

Dr. Harvey Crippen (1862 - 1910)

Doctor and wife poisoner.

Crippen was born in Coldwater, Michigan, USA. A graduate of Michigan University. In 1885 Crippen became a homeopathic doctor and started working for a homeopath pharmaceutical company.



His second wife was Belle Elmore. She was a music-hall artiste and would-be opera singer. A rather overbearing woman, she tried to control every aspect of her husband's life. She openly had affairs, about which he did not complain very much. In 1900, Crippen and his spouse moved to England. Unfortunately, his U.S. medical qualification was insufficient to obtain a doctor's position in the UK. The couple moved to Holloway, London where they had lodgers to compensate for Crippen's rather measly income. Crippen was not a homeopath in the classic sense in that he used many potions aside from homeopathic remedies. He worked as dentist, partly as an agent for a patent-medicine firm.

After a party at their home on January 31, 1910, Belle disappeared. Hawley Crippen told everyone she had returned to the United States, and later added that she had died in California and had been cremated. Meanwhile, his lover, Ethel le Neve came and began openly wearing Belle's clothes and jewelery. The police were informed of Belle's disappearance by her friend, strongwoman Vulcana. The house was searched but nothing was found, and the doctor was interviewed, police Chief Inspector Walter Dew was satisfied. However, Crippen and le Neve panicked and fled across the Atlantic on the Canadian Pacific liner *Montrose*, with le Neve disguised as a boy.

Their disappearance led Scotland Yard to perform another three searches of the house. During the fourth and final search, they found the remains of a human body, buried under the brick floor of the basement. Mrs. Crippen had to be identified from a piece of skin from her abdomen, because her head, limbs and skeleton were never recovered. Sir Bernard Spilsbury found traces of hyoscine, a calming drug.

The captain of the *Montrose* saw a newspaper report about the wanted pair in a foreign newspaper, and became suspicious of two of his passengers who had boarded at Antwerp. He sent a message via the Marconi telegraph on 22 July which read: "Have