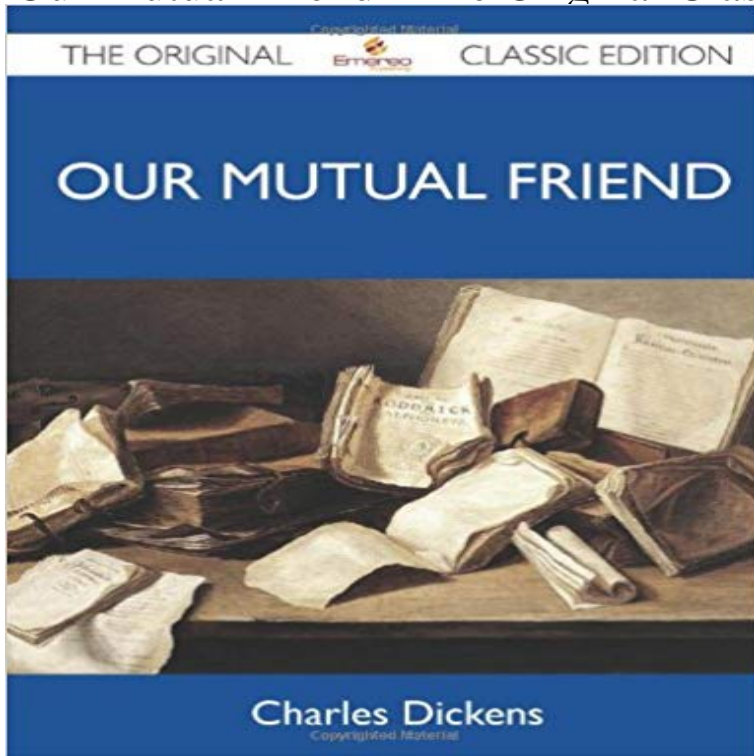


Our Mutual Friend - The Original Classic Edition



Charles Dickens's 1865 novel, his last completed novel, *Our Mutual Friend* is an extraordinarily dark and convoluted work. Featuring such unforgettable figures as Mr. Boffin, Mr. Podsnap, Bradley Headstone, Jenny Wren, and Silas Wegg, Dickens continues, or rather concludes his artistic legacy with a work rich in well written and compelling characters. Exploring, as do many of Dickens's works, the intricacies of inheritance, *Our Mutual Friend* is also deeply concerned with families and the things that hold them together or rip them apart. Interesting and fraught emphases on education, upholding particularly English interests in the face of the still rising British Empire, and concerns about the absolute uncertainties about life and death, this is quite a way to come at a last complete novel. *Our Mutual Friend* begins with Lizzie and her father Gaffer Hexam patrolling the river in the dark of night. Pulling a body out of the river for the potential reward money, the novel jumps right into the action with a bang. The body is presumed to be that of young John Harmon, just returned from South Africa to claim a huge inheritance from his recently deceased, hateful and miserly father. The only heir dead, the elder Harmon's loyal employees, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin stand next in the will to inherit everything. This causes a stir in Society, where Mortimer Lightwood, the legal executor of the will, and his friend Eugene Wrayburn are called in to view the body and question Gaffer Hexam. This causes two others to be drawn into the plot - Lizzie Hexam, an uneducated, but prescient young woman, who immediately catches Wrayburn's eye, and Miss Bella Wilfer, a sprightly young woman whose marriage to young John Harmon was the sole condition for that gentleman to come into his inheritance prevented by his untimely death. The novel tries over the next pages to work out the personal ramifications of the murder, the

will, and the fates of these two young women.

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