

The Vampire

by H. S. Olcott

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Of all the forms of the real or supposed intercourse between the living and dead, that of the vampire is the most loathsome. The horrid physical effects which follow after the burial of a corpse, have no doubt, had much to do in creating the sentiment of disgust and terror which associates with the thought of this return of the dead to prey upon the living. And it is another argument in favour of cremation—if any were needed by thoughtful persons—that there are no vampires save in countries where the dead are buried. We do not hear of Hindu vampires, but where such cases occur in India, it turns out that the *revenant* is a deceased Mussalman, Christian, or Jew, whose body has been interred. Some years ago the grandmother of our Mr Gopalacharlu had a neighbour, a Hindu woman, who was supposed to have been obsessed by a devil (*pis'acha*). For about a year she would find herself every morning on awakening deprived of all strength, pale and anæmic. Twice becoming pregnant, she had miscarriages. Finally, resort was had to a Mussalman *mantriki*, or exorcist, who, by arts known to himself, discovered that the “control” was a deceased man of his own Faith. He went secretly to the country, opened the grave of the suspect, found the corpse fresh and life-like, made a cut on its hand near the thumb and found fresh blood flowed spurting out from the wound. He then performed the usual placatory rites, recited his mantrams, and drove the phantom away from his victim and back to its grave. The woman recovered, and no fresh victim was visited.

I do not know the derivation of the word vampire. In French it is spelt as in English; in Spanish and Italian *vampiro*; in German and Danish *vampire*; in Serb *Wampire*, *wampira*, *wukodlak*; in Wallachian *murony*; in Turkish *massacet*; in Modern Greek *bronkolakas*, and in several other ways; its Polish name is *upior*, Slavonic *upir*, and Russian *googooka*. The “*Am. Cyclopædia*” calls it “a fabulous creature,” but the pious Benedictine writer, Dom Calmet, describes it as persons “who have been dead a considerable time, sometimes more, sometimes less; who leave their tombs, and come and disturb the living, sucking their blood, appearing to them, making a noise at their doors and in their houses, and often causing their death”. They usually, he informs us, visit their relatives and those in the prime of life and full health and vigour.

In reading upon this gruesome subject, I have been struck with the apparent substantiation of certain facts, *viz*:

1. The vampire elementary always attacks the robust;
2. The signs of the obsession are invariably nervous prostration and anæmia, and usually a slight puncture over the jugular vein;
3. The corpse of the suspected vampire, when examined, appears well-nourished with healthy blood, and presents the appearance of one in cataleptic sleep, rather than of death.
4. If a pointed stake or weapon be thrust through the heart, the corpse cries out and often writhes in agony;
5. If the corpse be cremated, the vampire ceases to trouble. I have found no exception stated in this respect.

All these are indications that our problem has to deal not with a dead, but with a half-dead, person: in short, that the defunct is in catalepsy or some other form of suspended animation. The phantom which sucks the blood of the living appears to the eye, creates noisy and other phenomena in and about houses, and disappears when the corpse is burnt, is an astral, not a physical shape, a body of sublimated, not one of concrete, matter: in short, D'Assier's posthumous phantom, the survivor of the living phantom, or "double," "*doppelgänger*" or "perisprit," as you like to call it. The vampire, then, is divisible into two factors, the inert corpse and the projectible double, or astral body: it is, therefore, a proper subject of scientific enquiry.

The first stage of verification is the existence of an astral human double which is capable of being projected from the body of the living man. This is the line of proof followed out by D'Assier in his *Posthumous Humanity*, which most interesting work should be studied by all who wish to know the evidence and the deductions therefrom of a Positivist man of science. His theory—but before passing on to theories, we may as well confine ourselves to a few out of the mass of facts that are available. The literature of Vampirism is large and copious, covering the records of many countries and epochs. As to the witnesses, "their name is legion"; as to their trustworthiness, all that can be said is that, in nearly

all cases where the ecclesiastical or political authorities intervened, there was an inquest conducted at least under the forms of law. The deaths of the victims were attested, their graves and those of the alleged vampires were opened, the fresh and ruddy condition of the corpses of the latter recognized, the spurting of fresh blood from them, and the cries or other signs of momentarily revived physical vitality, when the pointed stake or the executioner's sword was driven through the heart, placed upon the record of the inquest. If we are to open a scientific enquiry by first violating the canon of science that corroborative evidence of probability cannot be put aside, but should be kept as unproved theory awaiting the final verdict, then it is but waste of energy to take up the research at all. There are those who straightaway scout all testimony with respect to witchcraft and sorcery as of necessity false and puerile, and such has been the fate of modern Spiritualism, mesmerism, psychometry and various other branches of Occult Science. But times are changing, and men—especially hypnotists—changing with them. Spiritualism survives its thousand "final collapses," psychometry has won its foothold, Reichenbach's vindication has commenced, mesmerism is stronger because on a more scientific basis than ever, magic and sorcery are discussed as thinkable phases of practical psychology, and Theosophy, that universal solvent of mysteries and nursing-mother of every branch of psychical science, has gained every year fifty times the influence it has ever lost by the most bitter attacks of its cleverest antagonists. We may safely venture, then, to quietly discuss vampirism as one of group of psychical phenomena.

I note at the start two points, *viz.*, that the most incredulous writers concede that the exhumed bodies have, or may have, been found in a preserved state, which they ascribe to either the preservative property of the soil, or the burial alive. As for the noctambulation of the phantom, its vampirising the living, and its making noisy "spiritual" phenomena, they dismiss all with the sneer of denial and the charge of falsification by the witnesses. It is true that a living man—a yogi or fakir—can be resuscitated after inhumation for several weeks. Ranjit Singh's startling case at Lahore is historical and perfectly attested by Sir Claude Wade, Dr Macgregor and other unimpeachable eye-witnesses. It is, therefore, possible that an apparently dead man may be buried for an indefinite time without extinction of life, if the person be all the time in that state of human hibernation known as Samadhi—a state when the lungs need no air, because respiration is suspended, and the heart propels no blood through the arteries, because the human clock is stopped. The vampire's body may, therefore lie fresh and rosy in the grave, so long as it can draw to itself nutriment to counteract the waste by chemical and subtler actions which operate upon the tissues, even in Samadhi. The Lahore yogi was wasted to a skeleton when exhumed, though he had had no chance to breathe during the whole six weeks of his inhumation. In the Indian case of vampirism, given on Mr Gopalacharlu's authority, this freshness and plethoric fullness of the blood vessels existed after nearly a year's stay of the corpse in the grave. This was unnatural, and the theory of common catalepsy

does not apply. Whence was blood-food derived, if not from the poor Hindu woman whose blood had been drawn and nervous force thoroughly drained away during the same period, and who was restored to health after the powerful will of the *mantriki*, and his ceremonial ritual, had driven the horrid phantom back into his grave to rot away with its corpse. In my translation of D'Assier's book, I quote (p 274) from Eliphas Levi's *Dogme et Rituel*, etc., his diagnosis

of the Vampire.

After death, then the divine spirit which animated man returns alone to heaven, and leaves upon earth and in the atmosphere two corpses, one terrestrial and elementary, the other aerial and related to the stars; the one already inert, the other still animated by the universal movement of the soul of the world, but foredoomed to die slowly, as absorbed by the astral powers which produced it. When a man has lived a good life, the astral corpse evaporates like a pure incense mounting towards the higher regions; but if the man has lived in crime, his astral corpse, which holds him prisoner, seeks still the objects of its passions and yearns to resume the earthly life.

During life it is the body which develops and nourishes the astral body; in the case of vampires the process is reversed, for the corpse, being confined in its coffin and by the superincumbent soil, cannot walk about, so the double, being an entity of the "Fourth Dimension," hence not impeded by either coffin, tomb or grave-soil, is free to move about in search of its blood-food, and to transmit it by sympathetic psychical infusion to the cadaver, now become its mere dwelling-convenience.

Dr Scoffern, author of *Stray Leaves of Science and Folk-Lore*, quotes (p 353) from Newbridge—a twelfth century English authority—the case of a man of Bucks who appeared bodily to his wife and others after death, and worked mischief, but whose phantom was appeased when the Bishop of Lincoln laid upon the disinterred corpse a written form of absolution.

Another case was that of a vampire at Berwick, whose nocturnal maraudings only ceased when his side had been pierced with a sharp stake, the heart extracted, the body cut up and cremated. The ancient Romans affirmed that "dead bodies of certain persons were subject to be allured from their graves by sorcerers, unless incremation had been performed or decomposition had actually

taken place". Lucan puts into the mouth of an enchantress an order to an evoked spirit, which supports this idea.

Dr. Scoffern makes the point that "no authentic information is available relative to the manner in which they (the vampires) *leave* their graves, or the way in which they *go back* to the same" (p 356). This is a paltry argument and only shows that he knows nothing of our modern "form manifestations," or apparitions so solid that I could handle and weigh them, yet so evanescent that they sometimes melt away before one's eyes. The vampire leaves the grave as an impalpable form, and "materializes" whenever it likes, the favoring atmosphere and psychical conditions existing. Dr Scoffern concludes his chapter on Vampires with the statement that two expedients are said to be efficacious for stopping a vampire's ravages, *viz.*, to have the grave beaten with a hazel twig, the operator being a virgin of not less than twenty-five years old. The other is to have the body dug up and burnt. "For some inexplicable reason," he sneeringly observes, "the remedy of incremation is always practiced in lands where vampires do most abound." Being a physician who evidently is ignorant of the existence of the astral counterpart to the physical body which may be separated from it for a time both before and after death, he fails to understand why cremation is found the one efficacious remedy for vampirism, the world over.

James Grant, in his *Mysteries of all Nations*, etc. (p 289), says that the popular belief was that vampirism was transmissible, like a sort of moral microbe, the victim turning vampire after his death under the impulse of a transmitted predisposition. This form of "superstition" created much anxiety in the public mind, "none knowing when he might be bitten by one of these hated demons, and be thereby transformed into a vampire". And he confesses that: "*Men of science bore testimony in favour of vampirism with seeming truthfulness and ability.*" Why, then, object to our scientific contemporaries resuming a study which has been temporarily pushed into a corner by the rough hands of our materialistic sciolists?

Dr Ennemoser gives (*History of Magic*, ii 479) two authenticated accounts of vampirism in Hungary. In the first, the report is made by the bailiff of Kisilova, to the tribunal of Belgrade, which dispatched to the village two officers and the executioner to examine into the affair. An Imperial officer also went, expressly to be witness of the circumstance. A number of graves of those who had been dead six weeks were opened, and one corpse, that of an old man of sixty-two years of age, was found "with the eyes open, having a fine colour, with natural respiration, nevertheless motionless as the dead. The executioner drove a stake into his

heart; they then raised a pile and reduced the corpse to ashes.” The deceased had appeared in the night to his son three days after his funeral, had demanded food, eaten it, and then disappeared; the second night after he had again appeared, and the son was found dead in his bed. On the same day five or six other persons had fallen suddenly ill in the village, and died one after the other in a few days. Dr Ennemoser’s other narrative relates to a bad case of vampirism in another Hungarian canton. A dead man named Arnald Paul, who formerly had been tormented by a Turkish vampire, turned vampire himself; on the thirtieth day after his death he vampirized and killed four persons, and on the fortieth day his body was exhumed.

‘His body was red, his hair, nails and beard had all grown again, and his veins were replete with fluid blood, which flowed (oozed?) from all parts of his body upon the winding-sheet which encompassed him. The Hadnagi, or baillie of the village, in whose presence the exhumation took place and who was skilled in vampirism, had, according to custom, a very sharp stake driven into the heart of the defunct Arnald Paul, and which pierced his body through and through, and made him, as they say, utter a frightful shriek, as if he had been alive (which of course, he was): that done, they cut off his head and burnt the whole body.’

They also cremated four bodies of other persons who had died of the vampire.

These precautions availed not, however, for three years later within the space of three months, seventeen persons of the same village, of both sexes and all ages, fell victims to vampirism. A close inquiry into this unprecedented survival of the scourge after resort to cremation, made by the doctors and surgeons, elicited the significant fact that the vampire Arnald Paul had not only sucked to death human beings, but also “several oxen, which the new vampires had eaten”. So it seems that the vampiric mania, like rabies, may be communicated through bacilli nourished in the bodies of animals, to other persons not touched by the first vampire, when they partake of the flesh of a vampirized beast. Recent experiments in the Paris hospitals in curing paralysis by transmission in a modified form through the body of a third person, appear to throw some light upon the psychical part of this subject.

Eliphas Levi gives to the vampire the very expressive title of “*le somnambule de la tombe*”. Certainly, the case of Arnald Paul has all the appearance of somnambulism. Levi furthermore affirms (*Histoire de la Magie* p 513) that

a person of sound mind and body need not fall a victim to a vampire if he or she has not during life abandoned himself or herself to it body and soul by some complicity in crime or some lawless passion.

The rule always holds that the pure in mind, heart and body, are beyond the reach of every species of evil magnetic influence, whether of magician, or sorcerer, “control,” vampire or *mantriki*: there must always be a joint in the physical or spiritual harness by which the maleficent current can enter and obsess. This is taught in the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*, is affirmed by the ancient classics, and is sound common sense.

The one sweeping theory adopted by the Christian Church to account for every phase of abnormal psychical phenomena, vampirism included, is the action of the Bogey Man—the Devil. Nothing is easier than the use of this universal solvent. Unfortunately, however, nobody nowadays believes in that absurdity—nobody, at all events, who is in the least loyal to science. One never tires of reading such absurdly stubborn demonologists as Des Mousseaux, who detects the Devil behind the clairvoyant’s head, within the medium’s circle, even behind the mesmerizer’s chair. He devotes many pages of one of his books (*La Magie au XIX me Siècle*) to proving that poor Margarita Hauffe, the Seeress of Prevorst, was a *pucca* vampire; and, certainly, in the sense of her living upon the auric emanations of those about her, there is some reasonableness in the use of his term Magnetic Vampirism. We have the good Dr Kerner’s testimony to that effect. But as to her being obsessed by the Devil, there was never a greater libel, her angelically pure and spiritual life and teachings indicating that the source of her inspiration was divine, not devilish. This magnetic vampirism is practiced every day and hour in social, most especially in conjugal, intercourse: the weak absorb strength from the strong, the sickly from the robust, the aged from the young. One vampirizes by hand-shaking, by sitting close together, by sleeping in the same bed; the full brains of the clever are “sucked” by the spongy brains of the stupid. Throughout all these phases the law of natural equilibration asserts itself, as it does in the whole realm of physics. Great minds love isolation, from an instinctive feeling that if they live the life of the crowd, they will be sucked down to the crowd’s low level. It was this sense which dictated to the yogi and the hierophant, that he must seclude himself within the sanctum, or retire to the *gupta* (yogi’s cave), the jungle, or the mountain summit. The magnetic aura (*tejas*) of a sage or an adept is to his soul-starving disciples like mother’s milk to the babe, or a fountain of cool waters to the parched traveler of the desert.

The unqualified affirmation of the theory that the vampire corpse is the hibernating cadaver of a *somnabule*, was made by Mme Blavatsky in *Isis Unveiled* (i 449, *et seq*), and supported by a sufficient body of testimony. She makes it very clear that the corpse of the future vampire is in a magnetic stupor, and one of two possibilities may occur: the soul may either be attracted back into the body, in which case,

either the unhappy victim will writhe in the agonizing torture of suffocation, or, if he has been grossly material (*i.e.* having an overpowering affinity for physical existence), he becomes a vampire. The bicorporal life begins; and these unfortunate buried cataleptics sustain their miserable lives by having their astral bodies rob the life-blood from the living persons. The æthereal form can go wherever it pleases; and so long as it does not break the link which attaches it to the body, it is at liberty to wander about, either visible or invisible, and feed on human victims.

Pierant notices this invisible cord of connection between the buried but not decomposed body and the somnambulating double, and says: "This, perhaps, some day may be explained." We may know how the results of the suction of the vitality of living persons are transmitted to the material body lying inert in the tomb, aiding it, in a manner, "to perpetuate the state of catalepsy". As Dom Calmet sententiously remarks,

there are two different ways to destroy the belief in these pretended ghosts The first would be to *explain* the prodigies of vampirism by the physical causes. The second way is to *deny totally* the truth of all such stories.

Being a Catholic priest, he naturally adds: "The latter plan would be undoubtedly the most certain, as the most wise. [*Dissertations sur les Apparitions des Anges, des Demons etc.*, Paris 1746]

We may now address ourselves to the enquiry whether M D'Assier has put forth a theory which explains on scientific lines the mystery of the link, or cord of communication between the body and the projected double. That there is such a tie or astral current, along which nutriment in the etherealized condition may be transmitted from the one to the other, seems probable, if not certain, from well known data. For example, many frequenters of mediumistic séances have seen liquids drunk by a "materialized form"—glasses of wine or beer, glasses of water or grog, etc—which disappeared from the glass in full view and were passed into the stomach of the medium, sitting at a distance in his cabinet. Ink or aniline

liquids have been thrown upon the projected form, and found later staining the medium's person. (I speak, of course, only of cases where the non-identity of the form and the medium was clearly proven.) Solid food has also been eaten by the form in full sight of the witnesses, and similarly disappeared. A mesmeric subject, in full *rapport* with the mesmerizer, tastes what is put into his mouth, smells what he smells, sees what he sees, and feels whatever painful or pleasant thing is done to the mesmerizer's body. To all appearance the two bodies are united like one, by an invisible yet thoroughly effectual agent of communication. Though the sleeping subject be blindfolded and the mesmerizer stand behind her, or him, the community of physical and mental sensation is perfect. So also between twins is there in many, perhaps the majority of cases, a similar sympathetic relationship.

This tie is a something possessing properties peculiar to itself, else it would not serve as a bridge of communication; for naught is naught, and cannot, even by miracle, be turned into aught. Another, and this time infrangible, proof of the close connection between the physical and astral bodies, is the fact that a bruise or wound inflicted upon the latter form reacts upon the former. This is termed repercussion. The judicial annals of witchcraft and sorcery teem with proven facts of this kind. D'Assier quotes a number, and says the astral body—or living phantom, as he prefers to designate it—is the continuation of the other, with its form, habits, prejudices, etc. He might have added, its vices and virtues: for the moral tone of the body dominates completely the double, except when the double has been enslaved by the malignant magnetic power of a sorcerer, in which case it may be turned into a mere passive, stupefied agent. D'Assier says that its tissue usually disintegrates readily under the action of the physical, chemical and atmospheric forces which continually assail it, and re-enters, molecule by molecule, the universal planetary medium. This corroborates E Levi's position. Says D'Assier:

Occasionally, it resists these destructive causes, continuing its struggle for existence beyond the tomb. We touch here upon the most curious phase of its history, for this brings us to the posthumous vampire.

After citing incidents which had been officially verified by special inquests of ecclesiastical, civil and military authorities, he says;

These facts bring into a new and clear light the physiognomy of the posthumous being. It is one of those cases where the fluidic being, instead of abandoning the body from which death has just separated it, persists in stopping with it and in living with it a new life, in which the parts are reversed. Thenceforth the struggle for existence continues beyond the tomb, with the same tenacity, the same brutal and selfish ferocity, one might say the same cynicism, as in living nature . . . Let us now examine what becomes of the blood aspired by the specter. We find here a repetition of what we have observed several times in the preceding chapters in connection with the living phantom. Its structure is bound so intimately with that of the body of which it is the image, that all absorption of liquid by the former

passes at once into the organs of the latter. It must be the same in the phenomena of posthumous vampirism, since the post-sepulchral phantom is the continuation of the living phantom. All the blood swallowed by the specter passes instantly into the organs of the corpse which it has just left, and to which it returns as soon as its poaching work is finished. The constant arrival of this vivifying fluid, which at once disseminates itself through the circulation, prevents putrefaction, preserves in the limbs their natural suppleness, and in the flesh its fresh and reddish tint. Under this action is seen to continue a sort of vegetative life which causes the hair and nails to grow, forms a new skin as the old one dries up, and, in certain cases, favours the formation of adipose tissue, as has been proved by the exhumation of certain vampires. . . . Powerless to attack the phantoms, the people disinterred and burned the body. The remedy was infallible; for from that moment the vampire ceased his dreadful depredations.

To conclude our analysis of this painful subject, it is most evident that too much care cannot be taken to ascertain beyond doubt the actual and complete death of a person before committing the body to the grave—if that senseless, unscientific and revolting custom must be preserved. One shudders to think of the untold agony that must have been felt by thousands of victims to ignorant hurry to put the body out of sight, who, awakening too late from a state of trance, found themselves screwed up in a coffin and buried under six feet of earth, without the least possibility of succor. The case of poor W Irving. Bishop, the thought-reader, who is said to have been dissected alive while in trance and which happened only the other day, is a sad example of the terrible possibilities of popular ignorance. Everything that one reads in connection with occult science and psychical phenomena goes to vindicate the wisdom of the ancient promoters of cremation. Let us hope that before long the movement in its favour, which I am happy to say I was one of the first to begin in the United States, may extend until a proper horror is universally felt for the custom of burial of the dead, and it is recognized in its true character of a survival of brutish ignorance, fostered by superstitious clinging to religious prejudice and bigotry. Of course, I need hardly explain that, while cremation is a sure preventative of the return of the vampire *somnambules* to plague the living, the chances of premature disposal of the body of a half-dead person are equally serious as in the case of burial. If the trance be deep, it is quite possible that the unfortunate subject might not recover the use of his bodily members in time to save himself from being burnt alive.

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