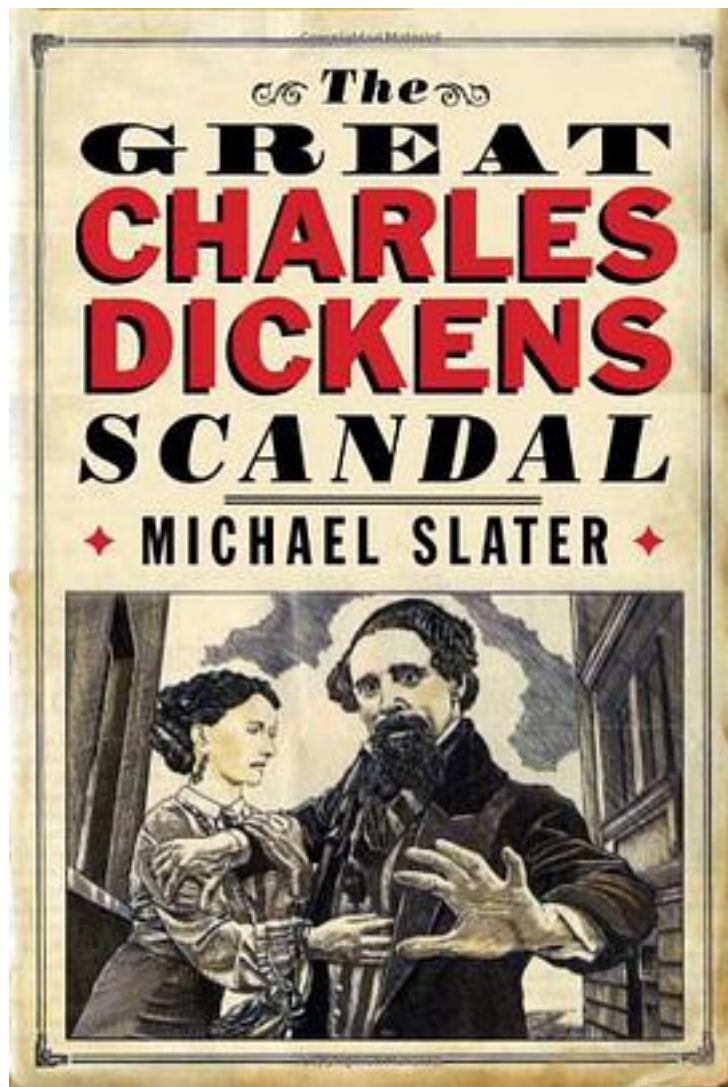


The Great Charles Dickens Scandal



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Charles Dickens was regarded as a pillar of respectability in Victorian Britain, but in 1858 this image was nearly shattered. With the break-up of his marriage that year, rumours about a scandalous relationship he may have conducted with young actress Ellen "Nelly" Ternan flourished. For the remaining twelve years of his life, Dickens struggled to quash the gossip. After his death, surviving family members did the same. But when the author's last living son died in 1934, there was no one to discourage rampant speculation. Dramatic revelations seemed to come from every corner - over Nellie's role as Dickens' mistress, the financial help he gave her, their clandestine meetings, their coded messages, and even his fathering of an illegitimate child with her. This book presents the most complete account of the scandal and ensuing coverup ever published. Drawing on the author's letters and other archival sources not previously available, Dickens scholar Michael Slater investigates what Dickens did or may have done, then traces the way the scandal was elaborated over succeeding generations. Slater shows how various writers concocted outlandish yet plausible theories while newspapers and book publishers vied for sensational revelations. With its tale of intrigue and a cast of well-known figures from Thackeray and Shaw to Orwell and Edmund Wilson, this engaging book will delight not only Dickens fans but also readers who appreciate tales of mystery, cover-up, and clever detection.

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