Mathew Franklin Whittier and Abby Poyen Whittier's Proposed Original Authorship of "A Christmas Carol"

The theory presented herein is admittedly controversial: that Charles Dickens popularized "A Christmas Carol," but was not the original author. This deeply-buried secret was revealed in perhaps the only way it could have been—by proceeding from the solution. An 11-year study of the real co-authors led from one clue to another, until Dickens' subterfuge was confirmed by a preponderance of the evidence, as well as by several startling discoveries.

There is far too much evidence to present all of it in depth. We will briefly consider five basic elements of the theory: evidence that Charles Dickens was an extremely unlikely personality to have authored "A Christmas Carol"; evidence that the proposed American authors, Mathew Franklin Whittier and his wife Abby Poyen Whittier, were extremely *likely* personalities to have written it; evidence embedded in Dickens' own handwritten draft that he diluted an existing manuscript for public consumption (especially concerning spirituality); evidence that Mathew and Abby had written extremely on-point precursor works, prior to Dickens' publication of the "Carol"; and evidence demonstrating a plausible path for the manuscript's transference to Dickens. This analysis will not focus on style comparison, because Mathew Whittier admired Dickens[1]—notwithstanding that he began publishing several years earlier.[2] There is even a possible route whereby Dickens could have read Mathew's work in the early 1830's, which further complicates the question of who may have influenced whom. Evidence exists indicating that Mathew was editing the New York "Constellation" in the years 1830-32, which newspaper would have been accessible in London—and this is before Dickens began publishing. Finally, in order to compare M.F. Whittier's early work with the "Carol," one would have to first establish that it was, in fact, his own work (inasmuch as he published under a great many pseudonyms). That, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

The following will be an overview of these five elements, illustrating key points and providing examples of the evidence for each. This is not intended to be comprehensive.

"A Christmas Carol" was presented to the public (and originally subtitled) as "A Ghost Story of Christmas." The impression was given that this was a tale conveying the themes of the season in a general, nondenominational way, having been "spiced up" by incidentally framing it within a ghost story, i.e., as paranormal entertainment.[3] Nothing could be further from the truth. No such story could have inspired generations around the globe as "A Christmas Carol" has done. This novella was deliberately written in the redemption genre, crafted to bring each reader vicariously through a spiritual conversion experience. Each chapter—as conceived by Abby Poyen Whittier, an esoteric philosopher and an accomplished musician—was a "stave," i.e., a rung, on a figurative ladder leading toward that experience. Those who have deeply studied mystical and paranormal teachings, will immediately recognize that the story was originally written as Bruce Joel Rubin wrote the film "Ghost," such that all portrayals of occult and paranormal phenomena (as Rubin personally communicated to the author) were intended to be authentic. Dickens was, relatively-speaking, ignorant of these subjects. Furthermore, his personal character is being increasingly revealed as substandard. A strong case can be made that he was a plagiarist,[4] that he had a long-time affair,[5] that he made his wife Catherine feel she was crazy whenever she dared

question his faithfulness, and that he attempted to have her committed to an insane asylum[6] (ostensibly to facilitate the affair). Nor was he particularly religious or spiritually-inclined.[7] Toward the end of his life, he became obsessed with publicly (and privately) enacting the murder of Nancy by Bill Sykes, from "Oliver Twist," playing both parts with such fervor that it threatened his health.[8] Thus, left to his own devices, he was drawn to the most depraved expressions of human nature, rather than the most refined. Based on the foregoing, one may justifiably conclude that he may well have assumed the persona of a social reformer the way large corporations engage in philanthropy—as branding, and to increase the "bottom line."

Those authentic occult and metaphysical teachings which are clearly evident in "A Christmas Carol" include earthbound spirits (as represented by Marley's ghost); the question as to the conditions under which such spirits can be perceived by human beings; the intense remorse experienced by these spirits; the principle that more advanced spiritual beings possess a higher degree of vibration; the phenomenon of levitation, specifically, when one's level of vibration is raised by contact with an advanced spiritual being ("bear but a touch of my hand *there*"); the law of karma ("I wear the chain I forged I life"); the life review (as when Scrooge revisits scenes of his childhood); the universality of salvation ("God bless us, every one!"); spirit guides; and, of course the turning of the heart or conversion. We note that in the "Carol," the latter is clearly spiritual and not merely secular, but is nonetheless not confined to Christian doctrine—meaning, it was originally written as esoteric spirituality. This is in sharp contrast to Dickens' other Christmas stories which, to the eye knowledgeable about these subjects, contain a hodge-podge of imaginative elements. Thus, "A Christmas Carol" is spiritual, but not exclusively Christian, while Dickens' Christmas productions are feel-good ghost stories. The first is supra-religious; the latter are sub-religious, or essentially secular.

The radical insight now emerges, that Dickens has taken someone else's supra-religious work of esoteric spirituality, watered it down for popular consumption, and presented it as the type of secular ghost story that he, himself, can write. The proof of this is that deeply embedded within "A Christmas Carol" are authentic occult and metaphysical teachings, as well as *heart*; while, given Dickens' scant knowledge of these subjects and his (actual) personal character, he could not possibly have been the original author.

The foregoing should be convincing in itself, but for our sample evidence we turn to Dickens' own explanation of how he supposedly wrote a spiritual world classic within six weeks. In a note to Prof. Cornelius Conway Felton, presenting a complimentary copy of "A Christmas Carol," he writes:

> Now if instantly on the receipt of this you will send a free and independent citizen down to the Cunard wharf at Boston, you will find that Captain Hewitt of the Britannia Steamship (my ship) has a small parcel for Professor Felton of Cambridge; and in that parcel you will find a Christmas Carol in prose; being a short story of Christmas by Charles Dickens. Over which Christmas Carol Charles Dickens wept and laughed and wept again, and excited himself in a most extraordinary manner in the composition; and thinking whereof, he walked about the black streets of London, fifteen and twenty miles, many a night when all the sober folks had gone to bed.[9]

Firstly, this is manifestly theatrical. It is precisely what a worldly actor would say, when imagining how a genuinely inspired spiritual author would behave under the circumstances. Secondly, it's logistically impractical, if not impossible. "Many a night" arguably translates to several times per week, over a period of six weeks. Assuming three nights per week for six weeks, at 20 miles per walk, this comes to 420 miles. But the "black streets of London" were dangerous, and (obviously) poorly lit. Even if ideas were generated on such jaunts, they would be awkward to jot down. A couple of excursions are plausible—420 miles is not. One might suggest that Dickens has exaggerated, but the reader must keep in mind that a plagiarist is very often obligated to concoct *some* explanation. Dickens knew full-well that six weeks is barely long enough for a competent author to re-work a novella. But he had to explain how he actually *composed* so powerful a work within so short a time. His solution was to give the impression that he wrote in a frenzy of inspiration, like Handel composing "The Messiah"; but if one sets aside the myth of Dickens and considers him as one would any person in this situation, his explanation is far more plausible as a grandiose lie than as the truth.

If this explanation is a lie, however, Dickens' claim to the "Carol" falls apart, because this one assertion is the cornerstone on which the entire edifice rests. Which is to say, if he did not, in fact, write "A Christmas Carol" in an exalted state of spiritual excitement as described, then the obvious alternative is that he hurriedly re-worked an existing manuscript to avoid impending debt, and then told a theatrical lie to cover his deception.

The second element under consideration is that American couple Mathew and Abby Whittier are far more plausibly the original authors. According to this author's research, both were child prodigies, and both wrote anonymously. Mathew began publishing in major literary newspapers at age 12, in 1825, and his career continued until 1875. His work was plagiarized by a number of different authors, providing some of them with literary careers and making a few of them famous. He nonetheless remained in the background, never publicly defending his work when it was stolen or attributed to others, partly because of his deep involvement in the abolitionist cause. Abby began writing sophisticated poetry, including on metaphysical and spiritual topics, at age 14, and a number of her short stories have been identified, as well. Her work, also, brought at least one plagiarist—Albert Pike, who appears to have been her classroom teacher in 1830—brief, undeserved fame as a poet.[10]

Daniel Royot views Mathew, the younger brother of Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier, as a "nihilist." Concerning Mathew's known character, "Ethan Spike," he opines: "The Ethan Spike letters express a consistently hilarious nihilism." He also inexplicably states as fact, referring to Mathew: "Unlike his brother, John Greenleaf, he did not explore holiness and spiritual truth…"[11] However, there is abundant evidence that Mathew was both a Stoic philosopher and an esoteric Christian. Abby, first cousin to mesmerist Charles Poyen,[12] was deeply spiritual, and moreover evinced a keen understanding of the paranormal and the "Perennial Philosophy." Both she and Mathew were of exemplary character and high ideals (although Mathew struggled with alcohol during certain periods of his life). Both passionately advocated for the disadvantaged. Mathew wrote specifically against debtors' prison, and attempted to extricate at least one deserving person from its clutches.

In Dickens' handwritten draft, preserved by the Morgan Library and Museum, is demonstrable evidence of Dickens having diluted the original author's metaphysical prose. For example, in the published "Carol," we see the following speech given by the "Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come":

> Oh cold, cold, rigid, dreadful Death, set up thine altar here, and dress it with such terrors as thou hast at thy command: for this is thy dominion! But of the loved, revered, and honoured head, thou canst not turn one hair to thy dread purposes, or make one feature odious. It is not that the hand is heavy and will fall down when released; it is not that the heart and pulse are still; but that the hand was open, generous, and true; the heart brave, warm, and tender; and the pulse a man's. Strike, Shadow, strike! And see his good deeds springing from the wound, to sow the world with life immortal!

This, by the way, would be typical of Abby Poyen Whittier's writing, and to those perceptive in such matters, it is clearly the work of a person who is deeply convinced of the victory of the spirit. Note that this figure, as written by Abby, is entirely inconsistent with his distinct resemblance to the Grim Reaper, as found in the published illustration. More importantly, however, one can discern, in the handwritten draft, that the closing statement in the above-quoted excerpt originally read "his soul set free immortal!" This phrase is strongly suggestive of the Vedantic principle of "Mukti," or Liberation; whereas Dickens' revision, "to sow the world with life immortal," is high-sounding but meaningless. If one analyzes it closely, it is not even consistent with Christian theology, because only Christ's death on the cross has the power to "sow the world with life immortal." No such claim could be made concerning an ordinary man's death, however noble. Therefore, Dickens has simply substituted a phrase which he thinks will sound vaguely religious, and yet not offend anyone.

This state of affairs is oxymoronic, inasmuch as the deeply spiritual person who wrote the original phrase would never have watered it down in this manner, on principle. Therefore, Charles Dickens, who obviously did water it down, could not possibly have been the original author of this paragraph.

Secondly, there is the portrayal of the "Spirit of Christmas Present," which is inconsistent with the spiritual beings found throughout the remainder of the novella. Abby would have conceived of them as "spirit guides," and as a result, they would not have been much different from what persons are generally found to be. Apparently, they were not different enough for Dickens, and as they were entirely fanciful beings to him, he might as well change up the second one. But Abby was a proper, refined Victorian young lady, and there is evidence suggesting she was a vegetarian. She would never have conceptualized the second Spirit as a bare-chested giant surrounded by meat dishes! However, in the scene which immediately follows, where we find Scrooge and this Spirit in a market, only fruits and vegetables are sold. This suggests that for the sake of public appeal Dickens saw fit to re-cast the second Spirit as a giant, not bothering to make his revision consistent even with the next scene, no less with the story as a whole. This gives us some idea of the lack of respect he may have had for the entire work.

Dickens' sloppiness is most evident in the scene featuring the future Cratchit family, in which Tiny Tim has died and been buried—or has he? If one studies the narrative closely, the inescapable conclusion is that the "child" which Bob Cratchit visits in an upstairs room "lighted

cheerfully, and hung with Christmas" is not the corpse of Tiny Tim lying in state, but was intended, by Abby—who was raised French Catholic—to be the Christ Child in the family crèche! By rendering "child" in lower case (it plausibly appears capitalized in the draft), Dickens betrayed his plagiarism, as well as his atheism. A devout Christian would never secularize this scene.

Abby would have made it quite clear in the original that the room was "lighted cheerfully," because this was a shrine. And that is also why there is the hint that other family members have likewise found solace, sitting next to the Christ Child and praying to Him about their loss. One can discern it clearly even in Dickens' revised text, if one knows what to look for. In the quote, below, "Child" has been capitalized so as to restore the original meaning:

> He left the room, and went up-stairs into the room above, which was lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas. There was a chair set close beside the Child, and there were signs of some one having been there, lately. Poor Bob sat down in it, and when he had thought a little and composed himself, he kissed the little face. He was reconciled to what had happened, and went down again quite happy.

Note that in Abby's original text, "little face" would not have have been merely a fond affectation—it would be quite literal, inasmuch as the figure in the creche may not have been fully life-size.

Dickens' inference appears to be that Cratchit is seated beside the body of his son, which is lying in state. But logistically, this cannot be, because—aside from the fact that it is nothing short of macabre, and completely inconsistent with the author's characterization of the room—according to the text, itself, too much time would have elapsed. Speaking of his father, who has lingered at Tiny Tim's grave on his way home from work, the eldest son, Peter, remarks:

> "But I think he has walked a little slower than he used, these few last evenings, mother."

The word "few" must always designate at least three, so it has been at least three days since Tiny Tim's death. Perhaps more. Bob Cratchit has been inexplicably (and thoughtlessly) avoiding returning home to his family—as well as to the corpse of Tiny Tim—by lingering at the empty grave. And then, once he does return, we have the absurdity that in a room "cheerfully lighted for Christmas," he composes himself and reconciles himself to his loss, by thinking a little and then kissing the now-decaying corpse of his son which has lain too long in state, not in the parlor as was customary, but upstairs.

This cannot possibly have been the original author's intention, but as Dickens has rushed to truncate and "pasteurize" this story in time for publication, removing all hints of Abby's Catholicism, he has given us no choice but to interpret it that way—creating a veritable monster in the process.

For the following evidence, concerning precursor works written by Mathew Franklin Whittier and Abby Poyen Whittier before the publication of "A Christmas Carol," certain facts must be

assumed, although they been addressed by the author in other books and papers.[13] Firstly, the reader must understand that in early 1848, a large amount of material was dishonestly appropriated from Mathew's unpublished portfolio, going back to at least 1830, by Francis A. Durivage and his partner, George P. Burnham. The second working assumption is that Mathew published a series of Abby's short stories posthumously, in the 1849/50 Boston "Weekly Museum."

Mathew wrote a number of works which are directly relevant to "A Christmas Carol," but none are quite so on-point as a story entitled "The New Year's Bells." This tale is found as the next-to-last offering in a compilation published by Francis Durivage in 1853, entitled "The Three Brides, Love in a Cottage, and Other Tales."[14] A close study of this story indicates so many points of direct comparison, that there is little doubt that it and the "Carol" are connected, and that one had to have been based on the other. Which is to say, mere coincidence is out of the question, here. Our two choices are that Durivage blatantly plagiarized "A Christmas Carol"; or else, that Durivage plagiarized Mathew Franklin Whittier. But M.F. Whittier prided himself on his originality. Furthermore, the style of this story is consistent with his work in his late teens and early 20's, around 1830. This would put it over a decade before the publication of the "Carol."

The inescapable conclusion, when all the facts are considered, is that "The New Year's Bells," having been written by M.F. Whittier around 1830, was used as a starting point—if not actually a template—when he and Abby began working on "A Christmas Carol," probably in the fall of 1838.

Some concrete examples are in order. The plot of "The New Year's Bells" concerns a miser named "Israel Wurm," and his poverty-stricken elderly tenant, the widow Mrs. Redman. It so-happens that her late husband had been boyhood friends with Mr. Wurm, when their fortunes were reversed and young Redman was quite generous with him. Mr. Wurm arrives at Mrs. Redman's cottage on New Year's Eve, demanding the rent and threatening eviction of herself and her children, despite the bitter weather.

On his return home, however, he passes through a cemetery, and in the bitter cold falls asleep on one of the graves:

> Suddenly he saw before him the well-known figure of the old sexton of the village, busily occupied in digging a grave. The winter had passed away; it was now midsummer. The birds were singing in the trees, and from the far green meadows sounded the low of cattle, and the tinkling of sheep bells. Even the graveyard looked no longer desolate, for on many of the little hillocks bright flowers were springing into bloom and verdure, attesting the affection that outlived death, and decorating with living bloom the precincts of decay.
>
> "My friend, for whom are you digging that grave?" asked Israel.
>
> The sexton looked up from his work, but did not seem to recognize the spokesman.

> “For a man that died last night; he is to be buried to-day.”
>
> “Methinks this haste is somewhat indecorous,” said Israel Wurm.
>
> “O, for the matter of that,” said the sexton, “the sooner this fellow's out of the way the better. There's nobody to mourn for him.”
>
> “Is he a pauper, then?”
>
> “O no! he was immensely rich.”
>
> “And had he no relations—no friends?”
>
> “For relations, he had a nephew, who inherits all his property. The young dog will make the money fly, I tell you. As for friends, he had none. The poor dreaded him—the good despised him; for he was a hardhearted, selfish, griping man. In a word, he was a MISER,” said the sexton.
>
> “A miser,” faltered the trembling dreamer; “what was his name?”
>
> “Israel Wurm,” replied the sexton.

The direct correspondences continue, as Israel Wurm is magically transported to a scene in his past. Suddenly, he is once again with his boyhood friend, who will become the widow Redman’s husband:

> Graveyard and sexton faded away; in their place arose a splendid grove of trees—a clearing—a village school house. Two boys were sauntering along the roadside, engaged in serious, childish talk. One was fair, with golden locks; the other dark-haired and grave of aspect. Israel started, for in the latter he recognized himself—a boy of fifty years ago.
>
> “Israel,” said the golden-haired boy, “it's 'lection day to-morrow; we'll hire Browning's horse and chaise, and go to Boston, and have a grand time on the Common, seeing all the shows.”
>
> “You forget, Mark,” said the dark-haired boy, sadly, “that I have no money.”
>
> “What of that?” replied the other; “I have a pocket full; and what's mine is yours, you know. Come, cheer up, you'll one day he as rich as I am; and then it will be your turn to treat, you know. I can afford to be generous, and so would you be, if you had the means.”
>
> Then the shadow passed from the face of the dark-haired boy, and a smile lighted up his countenance, and the two schoolfellows passed on their way together.

The third dream, which would have reflected young Mathew's fascination with science and technology, has Israel Wurm transported into the audience of a lecture in which a powerful microscope is being demonstrated. After displaying the image of a fly's proboscis, to the audience's disappointment the next image is entirely blank:

> "Now, ladies and gentlemen," said the voice, "look well to the illuminated screen. What do you see now?"
>
> "Nothing!" was the universal and indignant answer.
>
> "I thought so," replied the voice. "Yet you have before you a miser's soul magnified five thousand times; a million such would not produce an image on the screen."

Finally, Israel Wurm finds himself in Hell:

> The illuminated disk grew dark and disappeared; then a lurid light seemed to fill all space; and soon huge billows of flames rolled upward, and writhed and twisted together like a myriad of gigantic serpents. Shrieks and howls of anguish issued from the fiery mass, but above all was heard the startling clangor of a bell.

He is roused from sleep by several concerned villagers, and having narrowly escaped death, he is transformed. In a scene distinctly reminiscent of Ebenezer Scrooge's post-visitation redemption, he instructs that provisions be sent to the widow:

> "I was overcome by drowsiness," answered Israel. "I was very cold; I'd been to make a call on Widow Redman, and the poor soul was out of wood. By the way, farmer, the first thing after sunrise, I want you to be sure to gear up your ox team, and take a cord of your best hickory and pitch pine to the widow."
>
> "And who'll pay me?" asked the farmer, doubtfully.
>
> "I will, to be sure," answered Israel. "Have not I got money enough? Here—hold your hand;" and he put a handful of silver in the farmer's honest palm. "And you, Mr. Wilkins," he added, addressing the butcher, "take her the best turkey you've got, and half a pig, with my compliments, and a happy new year to her."
>
> "And how about that execution?" asked the constable, who was round with the rest, 'seeing the old year out and the new year in.'
>
> "Confound the execution! Don't let me hear another word about it," said Israel, magnanimously. "And now, neighbors," he added, "I owe you something for your good wishes; come along with me to the Golden Lion, and I'll give you the best supper the tavern affords. Hurrah! New year don't come but once in a twelvemonth."

But it is in the concluding paragraph that we find a nearly word-for-word correspondence. That is, a correspondence with the next-to-last paragraph of "A Christmas Carol," which arguably was

the original conclusion. The author—whom I take to be 18-year-old Mathew Franklin Whittier—writes:

> Israel was as good as his word, and never relapsed into his old habits. The widow and the orphan children were provided for by his bounty; he gave liberally to every object of charity. Hospitals, schools, and colleges were the recipients of his bounty; and when he died, in the fulness of years, the blessings of old and young followed him to his last resting-place in the old churchyard where he had dreamed the mysterious dream, and been awakened to a better life by the pealing of the NEW YEAR'S BELLS.

Compare the above with the corresponding paragraph from "A Christmas Carol":

> Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.

It so happens that this was not the only time that Mathew—who liked to hone and re-use his favorite literary elements—had written a similar ending. Another one, evidently stolen from Mathew by Durivage and published in the April 21, 1855 edition of "Ballou's Pictorial," is entitled "A Story of Old Times." It features a retired New York merchant named Harmann Brinkerhoff, who is wealthy, vain, proud and stubborn, being what we would call, today, a "control freak." His son, Nicholas, is "as unlike his father as possible." At the conclusion of the story, the elder Brinkerhoff undergoes a complete transformation of character when, having thought his son was dead, he discovers he is alive and well. Mathew writes:

> He was as good as his word, and from a miserly, surly old curmudgeon, Harmann Brinkerhoff became, to the astonishment of all who knew him, one of the most genial of the Kinckerbockers.

Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing the exact date of authorship, but once again, this is typical of Mathew's early work. Perhaps, given that it seems the least developed of the three, it was written even before "Israel Wurm." It probably dates back to around 1829.

Francis Durivage was, in this author's estimation, a plagiarist—but he wasn't stupid enough to write a story with so many elements directly borrowed from a famous work. One suspects he was aware of the problem, however, which explains why he placed it far in the back of his compilation! Actually, Durivage—who later became an associate editor for "Ballou's Pictorial"—seems to have written very little. Almost all of the pieces he took from M.F. Whittier's portfolio appear to have been copied more-or-less verbatim. When he did write on his

own steam, his plots were dark and cold-hearted. He is thus very unlikely to have ever attempted a story in the redemption genre. But once again, M.F. Whittier prided himself on his originality, so he could not possibly have written this story in imitation of "A Christmas Carol." Therefore, he would had to have written it before the "Carol" was published; and here again the style suggests his early work (though perhaps not quite so early as "Brinkerhoff"). Further indicating that this story was written early in Mathew's career, is the fact that in his late teens his productions reflected more ethnic stereotyping than his later work.[15]

Abby Poyen Whittier's influence on "A Christmas Carol" is no less evident. It was Abby who chiefly contributed the spiritual and occult elements, and these are frequently represented in the short stories that her husband began publishing for her some eight years after her death. Note that Abby died on March 27, 1841, so that anything she wrote was completed before Dickens published the "Carol."

Abby, being raised Catholic, had a penchant for creating saintly, mystical or magical heroes—several of them being children. Only one of her stories will be considered here, for purposes of comparison. Several others, however, might do as well.

"Old Alice" appeared in the Aug. 3, 1850 edition of the Boston "Weekly Museum." The authorship is indicated as "By the Author of 'Mary Mahony,' &c." "Mary Mahony," which was printed in the July 14, 1849 edition, was signed with Abby's maiden initials, "A.P.," for Abby Poyen. The story opens by introducing a lonely, eccentric old woman:

> Old Alice was misanthropic, jealous, griping and selfish, better suited, it was said, with sitting down and brooding on some fancied injury, than making glad with the most genial spirits in the universe. But then she was without relatives in the great world, and perhaps these blemishes had grown out of her loneliness, unconsciously. She was a very spinster of the olden time, and alas! that this old maidism has so degenerated; no blue stockings did Alice wear, no high-life airs and monstrous sounding words had she, or hobbies of reform, or theories of woman's rights. She was just a quiet, unpretending being, delighting in set terms and cleanly habits, deeply read in signs and omens, eschewing too much converse and going her solitary way a mark of propriety and order. There was the ancient little lightstand that was regularly arrayed for meals, the one forlorn old chair, one cup and spoon, knife and fork, all telling the one same tale; a "lone woman, indeed;" a "Goody Blake," save, as the neighbors said, they missed the *Goody*, and her name was never Blake, in very earnest.
>
> But the sun shines down on the poor bog just as benignly as on the choicest garden, and the but would have been an unblessed thing indeed if flowers had not bloomed and birds sung about it sometimes as well as everywhere else.

Alice had the habit of amusing herself by telling fantastical stories out loud. One day, she discovers that a little boy named Pat Rody has quietly entered her cabin, and has been listening in rapt attention. She angrily attempts to drive him away, but he returns, and soon they have developed a unique friendship. So much so, that Alice is transformed; but the townspeople interpret that she has cast some kind of spell over him, and they arrest her as a witch. Note the sheer quality of the writing in the following excerpt:

> And there was old Alice, looking out into the stilly twilight, and thinking all was so placid and beautiful that night, she recognized the presence of the angels. It was good, she thought, there had come the breath of childhood into her hut; the old scripture was fulfilled, for the lion of her nature had nestled with the lamb, and a little child had led them. All her soul's harshness was melted into harmony, all her old misanthropy, all jealousy and petty malice and weary dreariness of life were gone, and the lone old creature looked up to the sky and watched the stars as they came out one by one, with a heart softened and lifted up to God as it had never been before. It was sweet to be there listening; she caught the music of the leaves as the evening stole on, peaceful, and low, and holy, and she wandered farther still among the trees. She seemed to feel the breath of the Almighty, and, like the plants, was conscious of renewed life. Farther and farther on she wandered. Poor old Alice! in the midst of it all, the crowd was upon her, and she was seized and carried away to a place of security, almost before she knew of what she was accused. Gossips have preserved the tale, and much as we wish it forgotten, while the trade lasts, old Alice will still be remembered. That night she was locked up, and the room guarded as though she had been a felon. Early in the morning, though, her little friend, spite of all remonstrances, forced his way to see her, followed, however, by his foster parents and a long train of neighbors.

The symbolism is made clear in the writing—this is a Bible-inspired allegory, suggesting that the boy is saint-like, or even Christ-like, and that his love has redeemed Alice—who, herself, begins having mystical experiences. We see, for example, the extremely brief reference, casually tossed off as it were, that God's presence can be felt, and that even plants are conscious! (This, also, is a tenet of authentic mysticism.) Abby had been persecuted for her studies in these matters, so the story is clearly autobiographical. If she was, indeed, the co-author of the "Carol" who introduced these authentic occult elements, she used a freer hand with them in that story than she did in any of her others. For example, palm reading is featured in two of her short stories; but in both instances, the plot provides a normal—and safe—explanation before the close.

We now turn to the question of how the manuscript could have fallen into Dickens' hands. Mathew, moving in the same literary circles as his brother, became friends with Oliver Wendell Holmes as early as 1830 (Holmes' poems frequently appear in the "Constellation," along with those of Mathew's brother, while he is that paper). Holmes was among the young men around Dickens in Boston. Mathew admired Dickens, albeit, as mentioned earlier, he began publishing several years before Dickens did.[16] Mathew would certainly have been invited to the welcome dinner in January of 1842, as one of the 150 young authors in attendance; and Holmes would inevitably have arranged a personal introduction. Abby had died the previous year, and Mathew might have felt he was honoring her memory by handing over the manuscript to a famous author, who could spread her ideas worldwide. Only, he misjudged Dickens' character, not anticipating that Abby's spiritual teachings would be compromised so severely. Inasmuch as Dickens misrepresented himself and took advantage of a naïve fan, never admitting throughout his life that he had not been the original author, his actions were unconscionable—like stealing candy from a baby.

It so happens there is a record of a form letter, signed by Dickens while he was yet on tour in America, thanking Mathew for a letter. The entry reads:

> "*Acknowledging a letter*. Faithfully yours, Charles Dickens." Only the closing and the signature are in Dickens' hand.[17]

Mathew was an exceptional correspondent, as his private letters to his brother, and his many public letters to the editor, attest. Had he written to Dickens, he would have put his whole literary soul into it, and that letter would have deserved far more than a canned acknowledgment. This suggests that he had little respect for Mathew.

Once one takes this premise, that Mathew Franklin Whittier personally handed over to Dickens a collaboration written by himself and his late wife in 1838/39, having been introduced by his long-time friend Oliver Wendell Holmes, the course of events is easy to follow. Dickens, whose "Martin Chuzzlewit" was not being as well received by the public as formerly, was edging ever closer to debt—the very thing he feared most in the world. A great many aspiring authors had given him manuscripts during his American tour, and he decided to go through them searching for ideas. Recognizing the Whittier name, which was well-known in connection with Mathew's brother, John Greenleaf Whittier, he pulled that particular manuscript from the pile. Suddenly he realized it was good—very good—no, extremely good! Having a penchant for ghost stories, and with the Christmas season approaching, he realized he could quickly fashion it into a veritable "crowd pleaser"—he was saved!

The only problem, from his perspective, was that it was too explicit in its religiousity and too overtly Catholic. He would have to water down these religious elements, while sensationalizing the supernatural ones. And he would have to do it quickly, because Christmas was only a few weeks away. He couldn't take the time to render the plot internally consistent—but no-one would notice. Being a worldly man, he didn't recognize the story's spiritual power, and he didn't expect its popularity to last much beyond the Christmas season. What he cared about was that his bank account should escape going into the red.

However, when the novella became unexpectedly famous almost overnight, and so much attention was being focused upon it, he was forced to explain how he could have written so powerful a work so quickly. It wouldn't do to leave the matter to people's own interpretations. So he and his publicist, John Forster, contrived to create an image of himself "walking the black streets of London" in a kind of inspired trance. His fans would believe it—after all, he was the great Charles Dickens!

The above analysis has only scratched the surface of the evidence. This paper is intended to pique the interest of academicians and independent researchers, who may then wish to pursue the matter in more depth.

Footnotes:

1) John B. Pickard, ed., *The Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, Vol. I, pg. 585.

2) Stephen Sakellarios, *The Early Published Work of Child Prodigy Mathew Franklin Whittier*, 2021, *unpublished paper posted to Academia.edu*.

3) John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, 1880, pg. 146.

4) Amanda Claybourne, *The Novel of Purpose: Literature and Social Reform in the Anglo-American World*, 2007, pg. 75.

5) Fred Kaplan, *Dickens: A Biography*, 1988, pg. 376.]

6) John Bowen, "Madness and the Dickens Marriage: A New Source," *The Dickensian*, Spring 2019, No. 507, Vol. 115, Part 1.

7) Fred Kaplan, *Dickens: A Biography*, 1988, pg. 176.

8) Jeanne and Norman Mackenzie, *Dickens: A Life*, 1979, pp. 374-379. See also "Secret Agonies, Hidden Wolves, Leper-Sins: The Personal Pains and Prostitutes of Dickens, Trollope, and Gaskel," a Ph.D. dissertation by Claire Ilene Carly-Miles, 2008, Texas A&M University.

9) Edward P. Payne, *Dickens' Days in Boston*, 1927, p. 84; quoted excerpt of a letter from Charles Dickens to Cornelius Conway Felton, dated Jan. 2, 1844.

10) Stephen Sakellarios: "An Overview of the True Literary Legacy of Mathew Franklin Whittier"; "The Early Published Work of Child Prodigy Mathew Franklin Whittier"; "Following the Bread Crumb Trail: Or, How I Identified Mathew Franklin Whittier's Multitudinous Pseudonyms"; "A (Relatively) Brief Biographical Sketch of 19th-Century Author, Activist and Mystic Mathew Franklin Whittier"; "The Poetic Legacy of Abby Poyen Whittier"; "The Prose Legacy of Abby Poyen Whittier." All of these unpublished papers, written in year 2021, have been posted to Academia.edu.

11) Daniel G. Royot, entry for Matthew Franklin Whittier in *Encyclopedia of American Humorists*, ed. Steven H. Gale, 1988, page 483.

12) Charles Poyen, *Progress of Animal Magnetism in New England*, 1837, pg. 41.

13) Stephen Sakellarios, *Mathew Franklin Whittier in his own words*, e-book, 2011; *Mathew Franklin Whittier in his own world*, e-book, 2018.

14) Francis A. Durivage, *Three Brides, Love in a Cottage, and Other Tales*, evidently published in 1852 or 1853.

15) Stephen Stephen, *Mathew Franklin Whittier in his own words*,"e-book, 2011; *Mathew Franklin Whittier in his own world*, e-book, 2018.

16) Stephen Sakellarios, *The Early Published Work of Child Prodigy Mathew Franklin Whittier*, unpublished paper posted to Academia.edu.

17) Madeline House Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson, eds., Noel C. Peyrouton, assoc. ed., *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, the Pilgrim Edition, Vol. 3, 1842-1843, pg. 76.