

A close-up photograph of a man's face, partially obscured by a large camera lens he is holding in front of his eye. The lens is the central focus, with its intricate internal elements visible. The man's expression is neutral, and the background is blurred.

PI
magazine
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professional investigator magazine

US \$7.95 • CAN \$8.95

July/August 2019

OUR ANNUAL

SURVEILLANCE

ISSUE

**Tips and advice from experts on
Surveillance and Surveillance Equipment**

The Bizarre Case of Dr. Crippen

BY **DANIEL J. DEMERS**

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Ethel Clara Le Neve.

On November 22, 1910 Dr. Hawley Crippen was hanged in London.

Crippen had been convicted of his wife's murder. Crippen's attempted escape from justice was sensationalized by the world press. His apprehension and arrest would be the first international manhunt successfully using Guglielmo Marconi's newly invented wireless technology.

Crippen, an American, had studied medicine at the University of Michigan. In 1892 the 30-year-old Crippen was living in New York where he met and married Cora Turner. Turner was his 17-year-old patient. According to Erik Larson in his book *Thunderstruck*: "Turner had the demeanor and physical presence of a woman much older. Her figure was... *voluptuous*."

The *New York Daily Tribune* described the 5'4" Crippen as "a loud dresser [who] wore a high hat with a large diamond stickpin."

Shortly after the marriage, Cora underwent an ovariectomy, leaving a scar about four or five inches long and about one inch wide, which would become crucial evidence in Crippen's conviction.

In 1905 Crippen moved to London to run a patent medicine manufacturing company. Crippen's boss, according to Larson, claimed he sensed uneasiness and unhappiness in Crippen because Cora "engaged other men in conversations of candor and energy, flexing the power of her personality and physical presence." Adding, "she conveyed appetite. Crippen was growing jealous." Cora objected to the move to London and initially opted to remain in New York to pursue a singing career. Unsuccessful as an entertainer, she finally moved to London.

Arriving in London, Crippen found Cora a different person. He asserted she "cultivated a most ungovernable temper, and seemed to

think I was not good enough for her...boasting of men of good position...[who] had made a fuss of her, and... some...visited her [at our London home]."

The unhappy Crippen took up with his secretary Ethel Le Neve. The slender, petite Le Neve was 21 years Crippen's junior and described by Larson as "young and striking and slender."

Cora insisted that he fire Le Neve. Crippen refused, claiming she was indispensable.

According to Larson, "Outwardly, the Crippens seemed to have an idyllic marriage. Neighbors reported often seeing the couple "in the garden" and that Cora often sang. Another neighbor asserted they were on "very affectionate terms," adding she never "heard them quarrel." This was the Victorian era, a time when divorces were considered scandalous and bad marriages were generally kept hidden from public view.



On January 31, 1910, the Crippens had dinner at their London home entertaining friends. It was the last time anyone saw Cora alive. Crippen claimed that they became engaged in a horrible argument and she told him that she was leaving him the following day. According to Crippen, that was the last time he saw her.

Crippen told friends she had returned to America. When asked for her address, Crippen offered to forward mail to her. In mid-March Crippen told friends that she had suddenly died of double pneumonia in America. Simultaneously Le Neve moved into Crippen's home.

Cora's friends instigated a police investigation. Scotland Yard detectives discovered a body buried in the cellar of Crippen's home. The head, lower limbs and most of the bones were missing. One newspaper account revealed detectives were unable to identify if the "gelatinous mass" found was man or woman. "Portions of clothing and a necklace adhering to the flesh of the neck," suggested a woman who had been strangled "in her sleep."

Realizing he was the prime suspect, Crippen and Le Neve fled England. Upon his disappearance, police launched a massive manhunt for them. Scotland Yard briefed ship captains on the situation, asking them to be on the lookout for them.

Crippen and Le Neve boarded the SS *Montrose* in Antwerp en route to Canada, a scheduled passage of 11 days. Le Neve cut her hair and wore boys clothing. The two were traveling as father and son under the alias of Robinson.

The *Montrose's* Captain observed the Robinsons holding hands and found it strange — more like lovers. He wired Scotland Yard:

"Dr. Hawley Crippen on board." The message was historic — the first time wireless was used in a manhunt. A Scotland Yard detective immediately boarded the steamer *Laurentic* scheduled to arrive a day earlier than the *Montrose*.

On July 30th the *Montrose* rounded Father Point, Quebec, at the entrance to the St. Lawrence River, the Scotland Yard detective boarded the *Montrose* and arrested Crippen. Le Neve fainted when arrested "still dressed in boys clothing."

Without a positive identification of the exhumed body from Crippen's cellar, prosecutors had to rely on medical experts. A pathologist concluded the flesh found *sans* the head, hands, forearms, feet and legs below the knees and bones "were from a human body." The genitalia had been removed and the sex could "not be determined anatomically." The pathologist asserted "a piece of flesh six by seven inches" from the abdominal wall "bore a scar which... was undoubtedly left... from an operation."

On October 21, 1910 Hawley Crippen was found guilty of murder. Le Neve, charged as an accessory, was acquitted.

Six months after his execution, the British Bar found Crippen's attorney guilty of misconduct and suspended him from the practice of law for one year. The attorney had sold con-

fidential information about Crippen to several newspapers to "make copy"—a euphemism for the purposeful generation of newspaper sales.

In October of 2007, a Michigan State University forensic scientist performed a DNA examination of the tissue found in Crippen's cellar and concluded it was not Cora Crippen's. Additionally, Michigan State University researchers concluded the body parts found were those of a man. The research team also cast doubt on the scar evaluation at the trial—noting the tissue had hair follicles—scars do not. Several attempts to get Scotland Yard to provide samples of blond hair found in curlers with the body (now in a museum) for additional DNA testing were denied.

The new scientific evidence coupled with Scotland Yard's refusal to release evidence for additional testing has led one Michigan State University researcher to hypothesize that police planted evidence asserting they "were under public pressure to bring to trial a suspect for this heinous crime." In 2009, the British Criminal Cases Review Commission reviewed the case and denied a request to pardon Hawley Crippen posthumously a decision which stands to this day. **PI**

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