

Oxford, August  
7. 1844

My dear Sir,

My wife incites that  
I shall send you my own aut.  
graphs in regular forms. Let me  
then state that for many years  
I was the Liverpool Correspondent  
of the New York Evening Star,  
then edited by Major Nash,  
and that I have published  
a successful work in three  
volumes, called "Titian."  
It is the only Art-Novel



hitherto published in England,  
and was literally "a labour  
of love," as I had little leisure  
when I wrote it.

R. Shelton Mackenzie

T. A. Greene

A LITERARY CONTROVERSY. Mr. R. Shelton Mackenzie, in his *Life of Charles Dickens*, published last year, stated that in 1847 George Cruikshank told him that Charles Dickens, then writing "Oliver Twist," had dropped in one day, accidentally examined a bundle of drawings which he (Cruikshank) had made to show the life of a London thief, and had thereby been induced not to carry *Oliver Twist* through adventures in the country, but take him into a thieves' den in London, as shown in the said drawings. "I consented," Cruikshank said to Mr. Mackenzie, "to let him write up as many of the characters as he thought would suit his purpose; and that was the way in which Fagin, Sykes and Nancy were created. My drawings suggested them."

Mr. John Forster, in the first volume of his *Life of Dickens*, just out, calls in question the truth of Mackenzie's statement, and characterizes it as "a wonderful story, originally promulgated in America, with a minute conscientiousness and particularity of detail that might have raised the reputation of Sir Benjamin Backbite himself." He speaks also of "one unpolite word, in these letters, which is alone applicable to it." Which, to say the least, is drawing it rather strong. Mr. Mackenzie, being of this opinion, reiterates, in the *Philadelphia Press* of the 18th, the statement previously made in his volume, and brings forward, in attestation of it, a letter written by Cruikshank, Nov. 12, 1870, in which occurs this passage concerning the point in question: "Then followed (1839) '*Oliver Twist*,' which was entirely my own idea and suggestion, and all the characters are mine. And this will account for the fact of '*Oliver Twist*' being very different from any of his other writings."

Mr. Mackenzie comments, with some severity, upon the fact that Forster, though living in the same city with Cruikshank, took no pains to find from him the truth or falsity of the statement, and feels naturally somewhat aggrieved at the imputation cast upon his veracity. Such a conflict of authorities is unpleasant at the best, but in full view of the facts it seems that the only course left open to Mr. Forster is a full and withdrawal of his charge.