

5 May : Jonathan Harker's journal (Bistritz)

I soon lost sight and recollection of ghostly fears in the beauty of the scene as we drove along, although had I known the language, or rather languages, which my fellow-passengers were speaking, I might not have been able to throw them off¹ so easily.

Before us lay a green sloping² land full of forests and woods, with here and there steep hills, crowned with clumps of trees or with farmhouses, the

blank gable³ end to the road. There was everywhere a bewildering mass of fruit blossom--apple, plum, pear, cherry. And as we drove by I could see the green grass under the trees spangled⁴ with the fallen petals. In and out amongst these green hills of what they call here the "Mittel Land" ran the road, losing itself as it swept⁵ round the grassy curve, or was shut out by the straggling⁶ ends of pine woods, which here and there ran down the hillsides like tongues of flame. Beyond the green swelling hills of the Mittel Land rose mighty⁷ slopes of forest up to the lofty⁸ steepes of the Carpathians themselves. Right and left of us they towered, with the afternoon sun falling full upon them and bringing out all the glorious colours of this beautiful range, deep blue and purple in the shadows of the peaks, green and brown where grass and rock mingled, and an endless perspective of jagged rock and pointed crags, till these were themselves lost in the distance, where the snowy peaks rose grandly. Here and there seemed mighty rifts⁹ in the mountains, through which, as the sun began to sink, we saw now and again the white gleam of falling water. [...]

As we wound on our endless way, and the sun sank lower and lower behind us, the shadows of the evening began to creep round us. This was emphasized¹⁰ by the fact that the snowy mountain-top still held the sunset, and seemed to glow out with a delicate cool pink. Here and there we passed Czecks and Slovaks, all in picturesque attire¹¹, but I noticed that goitre was painfully prevalent. By the roadside were many crosses, and as we swept by, my companions all crossed themselves¹². Here and there was a peasant man or woman kneeling before a shrine¹³, who did not even turn round as

we approached, but seemed in the self-surrender of devotion to have neither eyes nor ears for the outer world.

[...] As the evening fell it began to get very cold, and the growing twilight seemed to merge into one dark mistiness¹⁴ the gloom of the trees, oak, beech, and pine¹⁵, though in the valleys which ran deep between the spurs¹⁶ of the hills, as we ascended through the Pass, the dark firs¹⁷ stood out here and there against the background of late-lying snow. Sometimes, as the road was cut through the pine woods that seemed in the darkness to be closing down upon us, great masses of greyness which here and there bestrewed¹⁸ the trees, produced a peculiarly weird and solemn effect, which carried on the thoughts and grim fancies engendered earlier in the evening, when the falling sunset threw into strange relief the ghost-like clouds which amongst the Carpathians seem to wind ceaselessly through the valleys. [...]

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We kept on ascending, with occasional periods of quick descent, but in the main always ascending. Suddenly, I became conscious of the fact that the driver was in the act of pulling up the horses in the courtyard of a vast ruined castle, from whose tall black windows came no ray of light, and whose broken battlements showed a jagged¹⁹ line against the sky. I must have been asleep, for certainly if I had been fully awake I must have noticed the approach of such a remarkable place. In the gloom²⁰ the courtyard looked of considerable size, and as several dark ways led from it under great round arches, it perhaps seemed bigger than it really is. I have not yet been able to see it by daylight.

When the caleche stopped, the driver jumped down and held out his hand to assist me to alight. Again I could not but notice his prodigious strength. His hand actually seemed like a steel vice²¹ that could have crushed mine if he had chosen. Then he took my traps²², and placed them on the ground beside me as I stood close to a great door, old and studded with large iron nails²³, and set in a projecting doorway of massive stone. I could see even in

the dim light that the stone was massively carved²⁴, but that the carving had been much worn by time and weather. As I stood, the driver jumped again into his seat and shook the reins. The horses started forward, and trap and all disappeared down one of the dark openings.

I stood in silence where I was, for I did not know what to do. Of bell or knocker there was no sign. Through these frowning walls and dark window openings it was not likely that my voice could penetrate. The time I waited seemed endless, and I felt doubts and fears crowding upon me. What sort of place had I come to, and among what kind of people? What sort of grim adventure was it on which I had embarked? [...] I began to rub my eyes and pinch myself to see if I were awake. It all seemed like a horrible nightmare to me, and I expected that I should suddenly awake, and find myself at home, with the dawn²⁵ struggling in through the windows, as I had now and again felt in the morning after a day of overwork. But my flesh answered the pinching test, and my eyes were not to be deceived. I was indeed awake and among the Carpathians. All I could do now was to be patient, and to wait the coming of morning.

Just as I had come to this conclusion I heard a heavy step approaching behind the great door, and saw through the chinks²⁶ the gleam of a coming light. Then there was the sound of rattling²⁷ chains and the clanking of massive bolts drawn back. A key was turned with the loud grating²⁸ noise of long disuse, and the great door swung back.

Within, stood a tall old man, clean shaven save for a long white moustache, and clad²⁹ in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour about him anywhere. He held in his hand an antique silver lamp, in which the flame burned without a 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 his right hand with a courtly gesture, saying in excellent English, but with a strange intonation. "Welcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own free 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 threshold³⁰, he moved impulsively forward, and holding out his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince³¹, an effect which was not lessened by the fact that it seemed cold as ice, more like the hand of a dead than a living man. Again he said. "Welcome to my house! Enter freely. Go safely, and leave something of the happiness you bring!"

The strength of the handshake was so much akin to³² that which I had noticed in the driver, whose face I had not seen, that for a moment I doubted if it were not the same person to whom I was speaking. So to make sure, I said interrogatively, "Count Dracula?"

He bowed in a courtly way as he replied, "I am Dracula, and I bid you welcome, Mr. Harker, to my house. Come in, the night air is chill³³, and you must need to eat and rest." As he was speaking, he put the lamp on a bracket on the wall, and stepping out, took my luggage. He had carried it in before I could forestall him. I protested, but he insisted. "Nay, sir, you are my guest. It is late, and my people are not available. Let me see to your comfort myself." He insisted on carrying my traps along the passage, and then up a great winding³⁴ stair, and along another great 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 in which a table was spread for supper, and on whose mighty hearth³⁵ a great fire of logs, freshly replenished, flamed and flared. [...]

The count himself came forward and took off the cover of a dish, and I fell to at once on an excellent roast chicken. This, with some cheese and a salad and a bottle of old tokay, of which I had two glasses, was my supper. During the time I was eating it the Count asked me many question as to my journey, and I told him by degrees all I had experienced³⁶.

By this time I had finished my supper, and by my host's desire, had drawn up a chair by the fire and begun to smoke a cigar which he offered me, at the same time excusing himself that he did not smoke. I had now an

opportunity of observing him, and found him of a very marked physiognomy.

His face was a strong, a very strong, aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils, with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily³⁷ round the temples but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy³⁸ 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. These protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness³⁹ showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed. The chin was broad⁴⁰ and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.

Hitherto⁴¹ 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 seeing them now close to me, I could not but notice that they were rather coarse⁴², broad, with squat⁴³ fingers. Strange to say, there were hairs in the centre of the palm. The nails were long and fine, and cut to a sharp point. As the Count leaned over me and his hands touched me, I could not repress a shudder⁴⁴. It may have been that his breath was rank, but a horrible feeling of nausea came over me, which, do what I would, I could not conceal.

The Count, evidently noticing it, drew back, and with a grim⁴⁵ sort of smile, which showed more than he had yet done his protuberant teeth, sat himself down again on his own side of the fireplace. We were both silent for a while, and as I looked towards the window I saw the first dim streak of the coming dawn. There seemed a strange stillness over everything. But as I listened, I heard as if from down below in the valley the howling of many wolves. The Count's eyes gleamed, and he said. "Listen to them, the children of the night. What music they make!"

Seeing, I suppose, some expression in my face strange to him, he added, "Ah, sir, you dwellers in the city cannot enter into the feelings of the hunter." Then he rose and said. "But you must be tired. Your bedroom is all

ready, and tomorrow you shall sleep as late as you will.[...]" With a courteous bow, he opened for me himself the door to the octagonal room, and I entered my bedroom.

I am all in a sea of wonders. I doubt. I fear. I think strange things, which I dare⁴⁶ not confess to my own soul. God keep me, if only for the sake of those dear to me!

Reading Guide

- Describe Jonathan as opposed to Dracula.
- How does he feel about his journey?
- Where does the scene take place? How does it account for Jonathan's feelings
- Focus on the description of Nature and of the Castle. What can you say about it?

Vocabulary

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- ¹ To throw something off = to forget something
² Sloping = vallonnée
³ The gable = le pignon
⁴ Spangled = parsemé
⁵ To sweep = serpenter
⁶ Straggling = les étendues irrégulières
⁷ Mighty = impressive / powerful
⁸ Lofty = noble
⁹ A rift = une faille
¹⁰ To emphasize = to make clearer
¹¹ Attire = clothing
¹² To cross oneself = se signer
¹³ A shrine = un autel
¹⁴ Mistiness = une atmosphère brumeuse
¹⁵ Oak, beech and pine = les chênes, hêtres et pins
¹⁶ Spurs = les éperons (rocheux)
¹⁷ Firs = les sapins
¹⁸ To bestrew = to cover
¹⁹ Jagged = découpé
²⁰ Gloom / dusk = obscurité
²¹ A vice = un étau
²² Traps = luggage
²³ Nails = clous
²⁴ Carved = gravé / sculpté
²⁵ Dawn = l'aube
²⁶ Chinks = fissures
²⁷ Rattling / clanking = bruit métallique
²⁸ Grating = grincement
²⁹ Clad = dressed
³⁰ Threshold = seuil
³¹ To wince = grimacer
³² Akin to = like
³³ Chill = cold
³⁴ Winding = en colimaçon
³⁵ A hearth = a fireplace
³⁶ Experienced = (here) felt
³⁷ Scantily = not much
³⁸ Bushy = broussailleux
³⁹ Ruddiness = de couleur vermillon
⁴⁰ Broad = Large
⁴¹ Hitherto = until this moment (old fashioned)
⁴² Coarse = calleuses
⁴³ Squat = trapus
⁴⁴ A shudder = un frisson

⁴⁵ Grim = sinister

⁴⁶ To dare = oser