The Woman in White by Wilkie Collins

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(of Clement's Inn, Teacher of Drawing)

This is the story of what a Woman's patience can endure, and what a

Man's resolution can achieve.

If the machinery of the Law could be depended on to fathom every case

of suspicion, and to conduct every process of inquiry, with moderate

assistance only from the lubricating influences of oil of gold, the

events which fill these pages might have claimed their share of the

public attention in a Court of Justice.

But the Law is still, in certain inevitable cases, the pre-engaged

servant of the long purse; and the story is left to be told, for the

first time, in this place. As the Judge might once have heard it, so

the Reader shall hear it now. No circumstance of importance, from the

beginning to the end of the disclosure, shall be related on hearsay

evidence. When the writer of these introductory lines (Walter

Hartright by name) happens to be more closely connected than others

with the incidents to be recorded, he will describe them in his own

person. When his experience fails, he will retire from the position of

narrator; and his task will be continued, from the point at which he

has left it off, by other persons who can speak to the circumstances

under notice from their own knowledge, just as clearly and positively

as he has spoken before them.

Thus, the story here presented will be told by more than one pen, as

the story of an offence against the laws is told in Court by more than

one witness--with the same object, in both cases, to present the truth

always in its most direct and most intelligible aspect; and to trace

the course of one complete series of events, by making the persons who

have been most closely connected with them, at each successive stage,

relate their own experience, word for word.

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

heard first.