

“The Renowned Dog Caesar” by Percy Hetherington Fitzgerald

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It was at Wearmouth, on the coast, where there were docks and vessels of war, and mariners, and a general sea flavour, that we — my younger brother Jack and I — were reared: at the apron, as it were, of an aunt of awful severity, and almost ferocious bearing towards the youth of either sex. She meant well; for to adults needing the many charities of life, she was gentle and gracious. But towards infancy her system amounted to a frightful terrorism. The town and its docks are fallen out of fashion; the mariners, and the ships of the mariners, have long since drifted away; that stern woman, who ruled so awfully in the little two-story baby-house at the entrance of the sea-town — a baby-house with a garden and wooden green rails in front, and a green paddock — hunting-grounds so exquisitely coveted, and so jealously guarded — that stern woman has drifted away too, in quite another direction. But there remains for me, in all its primitive gorgeousness, undimmed, untarnished, in the old glory, the old nimbus or aureole, the image of the Theatre Royal, Wearmouth, that glorified temple of the drama, rising in a sort of divine light, and rosy cloud, all spiritual as it were, and redeemed from any taint of earthy grossness.

Taken in a strict practical sense, such as it would appear to persons of a prose nature, and setting its image before me at this date, it must be owned that it was a mean wretched tenement. It was very old, very shaky and tattered towards the roof, sadly ruined, and, for a considerable margin running round its base, very soiled and slimy, like the green sediment on the sheathing of an old ship. An ancient shed ran all round; and over each door were faded inscriptions — a little awry, too — “BOXES” — “PIT” — “GALLERY.” Gorgeous cabalistics they seemed; and though the approach to the sacred stage was up a lane, which I believe now must have been dark, boggy, and unsavoury, I used to look up the lane with an awe and exquisite interest, and an utter insensibility to the peculiar fragrance of the place. It was this divine beat which kept away a too near familiarity with the persons of those who took part in the inner unspeakable mysteries. Once, indeed, I saw a figure pass me, and turn up the sacred lane, and whose retreating form I pursued with a gaze almost stupefied. An interior instinct told me at once who it was; and though his face was of a curious dusky yellow, and though his coat was buttoned tightly, and his hat had acquired a sort of burnish or glaze near the brim, from too anxious brushing — still, through all their tokens broke out the divinity of the man. I pursued him with a sort of fascination until he reached the door, and was absorbed into those halls of Eblis¹ — behind the scenes. It thrilled me. He would live constitutionally among the blue clouds, and the golden spangles, and crimson light (for the pantomime was then going forward, and the luscious description on the bills drove us wild), and rise up clarified, as it were, with an ambrosial light in his face, and clothed in dazzling celestial attire. It was maddening; for our ascetical aunt, following the tenets of the late Mr. Wesley², never let us near these demoralising seats of entertainment.

¹ “Eblis,” sometimes written “Iblis,” is a figure from Islamic belief who is sometimes understood as the devil; the reference is relevant here because of the author’s belief in his aunt’s puritanical views of theatrical entertainment.

² John Wesley (1703 – 1791) was the founder of Methodism, which at least in its early forms did not approve of attending the theater, gambling, dancing, or other “wordly” activities.

Shall I ever forget that morning when we — my younger brother Jack and myself — prowling about the town on our way to school, were attracted by a dead wall — a wall so dead, in fact, that decomposition had set in — which displayed to our enraptured eyes a bright fresh glaring primrose-coloured bill — glistening like a snake's coat with the fresh varnish of new paste. We were always greedy connoisseurs of such proclamations. It was the most delightful and entertaining literature we knew. They became Homeric for us; because, recording the works of godlike men and women. What dignity, what gorgeousness, what splendour in the titles! associations of which no rude awakening shocks could ever have divested us. But here, at the dead wall, with chins turned upward at an angle painfully inconvenient — for the officer of the theatre had placed his bill at a higher level than his wont (it was a Saturday morning, too, I recollect) — we read the delightful news, and were confounded with joy. The “Renowned DELAVAL Family” were engaged for three nights only, which was welcome intelligence in itself; but an arrangement had also been effected with their famous DOG CAESAR! which was the special tidings that made our hearts beat. He was actually engaged to perform in an exciting, a real piece, the name of which we had never heard, and yet which was very dear and familiar, and strangely vital and suggestive — “The Dog of Montargis, or the Forest of Bondy!”³ What a breadth, a pregnancy of colour, as it were! Could the English language go further? A dreamy mystery hung over the yellow bill, and seemed to exhale from that glorified paste. Something French, something secret, something in the depths of a forest, exquisitely delightful. Nor was this all. There was a cut — a cut? — a vigorous picture — brought out in rich masses of printing ink, with the dog, noble creature, in the centre, and the moon, boldly portrayed, and trees, and a woman at the door of a bouse. Nor was this all. The characters were sustained by the Delaval Family — the “inimitable” Delaval Family — that is to say, by Mr. Delaval (of the Theatres Royal, London, Bath, and Bristol, indistinctly); Madame Delaval, also indistinctly, of the Theatres Royal, London, Bath, and Bristol; Mr. Paul Delaval, late of the Metropolitan Theatres (this much more cloudily); and “the Infant Marie Delaval,” a little cherub of the stage, as yet far too young to be associated with any establishment. Though yet unknown to us personally, we — my brother and I — felt a strange yearning to “the Infant Marie Delaval,” for even the bill, usually seasoned with the coldness of an official document, spoke of her delicately and tenderly. This gifted family, we observed, came forward later in their Grotesque Ballet Pantomime, entitled “The Scaramouche in Love,” which seemed to be an entertainment of much promise. But, somehow, our eyes seemed to wander back again to the glorious cartoon, done in the rich lampblack, of the friend of man, the “renowned Dog Caesar,” wandering in his mysterious forest. Lovely, indeed, was that bill against the dead wall; and we feasted on it until we knew its sonorous periods by heart; even until we arrived a full quarter of an hour late at school, and were put ignominiously with our faces to the wall. We little recked that public humiliation; we were far away, lifted above earth, in the society of the immortals, the Delaval Family, and the Dog Caesar!

That Saturday was a half-holiday. In our way home we took the now etherealized temple of the drama. A horrid profanation had occurred in our absence. Some irreverent person had carelessly torn away a large segment of the bright yellow bill, dividing the renowned dog Caesar diagonally across; barely the head and fore-paws of the injured animal were left. It was a cruel outrage. We found another not very far away; but somehow it had not the old glory; it did not show the original glisten and stickiness, so to speak. The first had endeared itself as though it had a special individuality of its own, and yet this was clearly an erroneous impression. It was the change in the

³ An actual 19th-Century melodrama, originally French, which premiered in 1814. It is sometimes claimed, incorrectly, that this is the first play with a significant role for a dog; Francis' Reynolds *The Caravan; or The Driver and His Dog* premiered 11 years earlier, and specifically called for a Newfoundland in a key role.

renowned dog Caesar that affected us. He seemed fainter— his impression that is; the black ink was not so vivid and abundant.

At home there was a strange surprise. There was our father waiting, come down from London to see us: nay, not only to see us, but to take us home for a week. Events of gravest import had occurred; the hand of a sister had been asked in marriage — the hand of the sister had been granted, and we were to be fetched to see the show. To-morrow we were to start; meantime, we would take papa out and show him the sea, town, docks, mariners, and the rest of the attractions. Was the same thought in both our little hearts? Was the same idea ever fluttering upward to our lips? With our dear father we always cultivated a republican freedom of speech; but it was the ineffable awe and grandeur of the subject that inspired us with timidity. But it is certain that, with a mutual instinct we artfully took him round by the strange and deeply meaning edifice which affected us so curiously. And, after all, there was indeed a sincerity in this motion, for we regarded it as by far the chief lion of the place. “What! eh!” said our dear father, gaily, “what's this? Store of some sort? Oh, I see — used to be a theatre. Have they ever plays here now?” Our eyes met — my brother's and mine, that is — and we murmured timorously, “Oh, papa, the Dog! the Renowned Dog Caesar!” We had drawn him near to a glistening bill; the glories met his eye!

We went that night — I cannot bear to think how wearily the hours dragged themselves by — and yet the bliss of that day; it was too much happiness for mortal boy. I had a sort of gentle palpitation of the heart which was distressing at times; it came from chafing at the constraint, and yet it was very sweet agony: but our aunt! gracious, what injustice we had done that injured woman! How we had secretly traduced her! We blushed for it, and wondered at our blindness. She entered into all the spirit of the festival; her ascetical spirit had vanished. She was enthusiastic, generous, co-operative; she lent her aid heartily to the adornment of our persons. She was busy the whole evening, decorating us with unprecedented splendour. What a fairy-like evening it was — a golden cloud hangs over it now — we walked and pursued the customary avocations of life as in a glory. The customary ceremonial of dinner was but indifferently executed, in strange contrast to the usual avidity that waited on that meal. We were too blissful for such earthly joys; there was a choking feel about the throat, and an interior disrelish, which rendered the meal unpleasant; it was got through in some fashion; papa occupying a time and using a deliberation that seemed unaccountable. Then to dress.

Delicious function! Such burnishing of the cheek, such moistening of the hair — never was personal adornment so delightful. There was a magic waistcoat of pale blue shot with silver, never worn before, and which had indeed been appointed for another solemnity, but through accident had been left buttonless. This my aunt — no longer ascetic — strained every nerve to have completed. There were white trousers — virgin articles and speckless; and there were short jackets, and black ribbons about our necks tied in elegant bows.

The dragging hours at length brought us to seven o'clock. At half-past the doors opened. Yet there was a feeling within us that no risk was to be run, and that a handsome margin of time was to be allowed to be clear of accidents. A fly, therefore, was sent for with all speed; with fluttering hearts we descended in our gorgeous apparel. It was a dampish interior, and had a perfume of ancient straw — yet how celestial seemed the vehicle. That aroma has been sweet in our nostrils ever since. A horrible thought — what if the household time had been astray, say by half an hour, or even by three-quarters! At another season the wildness of the theory would have been apparent on a moment's thought, for an irregularity of that nature under the rule of my aunt — that exactest of the

tribe of women — was almost ludicrously improbable. A moment's calm reflection would have shown us this; but we were too agitated to let reason have her sway.

Here it was at last — a dark projection, with unlimited flare of gas. Here was *our* door, with the epigraph “BOXES,” on which played unsteadily, a lamp. A few people were standing about, one or two entering, and yet on the whole there was not the furor we counted on. What a fragrance again as we entered the passages, skirted by whitewashed walls, and sprinkled ever so delicately with sawdust, — a fragrance compounded of orange-peel, and a delicate aroma of gas, together with a damp vaultish savour, inexpressibly sweet. And then the check-taker; how courtly, how noble in his bearing (I believe him now to have been a very earthy creature, sadly corrupted with gin); and above all, the Unseen Hand that so mysteriously absorbed our moneys into that awful window! Another moment, and we are in the theatre! Exquisite sensation! Something between awe and a thrill, and yet ravishing delight, curiously compounded, as the somewhat murky interior gradually opened on us. And yet, though *now* it was something approaching to darkness, yet then it was more a subdued light and delicious sense of mystery. It must have been a raw and cavernous temple; somewhat, as I now suspect, broken out into moist patches and damp eruptions, with an universal unwholesomeness as to the plaster. The green curtain was mean, and a little ragged, and an unwholesome air seemed to float from the pit. But I saw none of these imperfections — it was all divine, sacred, and we gazed with ineffable reverence, and waited for the dog. Dimly does it now come back to us that there was not an overwhelming audience; which indifference to the claims of the drama affected us with secret wonder.

When our eyes had been satiated with the natural beauties of the scene, they found a sort of relief in wandering to the orchestra, which was now filling in slowly. I am bound to say, that the divine cloud did not seem to enclose those members of human society; but stopped short with the stage. Still, though regarding them with a certain familiarity, and as more or less mortal, they seemed lifted above our humanity, and formed a link between us and that brighter sphere to which they led the way. Even their entrance — how mysterious! — was out of the bowels of the earth.

And yet, looking back now, taking them for all in all, I am afraid they were not what would be called an efficient orchestra. I fancy five or six was their full strength; but no secret enemy can say that on that night they did not do their best. But the whole responsibility seemed to lie upon one member, who seemed to take upon himself more duty than was perhaps necessary for the complete balance of the parts. He sat apart, and long before the performance commenced, preludised softly to himself. His instrument was the cornet.

I am confident the music he discoursed was of a harsh, and what might be called an *ad libitum*, nature. None of the band, I am confident, were shackled by the stupid conventionalities of notes or staves; and yet the effect seemed to be very beautiful. Too much — a responsibility almost unfair — seemed to be thrown upon the shoulders of the drum — I mean upon the performer who made that instrument discourse. He never relaxed; but when there was even a hint of failing, came in splendidly to the rescue. Someway the wielder of the cornet attracted me more powerfully. He seemed more conscientious; yet this might be fanciful. There was something odd about his appearance that drew us to him with wonder. He always presented to us who were above, a sort of second face, for he was abruptly and shiningly bald; and the effect to us, was as of a small private pool or pond, surrounded with banks of rich verdure. He had a hopeless expression, as though he were blowing himself steadily to his grave, and at the same time a stern purpose in his blast, as though he were blowing a

scanty subsistence for a numerous offspring at home. A few scattered brambles grew upon his upper lip, in the nature of a moustache, and he affected us with sadness.

It was a gloomy piece naturally, alas! I speak of the cold maturer view — with that Forest of Bondy in the dead of night, and a good deal of losing of their way by belated parties, and much measured speech, recriminating, defiant, and in various other keys; and yet how absorbing, how even fascinating, the whole history. How we sympathised with the noble Aubrey (he was captain in the French service at some indistinct period, when a large field of white facings was worn in front), who used literally to chant his heroic sentiments in a sort of measured strain. And was he not proprietor of the renowned dog Caesar? Aubrey — the name Captain Aubrey, how musical, how melodious! It embodied all that was chivalrous, grand, gallant. Even in the bearing of that other officer in the same regiment, a man in whose breast every spark of manly principle seemed dead, and who was consumed with an unworthy jealousy of the noble Aubrey, even in him (he had large white facings too) we had that interest which attaches to bold reckless villany. It was impossible not to admire secretly, when the noble Aubrey was forced into a duel with him and actually won the first fire, how he — was his name Lesparre, or something in that key? — took his place with folded arms and without changing a muscle. We knew, as *he* knew well, that the noble Aubrey had his life at his command — and we gasped. A feeling, however, that was changed into uncontrollable admiration when the noble Aubrey discharged his weapon in the air, remarking at the same moment that “thus it was that Aubrey avenged himself upon his friend.” Which admiring feeling was in no wise diminished by the fact that for the rest of the evening the air was charged with the sulphurous results of the explosion.

From the way in which the Captain — shall we say Lesparre? — received this advance, we gave him up. He must have been radically a bad man, and we were not surprised when the night drew on, and the noble Aubrey had to pass through the Forest of Bondy on urgent private affairs, to find this bold bad man plotting some unholy deed. We had no fair data to go on, but we could see from the scowl and general deportment of Lesparre, that something was rankling in his breast.

It came to the Forest itself — the depths of the Forest — a *very* flat scene, which came from the right and left and joined in the middle; and at the same moment, to impart a sense of coming horrors, the lights went down to a degree that hindered all view of what was going forward. And yet there was an artfulness in this enforced obscurity, for otherwise would have been revealed — at least, I now feel an instinct of this description — a cottage and garden in the distance, with other objects wholly inconsistent with the depths of a forest. The mists of years rise up between me and that lonely and sequestered place; yet still I faintly recal that we were present at the deed of blood. The fact is, all gave way before the overpowering interest of the scene that followed, still vividly imprinted, even to the minutest particulars: the scene of the Midnight Cottage, with a real green door, and a real garden gate, and a bell, and general obscurity.

What was it that made our heart leap so? Not the skipping grasshopper music which was now being “made” in the orchestra, suggestive of spasmodic walking, and which had somehow a strangely oppressive effect, — not the silent and deserted aspect of the village hamlet (the proprietors of the green gate and bell being locked in profound slumber), not the breathless expectancy of the House, but the distant bark or “baying” (most exquisite music!) of the DOG (induced by pressure on his tail) heard behind! At that sound a strange physical impulse of rising and sitting down again in our places took possession of us — a pleasing yet disquieting restlessness — with an idea that force would be requisite to keep us down in our places. Every eye was strained to the wing. And here,

with a sort of joyous canter, his mouth open, and a great red tongue lolling good humouredly out, as the habit of Newfoundland dogs is, entered the renowned dog Caesar.

At last! Splendid creature, so noble, so grand, so massive. Black and white all over, shaggy, with his tail in a hairy and insolent cornucopia, and his hair, ears, and general person, swinging about him as he walked. We burst into a tumult of delight as he jogged across, utterly indifferent to the lights and intelligent audience who were regarding his movements, and, oh! wonder of wonders, reared himself on his hind-legs at the green gate, took a cord in his mouth, and rang the bell — at least appeared to perform that function. For how were we to know that the cord had been artfully rubbed with some substance of a rich and savoury nature (it may have been dripping), or that the bell was rung behind, by no other hand than that of his master, the wicked Lesparre! But wait. There was more to come.

To him opens the green gate a domestic of the house, plainly roused from slumber, with a familiar bedchamber candlestick in her hand. She looks round with inquiry for the human hand that, of course, has rung, and at last sees the faithful and intelligent animal at her feet. But mark what follows. The faithful and intelligent animal (on unseen invitation from the base Lesparre) seizes the familiar candlestick in his mouth, and ambles off with it (still lighted), all his coat swinging and shaking about him. Just at the end he stops a second (the base Lesparre has got round in time) and looks round over his shoulder by way of invitation, which motion has set the candle all awry, and has nearly lighted up his own tail — and then exit. Delightful creature!

It was only natural that on the disappearance of the noble Aubrey in the Forest of Bondy, something in the nature of an investigation should be set on foot. Was it the Colonel that took the matter up? Suspicion somehow lighted on the vile Lesparre, whose deportment, lowering, surly, and with a general tendency to folded arms when questioned, did seem to fortify the impression abroad. Why linger over details? He is tried before some irregular tribunal; the case breaks down. Already there is an air of triumphant villany on his lips; when hark! once more to the familiar note at the side. The officers of the court look out anxiously in that direction; a lane is opened; and in comes, bounding, scampering, and his great red mouth opened with frightful ferocity, the noble DOG, making straight for the wretched criminal. The wretched criminal was seen to lift his two hands to his throat, no doubt for its protection (but in the days of later scepticism knew it was actual invitation to the animal to attach itself promptly), and then followed a most distressing scene. The wretched criminal, when he found the dog was securely fixed in his handkerchief, sloped his back inward, held his arms out, as if in the natural agony of the moment, and began to turn round and round. The noble dog held on firmly, and by the motion was swung out in the air. Rounds of tumultuous applause from all sides. Still, strange to say, none of the court, or even of the soldiers in cocked-hats who were standing by, interfered, but all seemed anxious to allow canine justice to take its course. Finally, without apparent reason, the strength of the vile Lesparre gave way, and he tottered to the ground, while the noble brute got over him and burrowed at his throat, and barked furiously, and at the same time wagged the cornucopia, — although as if in apparent satisfaction. At the end of all, the music braying on mournfully, the green curtain slid down in sad folds; the members of the court formed in an exact semicircle round the dog and the vile Lesparre, now almost exhausted; and, with feelings of alarm and terror, we saw the soldiers in the cocked-hats pointing their muskets with deadly aim at the prostrate form of the murderer of Aubrey!

As the curtain fell, a feeling of deep grief settled on us, that we were never more to see the renowned dog, and that we were, as it were, parted from him for ever. But the audience began to raise discordant cries, which were understood as a desire to see the noble animal once more, in a

sort of private capacity. And presently the curtain being drawn aside, to our speechless delight we saw him again; that is, his huge bluff head, and red jaws and tongue, which it seems constitutional with him to keep on view, for respiratory ends. He withdrew it in a second, but reappeared a little suddenly, giving the idea of having been propelled from behind. He then stepped forth gravely and deliberately, and trotted across, swinging his coat in measured beats, until he reached the other end. Then something appeared to irritate the huge flap of his ear, and with a delightful aplomb, he at once dropped into a sitting attitude, and with his hind paw proceeded diligently to alleviate this cutaneous affection. The ease, the absence of shyness, the happy air, with which this operation was accomplished, would have done credit to any man of the world, were he trained in the very best circles. When the work was accomplished to his satisfaction, he retired, pushing the curtain aside with his nose. I question if this act, performed in a private capacity, did not endear the noble animal, to us, more than his more elaborate performances.

A troubled feverish sort of night followed this first mental trouble we had known. Our hearts fluttered uneasily. The gorgeous lights of the scenic world danced before our eyes. Our neat and orderly chamber, otherwise welcome, became odious and prison-like. In the morning we awoke, and came down with a heavy, heavy weight upon, our soul. To look back, it seemed a blissful night, bathed in golden purple, pink — what hue was it?— light. And the dog! Thrice noble, grand, brave, gallant, lovable animal. Then came an internal soreness as we thought of him.

In the middle of the day, our father took us away up to London; our aunt, over whom principle had now again asserted its sway, taking of us a cold and stern farewell. We were going home; there were joyful times approaching; unbounded cake, a certain freeness in a money direction, and a general license as to manners, Home was always welcome; and with such a festival as a sister's marriage! And yet on this occasion we went forth with mournfulness. We seemed to be leaving a friend, I believe — but we did not dare even to whisper this — that if the matter were open to such an arrangement, we would have cheerfully exchanged all our chance of future joys for one more night of canine happiness. A rash improvident contract, such would have been, but we would have entered into it cheerfully. Where was he now, the noble creature? How was it with him in private life? Did he feast on the fat of the land, as a dog of such gifts should? A hundred such questions as these entertained us, as we were borne far away from him and Wearmouth.

The family were in all the flutter and confusion attendant on the sister's marriage. We were welcome, yet not very highly considered. Would overlooked be too strong an expression? And yet our treatment, generally, verged in this direction. In fact, there was mantua-making on a gigantic scale going forward within the walls of the mansion, under the personal superintendence of our mother. This accounted for any apparent deficiency in the affections. Nor, in sooth, did we heed it. We were changed, and it was remarked that there was a moodiness in our bearing. Once, indeed, we broached the DOG, and volunteered a little narrative of that evening; but they were cutting out at the moment, and the fervent attention, after a moment's affectation of listening, wandered away.

The bridegroom we took to amazingly. Plusher was his name — John Plusher — a good fellow, honest, rough, and — he took us out and gave us treats. O, how we liked him! Possibly next to the noble animal Caesar, to whom our hearts yearned more and more. And very soon we were tempted to unfold to *him*, the whole story of that splendid animal. Not only then, but often. Not only the mere narrative, but the most abundant details. He relished it. *His* attention did not wander. One day he proposed gifts — gifts of astounding value, to be measured by pounds — the object to be left to

our election. What would we have? Come! We were not to be afraid, but to speak out. Come — a second time! We began to blush and glow, and to drop our eyes, and finally murmured the “Dog Caesar.”

“By Jove! yes!” said Plusher. “I’ll go down to-morrow, and see if the theatrical fellows are there. Or, if they are gone, we can find out where they are. We’ll get him, never fear!” There was something so noble and confident in John Plusher’s manner, that it quite overcame us. Noble John Plusher!

Noble John Plusher arrived the next evening, after we had spent a day of horrible anxiety. This was the intelligence he brought. Two nights after the famous performance, the renowned Delaval Family had departed abruptly, taking with them all their effects, which were of a portable character. Taking with them also, the dog Caesar. Perhaps this sudden disappearance (which was accompanied with secrecy and mystery) might be set down to disgust at the slender support accorded to their talents; but there was more probability in imputing it to a sudden call for a nightly settlement of accounts, which it seems the proprietor — who had a deep acquaintance with human nature — was accustomed to insist on. In fact, the Theatre Royal, Wearmouth, was usually taken on this precarious tenure, it being its lot to become suddenly occupied and as suddenly deserted, many times in the course of the year. It would have been supposed that from his acquaintance with this curious law, the proprietor would have been wary of his tenants. But somehow, the skilful Delaval Family had contrived to disappear, taking with them all their effects, and the renowned DOG CAESAR. The noble creature, without any fault of his own, had departed under the odium of not being able to meet his engagements. For obvious reasons, the Delaval Family had declined to leave its address. There was no hope. The noble dog was lost to us for ever. Honest John Plusher had done his best.

The marriage day came round. It was a great festival: a splendid occasion. All the neighbourhood rejoiced. We shone in apparel perfectly new; for, with a delicacy which we knew few would appreciate, we could not bring ourselves to desecrate the blue and silver waistcoat which was sacred to the memory of the renowned dog. We were in the habit of visiting that garment tenderly, as a relic. However, on this day of universal joy, we thought it but respectful to dismiss any mournful feelings of a private nature we might entertain, and consumed, silently but steadily, large blocks of a very rich and moist wedding-cake, until we actually became inert and almost torpid. In the evening there was to be a dance — a small dance — which was anticipated with happiness.

The day was long and weary, and the evening seemed to approach very slowly. Honest John Plusher and his young wife were gone — were already miles away upon their road towards honest John’s country-house. The tears were over, the cutting out was over. Here is now ten o’clock at last, and the party is about to begin!

We had been a little uncomfortable towards four o’clock, and had gone to lie down; but by the evening were fresh again. The rooms were lighted up, the company was arriving, and here was the music — a harp in a green baize paletot with a strap round it, a fiddle, and a cornet. Men from Chopkins’s, the eminent pastrycook of the district, who had “the direction” of the banquet, were already in possession of the place. I did not see them, but I heard of these things up-stairs, as I put on more festive raiment. For a moment, I thought of the blue and silver, as the drawer was opened — as a change from the morning’s apparel the effect would have been superb. It was tempting; but a better spirit prevailed.

We went down and wandered into the dancing room ; it was already full of lovely creatures — all flowers and general radiance. The men did not seem nearly such spiritual things. There they were, bowing, and going through their measures — a very pretty sight to look on, while the music played melodiously. They were wedged up in a corner, a little uncomfortably; and it struck me that the harp, whose instrument, projecting at an angle, was rudely brushed at times by passing dancers, must have a weary time of it. But he bore it with an angelic patience, as of one who was used to that sort of thing: while the cornet, who carried his instrument gallantly, holding it out dead horizontally, and blowing with a will — surely we should know *him*. What! The pool of baldness, and the banks of bulrushes fringing it — the sad blowing expression — why, we knew him at once, though only seeing him athwart the forms of flitting dancers! What a vicissitude of fortune was this! Surely the finger of some mysterious power was here! Again our hearts began to flutter.

As soon as the dance had stopped, we stole round to have a better look. It *was* he. There could be no mistake. His manner of discoursing the music, too, suggested the night. At first we thought of an introduction; but, on reflection considered such would be a delay unnecessary. So, we went up to him and boldly recalled to him the Wearmouth Theatre — and — the dog. He was confused, yet nobly admitted the connexion. We entered freely in conversation. He had indeed been attached to the Delaval Family; but they were “a bad lot.” Even, he would go so far as to say, a shabby lot. They lived by defrauding humble people who were struggling to maintain their families. The dog? Oh, yes. Clever enough, but nothing *as* a dog.

Here the leader tapped the back of his fiddle impatiently, the harp was tilted back on to the shoulder of its proprietor, and they struck into the popular Fury Galop. I was left in the tortures of expectancy to know what had become of the renowned dog Caesar. I would wait until the next interval; and in the mean while, as I was standing thoughtfully, determined not to lose sight of the cornet player, a massively built military person, coming round with express velocity, struck me heavily, and nearly flung me across the fender. At last the Fury Galop was done, and I drew near to my cornet player, with whom I might now be said to be intimate. He was good natured. I told him my story. He sympathised with my affection for the noble creature. He himself was not possessed of much information as to the present residence of the Delaval Family; but he had a brother — Where? where?

He hesitated a little; but he told me all eventually. His brother, like himself, had had dealings with the Delaval Family; and, like himself, had, so to speak, been betrayed by the Delaval Family — sold, I believe was the word he used, which, though indistinct, conveyed to me the idea of horribly base treatment. This brother, the victim of the Delavals, could give information on the subject; but there would be, the cornet player owned, much delicacy necessary in dealing with him; for he was a man of peculiar temperament, rendered sensitive by his reverses, and who had moved in far higher walks of life. At this juncture the harp again reeled back on its proprietor's shoulder, and the whole band struck vigorously into the opening bars of The Lancers. A “set” forming close by, imprisoned me for a considerable period, but I got free at last, and stood at the door burning for further particulars.

As I stood, a voice was borne to my ears, which did, indeed, seem tuned in a familiar chord. It seemed that I had heard it somewhere in the past, a richly measured cadence, something like chanting. Good gracious what did this mean? Events were crowding so thickly on this momentous night! I struggled to the door, and looked out. I saw nothing, heard nothing; our mother was sitting there in state outside, on a cane-bottomed chair, to receive the company. It was perilous to speak to her. Where was the voice? Hark! There it rang out again! “Mr. and Mrs. Jenkinwaters! Miss

Jenkinwaters! Mr. Alfred Jenkinwaters! Major Pumpes!” Surely it was the voice of the noble Aubrey? But here was a stately man, in a white tie and a white waistcoat, stepping up-stairs, with a bearing infinitely majestic, a herald to the Jenkinwaters family.

I could not recognise him. I should never have known him. But the voice still rang musically in my ears. And yet there was a mournfulness in his deportment, an air of suffering and placid resignation in the way in which he went through his function, that was to me inexpressibly affecting. I longed to accost him, to enter into familiar relations with him. But I durst not; for our mother was still sitting enthroned in the cane-bottomed chair.

I got back to the cornet, with whom I was now on a footing of deep and confidential intercourse. “I have seen him,” I whispered. “Mr. Lorimer is —” (The noble Aubrey was Lorimer in the bills.) “Hush! hush!” said the cornet, looking round. “There ain't no Lorimers here. That's the stage. Perkeboyes is *his* name.” “But,” said I, “Mr. Lorimer —” “I ain't Lorimer neither,” he said, a little pettishly. “Valvoni — Signor Valvoni's *my* name.” Wondering at this curious difference in the case of those who were brothers, I was yet restrained from further inquiries by the manner of Signer Valvoni.

Before the night was over, it was settled that my friend the cornet should arrange with his brother: who was too sensitive, after his gross treatment at the hands of the Delaval Family, to endure any allusion to the subject from third parties. He would communicate the result at a pastrycook's some two streets away. He originally proposed the assignation at a public-house; but that I firmly declined.

Now it was that I missed the supporting aid of honest John Plusher. The whole weight of the negotiation was thrown upon my shoulders. And yet the first thing necessary, I felt, was to put myself entirely in his hands, far away as he was. I was much pleased with the shape of this sentiment, and got it by heart in bed, the next night; though, indeed, I believe this putting myself in his hands was but an inducement to his putting something in *my* hands. Still he had promised, and so I determined to appeal to him in a manly way. This expression also struck me as being fine, and I got it also by heart in bed. The result of the whole was a letter composed after many hours of agony (the procuring the note-paper involving the sin of larceny), a strange production, made up of many tottering capitals, and suffering from caligraphic cramps and palsy:

“my dear John, — i hope you. are quite well, and I hope sister Jane is quite well also. i and mama are very well too. i met a man who heard of the dog — i wish you were here — to put myself in your hands in a manly way — far away as he was. please write.
“Ever your affectionate and friendly brother!”

It struck me nothing could be more delicate, or even elegant, than the way in which this was put. I read it over several times. I read it to my younger brother, who was lost in admiration, and sucked his thumb with wonder. I even — vanity getting the better of prudence — read it privately to Mary the housemaid. She kindly advanced me the sum of a penny on my own personal security, to defray the postage.

By return, came a letter from honest John. Such a letter! I had not miscalculated his noble nature in putting myself so freely in his hands, far away as he was. Nothing could be nobler, grander, than his conduct. He said, leave it all to him; he would manage it: and let Perkeboyes, or Lorimer, put himself in direct communication with him. He was up in town in about a week. He kept the assignation at

the pastrycook's; in another fortnight, the renowned dog Caesar had retired from his dramatic career, and become a member of our family.

I believe the Delaval Family must have been in sad straits about this time, from, the physical condition of the frame of the noble animal. There had been a conjoined indifference in the public mind both to the family and the unrivalled animal. However this might be, they were eager to part with their dog. They parted with him for, I believe, a not extravagant sum, the amount of which the innate delicacy of honest John would never let me know.

My mother naturally objected to receive the noble dog into her family, but she was a tender woman — is still, for I am glad to say she still rules our mansion — and gave way. After his first meal, consumed with a frightful greediness, the result of many days' abstinence, he at once showed a disposition to enter into the most cordial relations. He gained rapidly on all the members of the household. There was an honest bluntness, a plain straightforward manner, about him, that conciliated all. He kept his great mouth and red tongue always on view, and panted habitually, like a sort of canine steam-engine. He was so large and great and stately: so reasonable, and so quiet: that it was impossible to overlook him, or consider him other than one of the regular members of the family. He asserted himself firmly, yet not obtrusively.

Strange to say, he could never be got to go through any of his dramatic efforts: such as ringing bells, or carrying flat candlesticks in his mouth. Any approaches in this direction he seemed to shun as though it were a discreditable page in his life which he would willingly blot out. His connexion with the Delaval Family he would have the world forget; he showed his sense of the indelicacy of any allusion to the subject — which might take the shape of hanging an imitation bell-cord before his nose, or trying to encourage him to take up a flat candlestick in his mouth — by raising himself slowly on his feet, and walking slowly from the room.

But he had other fancies and accomplishments which were very pleasant, and which, as being of an unprofessional nature, he never had any objection to exhibit. On being invited to "Speak," he would gather himself up, simulate a certain ferocity, and finally deliver himself of a startling bark in a full deep key. Or, he would be shown, say a glove, or a whip, or other portable article capable of being conveniently carried in his mouth, and would be then brought away down into the street, round the corner, up past the square, for a quarter of a mile or more. His demeanour during this interval would be of a strange and mysterious sort; for he would walk with his great black eyes fixed steadily, and with a painfully earnest expression, on the face of the party directing the experiment. To smile, or even allow a muscle to stir, was fatal; he instantly interpreted it as a signal of acquiescence, and was off and away, bounding along in a sort of heavy gallop, his tongue lolling out, his great ears swinging like saddle-bags, and the momentum of his progress clearly dangerous to unguarded passers-by. The door being left open, he would come tearing up-stairs, dash in rudely and boisterously, seize the article, and disappear. It was dangerous to play any trick with him on these occasions, for he felt that it was a question of character, and he allowed no consideration to stand between him and duty. The flat candlestick was once tried to be palmed on him by an artifice — an insult which he resented by withdrawing himself from all friendly intercourse with the family for the space of nearly a day and a night.

The hours of joy and social entertainment I spent in the society of this noble creature are not to be described. He was positively a second brother to me; and I hope I shall not be considered wanting in fraternal love, if I say that I believe his mental powers were, if anything, more developed than those

of my first brother. Our walks were delightful. In the house he enjoyed universal respect, as a sensible, well-bred, kind, generous, high-souled gentleman, who would not descend to a mean action for the world. From the housemaids, especially, not a breath ever came to tarnish his good name. His memory is still green, and — Ah! his memory! I must come to that now.

It fell out in this way. It was a Saturday night, and extensive painting operations, carried on diligently through the whole week, were at last concluded. The house was fresh and resplendent, and we felt a natural pride in its glory. I recollect that Saturday so well! We went to bed; but I remember being awakened with a start, and finding the butler, in his waistcoat, standing over me with a lighted candle. “Hush, Master Jack,” he said. “Get up and come down. Poor Caesar! The poor dog!” I started up, and was dressed in a moment. “Hush, Master Jack! Don't let the mistress hear.” “And what is it?” said I, very agitated. “Oh, he's bad, he's very bad. I'm afraid — “

We hurried down and crossed the yard to the wooden tenement where poor Caesar usually resided. The butler carried the candle — one of the old, old objectionable flat candlesticks. As we came near, we heard mournful and piteous groans, and there, at his kennel door, was stretched out helplessly — his noble flank heaving distressfully — his head rising and falling again on the flags, with short gasps — the brave creature, the dear dear dog, the gallant Caesar! “Those painters!” said the butler. “Some of their stuff had got mixed with his food.” “Call up the house — fetch a doctor,” I cried, distractedly. The butler was a sombre man. He shook his head. “In a few minutes he'll be past that! the poor brute.” I wept over him, “See!” said the butler, holding down the candle. The light fell upon his head, still working up and down convulsively. I called to him despairingly. “Caesar! Good dog! Good fellow! Poor Caesar! Old fellow!” I was choking, and here fairly burst out. “He don't know you, Master Jack,” said the butler, still holding down the light. The large bright eyes were glazing very fast, and the eyelids were dropping down quietly over them. “Good dog!” I cried again, quite hysterically. “Poor fellow! Don't you know me? Dear old fellow, don't you?” The glazing eyes gave no sign; but the large bushy tail, which had been lying out quite straight and limp, began to move ever so softly — the motion was almost imperceptible, just as if a breeze was stirring the hair a little. That grateful recognition from the dying dog was inexpressibly sweet to think of, long, long afterwards. And then the butler, who was naturally a humane man, took me away into the house.

This is the simple history of the Renowned Dog Caesar, once the property of the Delaval Family.