***Woman in White***

***Part 1***

***Section 2***

***Chapter 4***

***Summary:***

* Mr. Gilmore heads back to Limmeridge to consult with Mr. Fairlie.
* Mr. Fairlie refuses to make a decision and tells Mr. Gilmore to just do whatever Sir Percival wants.
* Mr. Gilmore is furious and says he'd never let his own daughter get married with a settlement that doesn't protect her or her money.
* But Mr. Gilmore's hands are tied—he has to cave to Sir Percival's demands.

***Detailed Summary Part1Section2Chapter1-4:***

Vincent Gilmore has served as the solicitor for the Fairlie family for thirty years. He arrives at Limmeridge House on Friday, November second, to prepare the marriage settlement on behalf of Laura Fairlie. When he meets with the self-absorbed, ever-ailing Frederick Fairlie on Saturday, Frederick impresses upon him that he will sign whatever he has to when the time comes and that he should not be disturbed until then. Sir Percival's solicitor sends a note to Gilmore that he has received the anonymous letter and Gilmore's inquiry. Gilmore notices that Laura looks pale and depressed and that she avoids talk of Sir Percival. Monday brings Sir Percival's arrival. Sir Percival acts courteously and properly toward the others and does not remark when Laura steals away soon after welcoming him. In private with Gilmore and Marian, Sir Percival brings up the topic of the anonymous letter. He volunteers a noble story that he took great care of Mrs. Catherick and her daughter Anna, for Mrs. Catherick's faithful service to his family. He even placed Anna in an expensive private asylum to avoid disgracing the girl's mother. He offers Gilmore the name of two physicians at the asylum and his keen interest in restoring her to the care of these physicians as soon as possible. Marian questions him further so he insists that she write a letter to Anne's mother asking two questions: 1) If she approved of her daughter's placement in the asylum and 2) Was she grateful for his help in placing her there? Satisfied, Sir Percival goes up to his room leaving Gilmore and Marian to talk. Gilmore presses Marian about whether or not Sir Percival's explanations have settled matters. Marian states that she cannot possibly object based on Sir Percival's explanation and that she thinks that Gilmore's guidance is the best she can desire. Gilmore worries why Marian, an independent, smart woman "one in ten thousand," defers responsibility to him.

On Tuesday, Sir Percival goes to Todd's Corner to interview the family there about Anne Catherick. On Wednesday, a curt letter arrives from Anne's mother Jane Anne Catherick confirming that she approved of her daughter's placement in the asylum and Sir Pervical's part in it. Sir Percival responds to Laura's ill ease by telling Marian that he will withdraw his engagement if Laura requests it. Marian tells Gilmore about the offer and Gilmore becomes all the more convinced that Sir Percival is a gentleman among gentlemen. Gilmore receives a letter calling him back to London. Marian begs Gilmore to meet alone with Laura, so he does. Nina, the greyhound hops in his lap. After talking with her about her possible marriage settlement and her inheritance, he becomes convinced that no matter how great a gentleman Sir Percival is, a marriage between Laura and Sir Percival would destroy the sweet girl.

A week after Gilmore returns to London, he gets a letter from Marian that Laura Fairlie accepts Sir Percival Glyde's proposal for marriage. Gilmore draws up the marriage settlement contract. It stipulates that Laura receives 3,000 pounds income per year for life and upon her death, Sir Percival receives 3,000 pounds per year for his life. If she and Sir Percival have a son, then upon Laura's death, Sir Percival inherits Limmeridge Estate for the son. When Laura turns twenty-one, she inherits 20,000 pounds and a life interest in another 10,000 pounds. On Laura's death, the 20,000 pounds goes to whomever Laura dictates in her will, which is Miss Halcombe, if Laura has no children. Gilmore sends off the marriage settlement to Sir Percival's lawyer, Mr. Merriman. It is returned in two days with the change that the 20,000 pounds would go to Sir Percival if there are no children. Gilmore argues in writing that the change is unacceptable. Deadlocked, Gilmore writes to Frederick Fairlie that Sir Percival's debts and greed motivate him to demand a change to the marriage settlement that is not in Laura Fairlie's best interests. Frederick Fairlie writes back dismissing the whole topic as trivial. When Merriman pressures Gilmore, he asks for a few days to consult his client; then Gilmore heads to Limmeridge Estate to confront Frederick Fairlie. On the way, Gilmore is stopped by Walter Hartright, who asks about the marriage plans, then says he is leaving the country for a while.

Gilmore arrives at Limmeridge and is put off until the next day. When he meets with Frederick Fairlie, he has to demand that the servant holding a heavy art book be excused so they can speak in private. Frederick whines, insisting that the marriage settlement be done according to Sir Percival's demand, basically disinheriting Marian against Laura's wishes. Gilmore is so disgusted he tells Frederick that he would never make such a settlement for his own daughter. He returns to London immediately.

***Analysis Part 1 Section 2 Chapter 1-4:***

Sir Percival charms the solicitor and politely bullies Marian, but he cannot charm the little greyhound Nina, who whines and hides from him when he approaches her and calls her by name. The dog even barks at him when he leaves the room. This hints at Sir Percival's true character because the dog knows him and does not like him. Up until now the dog has been friendly.

Here an honest man is forced to assist in marrying a young girl to a much older man with an agenda that is not in the best interests of the young girl. Nina, the greyhound, serves as a character detector. The dog trusts Gilmore and hides from Sir Percival. The author thus judges the characters without preaching narrative.

The reader learns that Sir Percival is probably marrying Laura for her money and potential inheritance rather than for love. Gilmore's narrative also reveals that Laura's father had a sister, Eleanor, who he essentially cut out of the family fortune because she married a foreigner named Count Fosco. Being a male, he enjoyed the power to cut off his sister financially based on nothing more than his opinion of her husband.

Collins shows Frederick Fairlie's sociopathic tendencies through his treatment of the servant, so the reader is probably not shocked when Fairlie treats his own flesh and blood relative with utter selfishness. Could any reader find Frederick Fairlie a sympathetic character? His migraines and his hypochondria come off as affectations of a selfish man.

***Critical Study Part 1 Section 2 Chapter 1-4:***

This section is introduced in the first person by Mr. Gilmore, the Fairlie family lawyer. He says he has been asked by Hartright to write about events from his own point of view. Mr. Gilmore has known the family for many years, and he is fond of both the sisters—although he despises Mr. Fairlie, the weak, selfish hypochondriac.

Sir Percival arrives at Limmeridge, and impresses Gilmore favorably: he "was so easy and pleasant that we got on together like old friends." Gilmore is particularly impressed by Sir Percival's behavior toward Laura: "a mixture of tenderness and respect, with an unassuming delicacy of tone, voice, and manner."

Gilmore asks Sir Percival to account for the contents of the letter from [Anne Catherick](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Woman-in-White/character-analysis/#Anne_Catherick). Sir Percival says he did, in fact, pay for Anne's stay at a private asylum at the request of Anne's mother. He says he wants only what is best for Anne and believes that would be a return to the asylum. Gilmore sends a letter to Anne's mother, requesting confirmation of this story, and receives it.

Despite reassurances of Sir Percival's innocence and good intentions, Halcombe and Laura both have forebodings about the engagement. In addition, it is clear that Laura still has romantic feelings for Hartright. Sir Percival tells Laura that he will not insist on his rights if she chooses to break the engagement. Nevertheless, about a week after leaving Limmeridge, Gilmore receives a letter saying Laura has decided to marry Sir Percival. Gilmore therefore returns to Limmeridge to write up a "marriage settlement." This document will describe how Laura's significant income and inheritance (about 30,000 pounds) will be distributed during her life and after her death.

Gilmore explains that 10 thousand pounds of Laura's money will go to her aunt (Countess Fosco) if Laura dies before her. In addition, Gilmore intends to settle the money "so as to give the income to the lady for her life—afterward to Sir Percival for his life." The principal of her inheritance is to go to "the children of the marriage." Should there be no children, Laura would leave the principal to Halcombe, her half sister. Sir Percival's lawyer refuses, insisting "The *principal* ... go to Sir Percival ... in the event of his surviving Lady Glyde, and there being no issue." Gilmore is horrified at the greed inherent in this proposal, but as Laura's guardian will not intervene, he is forced to draw up the papers.

Gilmore provides a very different perspective from Hartright's, and allows the reader to see Sir Percival through the eyes of an outsider. From this viewpoint, Sir Percival is handsome, charming, and able to fool an uncritical observer with his apparently chivalrous and tender behavior toward Laura.

Through Gilmore, [Collins](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Woman-in-White/author/) also provides the reader with critically important information about the status of Laura's wealth. The settlement essentially makes Laura worth a great deal more dead than alive—both to her husband and also to her aunt ([Count Fosco](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Woman-in-White/character-analysis/#Count_Fosco)'s wife).

Finally, this segment provides clear evidence of Sir Percival's intent, Gilmore's reliability as a family friend, and Mr. Fairlie's worthlessness as a guardian. Gilmore tries to protect Laura's interests, pleading "I entreat you to reconsider ... and not to force me to abandon the just rights of your niece." However, because Laura is under age and Mr. Fairlie is interested only in avoiding conflict, Laura is stripped of her inheritance.

The character of Mr. Gilmore is somewhat unusual in Victorian literature. Typically, lawyers are presented in a less-than-pleasant light. For example, Collins's friend Charles Dickens—in his novel *Bleak House*—calls lawyers "narrow, mean, ignorant pettifoggers." Dickens's lawyers are greasy, dirty, and usually poorly dressed. Mr. Gilmore, however, in Hartright's words, is "in external appearance ... the exact opposite of the conventional idea of an old lawyer." Gilmore is clad immaculately in lavender gloves and a white cravat and "his black coat, waistcoat, and trousers [fit] him with perfect neatness."

Mr. Gilmore is the perfect gentleman and has great regard for both Halcombe and Laura, although he has little respect for Mr. Fairlie. To Gilmore's credit, he treats Hartright respectfully, shares his plans, and engages him in conversation. However, he is blinded to Sir Percival's many failings as a result of his social snobbery. For example, he finds Sir Percival's dishonest explanation of [Anne Catherick](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Woman-in-White/character-analysis/#Anne_Catherick)'s anonymous letter "as simple and satisfactory as I had ... anticipated it would be."

Despite initially being obtuse about Sir Percival's villainy, Gilmore does pick up on one important detail. He notices that the Fairlies' pet dog dislikes Sir Percival and whines in his presence. When this happens, Sir Percival walks quickly away and Gilmore notes "perhaps his temper is irritable at times." As it happens, the dog's judgment regarding Sir Percival is more accurate than Gilmore's own.

Gilmore is also aware of Halcombe's discomfort with Sir Percival, and that concerns him. He describes Halcombe's practical and intelligent nature and says, "she had made me a little uneasy, and a little doubtful." He then brushes off his discomfort, saying, "In my age, I knew better, and went out philosophically to walk it off."

Gilmore is an unreliable narrator in that he misunderstands much of what is going on around him. By the same token, however, he is intuitive enough to sense that there is a problem in the Fairlie home. The reader becomes increasingly anxious as a result of seeing that even a family friend can't see the villainy behind Sir Percival's mask. The reader's foreboding is increased as Mr. Gilmore mentions his intuitive sense that something is wrong.

spends the first few days of his time at Limmeridge House quietly, noting that Laura Fairlie seems depressed. Mr. Fairlie indicates that he is in favor of the marriage between her and Sir Percival, but his main priority is to be bothered as little as possible. When Sir Percival arrives, he acknowledges that he has seen the copy of the anonymous letter, and readily offers an explanation. Mrs. Catherick (Anne's mother) had formerly been his employee, and he had always felt particularly concerned about her since her husband abandoned her, leaving her as a single mother to a child with psychological difficulties. Anne's illness eventually made it necessary for her to receive full-time care, and so Sir Percival offered to pay the cost of her being housed in a private asylum. He did so out of a charitable desire to help the Catherick family and to ensure that Anne received a good quality of care, but Anne perceived being sent to the asylum as a kind of imprisonment, and blamed him for it. Thus, she sent the angry letter in which Sir Percival was presented as a villain. He is more than happy to provide any necessary documentation to support this story, and is actively trying to find Anne so that she can be returned to the institution.

Mr. Gilmore finds this story entirely plausible and Marian says that she does too, although she appears somewhat hesitant. Sir Percival notices this hesitation, and suggests that she write to Mrs. Catherick for confirmation of this story. She reluctantly does so. Sir Percival also finds out where [Anne Catherick](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-woman-in-white/study-guide/character-list#anne-catherick) was staying, and says he will ask more questions in hopes that she can be located. Marian still seems dissatisfied with the conversation, and tells Mr. Gilmore that she wishes Walter were still at the house. A short time later, a very brief reply comes from Mrs. Catherick, in which she confirms everything that Sir Percival has said. Sir Percival has also told Marian that he has noticed that Laura does not seem happy, and that he is willing to break off the engagement if she tells him she wants to. Marian is concerned that Sir Percival is being manipulative, and does not want to have any responsibility in persuading Laura to marry him. When Marian explains the story behind the letter to Laura, Laura seems to accept it, but also requests time to delay making up her mind about the marriage.

Mr. Gilmore, however, is concerned about the delay; he will not be able to return to Limmeridge House in the coming months due to his other business, and this means that if Laura decides to go ahead with the engagement, he will not be able to discuss terms with her in person. In light of this, he meets with her the following morning, and while still acknowledging that the marriage may not go forward, asks her if she has reservations about the terms. Laura surprises him by asking that it be stipulated for Marian to live with her. Mr. Gilmore brushes this off and clarifies that he is interested in where she would like to see her money go. Laura suggests that she would like to leave it to Marian, and then tries to say something about someone she would like to leave a keepsake to, but gets overwhelmed by tears. Mr. Gilmore drops the subject. As he leaves, however, Mr. Gilmore comes to feel increasingly unsettled about the prospect of Laura and Percival's marriage.

Eight days after his return to London, Mr. Gilmore receives a letter notifying him that Laura has agreed to marry Sir Percival, and that they plan to marry very quickly. Marian also tells him that prior to the wedding, she and Laura will be traveling to Yorkshire to visit some friends. Mr. Gilmore then explains the financial situation relevant to the legal documents he must now draw up in preparation for the wedding. If [Frederick Fairlie](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-woman-in-white/study-guide/character-list#frederick-fairlie) dies without having children, the Limmeridge estate will be inherited by Laura. She will have access to the income from the estate during her lifetime, and could arrange her will such that her husband would have access to the income after her death. More importantly, if she has a son, he will inherit the Limmeridge Estate. This arrangement is clear and straightforward, and unlikely to present problems. When Laura turns twenty-one (which will happen a few months after her marriage) she will also be able to access twenty thousand pounds, which her father willed to her. There is also an additional ten thousand pounds the interest on which will go to Laura; upon Laura's death, this will be inherited by her aunt Eleanor.

This unusual set-up took place because Eleanor, the sister of Philip and Frederick Fairlie, married an Italian man named [Count Fosco](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-woman-in-white/study-guide/character-list#count-fosco). Philip was angry about this marriage and disinherited his sister. Even though Laura advocated for her aunt, the best she could achieve was the strange condition which made it very unlikely Eleanor would ever receive her inheritance. Eleanor unfairly blames Laura, and refuses to see her niece. The source of potential tension is the 20,000 pounds Laura will inherit when she comes of age. Mr. Gilmore wants to establish the settlement such that, should Laura die without having children, the money will be willed by her to whomever she chooses. If she has children, the money will of course go to them. During her lifetime, she will have access to the interest, as will Sir Percival for his lifetime.

Mr. Gilmore sends this proposed contract to Sir Percival's lawyer, but is countered with a request that if Laura dies without children, the 20,000 pounds will pass to her husband. Neither lawyer can come to an agreement, and Mr. Gilmore is particularly worried because he knows that Sir Percival is deeply in debt, and in fact not very well off. He writes to Mr. Fairlie, who does not want to be bothered and thinks Gilmore should just agree to the terms. Gilmore and Sir Percival's lawyer, Merriman, have a meeting and Gilmore tries to negotiate a compromise. Merriman also discloses that he is still working to find Anne, and now believes a man is involved in hiding her in London. Gilmore is still preoccupied with getting a better settlement to protect Laura, and decides to travel to Cumberland to meet with Mr. Fairlie in person.

As Gilmore is leaving for his journey, he runs into Walter in London. Walter asks if Laura will be marrying Percival, and Gilmore does not give him a straight answer. Walter also says he is hoping to get away, and asks Gilmore to let him know if he hears of any opportunities that would allow him to go abroad. Gilmore agrees to do so, and resumes his journey. However, Gilmore is not successful at persuading Mr. Fairlie to change his mind. He leaves angrily, and upon his return reluctantly draws up a settlement that he knows is unfair and disadvantageous to Laura.

The switch in narrators to Mr. Gilmore allows a new tone and perspective to be introduced into the narrative. Unlike Walter, Mr. Gilmore is not biased by his own interests, and his only priority is to see Laura happy. As readers know from Walter's narrative, Gilmore is also a very logical and practical man. Therefore, Mr. Gilmore's fears about the impending marriage are quite different: he doesn't worry that some sinister Gothic secret might be threatening Laura. Rather, he worries about the financial situation that she find herself in. The lengthy details of the negotiation process and Laura's financial position make it very clear that this marriage is essentially a business transaction, and that it is being treated like one. The two lawyers represent opposing interests and both fight very hard for the best deals for their clients.

The marriage negotiations also show how little control Laura has, and how she is insufficiently protected by the man who should take care of her. While Mr. Gilmore makes an effort to find out what she wants, he does so because he cares about her, not because he is obligated to. It is also not Laura who gets to make the decision about whether or not to accept the terms that Sir Percival's lawyer proposes. Frederick, as her male guardian, gets to make this decision, and he is too lazy and incompetent to advocate for her best interests. The way in which the man who is supposed to be responsible for Laura's welfare fails to safeguard it offers a grim foreshadowing of the way in which her husband will also fail to keep her safe.

This section builds dramatic tension in that Sir Percival at first seems charming and attentive, and has a plausible explanation for everything. Still, both Marian and even eventually Mr. Gilmore cannot shake the feeling that something is not right, which raises the reader's suspicions. Ironically, the fact that Sir Percival is so eager to have his story checked out seems to make it even more suspicious. The letter from Mrs. Catherick seems like inarguable proof, and adds to the way in which written documents are assumed to offer a truthful account. Still, a reader's doubts about this letter might begin to shed light on how nothing in the novel is quite what it seems.

The history of Laura's finances does give the reader the opportunity to learn about Laura's aunt Eleanor, whose fate offers an echo of what might have happened if Laura tried to marry Walter. Eleanor's husband was wealthy and aristocratic, but because he was not English, no one approved of the marriage. As a result, Eleanor lost her financial independence as well as contact with her family. This unhappy fate shows another way in which women lacked control; even if they defied expectations to marry the man of their choice, they might suffer very much as a result of this decision.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

[Mr. Gilmore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-gilmore) arrives at Limmeridge but is told that [Mr. Fairlie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/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.

***Analysis Part 1:***

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.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Mr. Gilmore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-gilmore) begs [Mr. Fairlie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-fairlie) not to allow [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) to marry [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie). 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.”

***Analysis Part 2:***

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.

***Summary Part 3:***

Seeing that he has made no progress with [Mr. Fairlie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-fairlie), [Mr. Gilmore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-gilmore) tells Mr. Fairlie that the responsibility lies on him if anything happens to [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie), and Mr. Gilmore angrily leaves Limmeridge House. A week later, he sends the marriage settlement to [Mr. Merriman](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-merriman), [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde)’s lawyer, with the clause regarding the twenty thousand pounds still included.

***Analysis Part 3:***

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.