

A case of mesmeric attack thrusting a mortal wound on the inner man without piercing the skin



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A mystical story by a member of the Theosophical Society.¹

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To the Editor of *The Sun*.

Sir,

One morning in 1868 Eastern Europe was startled by news of the most horrifying description. Michael Obrenovitch, reigning Prince of Serbia, his aunt, the Princess Catherine, or Katinka, and her daughter, had been murdered in broad daylight, near Belgrade, in their own garden, the [164] assassin or assassins remaining unknown.² The Prince had received several bullet shots and stabs, and his body was actually butchered; the Princess was killed on the spot, her head smashed, and her young daughter, though still alive, was not expected to survive. The circumstances are too recent to have been forgotten, but in that part of the world, at that time, the case created a delirium of excitement.

In the Austrian dominions and in those under the doubtful protectorate of Turkey, from Bucharest down to Trieste, no high family felt secure. In those half-oriental countries every Montecchi has its Capuletti, and it was rumoured that the bloody

¹ [This story was republished by H.P. Blavatsky in *The Theosophist*, Vol. IV, January, 1883, pp. 99-101, under the title of "Can the 'Double' Murder?" She prefaced it with the following Editorial Note:

"The story which follows was written by the editor of this magazine some years ago at the request of a literary friend in America, and published in a leading journal of New York. It is reprinted because the events actually occurred, and they possess a very deep interest for the student of psychological science. They show in a marked degree the enormous potentiality of the human will upon mesmeric subjects whose whole being may be so imbued with an imparted intellectual preconception that the 'double,' or *mayavi-rupa*, when projected transcorporeally, will carry out the mesmerizer's mandate with helpless subserviency. The fact that a mortal wound may be inflicted upon the inner man without puncturing the epidermis will be a novelty only to such readers as have not closely examined the records and noted the many proofs that death may result from many psychical causes besides the emotions whose lethal power is universally conceded." — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

² [Mihailo Obrenović (1823–68) was the youngest son of Prince Miloš Obrenović (1780–1860). After the abdication of his father in 1839, and the death of his elder brother, Milan Obrenović, the same year, he ascended the throne of Serbia. His ambitious program of self-assertion abroad and reforms within, alienated Turkey and Austria. Heavy taxation imposed upon the people strengthened the party which had forced his father to abdicate. In August, 1842, Vučić the leader of the malcontents, forced him to leave Serbia, and Alexander Karagegević was elected in his place. In 1858 Alexander was dethroned in his turn, and Miloš Obrenović recalled to the throne. On his death in 1860, Mihailo succeeded him. His policy was wise and moderate; he entertained plans for a union of various Slavonic tribes in South-East Europe, and obtained the withdrawal of the last Turkish garrisons from Serbia April 18th, 1867. On May 29th to June 10th, 1868, he was assassinated in the park of Koshutnyak, at Topcider, near Belgrade. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

deed was perpetrated by the Prince Kara-Georgevitch, an old pretender to the modest throne of Serbia, whose father had been wronged by the first Obrenovitch. The Jaggos of this family were known to nourish the bitterest hatred toward one whom they called a usurper, and “the shepherd’s grandson.” For a time, the official papers of Austria were filled with indignant denials of the charge that the treacherous deed had been done or procured by Kara-Georgevitch, or “Czerno-Georgiy,” as he is usually called in those parts. Several persons, innocent of the act, were, as is usual in such cases, imprisoned, and the real murderers escaped justice. A young relative of the victim, greatly beloved by his people, a mere child, taken [165] for the purpose from a school in Paris, was brought over in ceremony to Belgrade and proclaimed Hospodar of Serbia.¹ In the turmoil of political excitement the tragedy of Belgrade was forgotten by all but an old Serbian matron, who had been attached to the Obrenovitch family, and who, like Rachel, would not be consoled for the death of her children. After the proclamation of the young Obrenovitch, the nephew of the murdered man, she had sold out her property and disappeared; but not before taking a solemn vow on the tombs of the victims to avenge their deaths.

A Vampire

Spooks have a language of their own.

The writer of this truthful narrative had passed a few days at Belgrade, about three months before the horrid deed was perpetrated, and knew the Princess Katinka. She was a kind, gentle and lazy creature at home; abroad she seemed a Parisian in manners and education. As nearly all the personages who will figure in this true story are still living, it is but decent that I should withhold their names, and give only initials.

The old Serbian lady seldom left her house, going out but to see the Princess occasionally. Crouched on a pile of pillows and carpeting, clad in the picturesque national dress, she looked like the Cumaean Sibyl in her days of calm repose. Strange stories were whispered about her occult knowledge, and thrilling accounts circulated sometimes among the guests assembled round the fireside of my modest inn. Our fat landlord’s maiden aunt’s cousin had been troubled for some time past by a wandering vampire, and had been bled nearly to death by the nocturnal visitor; and while the efforts and exorcisms of the parish pope had been of no avail, the victim was luckily delivered [166] by Gospoja P ****, who had put to flight the disturbing ghost by merely shaking her fist at him, and shaming him in his own language. It was in Belgrade that I learned for the first time this highly interesting fact for philology, namely, that spooks have a language of their own. The old lady, whom I will call Gospoja P ****, was generally attended by another personage destined to be the principal actress in our tale of horror. It was a young gypsy girl, from some part of Rumania, about fourteen years of age. Where she was born, and who she was, she seemed to know as little as anyone else. I was told she had been brought one day by a party of strolling gypsies, and left in the yard of the old lady; from which moment she became an inmate of the house. She was nicknamed “the sleeping girl,” as she

¹ [This was Milan Obrenović (1854–1901), son of Miloš Jevremović Obrenović (1829–1861), the nephew of Prince Miloš (1780–1860), and by his cousin Mihailo, educated at Bucharest and Paris, and placed on the throne under a regency in 1868. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

was said to be gifted with the faculty of apparently dropping asleep wherever she stood, and speaking her dreams aloud. The girl's heathen name was Frosya.

About eighteen months after the news of the murder had reached Italy, where I was at the time, I was travelling over the Banat, in a small wagon of my own, hiring a horse whenever I needed it, after the fashion of this primitive, trusting country. I met on my way an old Frenchman, a scientist, travelling alone after my own fashion, but with the difference that while he was a pedestrian I dominated the road from the eminence of a throne of dry hay, in a jolting wagon. I discovered him one fine morning, slumbering in a wilderness of shrubs and flowers, and had nearly passed over him, absorbed as I was, in the contemplation of the surrounding glorious scenery. The acquaintance was soon made, no great ceremony of mutual introduction being needed. I had heard his name mentioned in circles interested in mesmerism, and knew him to be a powerful adept of the school of Du Potet.

The Queen of Clairvoyants

"I have found," he remarked in the course of the conversation, after I had made him share my seat of hay, "one of the most wonderful subjects in this lovely Thebaide."¹ [167] I have an appointment to-night with the family. They are seeking to unravel the mystery of a murder by means of the clairvoyance of the girl. . . . She is wonderful; very, very wonderful!"

"Who is she?" I asked.

"A Rumanian gypsy. She was brought up, it appears, in the family of the Serbian reigning Prince, who reigns no more, for he was very mysteriously murdered. . . . Holoah, take care! Diable, you will upset us over the precipice!" he hurriedly exclaimed, unceremoniously snatching from me the reins, and giving the horse a violent pull.

"You do not mean Prince Obrenovitch?" I asked, aghast.

"Yes, I do; and him precisely. To-night I have to be there, hoping to close a series of *séances* by finally developing a most marvellous manifestation of the hidden power of human spirit, and you may come with me. I will introduce you; and, besides, you can help me as an interpreter, for they do not speak French."

As I was pretty sure that if the somnambule was Frosya, the rest of the family must be Gospoja P****, I readily accepted. At sunset we were at the foot of the mountain, leading to the old castle, as the Frenchman called the place. It fully deserved the poetical name given it. There was a rough bench in the depths of one of the shadowy retreats, and as we stopped at the entrance of this poetical place, and the Frenchman was gallantly busying himself with my horse on the suspicious-looking bridge which led across the water to the entrance gate, I saw a tall figure slowly rise from the bench and come toward us. It was my old friend, Gospoja P****, looking more pale and more mysterious than ever. She exhibited no surprise at seeing me, but simply greeting me after the Serbian fashion, with a triple kiss on both cheeks, she took hold of my hand and led me straight to the nest of ivy. Half reclining on a

¹ [in solitary retreat]

small carpet spread on the tall grass with her back leaning against the wall, I recognized our Frosya. [168]

The Entrancement

She was dressed in the national costume of the Valachian women, a sort of gauze turban intermingled with various gilt medals and bands on her head, white shirt with opened sleeves, and petticoats of variegated colours. Her face looked deadly pale, her eyes were closed, and her countenance presented that stony, sphinx-like look which characterizes in such a peculiar way the entranced clairvoyant somnambule. If it were not for the heaving motion of her chest and bosom, ornamented by rows of medals and bead necklaces which feebly tinkled at every breath, one might have thought her dead, so lifeless and corpse-like was her face. The Frenchman informed me that he had sent her to sleep just as we were approaching the house, and that she now was as he had left her the previous night: he then began busying himself with the *sujet*, as he called Frosya. Paying no further attention to us, he shook her by the hand, and then making a few rapid passes, stretched out her arm and stiffened it. The arm, as rigid as iron, remained in that position. He then closed all her fingers but one — the middle finger — which he caused to point at the evening star, which twinkled in the deep blue sky. Then he turned round and went over from right to left, throwing on some of his fluids here, again discharging them at another place; busying himself with his invisible but potent fluids, like a painter with his brush when giving the last touches to a picture.

The old lady, who had silently watched him, with her chin in her hand the while, put out her thin, skeleton-looking hand on his arm and arrested it, as he was preparing himself to begin the regular mesmeric passes.

“Wait,” she whispered, “till the star is set, and the ninth hour completed. The Vourdalaki¹ are hovering around; they may spoil the influence.”

“What does she say?” inquired the mesmerizer, annoyed at her interference. [169]

I explained to him that the old lady feared the pernicious influences of the Vourdalaki.

“Vourdalaki? What’s that, the Vourdalaki?” exclaimed the Frenchman. “Let us be satisfied with Christian spirits, if they honour us to-night with a visit, and lose no time for the Vourdalaki.”

I glanced at the Gospoja. She had become deathly pale, and her brow was sternly knitted over her flashing black eyes.

“Tell him not to jest at this hour of the night!” she cried. “He does not know the country. Even the Holy Church may fail to protect us, once the Vourdalaki aroused. What’s this?” pushing with her foot a bundle of herbs the botanizing mesmerizer had laid near on the grass. She bent over the collection and anxiously examined the contents of the bundle, after which she flung the whole in the water.

“It must not be left here,” she firmly added; “these are the St. John’s plants, and they might attract the wandering ones.”

¹ [Also known as *vlukolak* and *vukodlak* among Slavonian people. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

Meanwhile the night had come, and the moon illuminated the landscape with a pale, ghostly light. The nights in the Banat are nearly as beautiful as in the East, and the Frenchman had to go on with his experiments in the open air as the “pope” of the Church had prohibited such in his tower, which was used as the parsonage, for fear of filling the holy precincts with the heretical devils of the mesmerizer, which, he remarked, he would be unable to exorcise on account of their being foreigners.

Occult detective work

The old gentleman had thrown off his travelling blouse, rolled up his shirt sleeves, and now striking a theatrical attitude began a regular process of mesmerisation. Under his quivering fingers the odyle¹ fluid actually seemed to flash in the twilight. Frosya was placed with her figure facing the moon, and every motion of the entranced girl was discernible as in daylight. In a few minutes large drops of perspiration appeared on her brow and slowly rolled down her pale face, glittering in the moonbeams. Then [170] she moved uneasily about and began chanting a low melody, to the words of which the Gospoja, anxiously bent over the unconscious girl, was listening with avidity and trying to catch every syllable. With her thin finger on her lips her eyes nearly starting from their sockets, her frame motionless, the old lady seemed herself transfixed into a statue of attention. The group was a remarkable one, and I regretted that I was not a painter. What followed was a scene worthy to figure in “Macbeth.” At one side the slender girl, pale and corpse-like, writhing under the invisible fluid of him who for the hour was her omnipotent master; at the other the old matron, who, burning with her unquenched desire of revenge, stood like the picture of Nemesis, waiting for the long-expected name of the Prince’s murderer to be at last pronounced. The Frenchman himself seemed transfigured, his grey hair standing on end; his bulky, clumsy form seemed to have grown in a few minutes. All theatrical pretence was now gone; there remained but the mesmerizer, aware of his responsibility, unconscious himself of the possible results, studying and anxiously expecting. Suddenly Frosya, as if lifted by some supernatural force, rose from her reclining posture and stood erect before us, motionless and still again, waiting for the magnetic fluid to direct her. The Frenchman, silently taking the old lady’s hand, placed it in that of the somnambulist, and ordered her to put herself *en rapport* with the Gospoja.

“What seest thou, my daughter?” softly murmured the Serbian lady. “Can your spirit seek out the murderers?”

“Search and behold!” sternly commanded the mesmerizer, fixing his gaze upon the face of the subject.

¹ [Referring to. Reichenbach’s *Od*:

. . . light is . . . the mystery . . . which cannot be understood by any mortal] And yet it is pretty well known to Occultists and even many an advanced Kabbalist, without mentioning those who realize the true meaning of Alchemy and its transmutations.

It is evident that the word “light” is used for aura, or that radiant emanation from animate and inanimate objects which is called by Reichenbach *Od*. But the presence of such in living persons, at any rate, is well known even to good clairvoyants and sensitives, or mediums, who see it, though they are rarely able to understand and analyse correctly its coruscations.

— *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE LETTERS TO JOHANN CASPAR LAVATER) XII p. 210. Full text under the title “Blavatsky on the Letters of Lavater,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

“I am — on my way — I go,” faintly whispered Frosya, her voice seeming not to come from herself, but from the surrounding atmosphere.

The mystic double

Mesmerism is the conscious magic of the ancients; spiritualism, the unconscious effect of the same magic upon certain organisms.

At this moment something so extraordinary took place that I doubt my ability to describe it. A luminous shadow, vapour-like, appeared closely surrounding the girl's body. At first about an inch in thickness, it gradually expanded, and, [171] gathering itself, suddenly seemed to break off from the body altogether, and condense itself into a kind of semi-solid vapour, which very soon assumed the likeness of the somnambule herself. Flickering about the surface of the earth, the form vacillated for two or three seconds, then glided noiselessly toward the river. It disappeared like a mist dissolved in the moonbeams, which seemed to absorb and imbibe it altogether.

I had followed the scene with intense attention. The mysterious operation, known in the East as the evocation of the *sc̄in-lāc*¹ was taking place before my own eyes. To doubt was impossible, and Du Potet was right in saying that mesmerism is the conscious magic of the ancients, and spiritualism the unconscious effect of the same magic upon certain organisms.

As soon as the vaporous double had soaked itself through the pores of the girl, the Gospoja had, by a rapid motion of the hand which was left free, drawn from under her pelisse something which looked to us suspiciously like a small stiletto, and placed it as rapidly in the girl's bosom. The action was so quick that the mesmerizer, absorbed in his work, had not remarked it,² as he afterwards told me. A few minutes elapsed in a dead silence. We seemed a group of petrified persons. Suddenly a thrilling and transpiercing cry burst from the entranced girl's lips. She bent forward, and snatching the stiletto from her bosom, plunged it furiously around her in the air, as if pursuing imaginary foes. Her mouth foamed, and incoherent, wild exclamations [172] broke from her lips, among which discordant sounds I discerned several times two familiar Christian names of men. The mesmerizer was so terrified that he lost all control over himself, and instead of withdrawing the fluid, he loaded the girl with it still more.

“Take care!” exclaimed I. “Stop! You will kill her or she will kill you!”

But the Frenchman had unwittingly raised subtle potencies of nature, over which he had no control. Furiously turning round, the girl struck at him a blow which would have killed him, had he not avoided it by jumping aside, receiving but a severe scratch on the right arm. The poor man was panic-stricken. Climbing with an extraordinary agility for a man of his bulky form on the wall over her, he fixed himself

¹ [H.P. Blavatsky seems to imply that this is an Eastern term, while in reality it is an Anglo-Saxon one. *Sc̄in-lāc* means magic, necromancy and sorcery, as well as a magical appearance, a spectral form, a deceptive appearance or a phantom (*phantasma*). *Sc̄in-lāeca* is a magician or sorcerer, and *sc̄in-lāece*, a sorceress. The art by means of which illusory appearances are produced was known as *sc̄inn-craeft*. From the Anglo-Saxon *sc̄inan*, to shine, was also derived the term *sc̄in-fold* used for the idea of the Elysian fields. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

² [H.P. Blavatsky must have often thought in French, even when writing English. This is a case in point. She means “had not noticed it,” but uses the equivalent of the French word “remarquer” which carries a different meaning in English. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

on it astride, and gathering the remnants of his will power, sent in her direction a series of passes. At the second, the girl dropped the weapon and remained motionless.

“What are you about?” hoarsely shouted the mesmerizer in French, seated like some monstrous night goblin on the wall. “Answer me: I command you!”

“I did — but what she — whom you ordered me to obey — commanded me do,” answered the girl in French, to my amazement.

“What did the old witch command you?” irreverently asked he.

Vengeance satisfied

“To find them — who murdered — kill them — I did so — and they are no more! — avenged — avenged! They are * * * *”

An exclamation of triumph, a loud shout of infernal joy rang loud in the air, and awakening the dogs of the neighbouring villages a responsive howl of barking began from that moment like a ceaseless echo of the Gospoja’s cry.

“I am avenged. I feel it, I know it. My warning heart tells me that the fiends are no more.” And she fell panting on the ground, dragging down in her fall the girl, who allowed herself to be pulled down as if she were a bag of wool. [173]

“I hope my subject did no further mischief to-night. She is a dangerous as well as a very wonderful subject!” said the Frenchman.

We parted. Three days after that I was at T * * * * , and as I was sitting in the dining-room of a restaurant waiting for my lunch I happened to pick up a newspaper, and the first lines I read ran thus:

VIENNA, 186*, TWO MYSTERIOUS DEATHS. Last evening, at 9:45, as P * * * * was about to retire, two of the gentlemen in waiting suddenly exhibited great terror, as though they had seen a dreadful apparition. They screamed, staggered, and ran about the room holding up their hands as if to ward off the blows of an unseen weapon. They paid no attention to the eager questions of the Prince and suite, but presently fell writhing upon the floor, and expired in great agony. Their bodies exhibited no appearance of apoplexy, nor any external marks of wounds; but wonderful to relate, there were numerous dark spots and long marks upon the skin, as though they were stabs and slashes made without puncturing the cuticle. The autopsy revealed the fact that beneath each of these mysterious discolorations there was a deposit of coagulated blood. The greatest excitement prevails, and the faculty are unable to solve the mystery.”

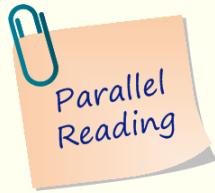
HADJI MORA¹

¹ [In her *Scrapbook*, Vol. I, p. 118, H.P. Blavatsky pasted a cutting of this story and signed her name under this pseudonym. Concerning the veracity of the facts outlined by Madame Blavatsky, and other data relevant to this story, the student is referred her letter written to A. P. Sinnett in the early part of 1886 and numbered Letter No. LXI, in the volume entitled *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, published in 1924.

Some years later, when this story was republished in *The Theosophist*, Vol. IV, January, 1883, John Yarker, the well-known Mason, wrote a brief account of similar experiences he had had with sensitives (*ibid.*, March 1883, pp. 149-50). To his inquiry, as to the genuineness of the narrative, Madame Blavatsky added in a footnote:

“We assure our learned correspondent that every word of our narrative is true.” — *Boris de Zirkoff.*]

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