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HELEN HALE IN "A YANKEE TOURIST"

"Czars of New York State"--*W. A. Marakle*
"A Millionaire Vampire"--*Don Mark Lemon*
The Grape Industry In Western New York

The Millionaire Vampire

Mysterious Mechanism by Which a Man of Wealth Drained Lives of Others to Maintain His Physical Strength—The Result

DON MARK LEMON

DOCTOR, I don't understand it! At all other times my health couldn't be better, but the moment I crossed Center street to enter East Station I feel a peculiar sensation of weakness, followed by a slight touch of vertigo. It is over in a moment and physically I seem none the worse afterwards, but its regular and persistent occurrence has begun to worry me considerably. How do you account for it?"

Doctor Winter deliberated a moment before replying, and then, physician-like, his answer took the form of a question.

"When did you first notice this?"

"About three weeks ago."

"Ah!" The physician seemed suddenly to be lost in some abstruse mental problem, when his patient became alarmed at his silence and demanded, "Is it anything serious?"

"No, no, no! Just a little eccentricity of your nervous system. No doubt at some time while entering East Station you were momentarily indisposed, and your imagination persists in reflecting the symptoms. Pay no attention to these feelings. Some ailments are like dogs—they snap at us if we mark them, but let us alone if we pay them no heed."

"I will endeavor to do so, but I assure you, doctor, these feelings are as far from fancy as is—a dog bite."

"A good figure!" laughed the other. "But take my advice and see what comes of it. Imagination is not everything, but most diseases can use it as a back stair to get at us. Good day, sir; good day."

When the patient had gone out Doctor Winter began pacing his office. "That's the ninth party that has come to me this week with the same complaint!" he exclaimed. "And I can vouch for the truth of these symptoms, as I have experienced them myself." He shook his head in emphatic denial of some unspoken speculation. "No, it is not possible that it can be an epidemic, for it is too rigidly local to East Station; besides, it bears every stamp of human agency. I believe I will look into this matter personally."

An hour later, attired in an easy-fitting, inconspicuous sack suit, Doctor Winter took his stand against a granite pillar to the left of the entrance of East Station, and watched the never-ending stream of men and women pour by towards the express and suburban trains.

He had not stood there five minutes before he was positive of the fact that as the human stream poured up over the nearest curbstone it wavered, swayed from left to right, trembled an instant, then rushed on through the wide entrance of the station, unconscious in its

haste that there had been a slight irregularity in its general movement.

As an elderly lady passed him, the doctor heard her remark to her companion: "I always feel how tired I am, just as I enter the station."

"It's the same with me," replied her friend. "And sometimes I am actually dizzy for a moment. But I am so glad to be going home that I never pay any attention to how I feel."

Doctor Winter's eye caught the gleam of a large lens in the window of a questionable physician's establishment located just down the street, and a sudden suspicion flashed into his mind. Could this physician have invented a powerful electric reflector of some sort, capable of exhausting the nervous energy of the man or woman whose eyes it was turned upon, and was he making use of it to sicken the thousands of hurrying pedestrians in hopes that many would seek his office to gain relief from what would seem imminent or present illness?

A moment's thought banished this suspicion as illogical. The mysterious influence at work was too slight and transient in its effect to alarm the most timid.

He now left the protection of the granite pillar and mingling with the throng crossed over and stood on the edge of the curbstone, which he had observed was the line of influence. Noting the effect carefully, he found himself growing slightly languid and weak, then a bit dizzy, whereupon he stepped back upon the walk and the unpleasant feeling left him almost immediately.

A man-hole at the corner was sending forth a low, white vapor after the heavy rain, but a careful test satisfied the doctor that the feeling of lassitude and vertigo could not have been caused by the inhalation of poisonous gas escaping from this conduit.

Suddenly his glance rested upon a thin, dull colored metal strip fixed wedge-like between the curbstone and the sidewalk, and extending a distance of about twenty-five feet. This metal strip was set flush with the walk and curb, and its further end ran into a hollow iron post that supported one corner of the stationary awning extending over the sidewalk above the baggage sheds. At a height of eight feet he saw that a heavy, insulated wire issued from a hole in the hollow iron post and ran thence along the gutter of the awning for a distance of about forty feet, where it crossed the street and entered the window just over the entrance of a narrow brick and terra-cotta office building.

"So far, it's as plain as a bad case of mumps," mused the doctor, elated by his suc-

cess; "but the other end of the wire is the ticklish end."

Crossing the street he mounted the first flight of the brick and terra-cotta building and knocked at the door of the room where the wire from the baggage sheds entered. A powerful and fine looking dark haired man about forty years of age answered the knock.

"Well, sir, what do you want?" he demanded, brusquely.

"Excuse me," replied the doctor, suavely, "but I am thinking of renting an office in this building and I wished to enquire of you as a tenant if the building has good janitor service and is well lighted and looked after."

The other eyed the doctor suspiciously, then demanded, "What is your business—Inquiry Bureau?"

With one swift glance Doctor Winter surveyed the room. In the center, upon a wooden stand, stood a machine having the singular appearance of a combined dynamo and generator. A telephone on the wall and a single chair completed the furnishing of this remarkable office.

"No," smiled the doctor, unruffled by the other's sarcasm, "I am a physician, and I was thinking of opening a branch office in this neighborhood. I am very sorry to have troubled you. You are an electrician, I see."

The tenant interposed his body between the doctor's gaze and the machine in the middle of the room. "The janitor will give you all the information you wish. Good day, sir." The door was shut in the doctor's face.

"Only rascals and inventors are so jealously suspicious," mused Doctor Winter as he descended the stairs, "and this man is both, I suspect. Well, we may meet again, and I rather fancy he won't be so churlish as to shut a door in my face." There was a cold glint in his gray eyes as he noted the number of the building he was leaving.

Shortly after Doctor Winter had left 21 Center street a lineman ascended to the roof and began following up the second and longer wire issuing from the office of the mysterious, dark haired stranger. It proved to be a tramp wire—one belonging to no authorized telephone, telegraph, or power company, and after several hours of careful and hazardous labor he found that at about a mile distant it entered the palatial home of an aged millionaire.

This intelligence was received by Doctor Winter with evident gratification and paying the young lineman liberally he dismissed him. At once the physician repaired to the address where the tramp wire ended, and writing

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The Millionaire Vampire

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across his card the words, *I am from 21 Center street. Important!* gave the card to the butler and asked him to take it to Mr. Gage.

Following this servant, who returned almost immediately and reported that his master would see him, Doctor Winter mounted the broad stairway and was ushered into a large, pleasant room on the second floor.

A man of about eighty sat in a chair by one of the windows with a buckram bound volume lying open on his lap, but as the doctor greeted him by name he put the book aside and arose, and the former could see that a wire ran from a battery on a near-by table to a metal plate attached at the base of the millionaire's brain. A further glance discovered to the physician that the battery was fed by a heavy insulated wire that entered at one of the windows.

The millionaire signalled the obedient butler to retire, then regarded his visitor with a look of questioning alarm.

"I trust that nothing is seriously wrong that Mr. Vonburg has sent a physician!" he exclaimed.

"No, Mr. Gage," Doctor Winter hastened to reply. "I beg you do not be alarmed. Mr. Vonburg" —"So that's the man's name," mentally hyphenated the doctor—"has sent me to make an examination of your general physical condition, with a view of reducing the power."

"Ah!" there was a look of intense relief in the other's face as he was reassured.

From the moment that Doctor Winter had stood on the curb at the entrance to East Station and felt the vital power being drained from his body, he had seen through the phenomenon sufficiently clearly and steadily as to have reached his present position without having made a single false step, but now that he was in the very presence of the millionaire vampire it would be well to make doubly sure before acting decisively.

Yet there seemed little to discover that his acute reason and subtle intuition had not already discovered, and a swift examination of the millionaire's person decided him to act at once. He was about to speak when the telephone bell rang, and the other left him to answer the call.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo! this is Vonburg!" came the answer distinctly enough for the doctor to overhear. "Quick! attach the storage line to your brain! This building is on fire and I will have to disconnect the power. In case—" Here the message was snapped like a broken wire.

Turning about with ashen face, the millionaire disconnected the wire attached to the plate at the base of his brain, and seizing a similar wire issuing from the opposite side of the battery-like machine on the table attached that to the metal plate.

"My God!" he cried, studying a scale on the battery, "there is scarcely enough power left in storage to keep me alive till morning!"

Doctor Winter looked the wretched million-

aire directly in the eyes. "Mr. Gage, that great, wise, and merciful judge—Nature—condemned you to death a month ago, and it is well that you should die to-night! By this invention of Vonburg's you have been enabled for weeks to draw from unconscious thousands of your fellow men the vital forces that keep you alive, but I shall allow it no longer! In the name of manhood I protest against this outrage! You are but a vampire, sir, sucking the life forces from the thousands of workers that daily pour into East Station, and what do they receive in return? Nothing!"

The millionaire drew back from the angry physician as from a flame of fire. "You are a traitor!" he gasped.

"No, I am not," replied the other, seeking to calm himself. "I am not in your employ, nor in the employ of your agents. I observed a metal strip set into the curb at the approach to East Station and found that a wire connecting one end of that strip runs through Vonburg's office to this room, where it ends at the base of your brain. There can be but one conclusion—You are being kept alive by draining from every man, woman and child whose foot touches that plate a certain quantity of vital force, slight in each instance, yet in the aggregate sufficient to give you the strength of youth. No, you need not protest; it is too evident!"

The millionaire clasped his hands. "You won't betray me?"

"I must, and I will!"

"Name your price of silence, and I will pay it now."

"No!" came the stern reply. "You have unlimited wealth; use it and buy this vital force honorably from willing subjects."

"Vonburg will not permit me. He fears the law."

"That is why this business must end!" exclaimed the doctor. "With your riches you could buy helpless children like sheep and drain them of their young lives, and not even a physician could tell how they died!"

"Don't!" pleaded the millionaire, cringing into his chair.

"My God, sir!" cried Doctor Winter, aghast. "I believe you have been guilty of such dastardly deeds! Ah, you vampire, I have your guilty record now! That was the way you kept alive before you placed the steel strip at East Station!"

The other arose and staggering to the battery moved a small nickel lever, then turned about and with every show of feebleness and submission approached the physician.

"You are right!" he whined. "I am an old, old man, and an old man's highest duty is to die! Give me your hand."

Doctor Winter drew back a step in disgust, when instantly the millionaire vampire leapt upon him, and with almost demonic strength and fury crushed him to the floor. "You traitor!" he shrieked, his white beard crackling with the volume of vital force that now

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poured into his body from the storage battery.

Realizing his danger, Doctor Winter wrenched one arm free and tore away the wire that ran to the plate at the base of his assailant's brain. Instantly all strength left the millionaire, and shaking him off the physician arose.

"The lust of life has made you more fiend than man!" he exclaimed.

The other crawled off and once again attached the wire to his person, then set the nickel lever at the lowest notch.

"That cost me an hour of life, and I will die long before midnight unless Vonburg comes!" he whined. "He is the only living soul who understands the force."

Doctor Winter stepped to the telephone, at the same time keeping a watch on the other, lest he should repeat the attack, and called up the baggage room at East Station.

"Can you tell me if there is a fire at 21 Center Street," he asked as soon as he had got connections.

"Yes," came the answer. "The building has just collapsed from a gas-main explosion."

"Anyone hurt or killed?"

"A hackman reports a man was crushed to death under a beam. He had gone back to get something in the burning building."

"Did he describe the man?"

"Said he was a big, fine looking, black haired man."

"That will do. Thank you."

Doctor Winter hung up the receiver and crossed the room. "I will send the butler," he said, and went out, without looking back.

He found the butler lolling in the reception hall. "Mr. Vonburg has been killed in a fire and the shock may kill Mr. Gage. Should it do so, I advise you to destroy that battery in his room, as it might get you into serious trouble. That is all." He left the craven servant backed against the wall and quit the mansion.

When he reached 21 Center Street he found it a heap of ruins, while protruding from beneath a heavy steel girder lay the machine that he had seen in Vonburg's office, now scarcely recognizable and wholly useless. Turning down to the morgue, he found that the man who had been killed in the fire was Vonburg.