

**THE BLOOD  
OF THE  
VAMPIRE**

BY  
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# **THE BLOOD OF THE VAMPIRE.**

## CHAPTER I.

It was the magic hour of dining. The long Digue of Heyst was almost deserted; so was the strip of loose, yellow sand which skirted its base, and all the *tables d'hôtes* were filling fast. Henri, the youngest waiter of the Hôtel Lion d'Or, was standing on the steps between the two great gilded lions, which stood rampant on either side the portals, vigorously ringing a loud and discordant bell to summons the stragglers, whilst the ladies, who were waiting the commencement of dinner in the little salon to the side, stopped their ears to dull its clamour. Philippe and Jules were busy, laying white cloths and glasses, etc., on the marble tables in the open balcony, outside the *salle à manger*, where strangers to the Hotel might dine *à la carte*, if they chose. Inside, the long, narrow tables, were decorated with dusty geraniums and fuchsias, whilst each cruet stand had a small bunch of dirty artificial flowers tied to its handle. But the visitors to the Lion d'Or, who were mostly English, were too eager for their evening meal, to cavil at their surroundings. The Baroness Gobelli, with her husband on one side, and her son on the other, was the first to seat herself at table. The Baroness always appeared with the soup, for she had observed that the first comers received a more generous helping than those who came in last. No such anxiety occupied the minds of Mrs. Pullen and her friend Miss Leyton, who sat opposite to the Baroness and her family. They did not care sufficiently for the *potage aux croutons*, which usually formed the beginning of the *table d'hôte* dinner. The long tables were soon filled with a motley crew of English, Germans, and Belgians, all chattering, especially the foreigners, as fast as their tongues could travel. Amongst them was a sprinkling

of children, mostly unruly and ill-behaved, who had to be called to order every now and then, which made Miss Leyton's lip curl with disgust. Just opposite to her, and next to Mr. Bobby Bates, the Baroness's son by her first marriage, and whom she always treated as if he had been a boy of ten years old, was an unoccupied chair, turned up against the table to signify that it was engaged.

"I wonder if that is for the German Princess of whom Madame Lamont is so fond of talking," whispered Elinor Leyton to Mrs. Pullen, "she said this morning that she expected her this afternoon."

"O! surely not!" replied her friend, "I do not know much about royalties, but I should think a Princess would hardly dine at a public *table d'hôte*."

"O! a German Princess! what is that?" said Miss Leyton, with a curled lip again, for she was a daughter of Lord Walthamstowe, and thought very little of any aristocracy, except that of her own country.

As she spoke, however, the chair opposite was sharply pulled into place, and a young lady seated herself on it, and looked boldly (though not brazenly) up and down the tables, and at her neighbours on each side of her. She was a remarkable-looking girl—more remarkable, perhaps, than beautiful, for her beauty did not strike one at first sight. Her figure was tall but slight and lissom. It looked almost boneless as she swayed easily from side to side of her chair. Her skin was colourless but clear. Her eyes were long-shaped, dark, and narrow, with heavy lids and thick black lashes which lay upon her cheeks. Her brows were arched and delicately pencilled, and her nose was straight and small. Not so her mouth

however, which was large, with lips of a deep blood colour, displaying small white teeth. To crown all, her head was covered with a mass of soft, dull, blue-black hair, which was twisted in careless masses about the nape of her neck, and looked as if it was unaccustomed to comb or hairpin. She was dressed very simply in a white cambric frock, but there was not a woman present, who had not discovered in five minutes, that the lace with which it was profusely trimmed, was costly Valenciennes, and that it was clasped at her throat with brilliants. The new-comer did not seem in the least abashed by the numbers of eyes which were turned upon her, but bore the scrutiny very calmly, smiling in a sort of furtive way at everybody, until the *entrées* were handed round, when she rivetted all her attention upon the contents of her plate. Miss Leyton thought she had never seen any young person devour her food with so much avidity and enjoyment. She could not help watching her. The Baroness Gobelli, who was a very coarse feeder, scattering her food over her plate and not infrequently over the table cloth as well, was nothing compared to the young stranger. It was not so much that she ate rapidly and with evident appetite, but that she kept her eyes fixed upon her food, as if she feared someone might deprive her of it. As soon as her plate was empty, she called sharply to the waiter in French, and ordered him to get her some more.

“That’s right, my dear!” exclaimed the Baroness, nodding her huge head, and smiling broadly at the new-comer; “make ’em bring you more! It’s an excellent dish, that! I’ll ’ave some more myself!”

As Philippe deposited the last helping of the *entrée* on the young lady’s plate, the Baroness thrust hers beneath his nose.

“Ere!” she said, “bring three more ’elpings for the Baron and Bobby and me!”

The man shook his head to intimate that the dish was finished, but the Baroness was not to be put off with a flimsy excuse. She commenced to make a row. Few meals passed without a squabble of some sort, between the Hotel servants and this terrible woman.

“Now we are in for it again!” murmured Miss Leyton into Mrs. Pullen’s ear. The waiter brought a different *entrée*, but the Baroness insisted upon having a second helping of *tête de veau aux champignons*.

“*Il n’y a plus, Madame!*” asseverated Philippe, with a gesture of deprecation.

“What does ’e say?” demanded the Baroness, who was not good at French.

“There is no more, mein tear!” replied her husband, with a strong German accent.

“Confound their impudence!” exclaimed his wife with a heated countenance, “’ere, send Monsieur ’ere at once! I’ll soon see if we’re not to ’ave enough to eat in ’is beastly Hotel!”

All the ladies who understood what she said, looked horrified at such language, but that was of no consequence to Madame Gobelli, who continued to call out at intervals for “Monsieur” until she found the dinner was coming to an end without her, and thought it would be more politic to attend to business and postpone her feud till a more convenient occasion. The Baroness Gobelli was a mystery to most people in the Hotel. She was an enormous woman of the elephant build, with a large, flat face and clumsy hands and

feet. Her skin was coarse, so was her hair, so were her features. The only things which redeemed an otherwise repulsive face, were a pair of good-humoured, though cunning blue eyes and a set of firm, white teeth. Who the Baroness had originally been, no one could quite make out. It was evident that she must have sprung from some low origin from her lack of education and breeding, yet she spoke familiarly of aristocratic names, even of Royal ones, and appeared to be acquainted with their families and homes. There was a floating rumour that she had been old Mr. Bates's cook before he married her, and when he left her a widow with an only child and a considerable fortune, the little German Baron had thought that her money was a fair equivalent for her personality. She was exceedingly vulgar, and when roused, exceedingly vituperative, but she possessed a rough good humour when pleased, and a large amount of natural shrewdness, which stood her instead of cleverness. But she was an unscrupulous liar, and rather boasted of the fact than otherwise. Having plenty of money at her command, she was used to take violent fancies to people—taking them up suddenly, loading them with presents and favours for as long as it pleased her, and then dropping them as suddenly, without why or wherefore—even insulting them if she could not shake them off without doing so. The Baron was completely under her thumb; more than that, he was servile in her presence, which astonished those people, who did not know that amongst her other arrogant insistences, the Baroness laid claim to holding intercourse with certain supernatural and invisible beings, who had the power to wreak vengeance on all those who offended her. This fear it was, combined with the fact that she had all the money and kept the strings of the bag pretty close where he was concerned, that made the Baron wait upon his wife's wishes as if he were her slave. Perhaps the softest spot in the Baroness's heart was kept for her



sickly and uninteresting son, Bobby Bates, whom she treated, nevertheless, with the roughness of a tigress for her cub. She kept him still more under her surveillance than she did her husband, and Bobby, though he had attained his nineteenth year, dared not say Boo! to a goose, in presence of his Mamma. As the cheese was handed round, Elinor Leyton rose from her seat with an impatient gesture.

“Do let us get out of this atmosphere, Margaret!” she said in a low tone. “I really cannot stand it any longer!”

The two ladies left the table, and went out beyond the balcony, to where a number of painted iron chairs and tables were placed on the Digue, for the accommodation of passing wayfarers, who might wish to rest awhile and quench their thirst with *limonade* or lager beer.

“I wonder who that girl is!” remarked Mrs. Pullen as soon as they were out of hearing. “I don’t know whether I like her or not, but there is something rather distinguished-looking about her!”

“Do you think so?” said Miss Leyton, “I thought she only distinguished herself by eating like a cormorant! I never saw anyone in society gobble her food in such a manner! She made me positively sick!”

“Was it as bad as that?” replied the more quiet Mrs. Pullen, in an indifferent manner. Her eyes were attracted just then by the perambulator which contained her baby, and she rose to meet it.

“How is she, Nurse?” she asked as anxiously as if she had not parted from the infant an hour before. “Has she been awake all the time?”

“Yes, Ma’am, and looking about her like anything! But she seems inclined to sleep now! I thought it was about time to take her in!”

“O! no! not on such a warm, lovely evening! If she does go to sleep in the open air, it will do her no harm. Leave her with me! I want you to go indoors, and find out the name of the young lady who sat opposite to me at dinner to-day, Philippe understands English. He will tell you!”

“Why on earth do you want to know?” demanded Miss Leyton, as the servant disappeared.

“O! I don’t know! I feel a little curious, that is all! She seems so young to be by herself!”

Elinor Leyton answered nothing, but walked across the Digue and stood, looking out over the sea. She was anticipating the arrival of her *fiancé*, Captain Ralph Pullen of the Limerick Rangers, but he had delayed his coming to join them, and she began to find Heyst rather dull.

The visitors of the Lion d’Or had finished their meal by this time, and were beginning to reassemble on the Digue, preparatory to taking a stroll before they turned into one of the many *cafés-chantants*, which were situated at stated intervals in front of the sea. Amongst them came the Baroness Gobelli, leaning heavily on a thick stick with one hand, and her husband’s shoulder with the other. The couple presented an extraordinary appearance, as they perambulated slowly up and down the Digue.

She—with her great height and bulk, towering a head above her companion, whilst he—with a full-sized torso, and short legs—a large hat crammed down upon his forehead, and no neck to speak

of, so that the brim appeared to rest upon his shoulders—was a ludicrous figure, as he walked beside his wife, bending under the weight of her support. But yet, she was actually proud of him. Notwithstanding his ill-shaped figure, the Baron possessed one of those mild German faces, with pale watery blue eyes, a long nose, and hair and beard of a reddish-golden colour, which entitled him, in the estimation of some people, to be called a handsome man, and the Baroness was never tired of informing the public that his head and face had once been drawn for that of some celebrated saint.

Her own appearance was really comical, for though she had plenty of means, her want of taste, or indifference to dress, made everyone stare at her as she passed. On the present occasion, she wore a silk gown which had cost seventeen shillings a yard, with a costly velvet cloak, a bonnet which might have been rescued from the dustbin, and cotton gloves with all her fingers out. She shook her thick walking-stick in Miss Leyton's face as she passed by her, and called out loud enough for everyone to hear: "And when is the handsome Captain coming to join you, Miss Leyton, eh? Take care he ain't running after some other gal! 'When pensive I thought on my L.O.V.E.' Ha! ha! ha!"

Elinor flushed a delicate pink but did not turn her head, nor take any notice of her tormentor. She detested the Baroness with a perfectly bitter hatred, and her proud cold nature revolted from her coarseness and familiarity.

"Tied to your brat again!" cried the Baroness, as she passed Margaret Pullen who was moving the perambulator gently to and fro by the handle, so as to keep her infant asleep; "why didn't you put it in the tub as soon as it was born? It would 'ave saved you a

heap of trouble! I often wish I had done so by that devil Bobby! 'Ere, where are you, Bobby?"

"I'm close behind you, Mamma!" replied the simple-looking youth.

"Well! don't you get running away from your father and me, and winking at the gals! There's time enough for that, ain't there, Gustave?" she concluded, addressing the Baron.

"Come along, Robert, and mind what your mother tells you!" said the Herr Baron with his guttural German accent, as the extraordinary trio pursued their way down the Digue, the Baroness making audible remarks on everybody she met, as they went.

Margaret Pullen sat where they had left her, moving about the perambulator, whilst her eyes, like Elinor's, were fixed upon the tranquil water. The August sun had now quite disappeared, and the indescribably faint and unpleasant odour, which is associated with the dunes of Heyst, had begun to make itself apparent. A still languor had crept over everything, and there were indications of a thunderstorm in the air. She was thinking of her husband, Colonel Arthur Pullen, the elder brother of Miss Leyton's *fiancé*, who was toiling out in India for baby and herself. It had been a terrible blow to Margaret, to let him go out alone after only one year of happy wedded life, but the expected advent of her little daughter at the time, had prohibited her undertaking so long a journey and she had been compelled to remain behind. And now baby was six months old, and Colonel Pullen hoped to be home by Christmas, so had advised her to wait for his return. But her thoughts were sad sometimes, notwithstanding.

Events happen so unexpectedly in this world—who could say for certain that she and her husband would ever meet again—that

Arthur would ever see his little girl, or that she should live to place her in her father's arms? But such a state of feeling was morbid, she knew, and she generally made an effort to shake it off. The nurse, returning with the information she had sent her to acquire, roused her from her reverie.

"If you please, Ma'am, the young lady's name is Brandt, and Philippe says she came from London!"

"English! I should never have guessed it!" observed Mrs. Pullen, "She speaks French so well."

"Shall I take the baby now, Ma'am?"

"Yes! Wheel her along the Digue. I shall come and meet you by and by!"

As the servant obeyed her orders, she called to Miss Leyton.

"Elinor! come here!"

"What is it?" asked Miss Leyton, seating herself beside her.

"The new girl's name is Brandt and she comes from England! Would you have believed it?"

"I did not take sufficient interest in her to make any speculations on the subject. I only observed that she had a mouth from ear to ear, and ate like a pig! What does it concern us, where she comes from?"

At that moment, a Mrs. Montague, who, with her husband, was conveying a family of nine children over to Brussels, under the mistaken impression, that they would be able to live cheaper there than in England, came down the Hotel steps with half a dozen of

them, clinging to her skirts, and went straight up to Margaret Pullen.

“O! Mrs. Pullen! What is that young lady’s name, who sat opposite to you at dinner? Everybody is asking! I hear she is enormously rich, and travelling alone. Did you see the lace on her dress? Real Valenciennes, and the diamond rings she wore! Frederick says they must be worth a lot of money. She must be someone of consequence I should imagine!”

“On the contrary, my nurse tells me she is English and her name is Brandt. Has she no friends here?”

“Madame Lamont says she arrived in company with another girl, but they are located at different parts of the Hotel. It seems very strange, does it not?”

“And it sounds very improper!” interposed Elinor Leyton, “I should say the less we have to say to her, the better! You never know what acquaintances you may make in a place like this! When I look up and down the *table d’hôte* menagerie sometimes, it makes me quite ill!”

“Does it?” rejoined Mrs. Montague, “I think it’s so amusing! That Baroness Gobelli, for instance——”

“Don’t mention her before me!” cried Miss Leyton, in a tone of disgust, “the woman is not fit for civilised society!”

“She is rather common, certainly, and strange in her behaviour,” said Mrs. Montague, “but she is very good-natured. She gave my little Edward a louis yesterday. I felt quite ashamed to let him take it!”

“That just proves her vulgarity,” exclaimed Elinor Leyton, who had not a sixpence to give away, herself, “it shows that she thinks her money will atone for all her other shortcomings! She gave that Miss Taylor who left last week, a valuable brooch off her own throat. And poor payment too, for all the dirty things she made her do and the ridicule she poured upon her. I daresay this *nouveau riche* will try to curry favour with us by the same means.”

At that moment, the girl under discussion, Miss Brandt, appeared on the balcony, which was only raised a few feet above where they sat. She wore the same dress she had at dinner, with the addition of a little fleecy shawl about her shoulders. She stood smiling, and looking at the ladies (who had naturally dropped all discussion about her) for a few moments, and then she ventured to descend the steps between the rampant gilded lions, and almost timidly, as it seemed, took up a position near them. Mrs. Pullen felt that she could not be so discourteous as to take no notice whatever of the new-comer, and so, greatly to Miss Leyton’s disgust, she uttered quietly, “Good evening!”

It was quite enough for Miss Brandt. She drew nearer with smiles mantling over her face.

“Good evening! Isn’t it lovely here?—so soft and warm, something like the Island, but so much fresher!”

She looked up and down the Digue, now crowded with a multitude of visitors, and drew in her breath with a long sigh of content.

“How gay and happy they all seem, and how happy I am too! Do you know, if I had my will, what I should like to do?” she said, addressing Mrs. Pullen.

“No! indeed!”

“I should like to tear up and down this road as hard as ever I could, throwing my arms over my head and screaming aloud!”

The ladies exchanged glances of astonishment, but Margaret Pullen could not forbear smiling as she asked their new acquaintance the reason why.

“O! because I am free—free at last, after ten long years of imprisonment! I am telling you the truth, I am indeed, and you would feel just the same if you had been shut up in a horrid Convent ever since you were eleven years old!”

At the word “convent”, the national Protestant horror immediately spread itself over the faces of the three other ladies; Mrs. Montague gathered her flock about her and took them out of the way of possible contamination, though she would have much preferred to hear the rest of Miss Brandt’s story, and Elinor Leyton moved her chair further away. But Margaret Pullen was interested and encouraged the girl to proceed.

“In a convent! I suppose then you are a Roman Catholic!”

Harriet Brandt suddenly opened her slumbrous eyes.

“I don’t think so! I’m not quite sure what I am! Of course I’ve had any amount of religion crammed down my throat in the Convent, and I had to follow their prayers, whilst there, but I don’t believe my parents were Catholics! But it does not signify, I am my own mistress now. I can be what I like!”

“You have been so unfortunate then as to lose your parents!”



“O! yes! years ago, that is why my guardian, Mr. Trawler, placed me in the Convent for my education. And I’ve been there for ten years! Is it not a shame? I’m twenty-one now! That’s why I’m free! You see,” the girl went on confidentially, “my parents left me everything, and as soon as I came of age I entered into possession of it. My guardian, Mr. Trawler, who lives in Jamaica,—did I tell you that I’ve come from Jamaica?—thought I should live with him and his wife, when I left the Convent, and pay them for my keep, but I refused. They had kept me too tight! I wanted to see the world and life—it was what I had been looking forward to—so as soon as my affairs were settled, I left the West Indies and came over here!”

“They said you came from England in the Hotel!”

“So I did! The steamer came to London and I stayed there a week before I came on here!”

“But you are too young to travel about by yourself, Miss Brandt! English young ladies never do so!” said Mrs. Pullen.

“I’m not by myself, exactly! Olga Brimont, who was in the Convent with me, came too. But she is ill, so she’s upstairs. She has come to her brother who is in Brussels, and we travelled together. We had the same cabin on board the steamer, and Olga was very ill. One night the doctor thought she was going to die! I stayed with her all the time. I used to sit up with her at night, but it did her no good. We stopped in London because we wanted to buy some dresses and things, but she was not able to go out, and I had to go alone. Her brother is away from Brussels at present so he wrote her to stay in Heyst till he could fetch her, and as I had

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