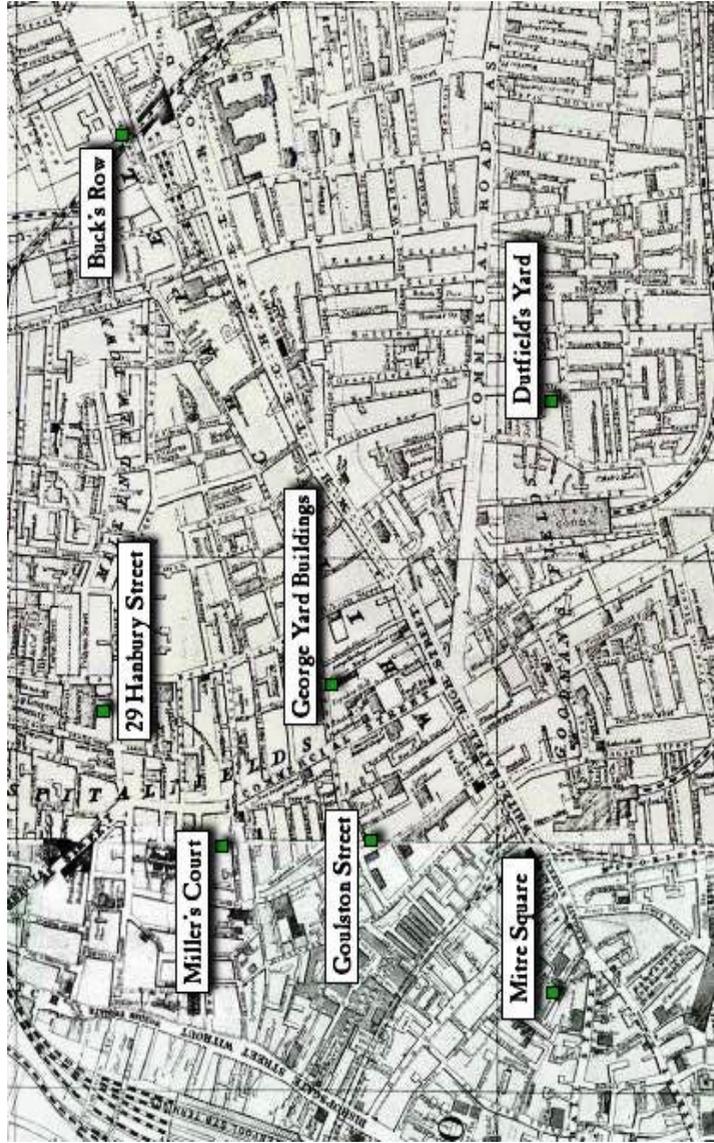


Jack the Ripper

by

Alister Crowley



Sites of the first seven of the Whitechapel murders

'Jack the Ripper'

by Aleister Crowley

To acquire a friendly feeling for a system, to render it rapidly familiar, it is prudent to introduce the Star to which the persons of the drama are attached. It is hardly one's first, or even one's hundredth guess, that the Victorian worthy in the case of Jack the Ripper was no less a person than Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. She has, however, never been unveiled to the unthinking multitude; very few, even of those who have followed her and studied her intently for years, have the key to that "Closed Palace of the King."

If the reader happens to have passed his life in the study of what is nauseatingly known as "occult science," he would, if he were sufficiently intelligent, grasp one fact firmly; that is, that the persons sufficiently eminent in this matter who have become known as teachers, are bound to have possessed in overflowing measure the sense of irony and bitter humour. This greatest treasure in their characters is their only guarantee against going mad, and the way they exercise it is notably by writing with their tongues in their cheeks, or making fools of their followers. H. P. B. is known by the profane and vulgar as an old lady who played tricks and was exposed; but her motives were not what such persons supposed. These tricks were a touchstone for her followers; if they were so little understanding of the true nature of her Work that any incidents of this kind affected in the smallest degree their judgement, then the sooner she was rid of them the better.

The truth of H. P. B., as in the case of any artist, is to be known by a study of her best work; in this case a small volume called *The Voice of the Silence*.

One of the closest followers of H. P. B., and in the sphere of literature unquestionably the most distinguished, with the possible exception of J. W. Brodie-Innes, was a woman named Mable Collins. Her novel, *The Blossom and the Fruit*, is probably the best existing account of the theosophical theories presented in dramatic form. One of the great virtues acclaimed and defended by this lady was that of chastity. She did not go quite as far as the girl made famous by Mr Harry Price upon the Brocken a few years

ago, whose terror of losing the jewel of her maidenhood was such that she thought it unsafe to go to bed without the protection of a man; but Mable Collins had considerable experience of this form of chastity a deux; at the same time, reflecting that one of the points of H. P. B.'s mission was to proclaim the Age of the Woman, she occasionally chose a female for her bed-fellow.

Some few years before Whitechapel achieved its peculiar notoriety, the white flame of passion which had consumed the fair Mabel and her lover, who passed by the name of Captain Donston, had died down; in fact he had become rather more than less of a nuisance; and she was doing everything in her power to get rid of him. Naturally eager to assist in this manoeuvre was her new mistress, a lady passing under the name of Baroness Cremers, whose appearance and character are very fully and accurately described in a novel called Moonchild:

An American woman of the name of Cremers. Her squat stubborn figure was clad in rusty-black clothes, a man's except for the skirt; it was surmounted by a head of unusual size, and still more unusual shape, for the back of the skull was entirely flat, and the left frontal lobe much more developed than the right; one could have thought that it had been deliberately knocked out of shape, since nature, fond, as it may be, of freaks, rarely pushes asymmetry to such a point. There would have been more than idle speculation in such a theory; for she was the child of hate, and her mother had in vain attempted every violence against her before her birth.

The face was wrinkled parchment, yellow and hard; it was framed in short, thick hair, dirty white in colour; and her expression denoted that the utmost cunning and capacity were at the command of her rapacious instincts.

But her poverty was no indication that they had served her and those primitive qualities had in fact been swallowed up in the results of their disappointment. For in her eye raved bitter a hate of all things, born of the selfish envy which regarded the happiness of any other person as an outrage and affront upon her. Every thought in her mind was a curse - against God, against man, against love, or beauty, against life itself. She

was a combination of the witch-burner with the witch; an incarnation of the spirit of Puritanism, from its sourness to its sexual degeneracy and perversion.

A prolonged contemplation of the above portrait may possibly fertilize the seed of doubt in some minds as to whether this woman was in every respect an ideal companion on one's passage through this vale of crocodile tears; but tastes differ, and she certainly mastered exquisite Mable Collins, turned her against her teacher, persuaded her to embark on the most contemptible campaign of treacheries. For, recognizing in H. P. B. one of the messengers sent from time to time by the Masters to take a hand at the carpenter's bench where humanity is slowly shaped, she thought that to destroy her would be as acceptable to the powers of darkness as could be imagined.

Of Donston less is known; it is believed that he was a cavalry officer, of the Household Cavalry at that, but under another name. Cremers tried to persuade people that he had been caught cheating at cards, but there is no reason to suppose that any disgrace attached to his leaving the Service. He was by all accounts a sincere sympathiser with the sufferings of our maudite race; his profession was obviously of no particular use to him, holding these sentiments, and apparently he drifted first into studies medical, and (later) theological. He was a man of extremely aristocratic appearance and demeanour; his manners were polished and his whole behaviour quiet, gentle, and composed; he gave the impression of understanding any possible situation and of ability to master it, but he possessed that indifference to meddling in human affairs which often tempers the activity of people who are conscious of their superiority.



These three people were still living together in Mabel Collins' house in London; but as previously hinted, they were trying to get rid of him. This, however, was not an altogether easy task. The reputation of the novelist was a very delicate flower, and in the early days of her beguine for Donston she had written him many scores of letters whose contents would hardly

have appeared altogether congruous with the instructive and elevating phrases of The Blossom and the Fruit.

Now, although Donston was so charming and pleasant a personality, although his graciousness was so notable, yet behind the superficial gentleness it was easy to recognize an iron will. His principal motif was righteousness; if he thought anything his duty, he allowed nothing else to stand in the way of performing it, and for one reason or another he thought it right to maintain his influence over Mable Collins. One theory suggests that he was loyal to H. P. B., and thought it essential to fight against the influence of Cremers. This, at any rate, is what she thought, and it made her all the more anxious to get rid of him; judging everybody by herself, she was quite sure he would not hesitate to use the love-letters in case of definite breach; so, to carry out her scheme, the first procedure must obviously be to obtain possession of the compromising packet and destroy it.

The question immediately arose -- where is it? Donston, with most men of his class, was contemptuously careless of interference with his private affairs; he left everything unlocked; but there was, however, a single exception to this rule. One of the relics of his career in the cavalry was a tin uniform case, and this he kept under his bed very firmly secured to the brass frame-work. This, of all his receptacles, was the only one which was always kept locked. From this, Cremers deduced that as likely as not the documents of which she was in search were in the trunk, and she determined to investigate at leisure.

In those days, transport in London was almost slower than today; from Bayswater or Bloomsbury -- memory is not quite sure as to where they lived -- to the Borough was certainly more than a Sabbath day's journey; the only evidence of speed in the whole city was the telegraph. Accordingly Cremers arranged one day for a telegram to be dispatched to Donston, informing him that some friend or near relative had met with a street accident, had been taken to Guy's Hospital, and wanted to see him. Donston immediately started off on this fictitious errand. As he left the house, Mabel laughingly warned him not to get lost and run into Jack the Ripper.

While he is changing buses, it may be proper to explain that these events coincided with the Whitechapel murders. On the day of his journey, two or three of them had already been committed -- in any case sufficient to start talk and present the murderer with his nick-name. All London was discussing the numerous problems connected with the murders; in particular it seemed to everybody extraordinary that a man for whom the police were looking everywhere could altogether escape notice in view of the nature of the crime. It is hardly necessary to go into the cannibalistic details, but it is quite obvious that a person who is devouring considerable chunks of raw flesh, cut from a living body, can hardly do so without copious evidence on his chest.

One evening, Donston had just come in from the theatre -- in those days everyone dressed, whether they liked it or not -- and he found the women discussing this point. He gave a slight laugh, went into the passage, and returned in the opera cloak which he had been wearing to the theatre. He turned up the collar and pulled the cape across his shirtfront, made a slight gesture as if to say: "You see how simple it is;" and when a social difficulty presented itself, he remarked lightly: "Of course you cannot have imagined that the man could be a gentleman," and added: "There are plenty going about the East End in evening dress, what with opium smoking and one thing and another."

After the last of the murders, an article appeared in the newspaper of W. T. Stead, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, by Tau Tria Delta, who offered a solution for the motive of the murders. It stated that in one of the grimoires of the Middle Ages, an account was given of a process by which a sorcerer could attain "the supreme black magical power" by following out a course of action identical with that of Jack the Ripper; certain lesser powers were granted to him spontaneously during the course of the proceedings. After the third murder, if memory serves, the assassin obtained on the spot the gift of invisibility, because in the third or fourth murder, a constable on duty saw a man and a woman go into a cul-de-sac. At the end there were the great gates of a factory, but at the sides no doorways or even windows. The constable, becoming suspicious, watched the entry to the gateway, and hearing screams, rushed in. He found the woman, mutilated, but still living; as he ran up, he flashed his bulls eye in every direction; and he was

absolutely certain that no other person was present. And there was no cover under the archway for so much as a rat.

The number of murders involved in the ceremonies was five, whereas the Whitechapel murders so-called, were seven in number; but two of these were spurious, like the alien corpse in Arsenic and Old Lace. These murders are completely to be distinguished from the five genuine ones, by obvious divergence on technical points.

The place of each murder is important, for it is essential to describe what is called the adverse pentagram, that is to say, a star of five points with a single point in the direction of the South Pole. So much for the theory of Tau Tria Delta.

It is not quite clear as to whether this pseudonym concealed the identity of Donston himself. The investigation has been taken up by Bernard O'Donnell, the crime expert of the Empire News; and he has discovered many interesting details. In the course of conversation with Aleister Crowley this matter came up, and the magician was very impressed with O'Donnell's argument. He suggested an astrological investigation. Was there anything significant about the times of the murders? O'Donnell's investigations had led him to the conclusion that the murderer had attached the greatest importance to accuracy in the time. O'Donnell, accordingly, furnished Crowley with the necessary data, and figures of the heavens were set up.

A brief digression about astrological theory: the classical tradition is that the malefic planets are Saturn and Mars, and although any of the planets may in certain circumstances bring about misfortune, it is to these two that the astrologer looks first of all for indications of things going wrong.

Some years before this conversation, however, Crowley had made extensive statistical enquiries into astrology. There is a small book called *A Thousand and One Horoscopes* which includes a considerable number of nativities, not only of murderers, but of persons murdered. Crowley thought this an excellent opportunity to trace the evil influence of the planets, looking naturally first of all to Saturn, the great misfortune, then to Mars, the lesser

misfortune; but also to Uranus, a planet not known to the ancients, but generally considered of a highly explosive tendency.

The result of Crowley's investigations was staggering; there was one constant element in all cases of murder, both of the assassin and the murdered. Saturn, Mars, and Herschel were indeed rightly suspected of doing dirty work at the crossroads, but the one constant factor was a planet which had until that moment been considered, if not actively beneficent, at least perfectly indifferent and harmless -- the planet Mercury. Crowley went into this matter very thoroughly and presently it dawned on his rather slow intelligence that after all this was only to be expected; the quality of murder is not primarily malice, greed, or wrath; the one essential condition without which deliberate murder can hardly ever take place, is just this cold-bloodedness, this failure to attribute the supreme value of human life. Armed with these discoveries the horoscopes of the Whitechapel murders shone crystal clear to him. In every case, either Saturn or Mercury were precisely on the Eastern horizon at the moment of the murder (by precisely, one means within a matter of minutes).

Mercury is, of course, the God of Magic, and his adverse distorted image of the Ape of Thoth, responsible for such evil trickery as is the heart of black magic, while Saturn is not only the cold heartlessness of age, but the magical equivalent of Saturn. He is the old god who was worshiped in the Witches' Sabbath.

Naturally, to his devotees, Saturn is not to be associated with misfortune *redeunt saturnia regna*; 1 Saturn has all the fond wisdom of the grandfather.

To return from this long explanatory digression, it was necessary in order to give the fair Cremers time to extricate the uniform case from its complex ropes, the knots being carefully memorised, and to pick the locks.

During this process her mind had been far from at ease; first of all, there seemed to be no weight. Surely a trunk so carefully treasured could not be empty; but if there were a packet of letters more or less loose, there should have been some response to the process of shaking. Her curiosity rose to

fever pitch; at last the lock yielded to her persuasive touch; she lifted the lid. The trunk was not empty, but its contents, although few, were striking.

Five white dress ties soaked in blood.