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## Charles Dickens: Life, Work and Legacy

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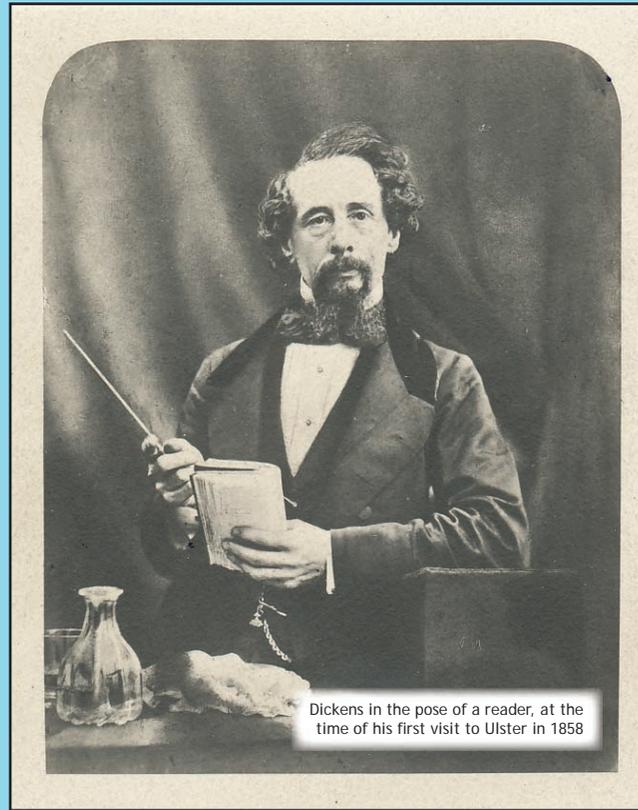
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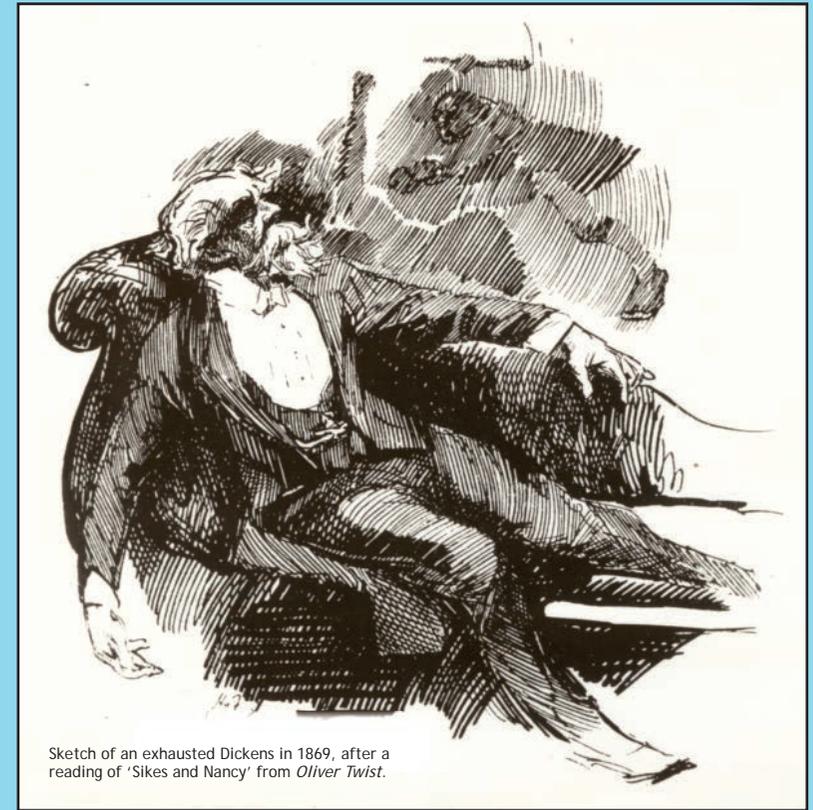
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Dickens in the pose of a reader, at the time of his first visit to Ulster in 1858



Sketch of an exhausted Dickens in 1869, after a reading of 'Sikes and Nancy' from *Oliver Twist*.

# Dickens and Ulster

Through his many connections in the worlds of politics and publishing, Dickens came to know three prominent Ulstermen. He befriended the politician James Emerson Tennent (1804-69), MP for Belfast and Lisburn, and President of the Board of Trade; they corresponded about such matters as education and international copyright, and the pair holidayed together in Rome in 1852. Dickens also knew Frederick Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood, 1st Marquess of Dufferin and Ava (1826-1902), and wrote to him about various political matters; after the novelist's death Lord Dufferin (who became Governor General of Canada) helped to gain preferment for Dickens's son Frank, in the North West Mounted Police. Dickens benefited from his friendship with Francis Dalziel (Dalzell) Finlay (1832-1917), owner of *The Northern Whig* newspaper, who assisted with the practical arrangements for Dickens's public readings in Belfast, and secured for him an Irish jaunting car, which Dickens used to ferry visitors from his country home, Gad's Hill Place, to the nearby railway station at Higham, in Kent.

The great novelist visited Ulster on three occasions, to read from his famous works. In 1858 he performed 'Little Dombey', 'The Poor Traveller', 'Boots at the Holly Tree Inn', and 'Mrs Gamp' at the music hall on May Street (later renamed Victoria Hall). As an inveterate walker, he used the occasion to visit Carrickfergus, and the Giant's Cradle near Larne. On his second visit in 1867, he stayed Belfast's Imperial Hotel, and read 'Dr Marigold' and the Trial from *Pickwick Papers*. For his third appearance, in 1869, he read *David Copperfield* and 'Mr Bob Sawyer's Party'.

Dickens received a very warm welcome in Ulster, judging it 'a fine place with a rough people'; he added, 'they seem all Scotch, but quite in a state of transition'. Of the buildings and landscape he said, 'The streets are very wide, and the place is very prosperous. . . quite amazing in the order, neatness, and cleanness of all you see; every cottage looking as if it had been whitewashed the day before; and many with charming gardens, prettily kept with bright flowers.'

DICKENS 2012 NI



Carrickfergus Borough