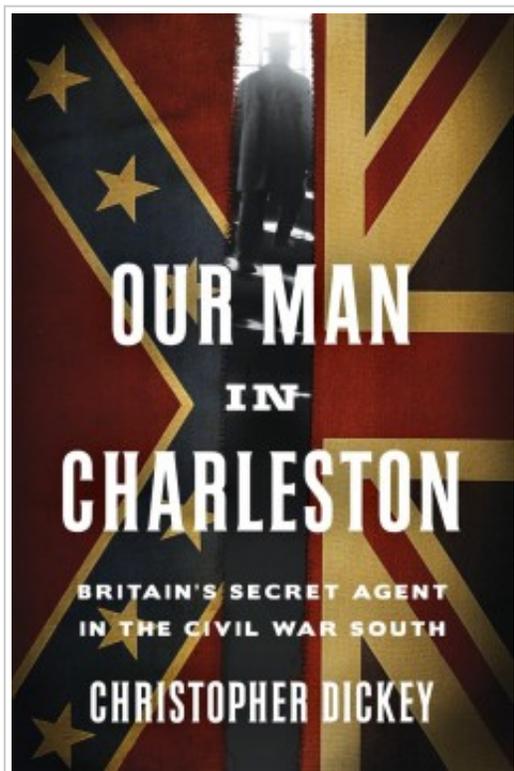


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Our Man In Charleston

by Christopher Dickey

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From the Publisher: Between the Confederacy and recognition by Great Britain stood one unlikely Englishman who hated the slave trade. His actions helped determine the fate of a nation. As tension in the United States over slavery and western expansion threatened to break into civil war, the Southern states found themselves squeezed between two nearly irreconcilable realities: The survival of the Confederate economy would require the importation of more slaves, a practice banned in America since 1807. But the existence of the Confederacy itself could not be secured without official recognition from Great Britain, who would never countenance reopening the Atlantic slave trade. How, then, could the first be achieved without dooming the possibility of the second? The South believed Britain would never risk losing the massive flow of cotton that fed British mills, and...

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This entertaining work of popular history rescues British consul Robert Bunch from the dustbin of history. He was assigned to the seeming backwater of Charleston, South Carolina before the Civil War. It became the cradle of the rebellion and Bunch became the most informed -- and at times the only reliable -- source of information to the UK gov't about coming elections, the brewing move towards secession and the slave trade. An ardent opponent of slavery (like the vast majority in the UK) once he saw its ills up close, Bunch played a dangerous game. Like many diplomats, he kept his eyes open. Unlike many, every dispatch he sent home was potentially a death sentence: if South Carolinians realized how much he opposed their aims, Bunch could be killed. With his insistent reporting and prescient comments, Bunch nudged the UK towards understanding that the South would embrace the slave trade and expand to Cuba, Mexico and beyond. He colored the reporting by the Times of London to support that belief and kept his real opinions so close to the vest that the US government accused him of colluding with the Confederate States of America. Dickey's book shows the war and the slave trade from a fresh international perspective, gives full due to Bunch and makes a passionate case that William Seward was a bumbling fool when it came to the UK. It's a fascinating and illuminating work of scholarship and story. -- Michael Giltz

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What Others Say

"Our Man in Charleston is a joy to discover. It is a perfect book about an imperfect spy." —Joan Didion "[Bunch is] a brilliant find...Dickey, the foreign editor of The Daily Beast and a former longtime Newsweek correspondent, uses his research well: in a story like this one, point of view is everything, and Bunch's is razor sharp." —American Scholar "Dickey has written a book that is as much suspense and spy adventure as it is a history book... A story as compelling as this one does not come around very often. With so much already written about the Civil War, and more coming every year, originality is a rare thing these days. The story of Robert Bunch is that and more." —The Carolina Chronicles "A fascinating tale of compromise, political maneuvering, and espionage." —Publishers Weekly "Dickey's comprehension of the mindset of the area, coupled with the enlightening missives from Bunch, provides a rich background to understanding the time period....A great book explaining the workings of what Dickey calls an erratic, cobbled-together coalition of ferociously independent states. It should be in the library of any student of diplomacy, as well as Civil War buffs." —Kirkus Reviews (starred) "A..."

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