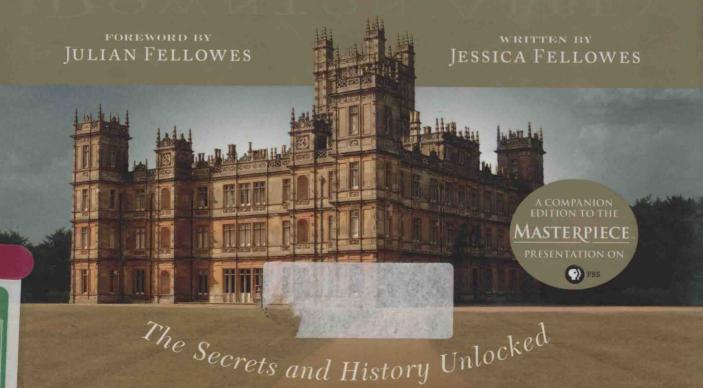


THE WORLD OF DOWNTON ABBEY



A CARNIVAL FILMS / MASTERPIECE CO-PRODUCTION

THE WORLD OF DOWNTON ABBEY

JESSICA FELLOWES

PHOTOGRAPHY
NICK BRIGGS

FOREWORD

JULIAN FELLOWES

ST. MARTIN'S PRESS



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A Carnival Films/Masterpiece Co-Production

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LORD GRANTHAM

'My dear fellow. We all have chapters we would rather keep unpublished.'

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Foreword

I have always enjoyed country houses. There is something about their completeness, with their different rooms and offices catering to almost every need, making up a microcosm of a complete world, that is very satisfactory to me. But, as a child, wandering around the homes of my parents' friends and relations, I was aware that I was looking at the remains of a way of life that, with rare exceptions, was no longer being lived in by them. Those empty attic rooms, often still boasting an iron bedstead or a dusty cupboard with vacant nameplate holders on the doors, spoke of a once-crowded place, peopled then only by ghosts. Those echoing stables, full of abandoned toys and rusting gardening equipment, those vast kitchens, jammed with discarded luggage and broken bicycles and signs for use in the village fête, were haunted to my childish eyes by shadows of what used to be.

Of course, I grew up in the sad years for these monuments to the past. They had lost their value as the aristocracy largely threw in the towel after the war, and in the 1950s they could hardly be given as presents. Instead, palace after great palace, those that were not considered suitable for some new and frequently inappropriate role, fell victim to the demolition ball, and an immense part of our nation's heritage was literally thrown away. Until 1974, when the new director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Roy Strong, decided to stage an exhibition, *The Destruction of the English Country House*, and it is not an exaggeration to say that everything changed, almost overnight. We woke up to the idea that these houses were an integral part of our history, that the life formerly

lived in them had involved us all, whether our forebears had been behind the green baize door or in front of it, that they were not simply huge and unmanageable barns, no longer viable without sufficient staff, but expressions of our national character that we should be proud of.

And as we learned to love them again, so a younger generation invented a new way to live in them. They didn't mourn the servants they had usually never known. They simply saw the space and its possibilities. The big kitchens were re-opened and the horrible converted ante-rooms and passages that had served as kitchens for our parents' generation were abandoned. But this time, the family chose to occupy the kitchens in their own way, importing televisions and sofas and toys and making them right for the way we live now. Helpers did not sleep upstairs in the garrets but came in from the village and called the owners by their Christian names and felt, quite rightly, that they had a stake in making the house work. In a way, the landowners reinvented themselves, as the aristocracy has done so many times before, and found a place, for themselves and their houses, in modern Britain. This was perhaps the main inspiration for the series, Downton Abbey, because we did all feel that were we to go into this territory, it must be right for our present zeitgeist to give equal weight, in terms of narrative or moral probity or even likeability to both parts of the community of a great house, the family and their servants. This I hope we have done, favouring neither group over the other, which I am convinced remains one of the principal strengths of the show.

Like most of the good things in my life, *Downton Abbey* came about entirely by chance. I had been trying to get a completely different project off the ground with the producer, Gareth Neame, and when at last we realised it was not going to fly, we met for dinner to call it a day. It was then that Gareth suggested venturing back into the territory of a film I had written some years before, *Gosford Park*, but this time for television, and that is how it began. *Gosford* was set in a large country house in November 1932 and it dealt with a shooting party and their servants, both those working in the house and for the guests, so it was clear at once what Gareth wanted. I was a little nervous initially, at the risks of asking for a second helping, but the idea grew on me and so *Downton Abbey* was born. Television – or rather, a television series, with its open-endedness, with its unlimited time to develop any character – held possibilities that the space allowed for a film narrative could not offer. We decided at once to retreat twenty years to 1912, since the underlying theme of *Gosford Park*

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had been that it was all coming to an end; but we didn't want to go further back than that as we both agreed that we needed the action to take place in a recognisable universe – with cars and trains and telephones and many other modern devices, albeit in embryo, which defined the period clearly as the parent of the present day.

As to why I find the subject so appealing, I suppose it is because that half century from around 1890 to 1940 seems to me to form a bridge from the old world into the new. At the beginning, society was run along much the same lines it had been since the Conquest. Inventions had altered things, of course, but the strict pyramid shape, the idea that everyone had their different roles to play and that, to a great extent, they were born to play them, was still unchallenged, or so it appeared. In fact, of course, beneath the smooth surface of the long Edwardian summer, a good deal was being questioned. Trades unions, women's rights, Marxism, were all waiting in the wings and it would only take a couple of years of war before they started to stride centre stage. New modes of travel would shrink the world, new methods of production would transform it. For most of the population of Monarchical Old Europe, at least for those who were young adults at the turn of the last century, the world they would die in would bear almost no resemblance to the world of their beginnings, whatever their nationality, whatever their class.

My own great-aunt Isie, the model for Violet Grantham, was born in 1880, making her more than ten years older than Lady Mary Crawley, and she would die at ninety one in 1971, so I knew her well. She was one of the generation of young ladies who never went to school and her Mama would only allow her to attend university lectures in London if she agreed to two conditions: the first that she would never sit an exam, the second that she would be accompanied at all times by a maid. She was presented in 1898, married before the First World War and set up house in one of the Cadogans, 'quite near Peter Jones, dear,' with a butler who had been first footman to Mrs Willie James, reputedly the illegitimate daughter of King Edward VII. She lost her husband in the first war, her only son in the second, and she would live to see men land on the moon. From knowing her and listening to her story, a clear sense came to me that 'history' is not so long ago.

For most of them, the way of life lived at Downton would come to an end in 1939. Of course there would be people after the war who employed butlers and cooks, there are quite a few of them now, but as a way of life

lived, to a degree, in every village and hamlet from Land's End to John o'Groats, it was over. Many of the houses were requisitioned by the services, some to their cost, and the debts and mortgages accumulated since the collapse of the agricultural economy in the 1880s and 90s, made the idea of re-opening them when the fighting ended six years later, unalluring. Their renaissance would not come for thirty years or so after the Second World War and then, as I have said, the new owners chose to live in them differently. Happily, this revival has, in many cases, proved successful and Britain's old families have written and continue to write another chapter in their long history. Which brings us back to the Crawleys of Downton Abbey, but when it comes to how far we will travel with them through the decades of challenge and change that lie ahead for their civilisation, that must remain to be seen.

Julian Fellowes

July 2011



Family Life

CHAPTER ONE



CHARLES CARSON Butler



ELSIE HUGHES Housekeeper



JOHN BATES Lord Grantham's Valet



SARAH O'BRIEN Lady Grantham's Lady's Maid



BERYL PATMORE Cook



ANNA SMITH Head Housemaid



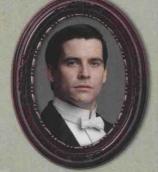
GWEN DAWSON Housemaid



ETHEL PARKS Housemaid



DAISY ROBINSON Kitchen Maid



THOMAS BARROW First Footman



WILLIAM MASON Second Footman



TOM BRANSON Chauffeur

