

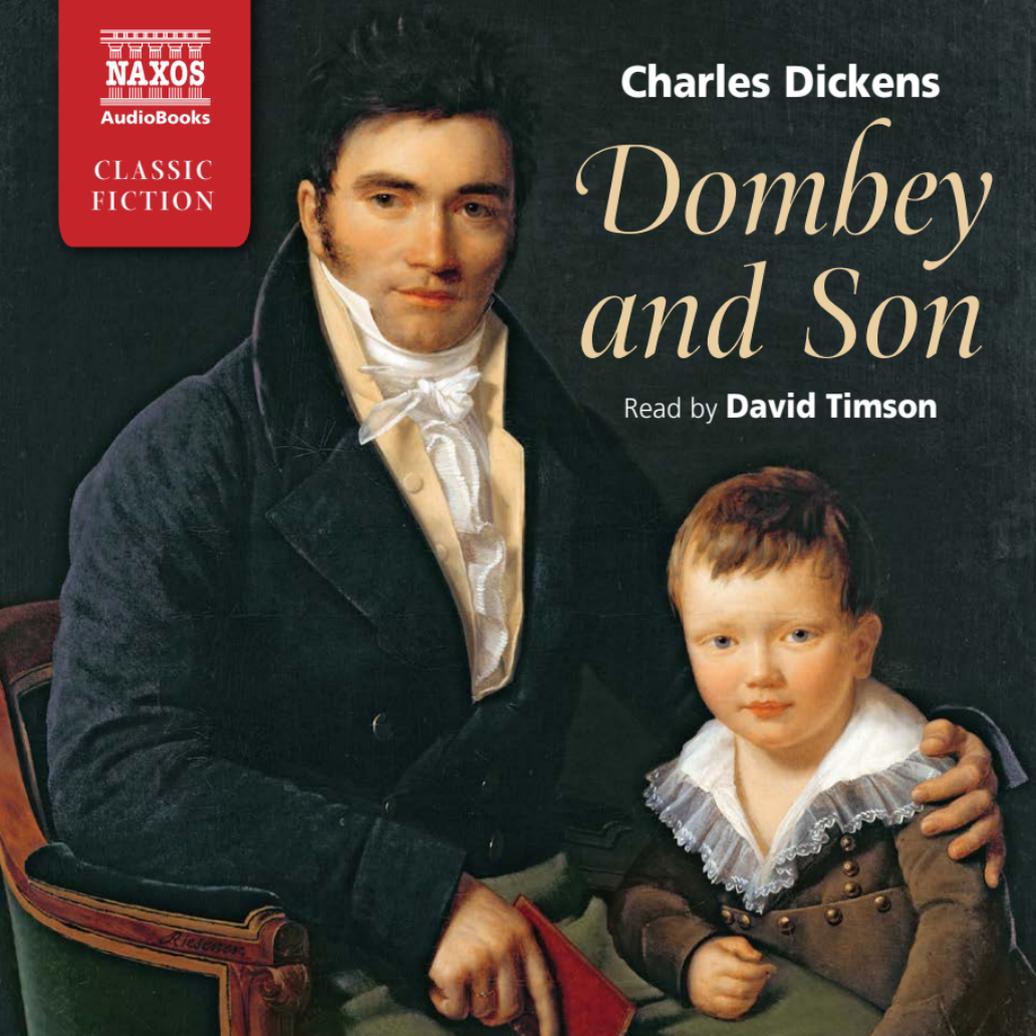
NAXOS  
AudioBooks

CLASSIC  
FICTION

Charles Dickens

# *Dombey and Son*

Read by **David Timson**



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## CD 1

1	Dombey sat in the corner of the darkened room...	5:59
2	'Mrs Chick?' said a very bland female voice...	3:42
3	'I am sorry to say, Louisa...'	2:39
4	'I shall never cease to congratulate myself,...'	5:41
5	'My good woman,' said Mr Dombey...	5:11
6	'I never saw such a melting thing in all my life!'	4:44
7	Next night, she found him walking...	4:33
8	The offices of Dombey and Son were within the liberties...	5:38
9	'And now,' he said...	4:31
10	Solomon Gills rubbed his hands...	5:33
11	'So that Paul's infancy and childhood...'	4:42
12	It happened to be an iron-grey autumnal day.	4:58
13	'I am very glad to see you have so much feeling...'	5:00
14	'Look! there's a pretty little lady come to see you,...'	4:54
15	The old woman took her by the wrist...	6:00
16	In hurriedly putting on the bonnet...	4:49

**Total time on CD 1: 78:49**

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## CD 2

1	Obedient to the indication of Mr Clerk's hand...	5:09
2	'Let the servants know that no further steps...'	4:24
3	Miss Tox inhabited a dark little house...	4:30
4	It was on the very next day...	4:55
5	On one of these occasions...	4:32
6	Mrs Chick and Miss Tox...	5:35
7	At about noon Mrs Pipchin...	5:10
8	That spice of romance and love of the marvellous...	5:05
9	'Captain Cuttle's at home, I know,' said Walter	4:55
10	Major Bagstock, after long and frequent observation...	5:36
11	But Mr Dombey, without attending to what he said...	5:57
12	Mrs Pipchin had kept watch and ward over little Paul...	4:56
13	Upon the Doctor's doorsteps one day Paul stood...	4:33
14	'I shall see you soon, Paul...'	4:53
15	At eight o'clock or so, the gong sounded again...	4:20
16	'Oh Saturdays! Oh happy Saturdays...'	3:19

**Total time on CD 2: 78:03**

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### CD 3

1	Such spirits as he had in the outset...	5:02
2	'Talking of Morfin,' resumed Mr Carker...	5:21
3	'It is of no service to me,' said the brother.	5:57
4	Paul, pocketing his invitation, sat down on a stool...	4:55
5	Paul now slipped away...	4:43
6	Once, for a last look, he turned and gazed...	5:40
7	The Captain, however, scarcely appeared to relish...	5:14
8	Greatly moved by what he heard...	4:27
9	He was visited by as many as three grave doctors.	5:25
10	Captain Cuttle, in the exercise of that surprising talent...	5:19
11	At first, when the house subsided...	5:24
12	Did he see before him the successful rival...	4:56
13	'Oh but Walter,' said Florence.	4:12
14	'Mr Dombey, Sir,' said Major Bagstock...	4:48
15	During the bustle of preparation at the railway...	2:44
16	There was a face – he had looked upon it...	3:41

**Total time on CD 3: 78:03**

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## CD 4

1	The Major and Mr Dombey were walking arm-in-arm...	3:05
2	The discrepancy between Mrs Skewton's...	3:25
3	On the next day but one, Mr Dombey and the Major...	2:23
4	Mr Carker the Manager sat at his desk...	5:01
5	'Ain't you a thief?' said Mr Carker...	4:45
6	'Now, boy!' said Mr Carker...	1:49
7	Florence lived alone in the great dreary house...	4:36
8	Arriving in good time abreast of the wooden...	4:20
9	The Captain in his own apartment was sitting...	5:07
10	'Bunsby,' said the Captain, striking home at once...	4:15
11	The voice here went out of the back parlour...	2:02
12	Sir Barnet and Lady Skettles, very good people...	4:17
13	Captain Cuttle, though no sluggard...	4:43
14	On mature consideration of this evidence...	3:13
15	'Your most obedient, Sir,' said the Major.	2:05
16	'You must have found the gentleman a great resource,' said Carker...	4:59
17	'Bluntness, Ma'am,' returned the Major...	3:18
18	'Major Bagstock, my darling Edith,' drawled her mother...	3:44
19	Mr Carker the Manager rose with the lark...	3:45
20	Mr Carker laughed, and turned upon his heel.	2:51
21	Mr Dombey having nothing else to say...	3:14

**Total time on CD 4: 77:19**

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## CD 5

1	Mr Dombey, who had taken a stately leave...	5:19
2	'This is an attack, I suppose,' returned her mother...	5:01
3	Florence descended from the coach...	5:19
4	Florence was, one day, sitting reading in her room...	5:07
5	'My dear Dombey,' said Cleopatra...	4:54
6	Dawn with its passionless blank face...	4:23
7	So, from that day forward, for better for worse...	4:50
8	The Captain got safe home again...	5:53
9	The Captain glanced at the newspaper...	5:01
10	Near to where the busy great north road...	5:04
11	She was now opposite the house...	4:57
12	If Florence could have stood within the room...	5:02
13	'Whose child?'	5:12
14	The dark blot on the street is gone.	1:46
15	Florence had come down to the hall...	1:48

**Total time on CD 5: 69:49**

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## CD 6

1	But dinner was announced, and Mr Dombey...	5:19
2	It was his wife's. She had exchanged her dinner dress...	5:40
3	'Mrs Dombey,' said Mr Dombey, advancing...	5:27
4	They took her to pieces in very shame...	2:30
5	Time, sure of foot and strong of will...	5:33
6	Mr Bunsby, who had a musical ear...	5:49
7	To the moody, stubborn, sullen demon...	4:06
8	'And now,' he thought, rising in his moral magnificence...	5:49
9	They had now come up.	4:02
10	All is going on as it was wont.	2:20
11	A shadow even on that shadowed face...	4:23
12	Mr Carker nodded. 'Take care, then!'	5:52
13	'You know,' said Mr Carker...	4:42
14	Mr Carker signified his understanding...	5:32
15	Florence, long since awakened from her dream...	5:36
16	With the day, though not so early as the sun...	5:31

**Total time on CD 6: 78:25**

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## CD 7

1	Susan then bestirred herself to get her trunks in order...	4:49
2	Arrived at her own door, she was alighting...	4:36
3	'It is growing late,' said Carker, after a pause...	5:05
4	'See where he goes!' cried one of these two women...	5:34
5	Florence loved him still, but, by degrees...	4:58
6	'Tell your sovereign master, Sir,' said Edith...	5:04
7	When the evening had set in...	5:12
8	She did not sink down at his feet...	3:59
9	'Oh, Captain Cuttle!' cried Florence...	2:38
10	'How de do, Captain Gills?' said a voice beside him...	3:57
11	It was long before Florence awoke.	4:58
12	'He was older than you, my lady lass,' pursued the Captain...	4:07
13	She had no thought of him but as a brother...	4:33
14	There was an empty room above-stairs...	4:32
15	'Thank you, heartily,' said Walter.	5:00
16	She raised her head, and spoke to him...	1:21
17	What is the proud man doing, while the days go by?	1:09

**Total time on CD 7: 71:48**

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## CD 8

1	At the Counting House, the clerks discuss...	5:18
2	'Oh, for goodness' sake, Misses Brown...	5:18
3	There were two of the traitor's own blood...	4:56
4	The time – an hour short of midnight...	4:29
5	They both stood looking at each other.	5:23
6	'All stratagems in love—' he interrupted, smiling.	5:39
7	The lamps, gleaming on the medley of horses' heads...	4:59
8	Unable to rest, and irresistibly attracted...	4:32
9	The Midshipman was all alive.	5:34
10	From that time, Miss Nipper never returned...	4:06
11	Although I have heard something of the changes...	6:00
12	And what are the young couple saying...	4:20
13	Solomon puts back the letter carefully...	4:48
14	Harriet Carker left her house, and entered...	3:46
15	The old woman, whose wits appeared disorderly...	4:31

**Total time on CD 8: 73:52**

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## CD 9

1	Changes have come again upon the great house...	4:49
2	In the dusk of the evening Mr Toodle, being off duty...	4:03
3	'And the ruined man. How does he pass the hours, alone?'	4:02
4	When the day broke he was shut up in his rooms again.	5:43
5	The grand half-yearly festival holden by Doctor...	5:18
6	Mr and Mrs Toots withdrew to the Bedford.	2:45
7	This awful demonstration...	3:33
8	All this time, the Captain could not but observe...	4:10
9	Florence had need of help.	5:33
10	It chanced one evening, towards sunset...	4:14
11	Their ride was six or eight miles long.	4:08
12	Edith, breaking her silence, without moving eye or limb...	5:58
13	'Oh Mama!' said Florence.	4:39
14	And how goes the wooden Midshipman...?	4:47
15	The Captain approves of this figure greatly...	3:37
16	Mr Toots, with the assistance of his pipe...	3:50

**Total time on CD 9: 72:23**

**Total time on CDs 1–9: 11:18:31**

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Charles Dickens  
(1812–1870)

# Dombey and Son

*'There's no writing against such power as this... it is stupendous'* (W.M. Thackeray)

In his Preface to the 1867 edition of *Dombey and Son*, Charles Dickens wrote: 'I began this book by the Lake of Geneva and went on with it for some months in France, before pursuing it in England.' As was his custom in London when planning a new novel, Dickens walked the streets of Lausanne, as well as the surrounding hills and by the shores of the lake, covering as much as eight or nine miles a night. It was an unlikely book to write on a family holiday, dealing as it does with a dysfunctional family – the Dombey's – and particularly the estrangement between Mr Dombey and his young daughter Florence. It would also seem to be unlikely that Dickens would have found any inspiration in his own family for the book's central theme – his relationship with his daughters appears to have been affectionate and close. Indeed,

his daughter Kate once wrote that he was only strict towards them regarding tidiness and punctuality.

Dickens had taken two years off from his self-imposed writing schedule of producing a new novel in monthly parts on a regular basis, and he began writing *Dealings with the Firm Dombey and Son: Wholesale, Retail, and for Exportation*, to give the novel its full original title, in 1846. It is the first of Dickens's novels for which his working notes have survived, and they clearly show that he developed the shape of his novels in detail beforehand. His subject matter was to be pride and its effects on a family, epitomised by Dombey and his attitudes and actions: he has pride in himself, his achievements and his unchallenged position in the material world of commerce. However, it is an arid world, a prison of his own making that shuts

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out Florence from any emotional contact. She is also considered to be barred by her gender from a future role in her father's business, while he over-burdens his little son Paul with expectations that the child could never sustain.

Incapable of feeling love and affection for his family, his natural emotions being warped by the pursuit of material success, Dombey has to be dismantled piece by piece throughout the novel and reconstructed as a loving father and a man of feeling through the power of forgiveness. It forms the main thrust of Dickens's narrative – an investigation into the mind and heart of Mr Dombey and also, antithetically, Florence, creating in essence what is a psychological novel, though this genre was not given a name until the studies of Sigmund Freud 50 years later. Dickens painstakingly dissects Dombey's emotions as he becomes more and more isolated from the living world and withdraws into a reclusive state of mind that denies everything that contradicts his own fixed opinions of himself and his importance, leading him, by the end of the book, to a state bordering on madness.

Florence is a study in emotional

deprivation and depression (she bursts into tears 88 times). She takes upon herself the blame for her father's indifference towards her. Her confusion leads her to believe that love is something that can be learnt, and painfully observes its effects in other families, seeking the key to affection but never finding it. Such analysis gives a darker and more sombre mood to the novel than anything Dickens had written previously.

It was, apparently, a difficult book to write, and at times a melancholy experience for Dickens. He was always deeply moved by the death scenes he created and whilst he was writing of the death of young Paul, his own son, Charley, was struck down by scarlet fever, a serious and often fatal disease in the nineteenth century. Charley survived but Dickens had decided in the early stages of the novel's publication that, 'Paul I shall slaughter at the end of number five'. Whilst writing this episode Dickens was in France and took time 'wandering desolate and sad about the streets of Paris'. As with the death of Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, the Dombey boy's demise 'flung a nation into mourning', but Dickens invests Paul's death with more import than that of Little Nell,

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as he enters the very mind of the child. Dickens wrote in his notes: 'His illness only expressed in the child's own feelings – not otherwise described', while his friend and mentor John Forster described it as 'a fairy vision to a piece of actual suffering'. Such comments fortified Dickens's reputation with the public as a master of pathos, an important aspect of his relationship with his readers as the Victorians enjoyed pathos. There was even a contemporary song, with music by Stephen Glover, based on Little Paul's story, called *What Are the Wild Waves Saying?* which was sung in drawing-rooms throughout the country.

Meanwhile, Florence, doomed to live neglected in her father's forbidding home, echoed Dickens's own neglected childhood. Desperate for a mother substitute, Florence endows a great deal in Edith, her father's second wife, pointedly calling her 'Mama', but Edith too, we learn, is a deprived child. She blames her own mother, the grotesque Mrs Skewton, for corrupting her as a child, teaching her, she says, to be 'artful, designing, mercenary. Laying snares for men – before I knew myself.' Dickens's relationship with

his own mother was troubled. His bitter experience as a child working in a blacking factory, bottling the noxious liquid used to clean kitchen ranges, which cast such a shadow on his life that he could never talk about it, had been prolonged by his mother. She had insisted that he continue the work, which he found so demeaning, to provide income for the rest of the family. He never forgave her for this betrayal of his sensibilities. Until *Dombey & Son*, Dickens had been reluctant to visit his unhappy youth for fictional purposes. Once he had made the connection, however, it proved to be such a rich source of material that he used it to even greater effect in his next novel, the largely autobiographical *David Copperfield*.

Edith Dombey, too, is a study in pride, and has the power both to attract and repel the reader. The confrontations between her and her husband show us the destructive power of two proud temperaments that have developed unnaturally. Dickens contrasts the unnatural (the pursuit of power and wealth) with the natural (the love of family and friends), showing the constant struggle between the two that

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exists in every human being and the society they create.

Published in book form in 1848, *Dombey & Son* was the first novel to include passages dealing with the burgeoning railway system in some detail. Dickens had an ambivalent attitude to the railway, regarding it as an unnatural development on the one hand, destroying communities and bringing speed and danger into our daily lives, but he could also see that this was the face of progress and perhaps a necessary evil. He also seemed to fear it, with some justification as he was injured in a railway accident at Staplehurst in 1865. In the novel, the railway symbolises the unfeeling and unstoppable, ruthless, mechanical drive of progress and business – Dombey's world.

By contrast Dickens uses water as an image of a flexible, shifting flow of emotion, epitomised in one of his happiest creations: the 'old salt' Captain Cuttle. 'Glorious Captain Cuttle,' wrote Forster, 'laying his head to the wind and fighting through everything.' He is a comic character but presented as a fully rounded individual, and indeed Dickens integrates

all his comic characters more successfully into the plot in this novel than he had heretofore. He surrounds the Dombey's with a set of thoroughly dysfunctional characters, disconnected now from their former place in society. Major Bagstock is used to being obeyed, but out of the army is out of step with the world. Miss Tox clings to the time when she had position, but is now a symbol of faded gentility. Likewise, Mrs Skewton, her beauty gone but once the toast of fashionable society, presents a pathetic picture. They all have an important part to play in illustrating the book's theme of natural versus unnatural, whilst not failing to entertain the reader.

With the novel finished, Dickens regained his usual high spirits, bolstered by the substantial sales figures for the monthly parts which were eagerly snapped up as they appeared. And with this novel it can be said that Dickens came of age as a writer. 'I have great faith in *Dombey*,' he wrote, 'and a strong belief that it will be remembered and read years hence.' He was not wrong in this prediction.

**Notes by David Timson**



**David Timson** has made over 1,000 broadcasts for BBC Radio Drama. For Naxos AudioBooks he wrote *The History of Theatre*, which won an award for most original production from the Spoken Word Publishers Association in 2001. He has also directed four Shakespeare plays for Naxos AudioBooks, including *King Richard III* (with Kenneth Branagh), which won Best Drama Award from the SWPA in 2001. In 2002 he won the Audio of the Year Award for his reading of *A Study in Scarlet*. He reads the entire Sherlock Holmes canon.

## Credits

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