

## Castle Dracula

6 May.

In the gloom the courtyard looked huge – several dark alleys leading off under great round arches. But perhaps it seemed bigger than it really is. Daylight will surely tell.

When the calash stopped, the driver jumped down to assist me, and again I noted his prodigious strength – his hand round mine like a vice of steel. Then he placed my bags on the ground beside me as I stood close to a great door, old and studded with large iron nails, and set in a projecting doorway of massive stone. I could see even in the dim light that the stone carving had been much worn by time and weather. As I stood, the driver jumped back into his seat and shook the reins. The horses started forward, and the carriage disappeared down one of the dark openings.

I stood in silence, for of bell or knocker there was no sign, and through these frowning walls and dark windows my voice could hardly penetrate. My wait seemed endless, and doubts and fears crowded round me. What sort of place had I come to, and among what people? What sort of grim adventure was this, indeed, for a solicitor's clerk sent out to explain the purchase of a London estate?

Solicitor's clerk!

Mina would not like that, for just before leaving London I had word that my examination was successful: now I was a full-blown *solicitor*!

Wasn't I?

To see if I were really awake, I began to rub my eyes and pinch myself. It all seemed like a horrible nightmare, and I expected that I should suddenly awake and find myself at home, with the dawn struggling in through the windows. But my flesh answered the pinching test, and my eyes were not to be deceived. I was indeed among the Carpathians. All I could do now was be patient, and await the coming morn.

Just as I reached this conclusion a heavy step approached behind the great door, and through the chinks came a gleam of light. Then the sound

of rattling chains and the clanking of massive bolts drawn back. A key was turned with the loud grating noise of long disuse, and the huge door swung back.

Within stood a tall old man, clean-shaven save for a long white moustache, and clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour about him. In his hand was an antique silver lamp, in which the flame burned without chimney or globe of any kind, throwing long, quivering shadows as it flickered in the draught of the open door. The old man motioned me in with a courtly gesture, saying in excellent English, but with a strange intonation:

‘Welcome to my house! Enter freely, and of your own will!’ He made no motion of stepping to meet me, but stood like a statue – as though his gesture of welcome had fixed him into stone. The instant, however, that I had stepped over the threshold, he moved impulsively forward and grasped my hand with a strength which made me wince, an effect not lessened by his hand feeling cold as ice – like the hand of a corpse.

Again he said:

‘Welcome. Come freely. Go safely. And leave something of the happiness you bring!’

‘Count Dracula?’

He bowed as he replied:

‘I am Dracula. And you, Mr Harker, must come in. The night air is chill, and you need to eat and rest.’ As he spoke he lodged the lamp in a bracket on the wall, then stepped out and took my luggage.

I protested.

He insisted:

‘Sir, you are my guest! Since it is late, and my people are not available . . .’ He carried my bags along the passage, then up a great winding stair and along a further passage, on whose stone floor our steps rang heavily. At the end of this he threw open a heavy door, and I rejoiced to see within a well-lit room and a table spread for supper, while a mass of logs blazed and crackled in a mighty hearth.

The Count halted, put down my bags, and closed the door. Then he crossed the room and opened a second door, which led into a small octagonal room lit by a single lamp, and seemingly without a window. Passing through this, he opened another door, and motioned me to enter. It was a welcome sight: a great bedroom well lighted and warmed with another log fire, which sent a hollow roar up the

wide chimney. The Count left my luggage inside and withdrew, saying:

‘You will need, after your journey, to refresh yourself. I trust you will find all you wish. When you are ready . . . your supper awaits you.’

The light and warmth and the Count's courteous welcome had allayed my fears, and I realized I was famished – so I made a hasty toilet, and went back to the other room.

My host, who stood leaning against the great fireplace, waved gracefully at the table, and said:

‘Be seated. Sup heartily. Excuse my not joining you – I have dined already.’

I handed him the sealed letter Mr Hawkins had entrusted to me.

He opened it, read it gravely, then, with a charming smile, he handed it back to me. One passage made me flush with pleasure:

‘I much regret that an attack of gout forbids absolutely my travelling; but I am happy to send in my place Mr Jonathan Harker, in whom I have every confidence. He is a talented young man, full of energy, and of a very faithful and discreet disposition, having grown into manhood in my service. He shall attend on you when you will, and shall take your instructions in all matters.’

The Count came forward and took the cover off a dish, and I fell to at once on an excellent roast chicken. This, with some cheese, a salad, and two glasses of old Tokay, was my supper. While I ate, the Count asked me many questions as to my journey. After my supper he desired me to draw up a chair by the fire and smoke a cigar.

(Mem., strange that he did not smoke himself.)

I had now an opportunity of observing him, and found him of a very marked physiognomy.

His face was strong – *very* strong. Nose aquiline, with a high bridge and peculiarly arched nostrils; lofty domed forehead; hair growing scantily round the temples, but profusely elsewhere; eyebrows almost meeting over the nose, with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth protruding over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale and at the tops extremely pointed; chin broad and strong; cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.

Hitherto I had noticed the backs of his hands as they lay on his knees in the firelight, and they had seemed rather white and fine. But now I saw that they were rather coarse – broad, with squat fingers, and hairs in the centre of his palms. The nails were long and fine, and cut to sharp points.

As the Count leaned over me, and his hands touched me, I could not repress a shudder. It may have been that his breath was rank, but a horrible feeling of nausea came over me, which I simply could not conceal.

The Count, noticing, drew back. With a grimly sharp-toothed smile he sat down again on the far side of the fire. In the tense silence that followed I looked towards the window and saw the first dim streak of dawn. Moments later I heard a strange distant howling of many wolves.

The Count's eyes gleamed, and he said:

'The children of the night! What music they make!' Seeing the expression in my face, he added:

'You dwellers of the city cannot feel as does the hunter.' Then he rose and said:

'But you are tired, and your bedroom is all ready. I have to be away till the afternoon, so sleep as late as you will. And dream well!' With a courteous bow he opened the door to the octagonal room, and I entered my bedroom.

*Later:*

I am at sea in doubts and fears. I think strange things which I dare not confess to my own soul. God keep me.

*7 May.*

It is again early morning, but I have rested and enjoyed the last twenty-four hours. I slept till late, and awoke of my own accord. When I had dressed I went into the room where we had supped, and found a cold breakfast laid out, with coffee kept hot on the hearth. On the table was a card:

'I have to be absent for a while. Do not wait for me. D.'

So I tucked in to a hearty meal. Then I looked for a bell, to let the servants know I had finished; but I could not find one. There are certainly odd deficiencies in the house, considering its extraordinary evidences of wealth. The table service, for example, is of beautifully wrought gold, and must be of immense value. The curtains and upholstery of the

chairs and sofas and the hanging of my bed are of the costliest and most beautiful fabrics, and are in excellent order even though they must be centuries old.

Yet nowhere is there a mirror – not even a toilet glass on my table – and I had to get the little shaving-glass from my bag before I could shave. I have not yet seen a servant anywhere, or heard any sound except the howling of wolves. After my ‘breakfast’ – it was between five and six o’clock – I looked about for something to read, for I did not like to roam about the castle until I had asked the Count’s permission. There was absolutely nothing in the room – no books or newspapers; not even writing materials – so I opened another door and found a sort of library. The door opposite mine I tried, but found it locked.

In the library I found, to my great delight, a vast number of English books, whole shelves full of them, and bound volumes of magazines and newspapers. A table in the centre was littered with English magazines and newspapers, though none of them were recent. The books were of the most varied kind – history, geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law – all relating to English life and customs. There were even the London Directory, Whitaker’s Almanack, the Army and Navy Lists, and – which somehow gladdened my heart – the Law List.

While I was looking at the books, the far door was unlocked, and in came the Count. He saluted me in a hearty way, and hoped that I had had a good night’s rest. Then he went on:

‘I am glad you found your way in here, for I am sure there is much that will interest you. These’ – he laid his hand on some of the books – ‘have been good friends to me, and for some years past, ever since I had the idea of going to London, have given me many hours of pleasure. Through them I have come to know your great England; and to know her is to love her. How I long to go through the crowded streets of your mighty London, to be in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity, to share its life, its change, its death, and all that makes it what it is. But alas! As yet I only know your tongue through books. To you, my friend, I look that I know it to speak.’

‘But, Count,’ I said, ‘your English is first-class!’

He bowed gravely:

‘True, I know the grammar, and the words – yet I know not how to speak them.’

‘Indeed,’ I said, ‘you speak excellently.’

He answered:

‘Did I speak in your London, all there would know me for a stranger. That is not good enough. Here I am noble; a boyar; the master. But a stranger in a strange land, he is no-one. Myself I have been so long master that I will have none other ever master over me. So you, Mr Harker, you must tell me when I make error, even of the smallest, in my speaking. I am sorry to have been so long away today – but you will forgive one who has so many important affairs in hand.’

‘Of course,’ I said, then asked if I might use the library freely.

He answered:

‘By all means,’ and added:

‘You may go anywhere in the castle, except where the doors are locked. There, in any case, you would not wish to go.’

‘Of course not.’

He went on:

‘We are in Transylvania, not England. Our ways are not your ways, and there shall to you be many things strange.’

This led to much conversation. Seeing he wanted to talk, I asked many questions. Sometimes I felt he pretended not to understand; but generally he answered frankly. As time passed I became bolder, and asked him why the coachman had stopped to investigate the blue flames.

The Count described the common belief that on a certain night of the year – last night, in fact, when all evil spirits are supposed to have unchecked sway – a blue flame is seen over any place where treasure has been concealed.

‘That treasure *has* been hidden,’ he went on, ‘in the region through which you came last night, there can be little doubt. For it was the ground fought over for centuries by the Walachian, the Saxon, and the Turk.’

‘But how’, said I, ‘could such treasure have remained so long undiscovered?’

The Count smiled, and as his lips ran back over his gums, the long, sharp, canine teeth showed out strangely. He answered:

‘Because your peasant is at heart a coward and a fool! Those flames only appear one night a year, and then no man of this land will, if he can help it, stir without his doors. So the blue flames burn unseen!’ Then he abruptly changed the subject:

‘But tell me now of London, and the house you have procured for me.’

I went back to my bedroom to get the property papers from my bag. While I was placing them in order I heard a rattling of china and silver in the supper room. When I passed back through it, I noticed that the table had been cleared and the lamp lit. The lamps were also lit in the study, or library, and I found the Count lying on the sofa, reading, of all things, an English Bradshaw's Guide. When I came in he cleared the books and papers from the table; and with him I went into plans and deeds and figures of all sorts.

He was interested in everything and asked me a host of questions about the place and its surroundings. He clearly had studied beforehand all he could get on the neighbourhood, for he knew much more than I did. When I remarked upon this, he answered:

'Is it not needful that I should? When I go there I shall be all alone, and my friend Harker Jonathan will be in Exeter, miles away, working at the law for Mr Hawkins. So!'

We went thoroughly into the purchase of the estate at Purfleet. When I had told him the facts and got his signature to the necessary papers, and had written a letter with them ready to post to Mr Hawkins, he asked how I had come across so suitable a place. I read to him the note which I had made at the time:

'At Purfleet, on a by-road, I came across just such a place as seemed to be required, where was displayed a dilapidated notice: *For Sale*. The property is surrounded by a high wall, of ancient structure, built of heavy stones, and has not been repaired for years. The closed gates are of heavy old oak and iron, all eaten with rust.

'The estate is called Carfax, no doubt a corruption of the old *Quatre Faces*, as the house is four-sided, agreeing with the cardinal points of the compass. It contains in all some twenty acres, quite surrounded by the solid stone wall above-mentioned. There are many trees on it, which make it in places gloomy, and there is a small but deep and dark-looking lake, evidently fed by some springs, as the water is clear and flows away in a fair-sized stream.

'The house is very large and of all periods – dating back, I should say, to medieval times, for one part is of stone immensely thick, with only a few windows high up and heavily barred with iron. It looks like part of a keep, and is close to an old chapel. I could not enter it, as I had not the key of the door leading to it from the house, but I have taken Kodak views of it from various points. There are few houses close at hand, one being a

very large house only recently added to and formed into a private lunatic asylum. It is not, however, visible from the grounds of Carfax.'

When I had finished, Count Dracula said:

'I am glad it is old and big. I myself am of an old family, and to live in a new house would kill me. A house cannot be made habitable in a day, and, after all, how few days go to make up a century? I rejoice also that there is an olden chapel, since we Transylvanian nobles love not to think that our bones must rest amongst the common dead. I seek not gaiety nor mirth, nor the bright sunshine and sparkling waters which so please the young and gay. For I am no longer young. And my heart, through weary years of mourning over the dead, is not attuned to mirth. Moreover, the walls of my castle are broken, the shadows many, and the wind breathes cold through the broken battlements and casements. I love the shade and the shadow, and would be alone with my thoughts.'

Somehow his words and his look did not seem to accord. Or was it the cast of face that made his smile look malignant and saturnine?

Presently, excusing himself for some minutes, he left me to arrange my papers. After half an hour I began to look at the books around me. One was an atlas, which I found opened naturally at England, as if that map had been much used. On it little rings marked certain places – one near his new estate; the other two round Exeter, and Whitby on the Yorkshire coast.

An hour later the Count returned.

'Aha!' he said. 'Still at your books? Good! But you must not work always. Come. Your supper is ready.' He took my arm, and we went into the next room, where I found an excellent meal ready on the table. The Count again excused himself, saying he had dined out. But he sat as on the previous night, and chatted while I ate.

After supper I smoked, as before, and the Count stayed with me, chatting and asking questions on every conceivable subject, hour after hour. I felt that it was getting very late indeed, but I did not say anything, for I felt obliged to meet my host's wishes in every way. I was not sleepy, as the long sleep yesterday had fortified me; but I could not help experiencing that chill of coming dawn which is like the turning of a tide. All at once we heard a cock crow rise up with preternatural shrillness through the clear morning air.

Count Dracula, jumping to his feet, said:

'Morning again! How remiss I am to keep you up so long! You must

make our conversation regarding my dear new country of England less interesting, so that I may not forget how time flies by us!' And with a courtly bow he left me.

I went into my bedroom and drew back the curtains, but all I could see was a warm grey of quickening sky. So I drew the curtains again, and have written of this day.

8 May.

There is something so strange about this place that I cannot but feel uneasy. I wish I were out of it, or, better, that I never had come. Perhaps this night-existence is telling on me; but would that that were all! If there were anyone to talk to I could bear it, but there is no-one. I have only the Count to speak with, and he! – I fear I myself am the only living soul within the place. But . . . no, I must not let imagination riot. If it does, I am lost. So let me say once how I stand – or seem to.

I only slept a few hours, and, feeling that I *could* not sleep any more, got up. I had hung my glass by the window, and was just beginning to shave. Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder, and heard the Count's voice say:

'Good morning.'

I started, for it amazed me that I had not seen him, since the reflection of the glass covered the whole room behind me. Having answered the Count's salutation, I turned to the glass again to see if I had been mistaken. This time there could be no error, for the man was close to me, and I could see him over my shoulder.

*But no reflection of him in the mirror!*

The whole room behind me was displayed; but there was no man in it except myself. And in that instant I saw that I had cut myself while shaving. The cut had bled a little, and the blood was trickling over my chin. I laid down the razor, turning as I did so half-round to look for some sticking-plaster.

When the Count saw my face, his eyes blazed with a sort of fury, and he made a demoniac grab for my throat. I shrank back, and his hand touched the string of beads which held my crucifix. Immediately his fury passed – so quickly that I could hardly believe it had ever been.

'Take care', he said, 'not to cut yourself. It is more dangerous than you think in this country.' Then he seized the shaving-glass and went on:

'And this is the wretched thing that has done the mischief. Foul bauble

of man's vanity, away!' Opening the heavy window with one wrench of his terrible hand, he flung out the glass, which shattered into a thousand pieces on the courtyard stones far below. Then he withdrew without a word.

It is very annoying, for I do not see how I am to shave, unless in my watch-case or the bottom of the shaving-pot, which is, fortunately, of metal.

When I went into the dining-room there was no sign of the Count, so I breakfasted alone.

(Mem., strange that I have not seen the Count eat or drink. He must be most peculiar.)

After breakfast I did a little exploring in the castle. I went out on the stairs and found a room looking south. The view was magnificent. The castle is on the edge of a terrible precipice. A stone from the window would fall a thousand feet! As far as the eye can see is a sea of green tree-tops, with occasionally a deep rift where there is a chasm. Here and there are silver threads where the rivers wind in deep gorges through the forests.

But I am not in heart to describe beauty, for when I had seen the view I explored further; doors, doors, doors everywhere, and all locked and bolted. Only through the castle windows is there any possible escape.

It is a veritable prison, and I . . . a prisoner.