From the standpoint of the illustrations, Dickens's last novel, The Mystery of Edwin Drood, could hardly have begun less auspiciously. Dickens doubted the wisdom of appointing his son-in-law, Charles Collins, as the illustrator not because of his ability, but because of his chronic invalidism. In the fall of 1869, however, Collins felt strong enough to undertake the Drood assignment. Meanwhile, Dickens's own premonitions of mortality prompted him to include in his Drood contract a clause promising compensation to the publishers if the novel were not finished. Indeed, the author only completed one-half of the novel he planned, and its first illustrator, who survived him, completed only one design, that for the wrapper. Ironically, however, Collins's single contribution has been examined more closely and discussed more heatedly than any other illustration in all of Dickens's works.

Collins was trained as an artist by his father, a Royal Academy painter whose land and seascapes Dickens himself admired. The son's Pre-Raphaelite tendencies early in his career probably astonished those familiar with his father's conventional canvases, but not those who knew that like Samuel Palmer, this young man felt born out of his time and was more comfortable with anything old. The timid younger Collins was encouraged by mentors like Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais, whose painting of 'Christ in the House of His Parents' Dickens had singled out and derided for what he thought was a sacrilegious literalism and regressive medievalism in his attack on the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1850 (CP, 1: 293-94). Also praised by critics like Ruskin for his "careful" technique, Collins indeed was so meticulous that painting became an unbearable physical and mental effort, and for even longer than his older friend Thackeray, he vacillated between painting and writing, for which he also displayed talent. Meanwhile, he had been introduced to the Dickens circle as the brother of Wilkie Collins with whom the author was becoming more intimate as his older friends either drifted away, became disabled, or died. Charles himself had become friendly with Dickens during the amateur productions of Wilde's plays at Tavistock House. The author must have been relieved when the young artist took over a minor role on short notice in The Frozen Deep, delighted when he sketched Georgina Hogarth playing Lady Grace in The Lighthouse to her satisfaction, and, in more serious moments, stimulated by debating with him religious issues of the day.

Finally, as he neared age thirty, Collins decided to become a man of letters. For his own sake as well as his brother's, Dickens, in his capacity as editor of Household Words and, later, All the Year Round, gave Collins invaluable aid in pursuing his new profession. Collins soon became a regular contributor to All the Year Round, writing features as "Our Eye-witness"; his work was invariably characterized by a self-conscious charm, if not by the variety and credibility that Dickens preferred. Collins became known as one of "Dickens's young men"—a group of rising writers, including George Meredith and Coventry Patmore—whose literary debuts were supported by the author.

The young man not only spent a good deal of time with Dickens, but with his two eldest daughters, especially Kate, to whom he paid particular attention (fig. 187). She, in turn, must have found the tall, slender artist with his striking red hair, blue eyes, and chiseled features attractive; perhaps his chronic timidity and melancholy made her feel needed (fig. 188). They became increasingly intimate while posing for a canvas by Millais (who had become a friend of Dickens's after Charles introduced them in 1855), entitled 'The Black Brunswicker,' which was displayed at the Royal Academy in
1860. Though she lived at Gad’s Hill with her father, whom she adored, and her Aunt Georgina, she also sympathized with her mother and felt her aunt had encouraged her parents’ separation in 1858. Kate became increasingly strained in the house run by Georgina, a factor that probably disposed her to accept Collins’s proposal of marriage, despite her father’s protests.

Dickens found nothing personally objectionable about her suitor, whom he regarded as a good-natured, trustworthy gentleman as well as an accomplished artist and writer. But he sensed that Collins, nearly twelve years older than his twenty-one-year-old daughter and in chronically ill health, was not really ready to settle down, and had not really won Kate’s heart. He also may have guessed, if not known, that his prospective son-in-law was either a homosexual or impotent or both and that the marriage might never be consummated. He barely concealed his misgivings throughout the wedding ceremony at Gad’s Hill in July 1860; and after the couple departed, Mamie discovered her remorseful father alone in her sister’s room, his head buried in her wedding gown. “But for me,” he sobbed, “Katie would not have left home.”

Dickens expected the worst from the marriage. When the couple appeared happy, he acted more surprised than relieved; when either seemed poorly, he appeared more resentful than sympathetic. After the newlyweds’ return from their desultory Continental honeymoon, for example, he observed with an obvious air of disbelief as well as pleasure that his daughter looked well, got on with her husband nicely, and, best of all, was not pregnant. The new Mrs. Collins, meanwhile, continued her own painting and, through Thackeray’s fondness for her husband, which in itself would not have improved matters with Dickens, became intimate with the Thackeray family, an ironic series of coincidences that opened the way for the reconciliation of the two authors. Despite his feelings, Dickens nevertheless did what he could to assist the young couple. He not only concealed from his son-in-law his conviction that he was a better painter than a writer, but he contacted the publisher Murray who agreed to publish Charles’s illustrated book, *Cruise upon Wheels*, which was based on his honeymoon travels, and he continued to display his “Eye-witness” articles prominently in *All the Year Round*. 

![Fig. 187. Marcus Stone, Portrait of Kate Dickens Collins, 1865. Watercolor. 10" × 7½" (25.9 × 19 cm). By permission of Mrs. Stuart Dickens McHugh and by courtesy of the Trustees of the Dickens House Museum.](image1)

![Fig. 188. John Millais, Portrait of Charles Collins, 1850. Black lead. 6½" × 5" (16.5 × 12.7 cm). By permission of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.](image2)
He abandoned a plan, perhaps formed partly in anticipation of Kate’s misery, to visit Australia with Collins, who would have acted as his secretary and helped him write “The Uncommercial Traveller Upside Down.” For it was clear, even to him, that Charles was turning out to be a good provider as well as a fine husband for his daughter.

After 1863, however, Collins’s weak condition justified Dickens’s persistent concern. The author was curiously intolerant of his son-in-law’s illness; indeed, his pessimism about its outcome had the force of hope. Whether the couple recuperated at Gad’s Hill, or resorted to London or to German and French spas in search of better conditions, for instance, Dickens remarked that probably no place would do much good; whenever Collins looked improved, Dickens commented on how exhausted his daughter looked from her ceaseless nursing duties. As the decade wore on, however, Collins was gradually reduced to physical and mental helplessness. When in 1868, to Dickens’s barely veiled chagrin, the continuous crisis abated, his hostility did not. The situation was abhorrent. Collins would clearly never be well again; he was wearing out Kate; and his passive presence may have been an intolerable reminder to the author of his own ill health. Nevertheless, Collins slowly began to improve.

By the fall of 1869 Collins felt strong enough to want to try illustrating his father-in-law’s forthcoming novel, which was to run for only twelve rather than the usual twenty numbers. Dickens no doubt welcomed Collins’s interest. He had always appreciated his artistic ability, thought it augured well for his future, and knew that the money would help relieve the couple’s financial plight. Moreover, it spared the overtaxed author having to search for a new artist for The Mystery of Edwin Drood. Marcus Stone, even if he were still interested in book illustration, would certainly understand Dickens’s choice of Collins; Collins, in fact, had a better reputation among the younger generation of artists than Stone. Browne, even in the unlikely event he was reconsidered, had never fully recovered from his paralytic attack in 1867 and would not have figured as a possibility.

Dickens wholeheartedly encouraged his new illustrator but wisely proceeded with caution. He wanted him to try the cover design first and had the publishers send some old green wrappers from previous novels to help him. He also insisted that Collins be paid at the same rate as Stone; Charles knew the amount, Dickens informed the publishers, and, as it was hoped that he would “do better—instead of worse—it would be unconscionable to offer him less.” Bolstered by Dickens’s rare encouragement, Collins commenced work, which, given his frailties, he probably regarded, as Kitton suggests, as an experiment.

Indeed, of the many designs Collins sketched for Drood, only the one for the wrapper was finished (fig. 189) and, after alteration, utilized (fig. 190). As a Dickens illustrator, he might have passed into oblivion like Robert Buss, had it not been for the author’s death halfway through the new story. The tantalizing questions provoked by the incomplete narrative—was Drood really dead? what happens to Rosa? who is Datchery?—could never be resolved by the text. Frustrated readers, then as now, turned particularly to Collins’s wrapper design and his initial sketch for it for clues, giving it unexpected fame. Although the only wrappers that are reliable indices to their texts are those for Oliver Twist and A Tale of Two Cities, which were issued in parts only after they had appeared in magazines, few have been dissuaded from microscopically scanning the wrapper for Drood. That most of the wrapper vignettes in this instance could, at best, suggest only scenes not yet written, actions not yet worked out, and characters not yet totally conceived, has only spurred on the would-be detectives. Despite their elaborate efforts, however, the unfinished Mystery remains a mystery.

If Dickens in his maturity became increasingly careful about working out his plot in advance, he also became increasingly cautious about revealing its details to anyone. He did not wish the wrapper design to mislead readers, though it might perplex them; and he could not allow it to restrict his narrative freedom. Accordingly, as Collins explained in 1871, Dickens revealed only “some general outlines for the scheme of Edwin Drood, but at a very early stage in the development of the idea, and what he said bore mainly on the early portions of the tale.” The author, of course, may well have exercised even more discretion than usual to conceal the subtleties of his mystery from Charles, if one of his objectives was to excel the intricate plots of the artist’s brother Wilkie Collins. Twenty years later, Fildes reported that Collins had told him he did not “in the least know the significance of the various groups in the design.” Collins was always self-effacing, however, and Fildes’s memory may have been imperfect, for it is almost inconceivable that Collins was wholly ignorant, for his wrapper depicts key characters and turning points in the plot, whose functions he must have understood to draw them at all. Indeed, though none of the wrapper vignettes finds an exact parallel in the text, each conveys the significance of particular incidents quite accurately. Moreover, as the numbers appeared, they must have shed light on Dickens’s earlier instructions, and Collins should have been better
able than any mere reader to make sense out of his own wrapper design. Hence, Collins's remarks in 1871, only eighteen months after he designed the wrapper, before the floodtide of debate about it was unleashed, must be weighted more seriously.

The sparseness of detail in Collins's much discussed sketch for the wrapper design, together with the angularity of its lines, suggests his hesitation as well as his ill health. He lacked the further knowledge of the plot, as well as self-confidence, to supply additional details. The artist drew the two figures holding back the curtains at the upper corners of his design quite tentatively, although their allegorical significance seems clear enough. The female figure overlooking the romantic scenes, involving women on the left-hand side of the wrapper, represents Love. Her male counterpart, clasping a dagger as he soberly overlooks scenes of suspicion or retribution involving only male characters, represents Hate or Revenge. Surrounding the crudely lettered title, the artist has placed bare branches. One extended branch, however, bears roses—some in bud, others in bloom—interspersed with thorns and wilted petals, suggesting the general love and death themes of the narrative as well as playing on two specifics: the name of the heroine, Rosa Bud, and the name of Bazzard's play, The Thorn of Anxiety.27

Collins displayed surer graphic and dramatic touches in the vignettes surrounding the title. This is particularly evident in the scene occupying the top of the wrapper from which the others move counterclockwise. Edwin and Rosa are seen walking away from Cloisterham Cathedral with their arms linked in a manner appropriate to betrothed lovers, yet Rosa looks away in a manner that suggests alienation from or anger at her fiancé, if not self-consciousness about Jasper's stare. Edwin seems oblivious of Jasper, who has turned away from his choir—and the harmony it represents—to regard the couple with puzzled intensity. That this exact moment is not depicted in the text is not important, for Collins has economically and accurately conveyed the disaffection of the engaged pair, the choirmaster's inordinate interest in both, and, perhaps, their differing consciousness of this interest.

In the two vignettes below and to the left of the cathedral scene, the meaning is clear, but not the identities of the characters involved. In the upper vignette, Collins depicts a graceful, long-haired girl studying the proclamation "LOST" that Jasper has posted after his nephew's disappearance. That the hair style does not resemble that worn by Rosa, or by any other woman described in the text, is tantalizing, but less important than that something or someone is missing. As Collins asserted, "the female figure is only intended to illustrate the doubt entertained by Rosa Bud as to the fate of her lover, Drood," not necessarily Rosa herself.28

No one disputes the artist's contention that, in the lower vignette, the girl sitting on the bench in the Monk's Vineyard is Rosa accepting the attentions of another suitor.29 The identity of her fair-haired suitor, however, is provocative. Edwin, whose moustache is removed in the published wrapper design, might be redundant; Jasper is dark-haired, and Fildes illustrated the scene of his proposal to Rosa, which might have been unnecessary had it already appeared on the wrapper; and Neville's coloring is also dark, though Collins gives him a moustache in one of his trial sketches. The internal logic of the developing narrative suggested to both Charles and Kate Collins that the young man is Tartar in a forthcoming scene.30 Dickens never describes the sailor's appearance in detail, but he makes it clear that Rosa is attracted to him from the first. Fildes's oblique portrayal of Tartar in 'Up the River' (XXII, 247) does not disqualify him from being the suitor in this vignette. The important fact is, as the continual attempts to identify the figure indicate, that Rosa fascinates almost every man in the book, three of whom, besides Tartar, are her declared admirers.

Descending to the left-hand corner, Collins leads the viewer's gaze through a cloud of smoke, billowing from the penny-ink bottle held by the outlined figure of the Opium Woman, to a dramatic tableau at the bottom center of the wrapper. This controversial scene, which suggests a climactic point in the narrative, portrays a confrontation between two figures in a long, narrow passage, probably the cathedral crypt. The light-bearing figure is Jasper, to judge from Collins's representations of him in the top vignette and in two of the trial sketches (see figs. 190, 194). His powerful light, superfluous on the moonlit night of his furtive expedition with Durdles, would be necessary if he were about to retrieve the engagement ring from his nephew, assuming he murdered and then buried him in a quicklime tomb; the ring would be the only means by which Drood could now be identified.

The identity of the man encountered by Jasper is not at all obvious, however. The artist disagreed with those "resurrectionists" who claimed that he is Edwin, or Edwin disguised as Datchery, reaching into his breast pocket for the identifying ring before accounting for his disappearance (and Jasper's part in it, if any). Both Collins and Fildes shared the conviction of all Dickens's family and friends that Drood was dead; to resurrect him, they maintained, would hardly be an innovation for the author of A Tale of Two
Collins's Sketch for the Wrapper of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*

**Known and Conjectured Actions and Identities**

Female allegorical figure of Love.

Edwin and Rosa at their last meeting which Dickens later changed from inside to outside the cathedral.

Poster which Jasper put up advertising loss of Edwin. Actual scene not in published text. Girl might be Rosa or anonymous onlooker with similarly light but longer hair.

Beneath branch of symbolic roses and thorns sits Rosa probably on the bench in the Monk’s Vineyard, scene of her interviews with Edwin and Jasper. The Suitor, whom she seems to accept, is therefore not Edwin (whose moustache removed in final wrapper), nor Jasper (dark hair, stands near sundial); but most likely Tartar.

Princess Puffer, the Opium Woman.

Male allegorical figure of Murder (or Hate, Tragedy, Death, Vengeance).

Jasper, hand at mouth, looks pensively at the young couple. Next to him are choir members or perhaps Crisparkle and Dean.

Probably the pursuit of Drood’s murderer up the winding staircase of the cathedral tower. The top figure, pointing to Jasper, is not identifiable, but is followed by local police.

Ambiguous opium-smoker of masculine size but feminine hair and nightgown-like dress.

The light-bearing figure resembles Jasper above and in Collins’s trial sketch 5. The figure he encounters is probably Bazzard, though his moustache makes him resemble Edwin above or Rosa’s suitor; in any case, he seems distinctly masculine. The sparse diagonal lines emanating from the light suggest a long, narrow passage like the cathedral crypt.

Fig. 189. Charles Collins, Sketch for the Wrapper of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Photograph. 5⅞″ × 3⅞″ (15 × 8.6 cm). By permission of the Trustees of the Dickens House Museum.
Allegorical female figure of Love looks away from scenes sadly.

Unidentified figure behind Edwin and Rosa moved from Rosa's right to Edwin's left in front of diminished cathedral door.

The single branch of roses and thorns has now expanded to surround the title; roses dominate on left-hand side, thorns on right. The letters of the title now resemble carved wood branches.

Durdles' spade, key, and dinner bundle added; doubtless would have been instrumental in plot's resolution.

Opium Woman far better defined.

The man now bearing a lantern, instead of a light, resembles Jasper of Fildes's later illustrations rather than Collins's wrapper sketch or trial illustrations. The other figure, whose face, hair, figure now fuller, moustache removed, probably Datchery but whether Datchery is Bazzard, Helena or Edwin in disguise or a professional investigator is not determinable from this vignette. The increased beams from the lantern better obscure the dark locale.

Fig. 190. Charles Collins, Wrapper for The Mystery of Edwin Drood. The Mystery of Edwin Drood, no. 1. Wood engraving. 9¼" × 5¾" (23.2 × 14.5 cm). By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.
Cities, originally entitled “Recalled to Life,” and Our Mutual Friend, indeed, they believed that the figure was one of the other characters in the narrative, so many of whom lead a double physical and mental life, disguised as Datchery. Except for Inspector Bucket in Bleak House, Dickens preferred amateur sleuths, personally involved with the victims or the villains of his fiction. The fact that the wrapper suggests that so many of Drood’s characters could qualify to be Datchery testifies to the skill of both Dickens and Collins, though it is usually ignored in the heated arguments supporting Neville, Tartar, Grewgious, Bazzard, Helena disguised as a man, or some new character. Collins’s final wrapper design, as well as the published Dickens text, ingeniously lends support at some point to each of these claims.

Passing through another cloud of opium smoke, emitted by a figure whose sex is defined by neither features nor garments, the viewer comes to the two vignettes that ascend the right-hand side of the wrapper. In a scene probably climaxing the physical action of the plot, three policemen, following the lead of a figure energetically pointing upward, mount a winding staircase, presumably the one in the cathedral tower, though it could be the postern stairs of Jasper’s gatehouse. Collins’s inclusion of officers suggests a criminal pursuit, though in the text the townsfolk, not the local police, arrest Neville. The substitution of plainclothesmen in the final wrapper design must have been made on instructions from Dickens, who was trying to use the characters from the story economically, perhaps, or to obscure the status of the chase in the wrapper design.

Even in the published wrapper, however, the identity of the three figures mounting the stairs is not clear. Probably they are more closely connected to the plot than the anonymous townspeople, but Collins could supply few clues as to their individual appearances. Doubtless at this early stage in Drood Dickens had not fully conceived all the minor characters. The two lower pursuers, wearing hats, might be Tartar and Crisparkle, who, according to Collins, eventually marry Rosa and Helena. It would be dramatically fitting for the uppermost, hatless, light-haired figure to be Neville who, the artist claimed, was slated to die pursuing Edwin’s real murderer, but Neville’s swarier coloring is insisted upon in Collins’s trial sketch of him (see fig. 197) as well as in Dickens’s number plans and text. It would be dramatically fitting for the uppermost, hatless, light-haired figure to be Neville who, the artist claimed, was slated to die pursuing Edwin’s real murderer, but Neville’s swarier coloring is insisted upon in Collins’s trial sketch of him (see fig. 197) as well as in Dickens’s number plans and text. It was not simply his work on the wrapper that exhausted Collins, but that in combination with his production of a number of trial sketches for the early scenes in Drood. Between September and November of 1869, he produced not only the wrapper design, but at least eight sketches of four subjects. He doubtless worked from Dickens’s manuscripts or verbal instructions, for the first proofs were not

Yet, even if Jasper does not actually lead the climactic chase, he has long consciously or unconsciously urged it on, doubtless, as Collins suggested, “in an effort to divert suspicion from himself.”

Collins’s first wrapper sketch clearly needed some alterations for aesthetic as well as dramatic reasons. Despite persuasive arguments to the contrary, there is far more first-hand evidence to indicate that the subsequent changes in the published wrapper were made by Collins, not Fildes; and its delicacy is more characteristic of the first artist’s style than the forceful one of his successor. Collins was certainly well enough to round out his many angular figures; to lower the church entrance and diminish its size; to elaborate the title border into a full-scale design of roses and thorns; to give the title letters themselves the depth and dimension of carved wood; and to add Durdles’s key, shovel and bundle beneath them. He certainly would have been capable of turning the allegorical figure of Love away from the scenes below her with an air of sad resignation; replacing her passive male counterpart with a threatening Amazon; converting the ambiguous features and clothing of the opium smoker opposite Princess Puffer into the recognizable ones of Chinaman Jack; and enlarge Edwin’s face in the top vignette and removing his moustache.

Particularly in the bottom vignette, however, other changes were effected, probably in order to promote ambiguity. That Collins darkened Jasper’s hair and expression and gave him a large distinct lantern whose reflected light better obscured the locale is straightforward enough. But by removing the moustache, lengthening the hair, and rounding out both the face and figure of the character Jasper confronts, the artist, no doubt deliberately, made its sex as well as its identity indeterminable. Collins finished his work by changing the police to plainclothesmen, whose identities are similarly indecipherable. The final wrapper design suggested yet preserved the mystery to Dickens’s satisfaction; presumably the vignettes do not deliberately mislead the reader, but neither do they reveal crucial secrets. Pronouncing the design “excellent,” “charming,” and undeniably worth its £10 cost, Dickens preserved it in its essentials, if not in every detail, even after he engaged a new illustrator.

It was not simply his work on the wrapper that exhausted Collins, but that in combination with his production of a number of trial sketches for the early scenes in Drood.
ready until December, by which time Collins had given up his efforts to do the illustrations. The similarity in subjects, if not style, between the illustrations of Collins and those of Fildes suggests either that Dickens previously designated which scenes were to be illustrated, or that the second illustrator, for the most part, simply followed the lead of the first.

On the whole, Collins's trial sketches were disappointing dramatically. His two complete sketches of the opium den, for example, despite its wonderful pictorial potential and Dickens's vivid first-hand description of it (I, 1–5), are dull. In both finished versions (figs. 191 and 192), Collins features Jasper in the den with the opium woman, the Chinaman, and the Lascar: in one, he stands apart as if apprehensive about his exotic but disreputable companions; in the other, he more forcefully bends over the slanted bed toward them. In a third unfinished study—previously noted but never before reproduced—which is clearly related to the latter portrayal of the opium den scene, Jasper focuses intently on the Princess Puffer who looks demurely away from him (fig. 193). The Choirmaster's slightly bent figure here stands free of the frame and his semi-profile hints at a moustache, but in yet another fuller profile drawn on the same sheet, he is bare-faced once again as well as unusually expressionless. In all three sketches, the vacillations about Jasper's hair length, moustache, facial expression, and position, as well as body placement and posture, suggest that Collins had far greater difficulty than Fildes (fig. 194) in visualizing Dickens's complex hero-villain. Moreover, the opium smokers, with their graceful postures and effete faces, fail to convey any sense of their misery or degradation, and the Princess Puffer suggests a meek almswoman rather than the menacing hag Dickens described from the first.

To judge from their completeness of detail and superior finish, Collins was more comfortable with his next trio of related sketches, all focusing on a chat between the Dean and Crisparkle but varying in interesting particulars. In the least finished sketch, clearly done without benefit of the text, a behatted Jasper is seen in the background, walking with Tope or an unidentified chorister, toward his gatehouse near the cathedral tower. In a later textually accurate sketch, Tope lingers near, as does a dog, while the Dean and Crisparkle converse, and only Jasper's gatehouse appears in the background. In what appears to be the last sketch, the Verger actively gesticulates, the dog disappears, and the gatehouse looms more prominently behind the three men. Dickens, as Margaret Cardwell suggests, probably relegated this less dramatic subject to a later number where the more eccentric Sapsea and Durdles could be added (XII, facing p. 128); at this point in the story he wisely inserted a Fildes illustration of Rosa and Edwin (III, facing p. 28) both to offset the disturbing effect of the opening illustration of the opium den (see fig. 194) and to attract readers to the young couple from the onset.

Collins failed to meet the challenges inherent in the Crisparkle dinner party scene honoring the philanthropist Mr. Honeythunder and his wards from Ceylon, Neville and Helena Landless. In one of his two extant sketches, the artist statically depicts the group gathered around the dinner table in formal dress; in the other, the piano scene in which Jasper frightens his pupil, Rosa, Collins remains unable to arrange the many characters in a way that would extract the many strands of physical and psychic tension as does Fildes in 'At the Piano' (VII, 65).

Collins's sketches, more than his wrapper design, betray an uncertainty as to concept and a rigidity of line that cannot be wholly attributed to his lack of text and health or even his understandable tentativeness about this assignment. It would have been in character for the artist to have far more difficulty satisfying himself than even his exacting father-in-law. Ultimately, in the face of such mental strain as well as his physical debilitation, Collins's strength gave out and he could not continue to work. Dickens seemed sincerely regretful when he was forced to inform the publishers in late November that: "Charley Collins finds that the sitting down to draw brings back all the worst symptoms of the old illness that occasioned his old pursuit of painting; and here we are suddenly without an Illustrator! We will use his cover of course, but he gives in altogether as to further subjects." Interestingly, it was Millais, butt of Dickens's criticism of the Pre-Raphaelites, but now a friend of the author as well as of the artist, who found a replacement, Luke Fildes, whose dramatic use of light and line reflected all the youthful flexibility and vitality Charles lacked.

"No man," Forster observed of Collins, "disappointed so many reasonable hopes with so little fault or failure of his own." Nevertheless, Dickens, now that nothing further could be gained or hoped for from Collins professionally, was unable to conceal his renewed distaste for his son-in-law. Though plagued by his own poor health, the author could not understand an illness that led neither to recovery nor to death; nor could he understand Collins's endurance of it. Having long worried that his daughter's health was endangered by the double strain of nursing her husband and supporting them both by her painting, Dickens now seemed openly bent on Charles's death. At meals, a friend reported, he would look at Collins as if to say "Astonishing you should be here today, but tomorrow you will be in your chamber never to come out again." Such hostility was not lost on
Fig. 191 (top). Charles Collins, Sketch for the Opium Den Scene. Black ink, pen, and pencil. 3 3/4" × 6 1/2" (9.9 × 16.5 cm). Fig. 192 (bottom). Charles Collins, Sketch for the Opium Den Scene. Black ink, pen, and pencil. 3 3/4" × 6" (9.5 × 15.2 cm). Both by permission of Captain Peter Dickens.
Fig. 193 (top). Charles Collins, Unpublished Sketch for the Opium Den Scene. Black ink and pencil. 7¼" x 5¾" (18 x 13.7 cm) [sheet]. By permission of Captain Peter Dickens. Fig. 194 (bottom). Luke Fildes, 'In the Court.' The Mystery of Edwin Drood, no. 1. Wood engraving. 3¾" x 6¼" (10 x 15.9 cm). By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.
Wilkie Collins, and it, together with his own literary success at this time, further estranged him from Dickens; Charles, however, endured this treatment, like his illness, without complaint and, ironically, outlived his father-in-law by three years. Indeed, Collins sincerely mourned Dickens's death in 1870 and wrote an affectionate description to accompany Fildes's famous picture of Dickens's Gad's Hill library (see fig. 199). Yet tensions involving him did not abate after the decease of his father-in-law, for Kate, interestingly, preferred to grieve with her aunt and older sister in Gad's Hill, which impelled Collins to seek refuge with Leslie Stephen. The author would have been pleased to know that, after Collins's death at the age of forty-five in 1873, Kate happily remarried a healthier if less potentially gifted artist, Carlo Perugini. Collins, however, must not have been altogether gratified by the peculiar kind of immortality he had even by then attained by virtue of his association with *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. 