Laura wants to know if Marian tried to save the dog and Marian tells her what happened. Meanwhile, Sir Percival grows increasingly agitated and snaps at Marian to tell him whose dog it was. Marian, startled by Sir Percival's tone and anxious about the connection to Anne Catherick, feels pressured to tell the truth and admits that it was Mrs. Catherick's dog and that the housekeeper told her that Mrs. Catherick had been to the house.

Sir Percival is losing his ability to maintain his civil façade and is aggressive towards Marian. He seems to be under enormous amounts of strain, which makes him act out, but the other characters do not know why. He does not have the Count's self-control, and so is unable to keep up a pretense of civility.

Sir Percival flies into a rage at this and aggressively questions Marian. He is called off by Count Fosco, who places a hand on his shoulder and coaxes Sir Percival out of his temper. Count Fosco smoothly suggests that the most sensible thing to do would, of course, be to question the housekeeper. Sir Percival works to gain his composure, apologizes to Marian, and, following the Count's instruction, rushes back towards the house.

Sir Percival's behavior is inexplicable to Laura and Marian, as they do not know why he is so upset that Mrs. Catherick, supposedly his old friend, has visited. Count Fosco easily manipulates Sir Percival and gives him the idea to question the housekeeper to get information. This again suggests that Count Fosco is the more intelligent and practical of the two men.

Once Sir Percival has gone, the others begin to walk back more slowly. Count Fosco begins to interrogate Marian about Anne Catherick and, although Marian wishes to conceal information from the Count, it is difficult to do this because Laura also asks her questions, which Marian struggles to find a good reason not to answer. As the conversation progresses, Marian begins to suspect that the Count does not know Sir Percival's secret, or the reason that he is so desperate to locate Anne, and that he too is genuinely trying to get information from her.

Marian and Walter kept their dealings with Anne Catherick a secret from Laura. Marian, therefore, does not wish Laura to think that she is hiding something from her and must answer her questions even though Count Fosco is present, and she does not wish to tell him what she knows about Anne.

As the come up the drive to the house, they see that a horse is being saddled by a groom. Assuming the horse is for Sir Percival, Count Fosco asks the groom if this horse can run long distances and if it will be worn out by the journey. The groom replies that this horse can go as far as necessary and that Sir Percival uses a different horse for short trips. Marian wonders if Sir Percival plans to ride to Welmingham to question Mrs. Catherick.

Count Fosco manipulates the groom by asking an indirect question. Instead of asking where Sir Percival is going, which would show that he is interested in Sir Percival's affairs, he pretends to be interested in the wellbeing of the horse. This shows how naturally and skillfully the Count can conceal his true motives.

They find Sir Percival in the hall, preparing to leave. He says that he has suddenly been called away but wonders if Laura, Count Fosco, and Madame Fosco will join him briefly in the library on a business matter. He needs a quick signature on something and wishes the Foscos to be the witnesses. The group make their way into the library and leave Marian—almost frantic with anxiety—outside in the hall.

Sir Percival tries to make the business that he wishes to transact seem casual and insignificant; it only requires a moment of attention and can be carried out quickly before he leaves. This seems to contradict his earlier reluctance, though, and his extreme agitation. He lacks self-control, and so cannot manipulate people like the Count can.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 4

Marian is about to go upstairs to her room when Sir Percival emerges from the library and calls her back. He tells her that Count Fosco objects to the idea of he and his wife being the sole witnesses and would like Marian present as a witness instead of Madame Fosco. Marian follows him into the library and sees Laura behind the desk, looking anxious. The Count explains that his wife should not be a witness alongside him, as they are a couple and only share one opinion: his. Therefore, he feels it will be fairer if Marian is present. Madame Fosco, as though receiving orders from her husband, gets up and leaves the room.

Count Fosco puts on a show of extreme transparency. He claims that he wants to help Sir Percival carry out his business in a way that is as fair as possible to Laura and Marian, and invites Marian to be a witness so that she will not suspect that anything underhanded is taking place. This makes it difficult for Laura and Marian to question or criticize the Count's motives. Madame Fosco's abrupt departure shows the extent to which she is under her husband's control.

Sir Percival produces a parchment and sets it in front of Laura with the body of the text folded down, so that everything in the document is concealed except the blank space where Laura should sign. Count Fosco and Marian takes their place as witnesses behind her. Laura glances at the parchment and then asks timidly what it is she signs. Sir Percival irritably tells her that he has no time to explain—his horse and cart are saddled and waiting—and that she must sign and be done with it.

Sir Percival tries to pressure Laura into signing the document, even though she cannot read it or see what it is. He tries to make her feel that she is inconveniencing him by refusing to sign, as he is in a hurry. However, he is bad at pulling off this act, and so only draws more suspicion to himself.

Distressed by this, Laura asks again what she will be signing. Sir Percival snaps that women have no need to understand business matters. Laura protests that her old lawyer, Mr. Gilmore, always explained contracts to her and Sir Percival angrily retorts that Mr. Gilmore was her employee, while he, as her husband, does not have to explain himself. When Laura still refuses to sign, Sir Percival grows even more aggressive and shouts at Laura that she distrusts him. Count Fosco intervenes and tries to calm Sir Percival down, but he is adamant that Laura must sign.

Sir Percival tries to use his position of power over Laura, as a man and as her husband, to convince her that she must sign. He wants to make her feel that wives must unquestioningly obey their husbands. When she still refuses, he tries to make her feel guilty and suggests that she is a disloyal wife because she does not trust his intentions towards her.

Seeing Laura's distress, Marian tells Sir Percival that she cannot, in good conscience, be a witness if Laura is forced to sign something that she does not have any knowledge of. Sir Percival rebukes Marian for accepting his hospitality and then disrespecting him in his home. Marian jumps up, furious, and thinks that, if she was a man, she would fight Sir Percival. Restraining herself for Laura's sake, Marian sits down again.

Marian tries to assert some power over Sir Percival. She refuses to be a witness, which means that he will be unable to use the legal document even if Laura signs it. However, because Marian is physically weaker than Sir Percival, and lives in his house—which he may turn her out of whenever he wants—there is not much she can do to help her sister. Collins shows a great deal of sympathy for the frustration felt by women when placed in this position by society.

Count Fosco again tries to reign in Sir Percival's temper. Sir Percival blames Laura for aggravating him, and, when she asks him to treat her with some decency and explain the contract to her, Sir Percival scornfully declares that she has proved herself to be without decency when she married him. Marian does not understand this insult, and sees that the Count does not either, but Laura is insulted and storms from the room. Marian hears Count Fosco rebuke Sir Percival as she follows Laura from the library.

Sir Percival tries to place the responsibility for his temper onto Laura and suggests that she is a hypocrite for expecting him to treat her decently when she herself is not a decent or moral woman. Marian does not understand this, because she knows Laura is an honest person and has always been honest with Sir Percival about her feelings.

As they are about to leave, Count Fosco civilly calls the two women back. He asks Sir Percival, who is sulky and sullen now, if the signature must absolutely be acquired today. Sir Percival says no, but that he would prefer it today. Count Fosco asserts his superiority over Sir Percival and mockingly asks him if he has forgotten that his horse and cart wait for him outside. Grudgingly, Sir Percival agrees to leave and get the signature tomorrow. Count Fosco apologizes to the ladies for Sir Percival's behavior and Marian feels horribly and desperately aware of her reliance on the Count, as she is sure that Sir Percival would have sent her away from Blackwater if it were not for the Count's influence.

Count Fosco exposes Sir Percival and makes it obvious that he has tried to trick Laura. He reminds Sir Percival that his carriage is waiting outside, which Sir Percival seems to have forgotten, and this makes it clear that Sir Percival's journey is not as urgent as he pretended it was. As she and Laura can do nothing to protect themselves against Sir Percival's anger, Marian feels that their only ally is Count Fosco, who is able to calm Sir Percival down, but who she also does not trust.

Left alone and shaken by their experience, Laura and Marian discuss what has happened. Laura wonders where Sir Percival is going and if he plans to ride to Wellingham to interrogate Mrs. Catherick. Marian avoids this conversation and Laura confesses that she is mortified by her husband's treatment of Marian, and admits that this constant violence and ridicule reveal the true state of her marriage, which she can no longer conceal from her sister. They speculate on what might be in the document that Sir Percival wishes Laura to sign, and agree that it is likely to be a signature for a loan to borrow money in Laura's name to pay Sir Percival's debts. Marian decides to write to Mr. Kyrle—Mr. Gilmore's replacement and their new lawyer—for advice, as he is the only trustworthy friend that the women can think of to approach.

Laura reveals that she has not told Marian about Sir Percival's treatment of her because she is ashamed of how her husband abuses her. The women are in a desperate and lonely position, as the only person who might be able to help them is a stranger to them both, and will not necessarily be reliable.

Marian writes her note and hatches a plan with Laura to ensure that they receive their answer and advice from Mr. Kyrle before Sir Percival can demand Laura's signature again the next day. Marian attaches a note that asks the reply to be brought to them by a messenger, before the usual post, and that Laura should hide in the grounds until the messenger arrives so that Sir Percival cannot call her in to sign the contract. Laura asks why she cannot stay shut up in her room, and Marian replies that she is afraid of Count Fosco and dreads alerting him to their plan.

Marian feels that Sir Percival may try to trick Laura again, so she asks her to hide from him until advice has arrived from their lawyer. She is afraid that Count Fosco is working with Sir Percival and that if Laura is in the house, then Count Fosco will help Sir Percival trick her.

Marian heads downstairs and Marian puts her letter into the postbag, which hangs in the hall. Count Fosco and Madame Fosco are talking by the front door and Madame Fosco calls Marian over and encourages her to walk around the **fountain** with her. Marian is startled to find that Madame Fosco is talkative and confidential with her. She discusses Sir Percival's dreadful behavior and keeps Marian talking for a long time. Suddenly, she abruptly ends the conversation and drifts off, leaving Marian totally confused.

Madame Fosco's behavior is very suspicious and out of character. She seems to be playing a role as she talks to Marian in a new, friendly way and then, suddenly, returns to her normal uncommunicative manner as though she is following instructions to behave in a certain way for a short period of time. This suggests that she is supposed to be distracting Marian while the Count checks her mail.

Marian goes back into the house and finds Count Fosco putting a letter of his own into the postbag. He greets her sadly and walks out. Marian feels a strange impulse to check and reseal her own letter. When she takes it out of the bag, the seal pops open and Marian hurries back to her room to fix this. She tries not to think about why she has found the letter open in the bag.

Marian suspects that Count Fosco has read or interfered with her letter in some way. Although she reseals the letter, the fact that the letter is open in the post bag is worrying because, although it may have popped open itself, it also may mean that Count Fosco knows that she has written for help.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 5

That evening at dinner, Count Fosco is lively and entertaining. Marian remarks that she and Laura are almost as mesmerized by his stories as Madame Fosco is, and that women are unable to resist a man "who knows how to talk to them." After dinner, she and Laura take a walk through the plantation to the boathouse. It is a still, dreary evening, and a heavy mist hangs over the grounds.

Although women were not considered to be men's equals in conversation or intelligence in the nineteenth century, Collins undermines this idea by suggesting that women like to be spoken to like equals, which shows that they are just as capable of conversation as men are.

Once at the boathouse, Laura begins to tell Marian about her marriage. She is deeply ashamed and confesses that it has been humiliating to discover that her husband does not care about her. She tells Marian about a day in Rome when she felt affectionate towards Sir Percival and made an effort to connect with him.

Laura feels rejected and ashamed because of Sir Percival's cruelty towards her. Like many women who are abused by their husbands, she believes that his treatment of her is somehow her fault, even though, of course, it is not.

They were on a visit to a tomb which was built by a man to commemorate his wife. Laura asked Sir Percival if he would build her a tomb and he callously joked that, if he did, he would "build it with her own money." Seeing that this upset her, Sir Percival told her that she was hard work and told her to imagine that he had treated her lovingly and paid her compliments. This exchange hardened Laura's heart against Sir Percival and, after this, she never again prevented herself from thinking about Walter Hartright.

Laura feels especially rejected by Sir Percival because she has tried to make the effort to connect with him and he has responded sarcastically. He implies that he does not care about her but only cares about her money. His statement about building a tomb with her money is also very sinister because it suggests that Sir Percival may kill her himself.

Laura confesses that Sir Percival left her alone a lot during their honeymoon and that she often imagined what it would be like if she were with Walter instead. Marian begs Laura to be discreet. She is worried that they will be overheard, but Laura replies that Sir Percival knows everything, even Walter's name.

Laura sees that she will not succeed in making Sir Percival love her, so she abandons herself to memories of her true love: Walter.

She tells Marian that one day, when they were in Rome, they met a woman in a gallery who asked Laura if she liked drawing. Laura said that she used to, and the woman said that the best drawing master she ever had was a man named Walter Hartright. Laura tried to conceal her embarrassment, but she saw from Sir Percival's face that he understood everything. When they returned to their hotel room Sir Percival forced her down into a chair and announced that she had spared him the trouble of seeking out the name of her lover for himself and that now, Walter Hartright would be made to pay.

Sir Percival reveals that he never had kind intentions towards Laura and that his behavior at Limmeridge was all an act. Before their marriage, he pretended to admire her honesty when she told him that she loved another man, but now he reveals that he is secretly bitter and jealous and has planned to get revenge on Walter. This shows that he also has a possessive attitude toward Laura and sees her as one of his belongings.

Laura tells Marian that Sir Percival uses this knowledge against her every time they have a disagreement. Marian is heartbroken to hear Laura's story and regrets that she is the one who sent Walter Hartright away from Limmeridge "for the sake of Sir Percival Glyde."

Marian deeply regrets that she encouraged Walter to leave. She sees now that, despite their difference in class and wealth, Walter truly loved Laura and would have treated her far better than Sir Percival does.

Marian begins to cry, and Laura comforts her. After a long while they realized that it has almost grown dark and that they must walk back through the plantation to the house in the gloomy dusk. Just as they make up their minds to leave the boathouse, they see a figure—half concealed in the mist—travel along the bank past the boathouse and vanish into the plantation. They are frightened and cannot tell if the figure is a man or a woman.

This figure seems ghostly and mysterious in the dusk, which adds to Laura and Marian's apprehension about their safety at Blackwater, as well as the overall sinister mood of the book at this point.

Marian eventually convinces Laura to enter the plantation—where the mysterious figure has disappeared and which they must go through to reach the house—and the women cautiously begin their journey home, traveling as fast as they can. At one point, they hear a rustling behind them which sounds like footsteps, and they reach the house shaken by what has occurred.

It seems that the unknown figure is on the plantation with them and possibly even following and spying on them.

Marian tells Laura to go straight to her room and begins to make investigations to see if anyone is missing from the house—and if this might be the figure that they saw. She finds Count Fosco and Madame Fosco in the library and is convinced that they have not been out in the plantation, because Count Fosco questions Marian about where *she* has been. On her way to bed, she meets a servant who confirms that none of the maids have been away from the house, and Marian goes to bed wondering who the strange figure could be.

Marian demonstrates her intelligence and investigative abilities, using a similar technique to that used by Count Fosco when he questioned the groom about Sir Percival's horse. She asks the servants indirect questions about their activities that evening to find out where they were and if any of them could have been the mysterious figure.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 6

Marian spends a sleepless night regretting her decision to send Walter away from Limmeridge. When she rises the next morning, she hears that Laura has lost one of her favorite brooches and all of the servants have been sent out to search for it. Marian decides that—while everyone is distracted—this will be a good time for her to slip out and meet the messenger on the road, who has been ordered to carry a letter to her from her solicitor, Mr. Kyrle, in London. Before she sets out, Marian ensures that Count Fosco is in his sitting room—she hears him playing with his pet birds—and that Madame Fosco—whom she sees in the garden on her way out—does not plan to leave the house before lunch.

The lost brooch is a good distraction and allows Marian to slip out to meet the messenger. Again, Madame Fosco seems to be guarding the house as she remains outside where she can see people coming and going. Count Fosco playing with his birds also shows once more that he has a strange affinity for animals—he seems to genuinely enjoy their company, while he manipulates people like chess pieces.

Marian waits on a stretch of road some distance from the house, hidden between two high hedges on either side. The messenger pulls up on his way past and gives her the letter. Mr. Kyrle agrees that Laura should not sign the document produced by Sir Percival. He says it is most likely an agreement which allows creditors to take money from Laura's twenty thousand pounds to repay Sir Percival's debts. He advises that Laura should sign nothing without allowing Mr. Kyrle to look at the document first.

Mr. Kyrle's letter confirms Marian's suspicions about Sir Percival's intention. He plans to use Laura's money to pay for his own debts. This further supports her belief that Sir Percival has only married Laura for her money. How this all connects to the woman in white and Count Fosco's manipulations, however, is still a mystery.

Marian gives the letter back to the messenger and tells him to thank the person that sent it. Just as she is handing the letter back to him, Count Fosco appears suddenly on the road and sees Marian. The messenger drives off and Marian is horrified that her actions have been discovered. The Count, however, makes no reference to this. He simply says that he heard she was going for a walk and wished to join her. Almost rigid with fear, but striving to hide it, Marian takes his arm and allows him to lead her back to the house.

Marian suspects that Count Fosco is spying on her and has followed her to intercept the message from Mr. Kyrle. She believes that they are both putting on an act, as he pretends that he has bumped into her by accident and she pretends that she was just out for a walk—and also that she is not terrified of him. The nature of the women's imprisonment is especially sinister because on the surface all seems normal and well, as everyone still abides by social norms of politeness.

When they arrive back at Blackwater, they see that Sir Percival's cart is in the drive. They meet him in the hall, and he gruffly reminds them that Laura must meet him in the library that afternoon. Count Fosco takes Sir Percival aside to discuss business and Marian collapses on a sofa in the drawing room in a state of nervous exhaustion. A few minutes later, Count Fosco pokes his head around the door and tells Marian that Sir Percival has wisely decided to drop the issue of the signature for the time being. Marian falls back into a swoon after he has left, and sleeps on the settee.

Marian is physically drained by the stress of the situation she is in. It seems that Count Fosco has done Laura and Marian a favor, although Marian cannot distinguish the Count's motives for this and is too exhausted to try.

While dozing on the couch, Marian has a dream about Walter Hartright. She sees him lying on the steps of an ancient temple in the heart of the jungle and sees that the men around him are dying of disease. She begs him to come back. She sees him again trekking through the jungle, about to be attacked by men who lurk in the forest, and, again, she begs him to return. The third time she sees him in a storm at sea and sees him escape from a sinking wreck which kills all the other passengers. Finally, she sees him kneel beside a marble tomb and a woman in a veil rises out of the tomb and stands beside him.

Marian's dream reflects the dangers that Walter is likely to face in his expedition abroad. Stories about explorers and adventures into foreign lands were extremely popular at the time because of the general climate of colonialism and British expansionism. In her dream, Walter faces dangers that really did trouble colonies of British settlers abroad, such as tropical diseases and attacks by natives of the lands that they had invaded. Sea travel was also still extremely dangerous, especially on long voyages.

Marian is woken from her dream by Laura, who tells her that she has just come from speaking to Anne Catherick. The women rush to Marian's room and Laura tells Marian that she met Anne Catherick when she went to the boathouse to look for her brooch and that Anne had already found it there. Laura was struck by the likeness between Anne and herself. Anne told Laura that she is here to "atone" for the fact that she did not do more to stop Laura's wedding to Sir Percival, whom she seems to hate and speaks of with a vicious, mad expression.

Anne has clearly gone out of her way to find Laura and feels guilty for not doing more to stop Laura's wedding. Anne believes that Sir Percival is a dangerous individual because he once locked her in an asylum, and that he is now as much a danger to Laura as he is to her.

Anne told Laura that she did not do more at Limmeridge because she was afraid Sir Percival would put her in the madhouse again, but now she is not afraid because she is dying. She told Laura that the way to frighten Sir Percival is to learn his secret. Her mother, Mrs. Catherick, knows the secret, and she told Anne about it. Laura begged Anne to continue, but Anne seemed to hear something and rushed away into the plantation. She called back to Laura to meet her there at the same time the next day.

Anne is no longer afraid of Sir Percival because she knows she will die soon and has nothing to lose. However, she is worried that Sir Percival will find her before she has the chance to tell Laura his secret (if she knows it at all) and help Laura escape from him. This is perhaps why she rushes away when she thinks she may be caught.

Marian finds that Laura has not learned much more from Anne and plans to follow Laura the next day, to meet Anne herself. Leaving Laura alone, she goes to find out Count Fosco's whereabouts and is alarmed to hear he has gone for a walk with Sir Percival—something he never does. Marian is even more alarmed that evening, when Count Fosco and Sir Percival return home, because Sir Percival behaves civilly and kindly with Laura, the way he did when he courted her at Limmeridge. The Count too flatters Marian and is attentive to her all evening. Marian feels oppressed by the memory of her dream and senses that something terrible is about to happen. The Count seems to confirm her fears as she makes her way to bed; he tells her that change will come the next day.

Marian is concerned that Sir Percival and Count Fosco know about Anne's presence at Blackwater and that they have gone out to find her under the pretense of going for a walk. Their behavior at dinner seems calculating and overly attentive, which makes Marian afraid that they are now confident and cheerful because they have created a plan between then to subdue the women and prevent them from learning Sir Percival's secret or securing Laura's money.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 7

Sir Percival goes out early the next morning. Laura and Marian plan to keep their meeting with Anne Catherick and Laura sets out alone, while Marian prepares to follow her. After waiting a short time, Marian sets out into the plantation. While she is moving through it, she hears footsteps—they sound like a woman's followed by a man's—and tries to find the source. She cannot locate them and becomes confused and, eventually, without finding Laura or Anne, returns to the house.

This suggests that the women are being spied on and followed by the men in the house.

When Marian arrives back at the house, the housekeeper tells her that Sir Percival brought Laura back to the house not long ago. She says that they have had a huge argument and Sir Percival has fired Laura's maid, Fanny. He has given no reason for this, and Marian is concerned, as Fanny is one of the only people they can trust in the house.

Sir Percival's behavior seems irrational but also suggests that he wants to keep Anne and Laura from meeting. His dismissal of Fanny is more evidence that Sir Percival is isolating Laura from her friends and connections so that he can totally control her.

Marian runs to Laura's room and finds the door guarded by Margaret Poacher, a stupid, spiteful servant. Furious, Marian flies to the library and finds Sir Percival, Count Fosco, and Madame Fosco there. Marian tells Sir Percival that there are laws in England which prevent men keeping their wives as prisoners, and Sir Percival cautions her that he may lock her up too.

Although there were some laws that protected women from domestic abuse in the 1860s, the woman here are still relatively powerless since Sir Percival and Count Fosco have separated them from all their friends and prevented their communication with the outside world.

Madame Fosco suddenly announces that she will not stay in a house where ladies are mistreated—something Marian feels she would not do without her husband's permission—and Count Fosco enthusiastically agrees with her. Sir Percival is furious and confused, but he reluctantly agrees to free Laura, and Marian rushes to Laura's room to see if she is alright.

Madame Fosco makes a show of standing up for the rights of women, but Marian suspects that this is part of a ploy by Count Fosco—that he has put her up to this and that she does not really believe what she says (although perhaps she once did, before her marriage). This is tragically ironic, since she only makes her stand for women's rights at the command of her husband.

Laura is distressed but unharmed. She asks Marian why she has been set free and Marian says that, of course, Count Fosco has intervened. Laura replies in disgust that the Count is a spy and, just then, there is a knock on the door; Madame Fosco has come up to return Marian's handkerchief. When she opens the door, her face is white and livid, and Marian knows that she has overheard.

Laura agrees with Marian that Count Fosco has not intervened for their benefit but for some unknown reason of his own. Madame Fosco's dramatic reaction when she overhears Laura suggests either that she is horrified by this slander against her husband or that Laura has accidentally hit upon the truth.

Laura tells Marian that, when she arrived at the boathouse that morning, Anne was not there but had left a note for her buried in the sand. The note explained that Anne had been followed by a fat man—who must be Count Fosco—and that she dared not return to the spot. She wrote that she would tell Laura Sir Percival's secret at another time. Just as Laura was reading this, Sir Percival appeared behind her, confiscated the note, and dragged her back to the house, leaving bruises on her arms. All the way, he questioned her violently about the secret. When Fanny, Laura's maid, came upon them by accident as they entered the house, Sir Percival immediately dismissed her.

Count Fosco and Sir Percival seem to be working together against Laura and Marian, but it is unclear what Count Fosco wants with Anne. Sir Percival is driven to distraction by the idea that Laura might have learned his secret, and this provokes his violent treatment of her. It also causes his dismissal of Fanny, as he is worried that she has overheard them or that Laura may tell Fanny his secret.

Marian now tells Laura that she plans to write secretly to Mr. Kyrle and Mr. Fairlie for help. The bruises on Laura's arms are evidence of mistreatment that she will use to free Laura from her marriage. As they cannot use the postbag—which Count Fosco spies on—Marian will try to get the notes to Fanny in the village. She advises Laura to lock her door and then hurries out of the room.

If women were able to provide physical evidence of abuse (such as bruises), then the law could protect them against domestic abuse. However, because women did not have property rights or as many civil rights as their husbands, this law did not protect them from more subtle and coercive forms of abuse, such as imprisonment or exploitation, which their marriages could expose them to. Marian is now certain that Count Fosco intercepts her letters and knows that she must try to evade him if she writes again for help.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 8

Once in her room, Marian writes her two letters—one to Mr. Kyrle and one to Mr. Fairlie—imploring them to help her and Laura out of their terrible situation. She runs to Laura's room to show her the letters. Laura tells Marian to speak quietly because she has heard Madame Fosco's dress rustle outside her door. Marian plans to run to the village, where she will give the letters to Fanny, and be back before dinner. On the way out, she meets Madame Fosco and pretends to return indoors to dress for dinner. Seeing that the Countess has gone to her room to dress, Marian slips out again and makes for the village.

Marian and Laura must rely on the evidence of their senses to guess when they are being spied on. The rustle of Madame Fosco's dress outside Laura's door seems to prove that Madame Fosco is keeping tabs on them. Marian attempts to mislead Count Fosco and Madame Fosco as she pretends to go upstairs before she sneaks out, so that they will think she is in her room. The women are imprisoned, but must also keep up a façade of politeness and civility.

Marian reaches the Inn that Fanny is staying at and gives her the two letters. Fanny is distraught at being dismissed but Marian calms her enough to give her instructions on where to post the letters. When Marian arrives back at the house, Laura tells her that Sir Percival has been hammering on her door and demanding that she tell him all she knows about Anne Catherick.

Fanny is a dedicated servant to Laura and is devastated to have lost her place. Sir Percival's temper gets the better of him again, as he seems obsessed with finding out what Laura knows about him.

The group go downstairs for dinner. Marian notices that Count Fosco and Sir Percival are unusually sullen and quiet throughout the meal. As the women get up to leave the table, Sir Percival demands that Count Fosco remain with him to discuss a private matter. Count Fosco coldly and firmly refuses. In the drawing room, while they are having tea, Count Fosco brings in the postbag and deliberately holds it out to Marian to see if she has any letters to send. She declines and Marian notices that Madame Fosco rushes to make the tea. The Count plays the piano and talks with Marian about music—in a strangely sinister way—for a while before he leaves to discuss business with Sir Percival.

There is some tension between the two men, and it seems that they have had a disagreement. Sir Percival tries to exert his control over Count Fosco, but the Count makes it clear that he will decide when it is best for him and Sir Percival to talk. Count Fosco apparently knows that Marian has found a way to deliver letters without using the postbag, and offers her the bag to intimidate her.

Marian goes to Laura's room for a while. When she returns to the library, she sees that Madame Fosco looks flushed and breathless. Marian asks if she is unwell, and the Countess replies that she thinks Marian looks unwell too and rather pale. The Countess suggests that Marian should have had a walk before dinner to liven her up. Marian blames her paleness on a headache and retires early to bed.

Madame Fosco has clearly been out of the house and hurried to get back before she is noticed, implying that she has gone to intercept the letters that Marian took to the village. She hints at this when she pointedly remarks that Marian should have had a walk before dinner; it implies that she knows that Marian went to the village.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 9

Later that night, Marian leans out of the window of her bedroom to take in the warm evening air. She notices a red spark moving on the lawn, and another approaching it, and knows that one is Count Fosco's cigarette and that the other spark is Sir Percival's. She overhears the Count tell Sir Percival that they may now have their conversation—which Sir Percival has been pushing for all day—but that he wants to wait until Marian's light is out and then check the rooms to make sure she has not come downstairs to listen.

Count Fosco displays extreme self-control; a quality Sir Percival lacks. Although Sir Percival has tried all day to make Count Fosco submit to his will, Count Fosco controls the situation and only agrees to speak to Sir Percival when he is ready and feels the situation is right. Count Fosco believes Marian is capable of spying on them without being detected. This shows a level of respect for her bravery and ingenuity. Sir Percival, on the other hand, does not give Marian this credit and has not considered this possibility.

Marian knows that Count Fosco and Sir Percival usually sit out on the veranda on warm nights and she wishes to overhear their conversation. She puts out her candle—so that it looks like she is in bed—and puts on a dark cloak. She plans to climb out of her window, crawl along the veranda and listen to the men from above, even though she knows this will be dangerous and that she may be discovered.

Marian demonstrates her bravery and determination to protect her sister. She puts herself in danger to discover the intentions of Sir Percival and Count Fosco and, cleverly, thinks of a plan that they will never suspect. She also demonstrates the idea that crime is a "battle of wits" between the criminal and the detective, as Count Fosco described it. Marian here takes on the role of the detective and tries to foil a criminal plot.

Marian creeps down onto the roof and slides along to the space above the library doors where the men usually sit. She has to duck under Madame Fosco's window—the Countess is still not in bed—and hides anxiously under the sill. As she predicted, Count Fosco and Sir Percival sit down at the open doors to smoke and have their conversation.

If Marian is caught by Madame Fosco, she will be exposed to Sir Percival and Count Fosco and could be in real danger of being separated from Laura or even killed.

Count Fosco and Sir Percival discuss their financial affairs. They are both ruined and deeply in debt; the Count by several hundred pounds, Sir Percival by several thousand. Count Fosco reminds Sir Percival that his debts have been put off by three months but that after that time he will be in trouble. He also rebukes him for treating Marian like a brute, as he feels that she is a difficult woman to manage and must be tamed like an animal or treated with respect like a man. He tells Sir Percival that—because of his treatment of Marian and her sister—Marian has written again to her lawyer for help but that Count Fosco, luckily, intercepted the letters.

The full extent of Sir Percival's financial worries is here revealed to the reader. It is now clear that Sir Percival married Laura for her money in order to pay off his own debts, and that he needs access to her inheritance when she comes of age or else he will be ruined. Count Fosco respects Marian and, because she is intelligent, is afraid that she will try and foil their plans. His assertion that Marian must either be respected or tamed shows the binary way in which Count Fosco views gender; men are to be respected and women are to be tamed—unless they are clever enough to seem "like a man."

Sir Percival is furious and kicks over a chair, which muffles the startled sound Marian makes when she hears that Count Fosco has prevented her letters from being sent. Count Fosco then asks Sir Percival what money he expects to receive from Laura when Mr. Fairlie dies. Sir Percival says that, if Mr. Fairlie dies, he expects three thousand pounds a year as the income from Limmeridge House, but that this will not cover his debts and, besides, that Mr. Fairlie may not die soon and may marry and produce an heir before then.

It is clear that Sir Percival's debts are very severe and need to be paid urgently. He cannot afford to wait for Mr. Fairlie to die and must access the money as soon as possible. If Mr. Fairlie marries and has a son, this son will be heir to Limmeridge House rather than Laura, as property always automatically went to male relatives before female ones.

Count Fosco then asks Sir Percival what he will receive if Laura dies. Sir Percival is reluctant to discuss this but grudgingly tells Count Fosco that he will receive twenty thousand pounds and also reminds him that his own wife, Madame Fosco, will receive ten thousand. Count Fosco suggests that Sir Percival pay his debts in three months through Laura's death. At that moment, the light in Madame Fosco's window goes out.

Sir Percival and Count Fosco both stand to gain financially by Laura's death. If Madame Fosco receives her share of the money, Count Fosco will be in charge of it because of his dominance in the relationship. When the light goes out, it symbolizes the true darkness of Sir Percival and Count Fosco's plan, which Marian has so far only suspected.

As Marian crouches on the roof, listening in horror, it begins to rain. Count Fosco begins to press Sir Percival about Anne Catherick and the secret that she knows about him. Sir Percival refuses to tell him what this secret is. Count Fosco lets this go and makes a show of his great trust and respect for his friend by dropping the subject.

Count Fosco does not know Sir Percival's secret, so it seems the only person who can reveal it or threaten him with it is Anne.

Sir Percival confesses that he is utterly ruined if he cannot find Anne Catherick, and Count Fosco asks how Anne knows his secret. Sir Percival replies that she was told by her mother, Mrs. Catherick. Count Fosco asks if Mrs. Catherick is likely to tell anyone else, and Sir Percival answers that she will not because the secret is as shameful to her as it is to him. He is deeply concerned, though, that Anne Catherick might tell Laura the secret.

If Mrs. Catherick shares Sir Percival's secret, then her reputation will be ruined too. This suggests that she has been Sir Percival's accomplice in some way. Anne, however, has such a low social status as a poor, (supposedly) mentally ill woman that she has no reputation to worry about losing.

Count Fosco asks Sir Percival why he is so afraid; surely, he suggests, if the secret is scandalous to Sir Percival, then Laura will also wish to keep it hidden to protect her reputation as his wife. Sir Percival believes that this would normally be the case, except that Laura is in love with Walter Hartright and, he believes, would throw Sir Percival over for a chance to marry him. He feels Walter has plotted against him; helping Anne escape the asylum and then again at Limmeridge.

Count Fosco assumes that husbands have the power to make all wives as obedient as he has made his own. Wives were also considered partially responsible for their husband's behavior, so any ruin that fell on the husband would also fall on the wife. Sir Percival is clearly very paranoid and feels that people are plotting against him when, really, Walter's interaction with Anne and connection with Laura is just an accident.

Count Fosco says that they will dispose of Walter if he ever returns. He then asks Sir Percival what Anne Catherick looks like, as he saw Laura with a woman a few days ago, at the boathouse. Sir Percival says she looks very much like Laura, as if they are related, and Marian hears the Count jump up. Sir Percival asks him why he is laughing, and the Count tells him smoothly not to worry, and that he will hatch a plan that night which will free Sir Percival from his troubles. The two men go back inside and Marian, horrified by all she has heard, slinks back to her room.

Count Fosco demonstrates that he is an extremely ruthless and mercenary person, as he is willing to kill Walter, a stranger whom he has no reason to dislike, in order to protect his own interests in Sir Percival's crime. Although this decision may seem like loyalty to Sir Percival, Count Fosco is only thinking about the money he will receive from Laura and doesn't want this plan to be foiled by the revelation of Sir Percival's secret. Count Fosco's triumphant reaction to the likeness between Laura and Anne suggests that he has been struck by an idea—he has thought of a way to exploit this similarity between the two women for his own ends.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 10

Back in her room, Marian sits up the rest of the night frantically writing down everything that she heard. As the night wears on she begins to shiver, feel hot, and lose track of time. She soon realizes she is growing feverish and that she is going to be ill. The diary trails off into illegible scrawl and is taken up again with a "postscript by a sincere friend."

Marian grows too ill to write and to coherently describe what is going on around her. The postscript has clearly been written by someone else who has accessed her diary. This is ominous, as Marian's diary is private and she would not let anyone write in it or read it without permission.

The postscript is written by Count Fosco and congratulates Marian on the clarity and insightfulness of her diary—which he has read through. He laments that Marian is terribly ill and that he has tried to help the doctor who treats her, but that the doctor refuses his help: "miserable man!" He feels that Marian is so clever and impressive that, in different circumstances, they could have been lovers, but he regrets that her knowledge of his plans will not stop him from executing them.

Count Fosco has gained the upper hand over Marian and Laura, as he now knows everything that they do and all the plans they have made to escape. It is implied that Count Fosco tries to "help" the doctor in order to poison or sedate Marian, and the reader instinctively sides with the doctor, who seems to be protecting her (although this is later called into question, further complicating the issue of the Count's character). Count Fosco respects Marian's intellect, but it seems unlikely that he will let these feelings stand between him and his plan to secure Laura's money. The Count is clearly very confident that he will not be caught, and his intrusion into Marian's diary feels like a horrifying violation.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 2, CHAPTER 1

The next section of the narrative is a letter written by Mr. Fairlie, which he has been asked to write by Walter Hartright, and which details his interactions with Count Fosco and a visit he received from Laura's maid, Fanny. Mr. Fairlie feels very sorry for himself because he has been asked to write this letter—which is a terrible exertion for one in such poor health—and is deeply resentful that people will not leave him alone.

Mr. Fairlie's letter showcases his totally selfish personality and his failure to empathize with or care about anyone other than himself. Considering this, it is very unfortunate that he holds so much power over his nieces' fates simply because of societal norms.

Mr. Fairlie says that he cannot possibly remember dates but that he thinks Fanny visited him in June or July. He was busy surveying the artworks he collects—for the sake of the "barbarians" who surround him in the village—when his servant Louis announced that Fanny, Laura's maid, wished to see him and that she had a letter for him from Marian. Mr. Fairlie was very concerned that the girl's shoes would squeak and upset him, but he graciously agreed to see her, nonetheless.

The timing of events in the novel—particularly this period between June and July—is crucial as the plot continues. Although Mr. Fairlie is totally self-absorbed, he keeps up a pretense that his interest in culture is necessary to maintain artistic standards in the country. Of course, this is not true and his behavior benefits no one but himself. This is Collins's satirical criticism of members of the upper class who do not contribute to society at all, and who snobbishly consider themselves better than lower-class people because of their education while actually doing harm to others through their inaction.


When Fanny is shown in, she begins to cry, and Mr. Fairlie irritably asks Louis to step in and find out what she wants. He wishes the girl would not go into so much irrelevant detail but learns that she has been dismissed from Blackwater and was sent with a letter in her "bosom" from Marian. While resting at the Inn in the village—where she stayed the night after leaving Blackwater—she ordered a cup of tea and was terribly surprised when Madame Fosco suddenly burst into her room. Madame Fosco told her that Marian sent her with some messages which Marian forgot to give to Fanny. When she saw how upset Fanny was, Madame Fosco acted very kindly and made the tea for her. After drinking a cup, Fanny fell asleep and, when she woke up, Madame Fosco was gone and the letters she carried were crumpled.

Fanny describes the evening she was dismissed from Blackwater by Sir Percival; the same day that he caught Laura on her way to meet Anne Catherick. Fanny's account of events makes it clear that Count Fosco and Madame Fosco knew that Marian had gone to the village to give Fanny some letters. This is why Count Fosco deliberately brought Marian the postbag—to intimidate her—and why Madame Fosco made the tea in a hurry and looked flushed when Marian returned to the library later that evening; she was tired from her run back from the village. It is implied that Madame Fosco drugged Fanny and read her letters.



Mr. Fairlie takes Fanny's letter and unsympathetically dismisses the crying girl. After she leaves, he has a nap to recover. When he wakes up and reads Marian's letter, he becomes deeply indignant about the favors that married people expect from single ones. He feels that Marian has threatened him by suggesting terrible things will happen if he does not take his nieces back into his care and is deeply resentful of this. He requests that Marian come to Limmeridge to talk about the issue with him before he agrees to take his nieces back.

Rather than sympathizing with his niece or perceiving the danger that Marian and Laura are in, Mr. Fairlie relates the whole situation back to himself and the inconvenience it will cause him if he has to get involved. This furthers the portrayal of Mr. Fairlie as a useless member of the nobility who does nothing but live in comfort and ignore the suffering of others.

A few days later, Mr. Fairlie receives a concerned note from his lawyer, Mr. Kyrle, which says that the lawyer received an envelope addressed in Marian's hand-writing but which only had a blank sheet of paper in it. He believes the note has been tampered with. Mr. Fairlie ignores this and hopes that he will be left in peace. Five days after this he receives another visitor—this time, Count Fosco.

Madame Fosco has not only read Fanny's letters but has stolen them and replaced the notes inside them with blank sheets of paper.

Mr. Fairlie immediately assumes that Count Fosco has come to borrow money from him. Instead, Count Fosco has come to inform him that Marian is gravely ill. Mr. Fairlie takes a liking to the Count at first because the Count admires his artworks and is sympathetic towards his suffering. When Count Fosco tells Mr. Fairlie that Marian is ill with fever—after being out in the rain—Mr. Fairlie becomes utterly panicked at the possibility that he will be infected by it, and this distracts him from the interview.

Mr. Fairlie is greedy and obsessed with his own comfort and, therefore, thinks that everyone is trying to take this from him by trying to access his money. He is also slightly suspicious of Count Fosco because he is a foreigner. However, Mr. Fairlie and Count Fosco get along because they are both superficial and affect the false delicacy and refinement of aristocrats. Mr. Fairlie's aristocratic pretense masks his total selfishness while Count Fosco's masks his brutality.

Count Fosco goes on to say that Sir Percival Glyde and Laura do not get along and that he advises they separate for a short time. He asks Mr. Fairlie if Laura can stay at Limmeridge. Count Fosco is so insistent and Mr. Fairlie so desperate to get rid of him that, after some persuasion by the Count, he writes to Laura inviting her back to Limmeridge just to get rid of him. After the Count has gone, Mr. Fairlie bathes himself and orders everything in the room cleaned to protect himself from illness.

Count Fosco knows how to manipulate Mr. Fairlie, as he succeeds in manipulating everyone, and gets his own way. He now has a letter of proof that states that Laura will separate from her husband and return to Limmeridge.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 3, CHAPTER 1

The narrative is then taken up by Mrs. Michelson, who was the housekeeper at Blackwater park and who has been asked by Walter Hartright to write down what happened while Marian was ill and why Laura left Blackwater. She has been informed that her evidence may help uncover the truth of what occurred and—since she is the widow of a clergyman—Mrs. Michelson feels very strongly about truth as a virtue.

Mrs. Michelson is a slightly self-righteous and self-important woman who considers it her duty to tell the truth while she provides her evidence. This suggests that her narrative may be trusted, as it tells the truth as she sees it, but that it may also be biased, as it reflects only her slightly pompous perspective.

Although Mrs. Michelson cannot remember the exact dates, she states that one morning in June, Marian did not appear at breakfast as she usually did. When it got late and there was still no sign of her, a servant went up to check her room and found her pacing the floor in a confused and feverish state. The servant called for help and got her into bed and Count Fosco sent for the doctor. While he waited for the doctor's arrival, the Count prepared a medicine himself for Marian, but she refused to drink it.

The dates between the period of June and July will become crucial as the novel progresses. Mrs. Michelson believes that Marian is too feverish to drink the medicine Count Fosco prepares, not that Marian is afraid of the Count. Throughout the narrative, those who don't know Sir Percival and the Count give them the benefit of the doubt because of their rank.

The doctor, Mr. Dawson, also refused Count Fosco's help when he arrived to treat Marian. Mrs. Michelson observes that she is very fond of the Count because, although of noble birth, he took such an interest in the servants. She notes that he enquired about Fanny, the servant who Sir Percival dismissed, and wondered where she had gone. Sir Percival, on the other hand, Mrs. Michelson strongly disliked and found that he was stubborn and uncivil.

Mrs. Michelson is a conservative woman and admires members of the upper-class and nobility. She is taken in by the Count's façade of gentility and believes that his enquiries about the servants are genuine and a sign of his great refinement. She dislikes Sir Percival, though, because he is openly more brutal and less civilized than Count Fosco.

On the second day of Marian's illness, there was no improvement. As Mrs. Michelson was heading upstairs, after completing some chores, she saw Count Fosco arriving home from a walk. When he arrived, Sir Percival looked out from the library and asked the Count if he had "found her." The Count smiled but said nothing and Sir Percival, noticing Mrs. Michelson, rudely dismissed her. Count Fosco, however, called her back and informed her that he planned to send for a nurse from London to help take care of Marian, which Mrs. Michelson thought very generous.

Sir Percival refers to Anne Catherick when he asks if Count Fosco has "found her," and the Count's smile seems to suggest that he has. Again, Mrs. Michelson does not suspect any ulterior motive when Count Fosco makes a point of telling her about the nurse.

The next day, Marian remained much the same and Madame Fosco prepared to travel to London. Count Fosco took her to the station and returned the next day with the nurse, Mrs. Rubelle, a very quiet, foreign woman. Mrs. Michelson congratulates herself on her lack of prejudice towards foreigners—despite the "blinds errors" in their cultures—and notes that she was surprised that Laura did not want Mrs. Rubelle left alone with her sister. Although the doctor also objected to the Count's interference, Mrs. Michelson could see nothing to complain of in the way Mrs. Rubelle cared for Marian.

Mrs. Michelson's belief that she is not prejudiced is ironic, as she clearly believes that British culture is superior to other countries. Her attitude is condescending, and she feels that she does foreigners a favor by tolerating them despite their inferior backgrounds and cultures. It is also ironic that she believes Laura is prejudiced and does not suspect that Laura's distrust of Count Fosco may stem from anything other than this.

Count Fosco traveled to London for a week during Marian's illness. Even though Marian seemed to improve during this period, Madame Fosco confided in Mrs. Michelson that she did not trust the doctor, Mr. Dawson. She wrote to the Count every day; proof, Mrs. Michelson believes, of the ideal state of their marriage. On the third day of the Count's absence, Marian took a turn for the worse.

Mrs. Michelson is flattered by Madame Fosco's confidence in her. She does not suspect Madame Fosco of trying to turn her against the doctor. It is very ironic that Mrs. Michelson believes Count Fosco and Madame Fosco have an ideal marriage, as Madame Fosco is little more than a spy and a slave for the Count. This further critiques conventional nineteenth-century beliefs about gender and marriage, which suggested that a perfect marriage was one in which a wife was totally obedient to her husband. Collins shows that the reality of this is monstrous.

When Count Fosco returned he was horrified to discover that Marian's fever had turned into typhus. He was furious with Mr. Dawson. He hired a new doctor to get a second opinion. This doctor agreed with the Count that it was typhus and said that they would have to wait at least five days to see if Marian would recover. On the tenth day after this, Marian was declared out of danger. On the same day, Count Fosco had another huge argument with Mr. Dawson and sent him away from the house. Although Marian was not yet well, Sir Percival refused to hire another doctor.

It is unclear whether Count Fosco is genuinely concerned about Marian or whether he is trying to make her illness worse by dismissing Mr. Dawson. The doctor he brings in could be one of his conspirators, but it is left ambiguous at this point. Sir Percival seems to be in on this.

Later that day, Mrs. Michelson was summoned to Sir Percival's study where he informed her that he planned to dismiss all the servants—except her and Margaret Poacher—immediately. He said that he needed to save money and that, as soon as Marian could travel, himself, Marian, Laura, and Count Fosco, and Madame Fosco would leave Blackwater Park for the rest of the summer. Mrs. Michelson was horrified and tried to reason with Sir Percival, but he accused the servants of taking advantage of him and of wasting his money. Mrs. Michelson was insulted but, reluctant to leave Laura and Marian alone in the house with no help, carried out Sir Percival's orders.

Mrs. Michelson is confused by Sir Percival's sudden announcement and at his careless treatment of Laura and Marian, who will be left with almost no servants to help them. Although she is deeply offended by Sir Percival's attack on the servants, she feels pressured to stay for the sake of Laura and Marian. It seems likely that Sir Percival counts on her feeling this pressure and knows that, because of this, she will carry out his orders unquestioningly.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 3, CHAPTER 2

A couple of days after this, Sir Percival sent Mrs. Michelson to Torquay to look at houses. He said he wanted to rent one for a few weeks with Marian and Laura and gave Mrs. Michelson a list of peculiar instructions on the type of house she should choose. She felt that these instructions were almost impossible to follow but had no choice but to go. When she returned a few days later—having found no house that met Sir Percival's conditions—she found that Count Fosco and Madame Fosco had left Blackwater Park to stay in London.

The mission Mrs. Michelson is sent on seems to be an excuse to get her out of the house for a while. Although she does not explicitly suspect this, Mrs. Michelson feels that she has been set up to fail in her search for a house that matches Sir Percival's description.

On her return, Mrs. Michelson went to check on Laura, who was waited on by Margaret Poacher. Mrs. Michelson and Laura decided to visit Marian's room together but, on the way, were stopped by Sir Percival, who told them that Marian had gone to London with Count Fosco and Madame Fosco. Laura was horrified by this news and rushed to check Marian's room, which was empty. She begged Mrs. Michelson not to leave her and then ran after Sir Percival and demanded to know where her sister had gone. He told her that Marian would stop in London overnight on her way to Limmeridge, where she would to speak with Mr. Fairlie, as he had requested in his letter.

Sir Percival uses the letter from Mr. Fairlie (which invites Marian to Limmeridge to speak with him and tells Laura that she may travel to Limmeridge whenever she likes) as proof to support his decision to send Marian away. Mrs. Michelson is very shocked by this because Marian is clearly too ill to travel comfortably. She has not yet internalized the idea that Sir Percival and Count actively mean harm to Laura and Marian.

Laura followed Sir Percival to his study and dragged Mrs. Michelson along with her. She insisted that she must follow her sister and Sir Percival told her that she could leave the next day, travel to London in the morning, and meet Count Fosco there. She will spend the night in his house, then travel to Limmeridge the next day, just as Marian has done. He showed her a note from Mr. Fairlie inviting her to Limmeridge whenever she wanted. Laura was utterly horrified at the idea of Marian staying in Count Fosco's house and Mrs. Michelson, again, attributes this to Laura's hatred of foreigners.

Again, Sir Percival uses the letter that Count Fosco persuaded Mr. Fairlie to write to convince Laura that she will be sent back to her uncle's house. Laura is terrified of Count Fosco and is horrified at the prospect that Marian is with him alone and in his power. Again Mrs. Michelson naively believes that Laura is prejudiced against Italians.

Mrs. Michelson took Laura back to her room, where Laura remained adamant that she would not sleep in Count Fosco's house. She learned from Mrs. Michelson that Count Fosco had dismissed Mr. Dawson and felt that this was part of the conspiracy, as, had Mr. Dawson been present, he would not have allowed Marian to travel. Laura planned to escape Count Fosco in London and to stay with Mrs. Vesey instead. She begged Mrs. Michelson to deliver a letter to Mrs. Vesey for her at the village and pleaded with her to keep it secret.

Mrs. Michelson is stunned and confused by Laura's discussion of conspiracy and her refusal to stay with Count Fosco, but she feels sorry for her and agrees to do as she says.

Mrs. Michelson carried out Laura's wishes and the next day escorted her to the station. Laura complained that she was "troubled by dreams" the night before and looked pale as they waited on the platform. When the train pulled in, she said goodbye to Mrs. Michelson and, for a moment, put her hand to her heart as though in pain. Mrs. Michelson saw her into a carriage and returned to Blackwater, very concerned about Laura's state of mind.

When Laura places her hand on her heart, it misdirects the reader, leading them to believe that Laura has something wrong with her heart—when it is Anne who is dying of heart disease. This adds to the confusion over the women's identities. It also implies a physical connection between the women, and even hints that Laura may at times feel what Anne is feeling.

Back at Blackwater, Mrs. Michelson felt restless and walked in the grounds to clear her head. She was shocked to see Mrs. Rubelle in the garden, as she believed that Mrs. Rubelle had gone to London with Marian. Mrs. Michelson approached her for an explanation and Mrs. Rubelle casually informed her that neither she nor Marian had left Blackwater Park. Sir Percival arrived home at that moment and told Mrs. Michelson that Mrs. Rubelle was quite right; instead of traveling to London, Marian had been concealed in a separate wing of the house. Mrs. Michelson was aghast at the deception practiced on Laura and tried to resign, but Sir Percival protested that he only lied for Laura's own good—to force her away from Blackwater for a change of air for the sake of her health.

Mrs. Michelson is horrified to discover that Sir Percival has tricked her and Laura, and is shocked by the casual and open way in which he admits the deception. Although Sir Percival provides an explanation as to why he sent Laura away, it is not a very convincing one. Mr. Michelson continues to be shocked that a supposedly "noble" man would act this way.

Mrs. Michelson still wished to resign but changed her mind when Sir Percival told her that, if she did, Marian would be left all alone, as Mrs. Rubelle planned to leave that day. Mrs. Michelson went to Marian's room and sent for Mr. Dawson, who was unwell himself and could not come. In the middle of the night, she heard Sir Percival crashing around the house and thought that he must be drunk. The groom—whom Sir Percival knocked down in his hurry to saddle a horse—told her that Sir Percival was not drunk but had left Blackwater Park in a frenzy.

Again, Mrs. Michelson only remains in Sir Percival's service because she is worried about leaving Marian. Sir Percival essentially threatens her into staying as he implies that he will leave Marian, who is still very ill, to fend for herself if Mrs. Michelson does not agree to stay. It seems that in the night Sir Percival hears something that upsets him and causes him to leave in a rage.

Marian was distraught when she discovered that Laura had gone. Mrs. Michelson spent the remainder of her time at Blackwater caring for Marian until Marian left for Limmeridge. Mrs. Michelson closes her narrative by stating that she believes that Count Fosco is totally innocent of the deceptions practiced on Laura and Marian, and that she is sorry she cannot remember the exact date of Laura's journey to London.

Mrs. Michelson is still utterly convinced by Count Fosco's appearance of gentility and refinement. It is easier for her to believe bad things about Sir Percival because he does not put on such a convincing act. Mrs. Michelson's inability to remember the date of Laura's journey to London is a central problem in the narrative.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 4, CHAPTER 1

The next section of the narrative is a transcript of the testament of Hester Pinhorn, who worked for Count Fosco as a cook in his house in London. She was taken into his service in the summer and, a couple of days after Count Fosco and Madame Fosco arrived in London, was told that his niece was coming to stay and that she was unwell. Shortly after his niece arrived, the doctor had to be called because the Count's niece had a fit.

The narrative continues to present more "evidence" in the form of testimonies from various characters. Hester is hired around the time of Laura's journey to London. A young woman is clearly brought to the Count's house and introduced to the servants as his niece.

The doctor, Mr. Goodricke, was called and discovered that the lady suffered from heart disease which was very advanced. Count Fosco, on hearing this, began to weep and cry out, "Poor Lady Glyde!" The cook thought he was very sweet as he gathered flowers for Lady Glyde's sick room. Lady Glyde spent a troubled night but seemed to recover slightly the next day. At five o'clock, however, she collapsed again and, when the doctor arrived, he pronounced her dead.

Count Fosco refers to this woman as Lady Glyde, or Laura. However, Anne Catherick told Laura that she is dying and, as the woman look so similar, it is difficult to tell which is which. Count Fosco makes a point of calling the young woman Lady Glyde in front of the servants and the doctor so that they believe that's who she is.

Count Fosco appeared to be devastated by Lady Glyde's death, and Madame Fosco was left to arrange the funeral. Hester heard that Lady Glyde was to be buried in Cumberland, in the family tomb, with her mother. She concludes her narrative by answering three questions which have been put to her. She answers that she never saw the Count give Lady Glyde any medicine, that she never knew the Count to be alone with Lady Glyde, and that she did not know what had given Lady Glyde a fright or caused her to fall into a swoon.

Hester seems to confirm that Count Fosco has not had a direct hand in the young woman's death. He has not given her anything which might have been poisoned her, and he was not left alone with her where he could interfere with her in some way. Her death seems to have genuinely been caused by a weak heart, which gave out when she received a shock.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 4, CHAPTER 2

The doctor, Mr. Goodricke, who attended Lady Glyde during her last illness and death, provides the death certificate, which he signed. He confirms that Lady Glyde had recently turned twenty-one and that she died on the 5th of July 1850, from an aneurism.

The doctor has made up the death certificate from the information he received from Count Fosco; that the young woman who died in his house was Laura, or Lady Glyde.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 4, CHAPTER 3

Jane Gould confirms that she was sent by Mr. Goodricke to oversee the collection of the body. She found the body of Lady Glyde being watched over by Hester Pinhorne and, later, saw the body placed into the coffin.

Jane Gould confirms that the body has been disposed of legally, and this process was overseen by a servant or a doctor at all times. Count Fosco makes sure everything looks official and innocent.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 4, CHAPTER 4

The tombstone in the graveyard at Limmeridge bears an inscription which confirms that Laura Fairlie, married to Sir Percival Glyde, is buried in the tomb. It states that she died on July 5, 1850.

The inscription on the tombstone corroborates Count Fosco's word; that Laura died in his house. It also gives the date of her death.

THE SECOND EPOCH: PART 4, CHAPTER 5

The narrative now continues through the testimony of Walter Hartright. Walter states that he has returned from his journey to America. Many of his companions died of tropical diseases or were killed by the Native tribes they encountered, and, on the way home, he was shipwrecked and almost drowned. He arrives home in London in October 1850 and goes immediately to visit his mother and sister in Hampstead. He can tell, as soon as he arrives at their house, that they have bad news and his mother implores him to be strong while she breaks it.

Walter's account of his voyage corresponds with Marian's prophetic dream in which she saw him escape disease, ambush, and, finally, shipwreck. His mother tells him of Laura's death and has clearly been informed by Walter of his feelings for Laura.

Three days after learning of Laura's death, Walter travels to Limmeridge to visit her grave, as he hopes that this will bring him some comfort. He finds himself in the churchyard at Limmeridge, which holds so many memories of his time with Laura, and breaks down weeping, kneeling on her grave, as he tries to read the inscription on her tomb.

The inscription on the tomb, which includes Laura's name and date of death, brings home the reality of her death to Walter. This suggests the importance of evidence or material records in determining truth.

As he kneels there, Walter hears footsteps approaching and looks up to see two women. He recognizes one as Marian—although she looks ill and frightened—and the other has her face covered with a veil. Walter rises. The woman in the veil approaches him and Marian falls to her knees and cries, "My dream, my dream!" As the veiled woman reaches his side, Walter recognizes her eyes through the veil and her voice. She speaks the final, parting words that Laura said to him, and Walter knows, beyond a doubt, that Laura is not in the grave but standing directly before him.

Marian remembers her dream and realizes that it has come true when she sees Laura standing beside Walter at the graveside. Even though the evidence before him on the grave says that Laura is dead, Walter knows it is her because of the words she speaks and his own memory. This suggests that even when evidence seems concrete and to reflect truth, this may not necessarily be the case.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 1

Walter narrates the next section of the story. He now lives in London and rents the second floor flat above a "newsvendor's shop" with two women who pretend to be his sisters. One is Marian and the other is Laura, who is publicly and legally believed to be dead. The public also believe that Walter and Marian have helped Anne Catherick escape from the asylum a second time. Although, Walter acknowledges, Laura strongly resembles Anne, he knew as soon as he saw her that this was the real Laura—the woman he loves—and he remains devoted to her although she has been stripped of her social position, fortune, and even her name.

The fact that people believe that Marian and Walter have helped Anne escape from the asylum suggests that, at some point, Laura must have ended up in the asylum disguised as Anne and that it is Laura they have really helped escape. Walter knows Laura on a deep personal level and recognizes her true self, beneath the public veneer of her social status and her name as the heiress of Limmeridge, and this is why he can tell who she is despite the superficial evidence of her death.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 2

Walter begins by telling the story of Marian and Laura and how they found each other after Sir Percival and Count Fosco split them up. Marian returned to Limmeridge, after recovering from her illness at Blackwater, but grief-stricken by news of Laura's death. Count Fosco stayed at Limmeridge for Laura's funeral and wrote to Mr. Fairlie while he was there. In these notes, Count Fosco told Mr. Fairlie that Anne Catherick had been found and returned to the asylum. The note also warned Mr. Fairlie that Anne Catherick now maintained a delusional fantasy that she was his niece, called herself Lady Glyde, and that she might send letters to the family of Lady Glyde in her insanity.

At first Marian, like everyone else, believes that Laura is dead. She has no reason to question this, as there are so many witnesses and there is so much evidence to confirm it. Count Fosco takes the precaution of warning Mr. Fairlie that Anne may try to impersonate Laura. If Laura is not really dead and tries to return, everyone will believe she is Anne and will accept that Anne is capable of this because of her history of mental illness.

Shortly after she comes back to Limmeridge, Marian falls ill again. When she recovers, she tries to find out about Sir Percival, Count Fosco, and Mrs. Rubelle. She hires someone to spy on the Count's house in London and on Mrs. Rubelle, but discovers nothing, and hears that Sir Percival now lives in Paris. Thwarted, Marian decides to go to the asylum that Anne Catherick is confined in.

Marian suspects that all is not what is seems and feels that there may have been suspicious circumstances in her sister's death. If Anne has been returned to the asylum, it is likely that Sir Percival or Count Fosco put her there and she may know something of the men's behavior.

She is shown into the establishment and learns that Anne is in the garden. Anne is pointed out to her by a nurse and, when Marian approaches, the woman flings herself into Marian's arms. Marian instantly knows that this woman is Laura; her sister whom she believed to be dead. Marian is in shock for several moments but soon recovers and assures the nurse that she does not need help. Instead, she takes Laura a short distance into the garden, away from the nurse, to speak to her more privately.

Like Walter, Marian knows Laura so intimately that she cannot be fooled by the superficial evidence that points to her sister's death. The nurse is worried that Anne is attacking Marian, and asks if Marian needs help.

Laura calms down when she realizes that Marian recognizes her. Returning to the nurse, Marian gives her some money and asks her to arrange a time when Marian and "Anne Catherick" can meet privately. The nurse reluctantly agrees to allow them to meet the next day and to cover for them with the other staff. Marian does not think that Laura can withstand much more time in the asylum, and she plans to free her sister as soon as possible.

Marian bribes the nurse. She can tell that Laura has been profoundly affected by her time in the asylum and is worried that she will really go mad if left there much longer. This shows how counterproductive asylums were at this time—they could drive even a sane person mad.

Marian visits her stockbroker and withdraws all of her savings. She takes this money with her to the asylum, prepared to bribe the nurse if necessary. After speaking to the nurse for a short while, Marian learns that the nurse is saving up to get married and that she will be dismissed if Laura goes missing. Marian, therefore, decides to give the woman several hundred pounds to pay for her wedding if she helps Laura to escape. The nurse promises to help her the next morning and Marian returns to the asylum the next day at ten am.

Marian is extremely clever and good at manipulating people. She uses the information she learns about the nurse to persuade her to help. This supports Count Fosco's belief that he and Marian are alike. However, Marian's behavior is well-intentioned (she helps both her sister and the nurse) and is therefore morally defensible, while the Count manipulates people for his own gain.

Marian and the nurse concoct a plan to distract the authorities after Laura goes missing from the asylum. The nurse is to casually drop into conversation with the other nurses that Anne Catherick has been asking for directions to Hampshire, where Blackwater Park is situated. This way, when the police attempt to follow her, they will likely go in the wrong direction. The nurse brings some of her own clothes to disguise Laura, and Marian is able to free her sister and catch a train with her to Carlisle, in the direction of Limmeridge.

Again, this is a very clever plan devised by Marian, as it misleads the police and gives her and Laura time to escape. The characters frequently travel by rail throughout the novel, and cover distances in short periods of time. The rail networks across Britain were a revolution to the Victorians and allowed them to travel frequently and easily for business and leisure. The effects of this led to the development of commerce and allowed middle-class and poor people to go on holiday, often for the first time.

On the train to Carlisle, and during their first few days at Limmeridge, Laura tells Marian the story of what has happened to her. Unfortunately, like Mrs. Michelson, Laura does not remember the date that she traveled to London and met Count Fosco. He met her on the platform when she arrived, and she immediately asked about Marian. The Count told her that Marian was still at his house—she had decided to rest before journeying to Limmeridge—and the pair got in a carriage together.

The date on Laura's death certificate really reflects the date of Anne's death. If Laura could remember the date she traveled to London, and if she traveled after the date of Anne's death, this would prove that Laura is not dead, as Mrs. Michelson would be able to confirm her story.

They arrived at a house somewhere in London and Count Fosco showed Laura into an upstairs room. He told her that Marian could not see her for the moment and returned with a foreign gentleman. He did not introduce Laura to this man and, soon, the Count returned with a second man who began to ask Laura questions.

This is very suspicious and confuses Laura, who is totally powerless in this situation.

After this had gone on for some time, Laura grew panicked and felt faint. Count Fosco summoned a servant with a jar of smelling salts, and this is the last point in her journey to the asylum which Laura remembers clearly. She is adamant that she slept at Mrs. Vesey's house with Mrs. Rubelle and then woke up the next day in the asylum. The nurses there showed her the tags on her clothes, which had Anne Catherick's name written on them, and told her that she could not be Lady Glyde because Lady Glyde was dead.

Count Fosco sedates Laura in order to control her. Laura had intended to escape to Mrs. Vesey's house, and this has possibly given her a false memory. Laura then wakes up in an extremely confusing and stressful situation—in the asylum, being told she is someone else. She has been dressed in Anne's clothes, which Count Fosco obviously had because Anne died in his house. The nurses believe that Anne is delusional and so do not believe her protests.


Marian is able to work out from Laura's story that she was taken into the asylum on the 27th of July and that she was formally identified there as Anne Catherick. Marian notes that her sister is much changed by the experience, and that she is extremely mentally fragile. When they arrive at Limmeridge, she decides to approach Mr. Fairlie the next day, with the news about Laura, rather than that evening.

Although they can work out the date that Laura arrived at the asylum, they cannot prove the date on which she traveled to London, as Laura does not remember how many days she was in London after she got off the train.

When Marian tries to present Laura to Mr. Fairlie the next morning, she is aghast to find that he coldly rejects Laura. He says that he has been warned by Count Fosco about an imposter who pretends to be Laura and that he is fully convinced that the real Laura is dead. He demands that Laura leave Limmeridge House.

Mr. Fairlie is a shallow person and obsessed with aesthetics and appearances. He is also very lazy, and therefore has no desire to look beneath the surface appearance of things. Instead, he blindly accepts Count Fosco's word.

Laura is so like Anne Catherick already, and looks so tired and ill after her ordeal, that even the servants at Limmeridge do not recognize her. The pair decide that they must head back to London because the authorities will no doubt look for Laura at Limmeridge—believing her to be Anne Catherick. Before they go, Laura wishes to visit her mother's grave. They make their way to the churchyard, where they unexpectedly meet Walter Hartright.

Laura has essentially been turned into Anne in the eyes of the people around her. As no one believes that she is Laura, she cannot prove who she is and is rejected as an imposter. This suggests that, while inner identity is recognizable to those who know one best, identity as it is perceived by the rest of the world is mutable and can change based on public opinion and belief.


THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 3

Walter draws two conclusions from Laura and Marian's story. The first is that Count Fosco has switched the women's identities; he took Anne Catherick to his house, where she died, under Laura's name, and he placed Laura in the asylum under Anne's. Walter also understands that Sir Percival and Count Fosco have been financially rewarded for their crimes and that they have received Laura's inheritance; Sir Percival gained twenty thousand pounds while Count Fosco has gained ten thousand.

Walter, who knows Laura on a close personal level and therefore believes her story, immediately understands the plot that has been carried out against her. He also understands that Count Fosco and Sir Percival have plotted this between them and that they have both benefited from faking Laura's death and cruelly locking her in the asylum.

Walter has chosen a flat for himself, Laura, and Marian in a very poor part of London and has taken lowly and meagerly paid work as a wood engraver where no one will recognize him. Marian and Laura are confined to the house—in case Count Fosco or Sir Percival's men spy on them—and Marian must do the housework herself because they cannot hire a servant and allow a stranger to work among them. This is a blow to Marian's pride as a lady of rank, but she takes it very well, and Walter views this as a testament to her strength and capability.

This suggests that poor, lower-class members of society can be anonymous because they are nameless and have no public reputation to uphold or which might draw attention to them. This is usually a negative thing—as they have less power because they are hardly recognized as individuals—but here it is used to help the characters hide and keep themselves safe.

Meanwhile, Walter and Marian must be extremely careful in their care of Laura. They keep her comfortable and protected from shocks, and Walter encourages her to take up her drawing, which soothes her and reminds her of happy times spent at the **summer house** at Limmeridge. Her time spent in the asylum has severely disturbed her, and in her weakened state, she now looks more like Anne Catherick than ever. For this reason, Walter does not believe that there is any hope of convincing Mr. Fairlie or any of Laura's old friends and relatives that she alive without some proof. He decides to begin compiling evidence and plans to take Laura's case to Mr. Kyrle, the lawyer, for legal advice.

Their happy memories of Limmeridge are a connection that Walter and Laura share even when Laura is still in shock and recovering from her ordeal. It signifies the enduring strength of the love between them. As Laura has received the same brutal and undignified treatment that Anne received, being held captive in the asylum, she has started to look like Anne and, like Anne, has become ill with the strain. Again, this suggests many flaws in the care of mentally ill people.

Walter first copies out the relevant sections of Marian's diary, which document her time spent at Blackwater. Next, he visits Mrs. Vesey to find out if Laura stayed with her on her way to the asylum as she believes she did. Mrs. Vesey has a letter from Laura asking if she might stay the night but Laura herself never appeared, and the letter does not have a date on it to confirm exactly when Laura traveled to London. Walter also contacts Mrs. Michelson, the housekeeper at Blackwater for her story, and Mr. Goodricke, Hester Pinhorn, and Jane Gould for their take on events. With this evidence secured, Walter arranges an appointment with the lawyer, Mr. Kyrle, and sets out for Mr. Kyrle's office. He warns Marian not to leave the house while he is out, even if he does not return, because he is worried that Sir Percival may be back in London and may be spying on them.

Walter believes that if he can compile enough evidence, he will be able to take Laura's case before a court to give her a fair trial and seek justice against Count Fosco and Sir Percival. Mrs. Vesey confirms that Laura's memory of staying at her house is false. This passage gives the reader of an idea of when and how Walter compiled the written evidence from the other characters, which they have already read.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 4

Walter arrives safely at the law firm and is shown into Mr. Kyrle's office. Mr. Kyrle listens amazedly to Walter's case and at first seems not to believe him. After asking Walter some questions, Mr. Kyrle's doubts seem somewhat appeased but he is still adamant that Walter does not have enough for a legal case.

Mr. Kyrle is a skeptical man and relies primarily on evidence and facts to confirm what he believes. Since Walter does not have enough of these to convince him, Mr. Kyrle knows that Walter will never get his case approved in court because the legal system also relies on evidence.

Mr. Kyrle makes it clear to Walter that, besides his lack of proof, there is too much evidence against him for a trial. There is, on the other hand, mountains of official evidence which "proves" that Laura is dead: her medical certificate, her death certificate, even the inscription on her tomb. All he has to go on, besides this, is the word of a woman whom almost everyone believes to be Anne Catherick, whom they know to have been mad and escaped from an asylum. Mr. Kyrle argues that "an English jury" will never side with Walter's case if there is so much "surface" evidence to contradict what he says. Besides this, Mr. Kyrle points out, a legal case against Sir Percival would be extremely expensive and Sir Percival could afford to hire the best legal advice.

Although Walter is telling the truth, his case is contradicted by too much evidence to be taken seriously. This showcases the limitations of the law and a worldview which is based in evidence and facts alone. It allows people to accept the most straightforward version of events, rather than looking below the surface to find out possible deceits. It also suggests that the law is biased against poor or vulnerable members of society like Anne, as they are considered unreliable and cannot afford legal representation. Sir Percival, on the other hand, is considered extremely reliable because of his reputation and because he can afford legal help. This is not evidence of his virtue, but only of his wealth and the fact that the law can be bribed.

Mr. Kyrle thinks that a case may be possible if Walter can prove the date that Laura traveled to London. If it is after the date on the death certificate, then this will prove that it was Anne Catherick who died and not Laura. Walter at present has no way of finding this date.

The whole case hinges on the date. If the date can be found out, and if it is after the date of Anne's death on the 25th of July, it will prove that Laura could not have died in Count Fosco's house because she was not yet in London.

Disheartened and certain that the lawyer does not believe his story, Walter makes to leave, and Mr. Kyrle asks if he will deliver a letter that he received for Marian. Walter takes the letter and asks Mr. Kyrle if he has heard anything of Sir Percival. Mr. Kyrle thinks that he is back in London. Walter's suspicions of this are confirmed when he leaves the lawyer's office and is followed by the same men who tailed him before he left for America. He takes a long, confusing route home and manages to shake the men.

Sir Percival is still spying on Walter and obviously knows that Laura has been broken out of the asylum. Sir Percival clearly suspects Walter's involvement in this—he already hated Walter because of Laura's love for him.

The letter that Walter carries home for Marian is from Count Fosco. It warns Marian—in flowery language—to remain where she is, in hiding. He says that nothing will happen to her, as long as she does not continue with what she has started and as long as she has nothing to do with Walter Hartright, if he returns to London. The Count warns that, if he ever meets Walter, he will be forced to take drastic action, and that he is in control of Sir Percival and can make this gentleman act on his behalf.

Count Fosco's flowery prose supports his use of façade to hide his true, vicious character. Just as he presents a veneer of sensitivity and refinement to the world, Count Fosco uses pretty language to disguise the implicit threat in his words. The Count does not seem to know that Walter is in London or that Sir Percival has Walter followed.

Marian is enraged by Count Fosco's threatening and manipulative tone and makes Walter promise that, if he ever has the chance to kill Sir Percival or Count Fosco, to make sure that it is the Count he kills. Walter tells Marian that he is resolved to continue to uncover the truth for Laura; he will no longer rely on others, like Mr. Kyrle, but will "act for" himself.

Marian recognizes how dangerous the Count is, so she wants him dead more than Sir Percival. Their strange connection leads her to hate the Count especially, even as she also respects him. Walter's decision to act for himself is an early prototype of the fictional private detective who works alone. It also supports Collins's belief in the power of the "self-made" man who uses his own initiative to succeed rather than relying on others.

Walter plans to question Mr. Dawson, the doctor who attended Marian during her illness at Blackwater, to see if he knows the exact date that Laura left for London. He also plans to ask around in the village to see if anyone knows the date when Sir Percival left for London in the night, as discussed in Mrs. Michelson's testament. If this course of action fails, he intends to track down Sir Percival's secret because he knows that Sir Percival would be ruined if the secret was widely known.

Walter knows that Laura left Blackwater for London on the same day that Sir Percival left in the middle of the night. He thinks this may be a way of discovering the date of Laura's journey. If he cannot find this out, he intends to find out Sir Percival's secret in order to blackmail him. The novel here takes on its definitive form as a "battle of wits" between the individual detective (Walter) and the criminals, Count Fosco and Sir Percival.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 5

Walter sets out for Hampshire and visits Mr. Dawson, but Mr. Dawson is unable to give him the date he visited Marian, the same day that Sir Percival left in the night and that Laura was taken to London. The Inn where Sir Percival stayed on the night of his departure is closed and Walter decides to visit Blackwater to speak to the servants. On his way up the drive to the house, he sees a short man dressed in black who he thinks is a clerk. He finds Margaret Poacher there with another female servant and the gardener. The gardener is friendly and talkative but none of them can give Walter the exact date of Laura's or Sir Percival's departure.

Walter fails in his plan to discover the date of Laura's journey to London.

Walter makes to leave the property but, as he does, sees that the man in black has returned and is watching him. He approaches the man and tries to engage him politely, but the man tries to pick a fight with Walter. Walter knows then that this man is a spy of Sir Percival's and that he wants Walter to assault him so that Walter will be arrested. Walter, therefore, quickly leaves the grounds and returns to London, disappointed with the day's inquiries.

Sir Percival is trying to get Walter out of the way so that he will not be able to investigate him. He has told his spies to provoke Walter so that Walter will be placed in prison for assault.

Walter now knows that he may have no choice but to threaten or use violence against Sir Percival to get to the secret. Although he wishes to act nobly for Laura's sake, he also knows that part of him longs to get revenge on Sir Percival for marrying Laura. Since he has had no luck with the dates, he must try and get to Sir Percival through the secret. He decides to find and question Mrs. Clements, Anne Catherick's companion. He hopes that she will tell him something about Mrs. Catherick which he may be able to use against her, as Mrs. Catherick too knows the secret. He writes to Todd's Corner, where Anne and Mrs. Clements stayed at Limmeridge, and asks if they know where Mrs. Clements is.

Although Walter is a virtuous character and does not wish to use violence, he feels it may be necessary in this case to bring justice against Sir Percival if he cannot attain justice in a legal way, because the conventions of the legal system are too stacked against him. Although it is illegal to commit blackmail, Sir Percival has left Walter with no choice and has essentially provoked him into action, which will prove to be for the greater good if they succeed in punishing Sir Percival for his crimes.

While Walter waits for their reply, Marian tells him the history of Sir Percival's family. His father was born with a serious "physical deformity" and was not popular in the village of Blackwater. The family left the village after an argument with the local minister and did not return. Sir Percival's parents both died quite young while living abroad and Sir Percival returned to England as an adult, where he became friends with Laura's father, Mr. Philip Fairlie.

Sir Percival has a mysterious family history and comes from a family of social outcasts. This reflects Victorian society's rejection of and cruelty towards people with physical and mental disabilities and suggests that this type of unfair social isolation can make people bitter and cruel.

Although Walter feels that everything has been against him in discovering the truth of the case, his luck changes when he receives the reply from Todd's Corner which gives him Mrs. Clements' London address.

Mrs. Clements was Anne's close companion and Anne may have told her Sir Percival's secret.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 6

When Walter arrives at Mrs. Clements' house, she is desperate to find out if he knows where Anne is. Walter sadly informs her that he does not think Anne will ever be found alive, and the poor old lady is very distressed by this news. Despite this, she agrees to try and help Walter and tells him what happened when she and Anne left Todd's Corner. First, they returned to London, but Anne was so afraid of being found by Sir Percival that they left for the rural town of Grimsby. Anne became ill while they were there and remained ill for several weeks.

Walter does not want to tell Mrs. Clements about his suspicions in case she is approached by Sir Percival and Count Fosco and cannot keep his plans a secret. However, he feels sorry for her and does not want to give her false hope, so he implies that Anne is probably dead. Mrs. Clements confirms that Anne's heart problems started before her death in London, so she probably died of natural causes.

When Anne recovered, she became obsessed with going to Blackwater to speak to Laura. Mrs. Clements eventually agreed to take her, and the pair rented a house in a village nearby. Mrs. Clements tried to keep their visit a secret, but Anne insisted on walking to Blackwater several times to speak to Laura at the boathouse. The long walks exhausted Anne and she became ill again and could not meet with Laura at the time they had arranged, so Mrs. Clements agreed to go to the boathouse for her.

Anne was clearly a very compassionate and well-meaning person and was desperate to warn Laura about Sir Percival, even if she could not help Laura in any other way and even if she did herself damage in the process. Anne's loyalty to Mrs. Fairlie is also evident in her determination to help Laura.

When she got there, she did not find Laura but an overweight man who said that he had been sent by Laura to receive a message. Mrs. Clements told him that she was the person he should give the message to, and the man told her that Laura wanted Anne to leave Hampshire as soon as possible, for her own safety, and go to London, where Laura would meet her. Mrs. Clements lamented that Anne was ill and could not easily travel, and the man said that he was a doctor and would visit Anne for her.

Mrs. Clements is not a suspicious person and does not suspect the man she meets, who is obviously Count Fosco. Count Fosco orchestrates Anne's return to London so that he can take her to his house, where he expects her to die, and complete his plan to fake Laura's death. Count Fosco is extremely devious and reacts spontaneously to each new piece of information he receives. His decision to pretend to be a doctor is opportunistic and takes advantage of Mrs. Clements's naivety.

The man was shocked when he saw Anne's condition and went out to secure her some medicine, which worked wonders, Mrs. Clements says. Mrs. Clements and Anne met the man and his wife again on the train to London. After Anne and Mrs. Clements had been in London for a few days, the man's wife came to their house and told Mrs. Clements that she had been sent by Laura, who was at a hotel nearby. Mrs. Clements agreed to go with the woman to see Laura, but halfway there, the lady exited the carriage to go to a shop and did not return. When Mrs. Clements returned home, Anne was gone, and Mrs. Clements was told that she had been lured out of the house by a letter delivered by a boy. Mrs. Clements went to ask at the asylum, but no one had seen Anne there and Mrs. Clements has not seen her since.

Count Fosco obviously has some knowledge of medicines, as he uses drugs on Laura, Marian, and Anne throughout the story. This demonstrates the eclectic range of his skills and criminal experience. Count Fosco orchestrates Madame Fosco's visit to London (to fetch a nurse for Marian, as he told Mrs. Michelson) to coincide with Anne's journey to London. This allows Madame Fosco to recognize Anne and Mrs. Clements and to grow acquainted with them so that she can carry out her role in distracting Mrs. Clements while Count Fosco kidnaps Anne.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 7

Mrs. Clements is heartbroken over Anne's disappearance, as Anne was like a daughter to her. Walter believes that he may find out Sir Percival's secret by discovering Anne's history, so he asks Mrs. Clements about Anne's mother, Mrs. Catherick. Mrs. Clements clearly dislikes Mrs. Catherick. Mrs. Clements explains that she and her husband used to live near Mr. and Mrs. Catherick in Old Welmingham. She says that Mrs. Catherick was a hard-hearted, selfish woman who thought she was too good for her husband and only married him when he stopped asking her to. There was a huge scandal about them in the village, and the couple split up a few months after they moved there.

Mrs. Clements is Mrs. Catherick's opposite and her foil in the story. While Mrs. Catherick is a negligent mother to Anne and a shallow woman, Mrs. Clements is a good-hearted mother figure to Anne and does not care about appearances or how society views Anne's behavior. This pattern of opposites plays out several times throughout the novel. There are two criminals (Count Fosco and Sir Percival), two young heroines (Anne and Laura), two detectives (Marian and Walter), two mother figures (Mrs. Clements and Mrs. Catherick), and two lawyers (Mr. Gilmore and Mr. Kyrle).

Walter asks if the scandal was about Mr. and Mrs. Catherick, but Mrs. Clements tells him it was about Mrs. Catherick and Sir Percival Glyde. Mr. Catherick found jewelry inscribed with Sir Percival's initials which had been sent, as a gift, to his wife. The next day he overheard them "whispering about the vestry" of the church and, that night, surprised them there at their meeting place. Sir Percival attacked Mr. Catherick and he left the town after that. People in the village thought that Mrs. Catherick had perhaps known Sir Percival before her marriage and that he might be Anne's father. Walter does not think that this is the secret, however, because it is a very common occurrence and not enough to ruin a nobleman's reputation.

Although Mrs. Clements does not have all the information about the scandal, she foils Mrs. Catherick when she reveals a vital part of the conspiracy; the relation of the secret to the vestry of Welmingham church. Mrs. Clements takes the conventional view of the scandal and believes that Mrs. Catherick and Sir Percival were lovers. However, Walter astutely realizes that, although this would ruin Mrs. Catherick's reputation (because she is a woman) it is quite common for noblemen to father illegitimate children and to ruin women's reputations by seducing them and refusing to marry them. Although this behavior could devastate a woman's social position and totally destroy her life, for men this behavior was considered forgivable and even normal, as men were not expected to have the same level of self-control as women.

Sir Percival fled the village after the scandal, but Mrs. Catherick remained, despite her tattered reputation among the neighbors. Mrs. Clements tells Walter that Mrs. Catherick is provided for by Sir Percival Glyde, who sends her money every month. Walter now feels sure that Sir Percival pays Mrs. Catherick to remain in Welmingham because he knows that none of the neighbors will speak to her and, therefore, she will not tell his secret. He does not believe Anne is Sir Percival's daughter and wonders if Sir Percival has created this scandal to distract from the real secret hidden underneath.

If Sir Percival had really ruined Mrs. Catherick's reputation by getting her pregnant and not marrying her, it would be more likely that she would have to flee the village than that he would. This suggests that Sir Percival has another secret. His decision to pay Mrs. Catherick to remain in Welmingham, where she will have no friends and be a social outcast, demonstrates Sir Percival's cruelty and disregard for other people. He considers his own reputation more important than Mrs. Catherick's entire life.

Mrs. Clements tells Walter that Mrs. Catherick worked for a man called Major Donthorne, at a place called Varneck Hall, before her marriage. She then tells him a little more about Anne's childhood. Mrs. Catherick took Anne away from Mrs. Clements when she was nine or ten—after they had spent time at Limmeridge—and Mrs. Clements did not see her again until she escaped the asylum. Like Walter, Mrs. Clements does not think that Anne knew Sir Percival's secret, but that she heard from her mother that there *was* a secret and pretended that she knew the whole thing in front of Sir Percival, who put her in the asylum to keep her quiet.

Mrs. Catherick is clearly selfish because she takes Anne away from Mrs. Clements despite their close relationship. The idea that Anne did not know Sir Percival's secret is tragically ironic, as it highlights the fact that Anne is truly an innocent victim and that it is Sir Percival's guilty conscience and paranoia that persuade him to lock her up. Anne's innocence is symbolized by her determination to dress in white: a color associated with purity.

Walter realizes that Mrs. Clements has told him everything she can and makes to leave. Before he goes, he takes pity on the old lady and—although he cannot safely go into detail—tells her that he knows Anne is dead but that she has been "nicely buried" in a way that she would like, which comforts Mrs. Clements. Walter then asks her for Mrs. Catherick's address and tells her that he plans to uncover Sir Percival's secret. Mrs. Clements warns Walter that Mrs. Catherick is a heartless woman, but gives him the address and Walter goes on his way.

Walter feels sorry for Mrs. Clements, who is grief stricken over Anne's death, and tells her about Anne's burial to comfort her. This is comforting to the old lady because, as she and Anne are both poor and could not afford an expensive private burial, Anne probably would have been buried in a pauper's grave if she had died in Mrs. Clements care. In the nineteenth century it was a mark of shame and poverty to be buried in an unmarked grave as, by the mid-1800s, even most middle-class people could afford to pay for a tombstone and a plot in a cemetery. Walter also privately knows that Anne would like to be buried with Mrs. Fairlie because he heard her say so when they were at the grave.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 8

When Walter returns to London, he finds Laura very upset. She complains that she is not paying her way in the house and Walter agrees that she should start drawing for money to help. Although Walter cannot really sell her drawings, he lies to her and gives her some of his own money because he feels that her desire to help is a sign that her health is improving, and he thinks that this sense of independence will be good for her.

Walter lies to Laura to give her a sense of purpose and responsibility. Like many middle-class Victorians, Collins believes it is bad for people to lack responsibility and that, even if they are not responsible for anything important, it gives people a sense of self-esteem and dignity to feel that they are contributing to society.

Walter tells Marian that he is going to Welmingham to try and discover Sir Percival's secret. Marian fears for Walter's safety. It is Count Fosco she is afraid of, rather than Sir Percival. Walter sets out and catches a train towards the village.

Marian thinks that Count Fosco is the real driving force behind the conspiracy. She believes that he controls Sir Percival, that most of the plans have been his idea and that, without Count Fosco's influence, Sir Percival's guilty conscience and reckless behavior would have given him away.

Walter arrives and finds Mrs. Catherick's house easily. He finds Mrs. Catherick a hard-looking woman dressed all in black. She asks if he has come to tell her that Anne is dead, and Walter confirms that she is. Mrs. Catherick takes this news stoically and tells Walter he can leave if he has nothing else to say. Walter tells her that he plans to uncover Sir Percival's secret, for the sake of one who has been wronged, and that he knows of Mrs. Catherick's involvement in it.

Mrs. Catherick dresses in black because she is Anne's opposite. While Anne is innocent, Mrs. Catherick is Sir Percival's co-conspirator. She does not seem to care that her daughter is dead and seems to have expected this news.

Mrs. Catherick thinks she understands Walter's intention—she thinks he is trying to blackmail her by threatening to ruin her reputation—and mocks him. She tells him that she has "claimed" her place back in the town through sheer determination; she is a respectable member of the community now and nothing Walter says will tarnish that. As she is speaking, the minister passes the window and bows to Mrs. Catherick. Walter alludes to Sir Percival's rank and social power. Mrs. Catherick scoffs at this too and makes a comment about Sir Percival's mother. Walter tells her that he does not plan to blackmail her but that he can "crush" Sir Percival Glyde with her help, since he can tell that she hates Sir Percival as he does. Mrs. Catherick tells him to do it himself and leave her out of it.

Mrs. Catherick has regained her reputation as a respectable woman in the community by sheer, brazen force of will. Even if the people in the community do not really believe she is respectable, they behave as if she is. In Victorian society, reputation and social place determines how one is treated by the people around them. Mrs. Catherick has learned that, although she cannot undo her history, she can convince people to treat her with respect if she demands it with enough conviction. Mrs. Catherick, therefore, believes that reputation and social class are partly constructed, and this explains her cynicism when Walter refers to Sir Percival's reputation. Mrs. Catherick's laugh seems to imply that Sir Percival social status is as much as act as hers is.

Walter tries to provoke a reaction out of Mrs. Catherick by implying that he knows the secret; he knows what took place "in the vestry of the old church." Mrs. Catherick is horrified by this, and Walter gains confidence. He tells her that he knows Anne Catherick is not Sir Percival's child. This makes Mrs. Catherick angry. She shouts at Walter that he has no right to bring up Anne's father and dismisses Walter from the house. As Walter leaves, the minister passes Mrs. Catherick's window again and bows to her as he goes by.

Walter's revelation seems to genuinely frighten Mrs. Catherick, and this tells Walter that he is on the right trail to discover Sir Percival's secret. However, it is the mention of Anne's father that makes Mrs. Catherick really angry, which suggests that she still has feelings for this man. The minister's bow shows that, although Mrs. Catherick may not be a respectable woman, she wields the social power of one in this town.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 9

As Walter exits Mrs. Catherick's, he sees the man who shouted at him outside Blackwater Park. This man comes out of the house next door and rushes past Walter. Walter follows him to the train station and hears him buy a ticket to Blackwater. He then returns to his hotel to think over the day's events. He plans to visit Old Welmingham Church and the vestry the next day. He is beginning to suspect that Sir Percival's parents were not married—hence Mrs. Catherick's disdain about Sir Percival's mother—and he plans to check the marriage register of the church.

Walter is still being followed by Sir Percival's spies. He suspects that Mrs. Catherick's reaction when Walter brought up Sir Percival's parents holds the key to Sir Percival's secret. If Sir Percival's parents were never married, Sir Percival would be illegitimate and unable to inherit his father's property and title of Baronet. It was considered very shameful to be illegitimate in the nineteenth century, and illegitimate people were considered lower-class even if born into wealth.

Walter walks to the old village and, when he reaches the church, finds that Sir Percival's men who followed him in London are posted outside. They do not approach him, however, and Walter finds the clerk's house and asks to be shown the vestry. The clerk is a cheerful, talkative man and, when he and Walter approach the church, Sir Percival's men are gone. The clerk takes Walter to the back door of the vestry as the door inside the church is locked. The lock is very old and stiff, and it takes several minutes for the clerk to open the door.

Sir Percival's men have been told not to attack Walter in daylight so that they will not attract the suspicion of the law. The stiff lock on the door is a detail that becomes important later.

Inside the vestry, there are mountains of moldering paper and a couple of ancient wooden printing presses. There are also several boxes overflowing with straw and the window has been bricked up; the only light comes through a skylight in the ceiling. Walter asks to see the marriage register. He knows Sir Percival's age, so works backwards from that. Walter asks why the register is left out in the open in the vestry and not locked up, and the clerk replies that there is a second copy of it, kept by a lawyer in the town.

Walter knows when Sir Percival was born, so if his parents were married their wedding will appear in the register before this date. It's worth noting that the vestry is full of paper and straw and has only one exit—facts that will later be important when Sir Percival starts a fire inside.

To his dismay, Walter finds the marriage of Sir Percival's mother and father noted in the register. It is squeezed onto the bottom of a page in a space which looks narrower than the entries around it. He asks the clerk for the address of the man who keeps the copy, and the clerk willingly passes it along.

Walter is disappointed but relieved that the copy exists so he can verify the evidence he has found. The fact that the entry is squeezed into a margin is slightly suspicious, however.

As Walter leaves the church, he is followed by the two men who he saw earlier, joined by the man in black from the day before. This surveillance leads him to suspect that there is a secret hidden in the church after all.

Walter is convinced he is on the right track because Sir Percival's men have increased their watch on him. If he was looking in the wrong place, they would probably leave him alone.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 10

The men follow Walter along the road. Suddenly, one of them rushes past him and, startled, Walter pushes him away. The man falls to the ground and cries out for help and the other two rush up to Walter and seize him. A farmer in a field nearby also comes to help and Walter is taken to the jail in town and taken to court. He is put on bail by the judge and suspects that Sir Percival has planned this so that he can get rid of the evidence of his secret while Walter is locked up.

The men finally succeed in their aim and surprise Walter so that he lashes out and hits one of them. This keeps suspicion away from themselves, and by extension Sir Percival, and prevents Walter from investigating further by locking him up.

Luckily, Walter remembers that Mr. Dawson lives in the neighborhood and writes to him for assistance. Mr. Dawson kindly provides the bail money and Walter is freed the same night. Aware that Sir Percival's men will be watching him, Walter hurries to the town to visit the clerk who keeps a copy of the register.

Walter is able to make friends relatively easily. This rewards him here because he is able to call on Mr. Dawson for help.

Walter meets the clerk and is given a copy of the register to examine. He is shocked to find that the entry which documented the marriage of Sir Percival's parents is not there—it has been written in to the other and is a forgery. Sir Percival Glyde is not a Baronet at all, but either an illegitimate child with no inheritance or a complete stranger masquerading as nobility. Walter is amazed at the boldness of Sir Percival in adopting a new identity in this way. He determines to run back to the old church in case Sir Percival should try to destroy the evidence. He stops in the village to buy a club in case he is followed.

Walter knows that the marriage entry on the vestry register is the forgery and the copy held by the clerk is the genuine copy, which does not include a record of Sir Percival's parent's wedding, because the vestry copy is unguarded and would be easy to access privately. If the marriage was official, the clerk would have copied this entry into his version of the registry too. Sir Percival is the quintessential Gothic villain: a man of low birth masquerading as nobility. This was a common trope in Gothic novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, as this was a period in which there was widespread anxiety about the class system beginning to break down.

On the road, in the dark, Walter is attacked by several men whom he cannot see clearly. He suspects these are Sir Percival's men and manages to outrun them, escaping across the fields in the direction of the village. He reaches the clerk's house and is about to knock on the door, when the clerk bursts out of the house in a panic, because the key to the vestry has been stolen. Walter runs to the church with the clerk. On the way, he bumps into a servant who, in the dark, addresses him as Sir Percival. Walter tells the man he has made a mistake and the man tells him that Sir Percival—"his master"—ordered him to wait nearby.

Sir Percival has had Walter followed and, therefore, knows that Walter has been to the vestry and has likely discovered the forgery. He has broken into the clerk's house and stolen the key to break into the vestry himself and destroy the evidence. He has then left his servant outside to keep watch in case Walter or the clerk return.

The servant, Walter, and the clerk run to the church. As they approach, they realize that the vestry is on fire. Walter charges to the door and hears someone bang on the door and scream out from inside. The servant cries out that it is Sir Percival, and the clerk is horrified; Sir Percival has broken the troublesome lock and is trapped inside.

In his desperation to hide the evidence of his crime, Sir Percival has acted rashly and trapped himself in the burning vestry. Previous details about the vestry like the difficult lock and the abundance of straw now help to seal Sir Percival's fate.

Walter, in an instant, forgets his hatred for Sir Percival and tries to save him from being burnt alive. He shouts through the door for Sir Percival to try the passage into the church on the other side of the vestry. He hears the lock rattle and then silence. Acting on impulse, Walter climbs onto the roof and breaks the skylight, but the fire is too high, and he cannot see or reach Sir Percival.

Walter's humane and decent nature is immediately evident when, even though he hates Sir Percival, he tries to save his life. Walter is also incentivized to save Sir Percival because, if Sir Percival dies and the evidence burns with him, it will be extremely difficult to prove his crimes against Laura.

Walter summons several villagers who live nearby, and they break down the door. They cannot get into the vestry, however; it is totally consumed by the fire. The clerk begs them to "save the church" and the fire engine arrives to put out the blaze. Once the fire is extinguished, the body of Sir Percival Glyde is brought outside, and Walter sees his enemy for the first and last time.

Even though Walter has not physically harmed Sir Percival, he has driven him to the desperate actions that brought about his demise. Sir Percival's death is ironic and fitting because he has tried to destroy the evidence of his false identity and, although he succeeds in this, he also destroys himself, his own literal identity, in the process.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 1, CHAPTER 11

Walter writes to Marian to tell her of Sir Percival's death. He asks her to keep this from Laura for the time being because of Laura's fragile mental health. He stays in Welmingham for the inquest into the fire but is dismissed quickly as a stranger in the village. His own belief is that Sir Percival Glyde broke into the vestry to destroy the forgery which he committed in the marriage register. Walter believes that the fire started by accident, and that Sir Percival found himself locked in because of the broken lock. His body is identified by his watch, which has his name engraved on it.

Here is another connection between a piece of physical written evidence (Sir Percival's engraved watch) and a public identity that turns out to be false. Sir Percival will be remembered on his tomb and his death certificate as the Baronet of Blackwater, even though this is not his legal identity. This mirrors the written evidence on Laura's tombstone which wrongly marks the grave as belonging to Laura. This supports Collins's thesis that the supposed facts do not always reflect the truth of events, even if they are backed up by official records.

Walter is disheartened by the fire because it has destroyed the evidence of Sir Percival's illegitimacy, which would have helped Walter in his mission to win Laura her name and fortune back.

Although Walter is glad that Laura and Marian are no longer in danger from Sir Percival, the destruction of the evidence means that he cannot publicly or legally dispute Sir Percival's reputation as a nobleman, and people will be even less likely to take Laura's side over a presumably respectable man after his death.

Walter must stay in Welmingham for the term of his bail and considers going to see Mrs. Catherick again. The thought of her is repulsive to him, however, and he decides not to. When he arrives back at his hotel one night, he finds that he has a letter from her and he places this letter into the story now, word for word.

Walter may be able to get some more evidence from Mrs. Catherick about Sir Percival's secret, which Mrs. Catherick knew all along.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 2, CHAPTER 1

Mrs. Catherick is pleased by Sir Percival's death. She feels that Walter has had a hand in it—by investigating Sir Percival and frightening him into trying to destroy the evidence himself—and thanks him for it; she would have hated Walter if he had managed to save Sir Percival from the fire. As thanks for his part in Sir Percival's death, Mrs. Catherick writes to tell Walter about her own history, which he came to ask her about.

Although Mrs. Catherick's joy over Sir Percival's death seems somewhat callous and cruel, Mrs. Catherick has good reason to hate Sir Percival. as he deliberately ruined her reputation to save his own and blackmailed her into living in a community where she was despised.

Mrs. Catherick describes herself as a young woman living in Old Welmingham when Sir Percival came to the village. She says that he used to buy her presents and flatter her. He promised her a gold watch if she would get him the key to the vestry and, unable to resist, she did. She spied on him when he was there and learned of the forgery. She was young and careless and kept Sir Percival's secret for him because she did not realize what he did was illegal. Sir Percival told Mrs. Catherick that he was born illegitimate and that his father died without producing a will.

The gold watch which Sir Percival gave Mrs. Catherick has been mentioned before. It was inscribed with his own name, and it was this that led Mr. Catherick to believe that Mrs. Catherick and Sir Percival were having an affair. Again, a piece of written evidence has seemed to provide a clue to the truth but has, in fact, misled the person who discovered it. Sir Percival tries to make himself seem unfortunate to Mrs. Catherick, but he is really an opportunistic fortune hunter who wants to forge his nobility rather than earn wealth.

In order to claim his father's property—Blackwater Park—Sir Percival needed a marriage certificate from his parents. The property should really have been inherited by a cousin of Sir Percival's. Sir Percival originally planned to tear the page out of the register and destroy it so that no one could prove he was illegitimate, but he decided, on a whim and noticing the space at the bottom of the page, to forge his parent's names.

Sir Percival essentially steals his cousin's inheritance. Even if he is unfortunate and has been born illegitimate (a state which was considered lowly and inherently bad in Victorian era Britain), the reader can only have limited sympathy for Sir Percival because he has treated other people so poorly throughout the novel.

Mrs. Catherick helped Sir Percival because he promised her a gold watch. She begged him to clear her name with her husband and tell him that she and Sir Percival were not having an affair. Sir Percival, however, refused, and told Mrs. Catherick that he wanted people to believe that they were having an affair so that they would never suspect his real secret. He also frightened Mrs. Catherick by implying that she would be hung if anyone found out that she had helped him. He paid her to remain in the village where she would have no friends and could not spread his secret. Mrs. Catherick, who needed money to provide for Anne, did as he told her.

Sir Percival openly admits that he has tricked Mrs. Catherick once he has got what he wanted from her. He shows this same callous attitude to Laura after they are married; openly admitting that he does not care about her at all. He threatens Mrs. Catherick and cruelly imprisons her in a place where she cannot have personal relationships and is socially ostracized, just as he later imprisons Anne in the asylum and keeps Laura and Marian at Blackwater. He is a man who is always willing to get his own way by force.

She next tells Walter that she will explain how Anne came to be involved in the secret and why Sir Percival locked her up. Mrs. Catherick admits that she never really cared much for her daughter and was glad that Mrs. Clements took her off her hands. However, she did not like Mrs. Clements either and decided to separate Mrs. Clements and Anne after their time at Limmeridge. She did this because Anne had taken to dressing all in **white clothes** and Mrs. Clements encouraged this, while Mrs. Catherick hated it. Mrs. Catherick notes that Anne was encouraged to wear all white by Mrs. Fairlie, whom Mrs. Catherick also seems to dislike, and who, she says, "entrapped" the "most handsome man" in the county, Mr. Philip Fairlie.

Mrs. Catherick demonstrates her own spiteful nature through her admission that she separated Anne and Mrs. Clements on a whim and despite their close relationship. Mrs. Catherick's dislike of Mrs. Fairlie is implied by her distaste for the white clothes she gives Anne. These symbolize Mrs. Fairlie's own purity as a good, honest woman, while Mrs. Catherick herself is shallow and unpleasant. She also seems to be jealous of Mrs. Fairlie's connection to Mr. Philip Fairlie: Laura's father.

While Anne was living with her mother, Mrs. Catherick wrote to Sir Percival and asked if she could take Anne to the seaside for a change of scenery. Sir Percival wrote back rudely and Mrs. Catherick, losing her temper, cried out that she could "ruin" Sir Percival "for life" if she revealed his secret. Anne overheard her and seemed to take this idea to heart.

Anne again demonstrates her tendency to cling to certain ideas that appeal to her. She obviously already dislikes Sir Percival and is ready to believe something unpleasant about him.

The next day, Sir Percival arrived at Mrs. Catherick's house. When he saw Anne, he ordered her out of the room, but Anne refused to go. Sir Percival called her an "idiot"—a word she hated—and Anne lost her temper. She warned Sir Percival that he must treat her with respect and that she could "ruin" him if she chose to by telling his secret. Sir Percival became frantic upon hearing this. Mrs. Catherick tried to persuade him that Anne really knew nothing and only repeated what she had heard Mrs. Catherick say the day before, but Sir Percival would not believe her. He insisted that Anne be placed in an asylum, and Mrs. Catherick did not protest; she only insisted that it be a private asylum and not a pauper's one.

Sir Percival is very disrespectful and dismissive of Anne. Although Anne is vulnerable, she is proud and resents it when people think she is stupid. It is tragically ironic that Anne tries to stand up to Sir Percival by pretending that she has power over him, when she really has no power at all in society and no one to protect her. Mrs. Catherick's insistence that Anne be placed in a private institution suggests that Mrs. Catherick only cares about her own pride and does not want the shame of a daughter in a pauper's asylum—she doesn't really care about her daughter herself as a person.

She believes that Anne was clever enough to work out who had locked her up and why, but that—even if she pretended to know the secret in her letter to Laura—she really could not have told them anything about Sir Percival, except that he *had* a secret. Mrs. Catherick closes the letter by saying that she has saved enough of the money Sir Percival sent her to live comfortably after his death. She also tells Walter that he must not criticize anyone he suspects of being Anne's father, as he did when he came to visit, and that she wants him to apologize. She tells him that he may come to see her again and that she will remain in Welmingham and continue her life as a respectable lady.

Mrs. Catherick is still emotionally attached to Anne's father and clearly has fond memories of him, as she does not want his reputation attacked. Ironically, Mrs. Catherick is now wealthy and will continue to live on as a pillar of her community. This shows that, although reputation was deeply important in the nineteenth century, it was also more flexible than it appeared and could be transcended with enough luck and effort.

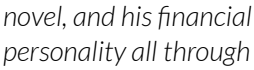
THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 3, CHAPTER 1

At first, Walter is insulted and disgusted by Mrs. Catherick's haughty tone in the letter and he plans to burn it and never write to or visit her again. However, on second thought, he decides that—for Anne's sake—he should try to find out who her father is. The next day is his last day in Hampshire, and he must remain for the final inquest into Sir Percival's death and to attend his court hearing for the alleged assault he committed. He receives a short note from Marian which tells him that she and Laura have had to move. Walter suspects that this is because of Count Fosco and is extremely concerned about them.

Even though Anne is dead, Walter feels that her identity should be recovered alongside Laura's, as she deserves this dignity at least. News of Sir Percival's death has clearly reached Count Fosco, who may now be worried that Walter may come after him for revenge.

Walter passes an uneasy night and attends the inquest in the morning. The court rules that Sir Percival's death was accidental, and Walter hurries off to catch a train to Knowlesbury, where his hearing will be held. He meets a man who was also at the inquest and who strikes up a conversation on the train. The man tells him that he has spoken to Sir Percival's solicitor, Mr. Merriman, who was at the inquest, and heard that Sir Percival was totally ruined financially. His property in Blackwater and all the inheritance he had received from his late wife is all gone. Walter reaches Knowlesbury and attends court. He is quickly dismissed and, anxious about Laura and Marian, immediately catches a train back to London.

Sir Percival was clearly a reckless man who lived a debauched lifestyle beneath his veneer of respectability. His desperate and restless temperament is reflected in his behavior throughout the novel, and his financial habits indicate that this was part of his personality all through his life. This suggests that, although Sir Percival faked his way into a position of nobility, he was not emotionally equipped to handle this lifestyle and ruined himself despite his wealth.



THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 3, CHAPTER 2

Walter arrives in London late that night and is relieved to see Marian and Laura safe and well. It is clear that Marian has not told Laura the reason for their move or about Sir Percival's death, and Laura seems perfectly happy and content. When Laura has gone to bed, Walter and Marian sit down to talk, and Marian tells him that she has seen Count Fosco.

Walter and Marian treat Laura with care after her time in the asylum. Ironically, although the asylum is meant to be a place to treat mental illness, it has caused it in Laura. This again suggests that locking ill people away from society is not an effective way to treat them.

Marian tells Walter that, a few days ago, she looked out of the living room window and saw Count Fosco across the street talking to the owner of the asylum from which Laura had escaped. Fortunately, Laura was involved in her drawing and did not see the Count. Marian thought that he had not seen her, but then she received a note from Count Fosco which asked her to meet him. She agreed to meet him downstairs in the shop beneath their house so that Laura would not see him or hear his voice.

Count Fosco, unlike Sir Percival, is very restrained. He intimidates Marian by appearing outside her window but does not act immediately, and is very slow and calculating in everything he does.

Marian tells Walter that Count Fosco was sickeningly kind towards her. He informed her that he had no interest in pursing them until his own interests were threatened. He takes Sir Percival's death—which he believes to have been caused by Walter—as a sign that Walter will next come after him and so, now perceiving himself to be under attack, he means to take action. He told Marian that he had originally planned to lead the owner of the asylum to them and have her and Walter arrested. Count Fosco then told Marian that he changed his mind at the last moment because of his strong feelings for Marian; sentiments which she is repulsed by. He could not bear to cause her grief by separating her from Laura again.

Although Marian is disgusted by Count Fosco's advances, it seems there is something genuine about them. He really is reluctant to cause Marian pain and proves this when he lets the women go. However, because Count Fosco is such a thoroughly brutal and vicious person, his love for Marian is a twisted kind of love. He is seemingly attracted to her because she is difficult to control, and therefore presents him with a challenge, rather than for any true romantic reason.

Marian tells Walter that after Count Fosco left, she decided to leave the house immediately and find a new one in an unknown neighborhood. Walter can see that her meeting with Count Fosco has shaken her and he promises that he has not forgotten the vow he made in Mr. Kyrle's office: that he will restore Laura's identity and kill the men who are behind the conspiracy. He decides that he should tell Laura about her husband's death. Marian trusts his judgement and agrees.

Walter is even more determined to have his revenge on Count Fosco now that Sir Percival has been killed. Count Fosco is the only person who can provide evidence of his and Sir Percival's crimes against Laura.

After Marian's meeting with Count Fosco, they do not see or hear from him again. Walter returns to his work at the engravers shop and privately continues his investigations, but keeps this from Marian and Laura so that he does not worry them anymore. He enquires about the house Count Fosco has rented and learns that the Count has let the house until the following summer. He also goes to see Mrs. Clements again—as he promised he would—and tells her the truth about Anne's death. This interview reminds him that he still does not know who Anne's father is, and he sets about trying to solve this mystery.

Walter is prepared to take his time to catch Count Fosco. He knows the Count is an extremely careful and clever man, and does not wish to act rashly and expose his plans.

Walter writes to Major Donthorne at Varneck Hall—where Mrs. Catherick worked as a maid in her youth—and asks if he knows Sir Percival, and asks some other questions about the Fairlie family. Walter does not know if Major Donthorne is still alive or not and is pleasantly surprised to receive an enthusiastic and helpful letter from the Major. The Major writes that he has never met Sir Percival and that Sir Percival has never been to Varneck Hall, where he lives. Mr. Philip Fairlie though, Laura's father, was a close friend of the Major's and came to Varneck Hall often. He was there in the year when Mrs. Catherick worked there and came again with his wife, Laura's mother.

It is likely that Laura's father, Mr. Philip Fairlie, met Mrs. Catherick as a young woman when she was working as a maid at Varneck Hall.

Walter remembers Mrs. Catherick's letter, in which she describes Mrs. Fairlie, Laura's mother, as a "plain woman" and Mr. Philip Fairlie as an extremely handsome man. Walter deduces from this, and Mrs. Catherick's apparent dislike of Mrs. Fairlie, that she was jealous of her. Anne's physical resemblance to Laura also convinces him that Mr. Philip Fairlie was Anne's father and that Anne and Laura were sisters. Walter thinks sadly about the way in which Laura and Anne paid for the mistakes and secrets of their parents. He remembers Anne's wish that she could be buried in the tomb with Mrs. Fairlie, and thinks mournfully that she finally got her wish.

Although Mrs. Catherick wants to keep the identity of Anne's father a secret, she accidentally reveals herself when she shows that she is jealous of Laura's mother. Laura and Anne are half-sisters, which explains the likeness between them. The theme of children who suffer because of their parents' mistakes was common in nineteenth-century literature. This reflects a society in which certain things, such as nobility and class, were hereditary and in which a person's good or bad reputation (or luck) could be passed down through generations.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 3, CHAPTER 3

Spring arrives and Walter notices that Marian and Laura seem happier and calmer as time passes. Laura still cannot remember anything from her time in the asylum and panics if it is mentioned, but she is growing stronger and more like her old self every day. Walter realizes that, the more she grows like her old self, the more awkward it becomes between them. He is still in love with Laura and he believes that she feels the same way. He decides to take them on holiday to the seaside for a couple of weeks and, while they are there, he asks Marian to speak with him privately.

Walter has put his feelings for Laura on hold while she recovers from her ordeal. Walter understands that Laura is vulnerable and does not wish to exploit his power over her—he is a direct contrast to Sir Percival in this way. The return of spring symbolizes the beginning of Laura's new life through her recovery, and the new ability for her and Walter's love to blossom after the darkness of the events that kept them apart.

Walter explains to Marian that he knows Laura may never receive her inheritance or have her true name restored publicly. He feels that it would be too painful to drag her through a court case and force her to remember everything that has happened to her. He also feels that it would be extremely expensive and that they would not win; there is too much evidence against them. In spite of all this, he tells Marian, he wants to marry Laura, even if they must live in hiding and be poor forever.

Unlike Sir Percival, Walter is in love with Laura as an individual rather than because of her wealth or social position. He loves her even without all these things. The law is biased against poor people, as they do not have the money to hire lawyers and compete fairly with the wealthy in a court case. This suggests that rich people are able to get away with crimes, whereas poor people are almost always punished for them.

Marian is delighted, and Walter returns to the house to wait for Laura's answer. While he sits in the drawing room, Laura bursts in, rushes over and embraces him; she will happily be his wife. He remembers how sad she seemed on the day that he left Limmeridge and is grateful for the change in their fortunes which has occurred. A few days later they get married.

Laura and Walter's circumstances are the opposite of what they were at the beginning of the novel. The obstacles which kept them apart have been removed and their love has endured the trials put before them.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 3, CHAPTER 4

For a while, after his marriage to Laura, Walter is so happy and distracted that he forgets about Count Fosco. However, one night he sees Laura crying in her sleep and knows that she is dreaming about her time at Blackwater. He resolves to finish his investigations and seek justice for the Count.

The memory of the injustice done to Laura reminds Walter that real justice has not been fully achieved and that Count Fosco still remains unpunished for his crimes.

Walter reviews the evidence he has and cannot find much out about Count Fosco's background. He remembers a part in Marian's diary in which she says that the Count often receives foreign letters with "official" stamps on them and thinks that he may be a "political exile." He also remembers Laura calling the Count "a spy" and—although Laura did not mean this literally—Walter wonders if she may be right, that the Count is a political spy.

Walter reviews the evidence he has about the Count and deduces that the Count is a literal, political spy. This explains his proficiency as a criminal, as he has a lifetime of experience avoiding the law.

It is the year of the Great Exhibition and many foreigners are traveling to London to visit it. Walter knows that there are many political exiles among these people, and he thinks that Count Fosco may be a powerful, high ranking spy who works for the Italian government. Considering this, Walter decides to speak to his friend Professor Pesca, who is also Italian and may know something of the Count's political position.

The Great Exhibition was an event put on in 1851 by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. The exhibition was a celebration of modern technology, invention, and industrial manufacturing. It showcased all sorts of machines and inventions designed to make modern life easier and more comfortable for the Victorian consumer and reflected the fascination and excitement about new technology and leisure industries in the 1800s. Pesca also left Italy for political reasons, so Walter thinks that, if Count Fosco is a political criminal, then Pesca may have heard of him.

Walter notes here that he has not included everything in his narrative so far and that, just because he has not written of Pesca, does not mean he has not seen him often. He also notes that he has seen his mother and sister but did not write about these events at the time. He has been to tell them of his marriage to Laura but, unfortunately, they believe that he has been tricked by an imposter and that Laura is really Anne Catherick. Walter will not see them now until they accept his wife for who she is.

Although Pesca has not appeared much in the narrative, he is still to play an important role in it. This reflects Walter's statement at the beginning of the novel that he will only include information which is vital to the events being described.

Pesca, however, has been a good friend and Walter has seen a lot of him. Before he approaches Pesca, Walter decides to spy on Count Fosco, whom he has never seen or met in person. He waits outside the Count's house and overhears him singing to his birds; a sound which he recognizes from the descriptions in Marian's diary. The Count then leaves the house and Walter follows him. He sees the Count buy a tart from a bakery and then give it to an organ grinder's monkey who looks starved on the street. Walter tails Count Fosco to an opera house and sees the Count buy a ticket for a show that evening. When the Count is gone, Walter buys two tickets and races away to find Pesca.

Count Fosco's behavior mirrors the descriptions of him in Marian's diary, which proves that Marian's testimony is accurate and trustworthy. Once again the Count shows himself to be an intriguing character, as he is generous and kind to animals despite his ruthless brutality towards humans. His love of fine art is also not just an act—he chooses to go the opera for his own pleasure.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 3, CHAPTER 5

Count Fosco is already seated when Walter and Pesca arrive at the opera that evening. Walter watches him covertly through the first act and sees that the Count enjoys the music and draws attention to himself by nodding and singing along. At the interval, he points Count Fosco out to Pesca but Pesca does not recognize him. Walter notices that a mild looking, foreign man "with a scar on his face" is watching them and turns around to look at the Count.

Count Fosco is confident that he is not in danger and even draws attention to himself in public before he notices Walter and Pesca.

Suddenly, Count Fosco looks down into the pit—where Walter and Pesca are seated—and meets Pesca's gaze. Walter knows immediately that the Count recognizes Pesca and is terrified of him. The foreign man nearby also seems to notice this. Pesca is shocked by the change which comes over the Count when they see each other, but Walter distracts him by asking him to look for other people in the crowd. As soon as Pesca looks away, the Count rushes out of the theater. The foreign man in the row beside Pesca also gets up and leaves.

Pesca does not recognize Count Fosco, but the Count clearly recognizes Pesca. Pesca is Count Fosco's foil and opposite in the novel: both men are Italian and have dubious political pasts, but Pesca is redeemed by his good nature and faithful attachment to England (which he now considers his home) while Count Fosco has not changed his ways and is proud of his criminality and contemptuous of British culture.

Walter begs Pesca to leave with him and explains that he needs to speak to him privately. The pair return to Pesca's house and there, Walter asks Pesca to tell him about the political reason that he left Italy. Walter is surprised when a change comes over Pesca; he looks haggard and afraid and tells Walter that he "does not know what he asks" of him. Walter reminds Pesca that he is asking for Laura's sake. Pesca, remembering the day that Walter saved his life, agrees to tell him what he can.

Walter suspects that Pesca's political past in Italy is darker than he expects. Although Pesca is cheerful and lively now, the reader gets the impression that he makes an effort to be this way in order to forget his past or to make amends for it. Pesca proves his loyalty to Walter and finally finds a way to fully repay Walter for saving his life.

Pesca tells Walter that he is a member of a secret society in Italy and that he used to work for them as a young man. He has been ordered to live in England by this society and he waits for their orders; he never knows when he might be called upon by them. He explains to Walter that he must keep this a secret as, if Pesca tells anyone about the society, he will be killed. Pesca tells Walter that the society—called "The Brotherhood"—is dedicated to fighting against corrupt governments, "for the people," all over Europe, but they are merciless towards members who betray the order.

Although Pesca is a member of an organization that commits violence, he has joined "the Brotherhood" for noble reasons—to fight against and protect people from government corruption. He takes a great personal risk by telling Walter about his secret.

Pesca tells Walter that members of The Brotherhood are branded with a secret mark, and he shows Walter the mark on his own arm. Pesca sees that Walter has drawn his own conclusions from this story and has guessed that Count Fosco was a member of The Brotherhood but has acted as a spy for the government and has betrayed them. Pesca confirms that he has never seen Count Fosco before but that, if Fosco is so terrified of him, then the Count must be a traitor. Pesca is drained from telling his story and begs Walter to leave him and ask no more about it. Walter promises to keep Pesca's secret and invites him for breakfast the next day, which Pesca gratefully agrees to.

While Pesca joined the Brotherhood with noble aims, Count Fosco is a mercenary who does not have loyalty to anyone and who works for all sides. He has clearly betrayed the Brotherhood, and therefore betrayed the people they protect, but has also worked against the Italian government; hence his exile from the country. Count Fosco is afraid when he sees Pesca at the opera because he believes that the Brotherhood have tracked him down to punish him for his betrayal.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 3, CHAPTER 6

Walter leaves Pesca's house and plans to find Count Fosco as soon as possible. He knows that Count Fosco will try to flee the country if he thinks that The Brotherhood are after him, and Walter wants to make sure that he can find him that night. He returns to his house and writes a note to Pesca. This note tells Pesca that he, Walter, has been killed by Count Fosco and gives Pesca Count Fosco's address. He also states that Count Fosco is a traitor to The Brotherhood. He puts the note in an envelope and writes on the envelope that Pesca is to open it at nine o'clock the next morning if he does not hear from Walter before then. Walter sends the note; he knows now that, even if Count Fosco kills him, Count Fosco himself will be killed by Pesca before he can escape.

Walter is willing to sacrifice his own life to see Count Fosco punished. Even if Count Fosco kills him, Pesca will find and kill Count Fosco before he leaves the country. His plan sets up mutually assured destruction for both himself and the Count, and proves Walter's status as a brave and clever hero.

Walter finds that Laura is asleep when he goes into her room to say goodbye to her. He does not wake her and, when he comes out onto the stairs, Marian is waiting for him with a note from Pesca; this is Pesca's reply. Pesca states that he will do as Walter tells him, and Walter tells Marian that he is leaving in the cab which brought the note. Marian knows he is going to see Count Fosco and begs Walter to take her with him, even though "she is just a woman," but Walter insists that she stay with Laura and rushes off to take the cab to the Count's house.

Walter does not want to upset Laura by telling her his plans. He absolutely trusts Pesca and believes that he will bring Count Fosco to justice even if Walter cannot. Once again, Marian is frustrated by her position in society, but Walter will not in good conscience put a woman in physical danger and refuses her request.

Walter arrives and approaches Count Fosco's house. As he walks towards it, he sees the foreign stranger from the opera slowly circling the Count's house. The stranger sees Walter and continues on past Count Fosco's house. Walter knocks on the door and tells the servant that he needs to see the Count "on important business." The servant tries to send Walter away, but he persists and is eventually shown into the Count's room.

The foreign man seems to be following and spying on Count Fosco. He tries to hide this from Walter, however, so clearly he does not want his purpose to be known.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 3, CHAPTER 7

Walter finds Count Fosco packing his things. Although the two men have never met, Count Fosco recognizes Walter's name. The Count is unfriendly and seems scattered and shaken by events at the opera; he asks Walter what he wants. Walter asks him why he is leaving London and the Count refuses to tell him. Count Fosco locks the door of the room and sits down in front of it. Walter sees that his hand hovers on the handle of a drawer in the desk beside him.

Walter expects to find Count Fosco charming and composed, as he is described in Marian's diary. Events at the opera, however, have rattled the Count's composure, which gives Walter an idea of just how scared Count Fosco is of the Brotherhood. Count Fosco has a weapon in the desk and blocks the door so that he will have Walter trapped in the room.

Walter tells Count Fosco that he knows the reason he is leaving; the answer, he says, is branded on Count Fosco's left arm. Count Fosco looks horrified by this and he opens to drawer and puts his hands inside. Walter hears the Count drag something along the bottom of the drawer and feels that his life is in danger. The Count tells Walter that he is going to shoot him, but Walter tells him to wait because he has something to ask him. He gives Count Fosco the note from Pesca, and Count Fosco understands that Walter has trapped him.

Walter tells Count Fosco that he knows about the Brotherhood, and intends to use this knowledge against him. The Count's reaction tells Walter that he has guessed correctly. The Count has a gun hidden in the desk, but Walter uses the note to let the Count know that if he kills Walter then he will be killed himself. Through both luck and cleverness, Walter has finally outwitted the Count.

Count Fosco asks Walter what he wants, and Walter tells him that he wants justice for Laura, who is now his wife. The Count seems to find this amusing but becomes worried when Walter mentions the ten thousand pounds which the Count received for helping Sir Percival. Walter scornfully tells him that he doesn't want the money back, he simply wants proof of the date when Laura came to London from Blackwater.

Count Fosco is scornful at the idea of justice and does not believe that it will apply to him. As he only cares about money and power, he judges Walter by the same standard and believes that Walter has married Laura for her fortune. Count Fosco's testament is Laura's last chance to prove her identity.

Count Fosco agrees to this on three conditions. First, he and Madame Fosco are to be allowed to leave the house freely when the letter of proof is written. Second, Walter is to send a messenger to bring the letter which Walter sent to Pesca back unopened, so that he will know that no assassin has been dispatched against him. Third, that, at a future time, he will write to Walter and invite him to duel as punishment for his impudent behavior.

As Pesca has been ordered not to open the letter until the next morning, he will have no reason to come after Count Fosco until he has seen the note. If it is returned unopened, Count Fosco will take this as evidence that no one is coming after him.

Walter agrees, on the condition that the letter he sent to Count Fosco is "destroyed unopened in his presence." This way Count Fosco will not be able to send The Brotherhood after Pesca for revealing their secret. For a moment, Walter has his doubts about accepting these conditions, which will allow Count Fosco to go free, but then he remembers that, although he did not personally punish Sir Percival, Sir Percival was still punished, and he decides to trust to fate.

Walter wants the note destroyed as, this way, Count Fosco will have no proof that Pesca has betrayed the Brotherhood by telling Walter about them and Count Fosco cannot use this against Pesca at a future time. Like Laura and Marian, Walter believes that "crime causes its own detection" and that eventually Count Fosco will give himself away, as Sir Percival did.

These terms agreed, Count Fosco suddenly seems quite cheerful and calls to his wife to make him coffee while he writes the letter for Walter. Walter is impressed by Count Fosco's mental strength, even though he hates him. Madame Fosco brings in the coffee and Count Fosco sits down to pen his narrative.

Walter experiences a similar reaction as Marian to Count Fosco. Although he despises him, he must acknowledge that the Count is an extremely powerful personality and has a very strong will.

Count Fosco finishes his letter at four o' clock in the morning and cheerfully fixes the manuscript together. He also gives Walter the name of the cabman who took Laura from the station when she arrived in London and a letter from Sir Percival to Count Fosco, dated the 26th of July, which tells Count Fosco that Laura has just left for London. The date on Anne Catherick's death certificate is the 25th of July, so this letter proves Laura's identity.

The letter from Sir Percival is effectively a confession of guilt from the two men. It proves that Sir Percival sent his wife, Laura, to London on the 26th of July and, therefore, the woman who died in Count Fosco's house on the 25th of July could not have been Laura.

Count Fosco then tells Walter that he will nap briefly before his departure that morning. He calls Madame Fosco into the room to make sure that Walter does not escape while he is asleep. Madame Fosco tells Walter that, if she had been her husband, she would have killed Walter. Then she begins to quietly read her book. When the Count wakes up, he finishes his packing but suddenly realizes that he cannot take his birds. Walter is amazed to see that the Count looks genuinely distressed by this and takes the time to write to a local zoo about them. He decides to take his mice with him, as he cannot bear to part with them.

Madame Fosco demonstrates her own vicious, unkind nature. It is unclear whether Madame Fosco has been brutalized by her husband or whether she had an unpleasant temperament to begin with, which Count Fosco has exploited and encouraged. The Count's attitude toward his mice and birds is still mysterious and intriguing—though he is devoid of love for other people, he seems to genuinely love his animals.

At dawn, Count Fosco's agent arrives to collect the letter from Pesca. His agent is Monsieur Rubelle, the husband of Mrs. Rubelle who the Count put in charge of Marian during her illness. Monsieur Rubelle returns with the letter unopened and the Count burns it as they agreed.

Monsieur and Mrs. Rubelle are also foreign spies and work for Count Fosco.

Madame Fosco gets into the cab. Count Fosco takes Walter aside for a final word. He warns him not to forget the third condition and that Walter will hear from Count Fosco shortly. Before he leaves, Count Fosco also says that Marian looked ill when he saw her in London and he tasks Walter with looking after Marian, whom the Count says is an "admirable woman."

Again, despite Count Fosco's ruthless and mercenary character, his affection for Marian seems to be genuine, in as far as he is capable of feeling sincere affection for a person other than himself.

As the cab drives away, Walter sees the "stranger from the opera" watching the carriage from the street. Walter goes back into Count Fosco's house to read the manuscript.

The foreigner from the opera is clearly following Count Fosco and only pretended to pass by when Walter saw him earlier that night. He is likely another member of the Brotherhood, sent to kill Fosco for his betrayal.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 4, CHAPTER 1

Count Fosco begins his narrative by saying that he came to England in 1850 on political business but that he cannot tell Walter what this business was. He planned to stay at Blackwater with Madame Fosco, Sir Percival Glyde, and Sir Percival's new wife, Laura. Both Count Fosco and Sir Percival were in desperate need of money and that "any man who is not in need of money must be either very sensible or very rich." He says that they were greeted at Blackwater by Marian, and that he fell in love with her instantly, as though he was a young man again.

Count Fosco's statement about money is evidence of his debauched and amoral lifestyle. Again, his affection for Marian does seem to be genuine, however.

Count Fosco then returns to the subject of money. He and Sir Percival were desperate to get at Laura's fortune but could not do so until her death. Count Fosco also knew that Sir Percival was in a panic about the fact that Anne Catherick was free and had been talking to Laura. Count Fosco did not know the secret which Sir Percival feared but was worried that if Sir Percival was ruined, he would not get access to the ten thousand pounds that Madame Fosco would receive if Laura died. So, Count Fosco began to track down Anne Catherick and accidentally met with Mrs. Clements at the boat house.

Count Fosco has used everyone in the situation to achieve his own ends: to acquire a part of Laura's fortune. He has used Sir Percival to get at Laura, he has used his wife's claim to the fortune to acquire money, and he has used Anne Catherick to protect Sir Percival's, and by extension his own, interests.

Mrs. Clements trusted Count Fosco and took him to see Anne Catherick, who was dying of heart disease. Count Fosco was "electrified" by the similarity between Anne Catherick and Laura and formed a plan to switch their identities. He gave Anne a "stimulant" which would give her the energy to travel to London.

Count Fosco is clearly a very intelligent and opportunistic person. He comes up with plans spontaneously and uses whatever is available to him to his own advantage. He has developed these traits throughout his life of crime and political intrigue.

Count Fosco explains that he is an expert chemist and that he has used this skill several times throughout the conspiracy. He gave medicine to Anne to strengthen her and tried his best to save Marian's life when the doctor, Mr. Dawson, prescribed the wrong drugs. He also admits that Madame Fosco drugged Fanny, Laura's maid, when she tried to carry Marian's letters to London and that he kept Laura anesthetized in London before taking her to the asylum.

It is surprising to learn that, while Count Fosco often used his skill at chemistry for devious means, he genuinely did try to save Marian's life even though she presented a threat to his plans. This seems to prove that he genuinely respected her and enjoyed the challenge of her attempts to foil him.

He told Mrs. Clements to take Anne to London and sent Madame Fosco to follow them there, under the pretense of going to fetch a nurse for Marian. This nurse was their accomplice, Mrs. Rubelle. He then went to see Mr. Fairlie and asked him to write to Marian, inviting her to Limmeridge. He knew that Laura would set out for London if she thought she was following Marian.

It is clear from Count Fosco's confession that he was in control and one step ahead of everyone throughout the conspiracy. Count Fosco is the mastermind behind the plans, while Sir Percival is only his assistant.

When he returned to Blackwater, Count Fosco heard from Mr. Dawson that Marian was well enough to be left with a nurse. The Count then dismissed the doctor to get him out of the way and encouraged Sir Percival to get rid of all the servants, except for Mrs. Michelson and Margaret Poacher. With the help of Madame Fosco, Sir Percival and Count Fosco moved Marian into a separate wing of the house where she would be hidden from Laura. Count Fosco then gave Sir Percival the letter from Mr. Fairlie and, on the 24th of July, he and Madame Fosco set out for London to kidnap Anne Catherick.

This explains the trick played on Mrs. Michelson, who was told that Marian had left the house and was charged with taking Laura to the train station to follow her sister. When Mrs. Michelson returned to the house, she was shocked to find Marian still there.

While Madame Fosco took Mrs. Clements away in a cab—allegedly to see Laura—Count Fosco sent Anne a note which said that Walter Hartright was waiting outside in a carriage to take her to see Laura. Anne left the house and got into this cab. When she was shown into Count Fosco's house—the servants were told that this was Laura—she saw Madame Fosco and became wild with fright. She collapsed on the floor and the doctor was sent for. Count Fosco confesses that he was terrified that Anne would die before Laura had been taken to London and the next day, on the 25th, this fear came true, and Anne passed away.

Anne obviously felt very safe with Walter and Count Fosco exploited this vulnerability against her. Anne is not a stupid person and, although Count Fosco manages to trick her, he also underestimates her, and she immediately suspects a conspiracy. The fright of this realization exacerbates her heart condition, however.

On the 26th, Count Fosco received a letter from Sir Percival which said that Laura was on her way to London. Count Fosco met her at the station and took Anne Catherick's clothes with him for Laura to put on. He sedated her with a bottle of smelling salts and, the next day—on the 27th—took her to the asylum and had her committed under the name of Anne Catherick. He then returned to Limmeridge for Laura's funeral.

It is not clear why Count Fosco kept this letter from Sir Percival, which contains evidence against himself, but it is likely that a man as cunning as Count Fosco would keep a private record of everything so that he could betray Sir Percival and use this evidence against him if he ever needed to.

Count Fosco admits that his weakness in his plan came from his love of Marian. His decision to let her go has led Walter Hartright to also cause Sir Percival's death. He concludes his letter by answering three questions which he suspects Walter might like to ask. Firstly, he says that Madame Fosco's devotion to him is due to the fact that she is his wife and that wives must obey their husbands. Secondly, he tells Walter that if Anne Catherick had not died of natural causes then he would have killed her. And thirdly, he says that he does not feel guilty for his part in things, as he could have killed Laura as well but refrained from doing so. With that, Count Fosco ends his manuscript.

Although Pesca is Count Fosco's direct foil, Marian is Count Fosco's weakness and his downfall in the narrative. Her connection with Walter seals Count Fosco and Sir Percival's fate, which completes the pattern of two criminals engaged in a "trial of skill" with two detectives. Count Fosco realizes that Madame Fosco is obedient to him to an unusual degree, but thinks that this is the way all wives should be. He also displays no guilt for his part in the conspiracy and believes Walter should be grateful to him as he did not simply kill Laura, which would have been easier for him.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 5, CHAPTER 1

Monsieur Rubelle does not return, and Walter leaves Count Fosco's house. The next day, he goes to the cab company that Count Fosco's manuscript gave him the address of and asks about the cab which took Laura and Count Fosco from the station. The cab driver, John Owen, remembers the Count but does not remember Laura. He remembers her name, however, because his wife's name is also "Glyde." Walter takes the evidence from the order book from him and takes this, with Sir Percival's letter and the Count's manuscript, to Mr. Kyrle's office.

Walter now feels he has enough evidence to convince a legal man like Mr. Kyrle and legally establish Laura's identity.

Mr. Kyrle is astonished and, the next morning, he, Walter, Marian, Laura, and John Owen travel to Limmeridge to confront Mr. Fairlie. They agree to leave Laura at Todd's Corner so that she is not upset. Mr. Fairlie gives in easily and immediately agrees to let them reinstate Laura as the heir when they threaten to take him to court. Walter then rounds up everyone who attended Laura's funeral and reads out a declaration which explains the conspiracy and reveals Laura's real identity. The people of the village celebrate Laura's return and the day ends with Laura's name being removed from the tombstone and Anne's name carved there instead.

Mr. Fairlie still only cares about his own convenience and is now as happy to believe that Laura is his niece as he was to reject her when this seemed like it would cause him the least trouble. Laura's identity is publicly reclaimed, which demonstrates that identity is partly the result of who people think someone is as well as a product of their internal character. Anne too is finally commemorated with her true name and receives the recognition she deserves.

As the group travel back to London, Walter thinks that it is lucky that he was not a rich man who could pay a lawyer to solve his case for him as, he thinks, without his own intervention—which led him to Pesca and the true identity of Count Fosco—the case probably never would have been solved.

Walter believes that a lawyer would have accepted a surface explanation of events and would not have been motivated to look beyond the facts and discover the truth of the case. Also, if Walter had been rich, he may have been used to relying on employees to do everything for him and therefore would not have relied on his own initiative, which is what ultimately helps him solve the case. Collins seems to believe that a certain amount of self-reliance is important to stop people from becoming complacent.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 5, CHAPTER 2

Shortly after this, Walter is offered a job as an artist for a newspaper, which he happily accepts. His first job sends him to Paris, and he takes Pesca with him, as Pesca has been in low spirits since the events with Count Fosco. On their last day, Walter returns to Pesca's hotel room and meets the foreign stranger, whom he saw at the opera, leaving Pesca's room. When he goes inside, Pesca seems frightened and begs Walter to leave Paris with him that morning. Walter says that they cannot leave until the afternoon, and Pesca accepts this.

The foreigner is clearly a member of the Brotherhood, and Pesca is unnerved by this brush with his political past.

On his way through Paris that afternoon, returning from his work, Walter passes the morgue and sees a huge crowd gathered outside to see the bodies. He approaches the glass and sees the body of Count Fosco. The Count has been stabbed in the heart and his body dumped in the river. Walter states that justice came for the Count after all, and notes that Madame Fosco spent the rest of her life writing books about her husband's political career.

Count Fosco has been foiled by his encounter with Walter and Pesca. Although neither is personally responsible for the Count's death, their efforts have led the Brotherhood to him and allowed justice to win out. This mirrors Sir Percival's death, which he caused himself, and supports the adage that crime does cause its own detection. Even after the Count's death, Madame Fosco does not reclaim her own identity but dedicates her life to commemorating her husband's.

THE THIRD EPOCH: PART 5, CHAPTER 3

In February of the following year, Laura gives birth to a son. Not long after this, Walter is sent away again on a job for the newspaper and, when he returns, finds the house empty and a note from Marian which tells him that they have gone to Limmeridge House and that he must meet them there.

The return to Limmeridge reflects the restoration of order and the final resolution of the novel. Limmeridge House is the site of the summer house: a symbol of new life, joy, peace, and happiness.

Walter follows on the train and, when he arrives, he finds Marian, Laura, and his son there, happily set up in one of the rooms. He is told that Mr. Fairlie is dead, and Marian happily hands Walter his son and announces that the boy is now the heir of Limmeridge House.

The virtuous characters, who have acted with the best intentions throughout the story, are rewarded by their reinstatement at Limmeridge. Mr. Fairlie, who is outdated and old fashioned in his snobbish and elitist attitudes, dies and makes way for a new generation in which the upper and middle classes are mixed and those who are deserving reap material rewards. This reflects the essentially conservative worldview of many nineteenth-century novels, which supported upward mobility and mingling among the classes within reason, but still felt that wealth and prosperity were the rewards for virtue and hard work rather than accidents of birth or social status.

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