

**‘Yours truly Jack the Ripper’—of New College, Oxford?
Montague John DrUITt and the Whitechapel Murders of 1888**



Montague John DrUITt

‘I keep on hearing the police have caught me but they wont fix me just yet . . . My knife’s so nice and sharp I want to get to work right away if I get a chance . . . Yours truly Jack the Ripper.’

(The ‘Dear Boss’ letter, received by Central News Agency on 27 September 1888)

Introduction

At around 1 pm, on Monday 31 December 1888, the decomposing body of a man was pulled out of the River Thames at Chiswick in London. Henry Winslade, the waterman who had discovered it, notified the authorities. Large stones placed in the pockets had weighed the body down in the water, keeping it hidden for about a month. Other items found on the body included a silver watch on a gold chain, two cheques (one for £50, a considerable sum, the other for £16), a first-class season rail ticket from Blackheath to London, and the second half of a return ticket from Hammersmith to Charing Cross dated 1 December.

The body was subsequently identified by the man's elder brother as Montague John Druitt, a barrister who also worked as an assistant schoolmaster at a boarding school in Blackheath, a former Winchester scholar and graduate of New College, Oxford. At the inquest held on 2 January 1889, Druitt's brother William, a solicitor living in Bournemouth, described how a friend had told him on 11 December that Montague had not been seen at his chambers for over a week. William therefore decided to make enquiries in London and discovered that Montague had got into 'serious trouble' at the school (the testimony went into no further detail) and had been dismissed from his post. A search of Montague's residence had produced a note addressed to William in which he declared his fear that he 'was going to be like mother, and the best thing for me was to die'. The men's mother Ann suffered from severe depression and had been confined in an asylum in July 1888. The eventual verdict of the jury was that Druitt had committed suicide 'whilst of unsound mind'.

Druitt's tombstone gives the date of his death as 4 December 1888. This was a little under a month after a shockingly violent murder in the East End of London, which was itself the last in a series of crimes that had held the capital in a vice-like grip of terror that autumn—the murders committed by the serial killer styled 'Jack the Ripper'.

In February 1894, over five years after the murders had occurred and with no perpetrator having been brought to justice, the Sun newspaper ran a series of articles in which it claimed to know the Ripper's identity, indicating that the killer was Thomas Cutbush, a violent madman who had been incarcerated in Broadmoor Lunatic Asylum in April 1891. In response to these claims, a confidential report was prepared by Sir Melville Macnaghten, Chief Constable of the CID at Scotland Yard. In this document, today known as the Macnaghten Memorandum, the official police copy of which is dated 23 February 1894, he named three other people he believed were more likely to have been Jack the Ripper. The first of those names was Montague John Druitt.

The Whitechapel Murders: the 'canonical five'

London in 1888 was the largest capital city in the world, the heart of a wealthy and ever-growing empire. The city had enjoyed a period of economic growth during which European and Irish immigrants had poured into the metropolis and many had settled in the East End. With the exploding population, however, came great poverty as the volume of people vastly exceeded the number of jobs available, resulting in the district of Whitechapel becoming home to many of London's worst slums—living conditions were appalling, death-rates were high, drunkenness and violence were prevalent, and many women saw prostitution simply as a way of life. Some individuals and businesses managed to make a good living, however, but this could provoke resentment among the other citizens. A further influx of immigrants in the 1880s saw the rise of anti-Semitism in the East End. It was onto this volatile stage that Jack the Ripper made his entrance in August 1888.

At around 3.45 am on 31 August, the body of Mary Ann 'Polly' Nichols, a 43-year-old prostitute, was found by P.C. Neil as he was walking his beat in Buck's Row. Her throat was oozing blood from a deep cut in her throat which severed the neck down to the vertebrae. An examination at the mortuary revealed that her abdomen had been extensively ripped open with a long-bladed knife. Detectives from Scotland Yard were seconded to the case, one of whom would become synonymous with the Ripper case: Detective Inspector Frederick Abberline.

Eight days later, at around 6 am on 8 September one of the residents of 29 Hanbury Street, John Davis, found the body of a woman lying against the fence that separated the house from number 27 next door. This was later identified as 47-year-old Annie Chapman. Her throat had been severed by a deep jagged cut while, in the words of examining doctor George Bagster Phillips' autopsy report, 'the abdomen had been entirely laid open': the intestines had been placed on the body's shoulder while the uterus and two-thirds of the bladder had been

completely removed. Dr Phillips was of the opinion that 'the work was that of an expert'. It was the first time a suggestion had been made that the killer possessed some anatomical knowledge.

On 29 September, the Metropolitan Police received a letter forwarded from the Central News Agency that had arrived at their offices two days earlier. Dated 25 September, addressed 'Dear Boss' and written in red ink, the author chillingly declared he was 'down on whores and I shant quit ripping them till I do get buckled'. While it is now considered to be the work of an enterprising journalist, this letter provided the world with a lasting legacy as the signature gave the Whitechapel murderer his notorious nom-de-plume.

The early hours of the following day, 30 September, saw what has become known as the 'double event'. At about 1 am, Louis Diemschutz, the steward of the Jewish Socialist club, arrived with his pony and cart at Dutfield's Yard off Berner Street. The pony suddenly shied to the left and stopped. Looking down, Diemschutz saw the body of a woman, later identified as Elizabeth Stride, a 44-year-old Swedish-born prostitute. Her throat had been cut, though not as deeply as the previous victims and there was also no sign of further injuries or mutilations. While the police believed the killer was indeed that of Nichols and Chapman because of the similar *modus operandi*, it was assumed that he had been interrupted in his work by Diemschutz's entrance, and that when the steward went into the club for help, the killer made his escape.

At 1.44 am, forty-five minutes or so after the discovery of Elizabeth Stride's body, P.C. Watkins of the City of London Police arrived at Mitre Square once more. He had passed by at 1.30 am, just fourteen minutes earlier, and found it deserted. This time he discovered the body of Catherine Eddowes lying in a pool of blood. Her throat had been cut, almost completely severing the head. Her body had been cut open from her breastbone down to her stomach and the intestines had been pulled out and placed on her right shoulder. Her face had been severely mutilated, her eyelids and earlobes had been slashed and part of her nose had been cut off; the post-mortem later revealed that half of her uterus and her left kidney had been completely removed. Despite the proximity of PC Watkins, and other witnesses, nobody had heard anything and the killer had simply vanished. One key factor of this murder was that the Ripper had crossed the invisible boundary into the area of the City of London Police; the previous murders were committed under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Police. This meant that the Ripper now had two police forces at his heels.

After the murder of Catherine Eddowes there followed a brief respite from the horrors, but it was to be shattered by the most brutal and shocking killing of all. At 10.45 am on 9 November, landlord John McCarthy arrived at the room of his tenant, 25-year-old Mary Jane Kelly at 13 Miller's Court, off Dorset Street in Spitalfields. Hoping to collect her overdue rent, he got no reply when he knocked on the door. Looking through her broken window he saw a vision of horror. Police officers subsequently broke down the door and were met by a scene of utter carnage. The remains of the body lay on the bed: the flesh had been cut from her abdomen and thighs, exposing the bones of her legs. Her throat had been cut to the vertebrae, her breasts cut off, her arms mutilated. Her internal organs were placed around the body, though her heart was absent. In the words of Dr Thomas Bond, the surgeon at the scene, her face had been 'hacked beyond recognition of the features'. Not merely a murder, this was the wholesale destruction of a human being. It is notable that this was the only Ripper murder not to take place on the street: in the safety of an isolated room, he had more time to practise his art.

While Mary Kelly is generally regarded as the last of the five victims that are usually attributed to Jack the Ripper, certain other murders between 1888 and 1889 are often included in the 'Whitechapel Murders' cycle. These include Emma Smith on 2 April 1888, Martha Tabram on 7 August (who had been subjected to a frenzied stabbing attack), Alice Mackenzie on 17 July 1889 (whose throat was cut and body mutilated in similar fashion), and Frances Coles on 13 February 1891. However, the idea of the 'canonical five' victims is reinforced in Sir Melville Macnaghten's Memorandum of 1894 where he clearly states that the Ripper had 'five victims and five victims only'.

It is unknown why the Ripper murders apparently stopped in November 1888. If the killer wasn't caught, other possibilities to explain the cessation of the crimes are that he fled to another country, was incarcerated in jail, or that he died. Having looked at the evidence of the killings themselves, it is time to return to Sir Melville's Memorandum and one of his suspects: Montague John DrUITT. Could he really have been responsible for the Ripper's brutal crimes?

Montague John DrUITT

Montague DrUITT was born in Wimborne Minster, Dorset, on 15 August 1857, the second son of surgeon William DrUITT and his wife Ann. His father was a respected figure in the area, being a Justice of the Peace and a governor of the local grammar school. When he was thirteen, Montague won a scholarship to Winchester College.

At Winchester he was deeply involved in the debating society, making many speeches on political subjects such as the influence of German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, French republicanism and the Liberal Party. Membership of this society may have contributed to his eventual decision to become a barrister. DrUITT was Prefect of Chapel for 1875-76, his final year at Winchester, when he was also Treasurer of the debating society.

DrUITT's other arena of success at Winchester was in sports, notably cricket, but also fives; in 1876 he was fives champion and in the First Eleven for cricket. Despite a generally slight appearance, it was observed that he had much strength in his arms.

He was awarded a Winchester Scholarship and came up to New College in 1876 to study Classics. Here, he continued to be an avid sportsman, again in cricket and fives, adding membership of the rugby team to his repertoire. Academically, though, his performance was not distinguished. He gained a second class in Classical Moderations in 1878, graduating in 1880 with a third class Bachelor of Arts degree.

Soon after graduation, DrUITT took up a post as assistant schoolmaster at the boarding school run by George Valentine at Eliot Place, Blackheath, where accommodation was provided for him. The wages he received from this job would help cover the cost of his legal training and, on 17 May 1882, he was admitted to the Inner Temple, his fees paid for via a loan from his father. He was called to the bar on 29 April 1885.

In September 1885 DrUITT's father died, leaving an inheritance of £16,579. Montague however saw very little from his father's will, most of the estate going to his mother and sisters. He is recorded in the Law List of 1886 which finds him in the Western Circuit and the Winchester Sessions; the following year saw him as a special pleader for the Western Circuit and Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton Assizes. He is also noted as having legal chambers at 9 King's Bench Walk in the Inner Temple.

Parallel to his career in the law and at the school, DrUITT continued to be active in sports. At Blackheath he joined the Morden cricket club, becoming its treasurer in 1885 on its merger with another local sports club, and in 1884 he was elected to the Marylebone Cricket Club. He was also a member of the Kingston Park and Dorset County Cricket Clubs. He continued to play for Blackheath during August and September 1888, the very time the Ripper murders began.

By the summer of 1888, with a good teaching post, his legal career proceeding well and his membership of notable sporting clubs giving him a certain social standing, Montague DrUITT's life and future must have appeared to be secure. The fact he left an estate of £2600 indicates his financial position was comfortable. The 'Southern Guardian' of 5 January 1889 paid tribute, describing him as 'well-known and much respected . . . He was a barrister of bright talent, he had a promising future before him . . .?'

The inquest into DrUITT's death in January 1889 heard that he had been dismissed from the Blackheath school as a result of 'serious trouble'. This would appear to have occurred on Friday 30 November 1888,¹ which would fit well with the date of the unused return rail ticket

¹ The record of the inquest, as detailed in a local newspaper, here gives a date of 30 December; however, given the length of time the body was believed to be in the river, it is likely this is an error and should read '30 November'.

found on his body (1 December). Although his tombstone gives the date of his death as 4 December, arguably a date a few days earlier may be more likely, given that his brother William was informed on the 11th that Montague had not been seen for *over* a week. It has been postulated that the cheques found may have been his final salary settlement from the school. The reason for his dismissal was unrecorded and remains unknown—it has been speculated that Druitt was a homosexual and there was a related incident at the school but this is unsupported by any evidence.

It has already been noted that in July 1888 Druitt's mother, Ann, had been institutionalised in Brooke Asylum, Clapton as a result of depression and paranoid delusions. She was to die still incarcerated in 1890. Notably, it would appear that mental illness was common in the family. His grandmother on Ann's side had committed suicide, while her sister had attempted it as well. Montague's eldest sister was also to kill herself in her old age by jumping from an attic window. In the note he left his brother William he wrote that 'Since Friday [presumably 30 November] I felt that I was going to be like mother, and the best thing for me was to die'. If depression, or something worse, was beginning to consume him, his dismissal from the school may have been enough to push him over the edge.

“Jack the Ripper” was known, was identified, and is dead'

Stories alleging that the identity of Jack the Ripper was known to police, and that he was actually dead, started to appear in the years following the murders. The first time the claim was made public, though no names were given, was by Major Arthur Griffiths, Inspector of Prisons from 1878 to 1896, in his 1898 book *Mysteries of Police and Crime*:

. . . there was every reason to believe that his own friends entertained grave doubts about him. He was . . . a doctor in the prime of life, was believed to be insane . . . and he disappeared immediately after the last murder, that in Miller's Court on the 9th of November 1888. On the last day of that year, seven weeks later his body was found floating in the Thames and was said to have been in the water a month.

Journalist George R. Sims later reiterated this information. Writing in the Sunday newspaper 'The Referee' on 13 July 1902, he declared that the investigating police had reduced their number of suspects to three when:

. . . the one and only genuine Jack saved further trouble by being found in the Thames, into which he had flung himself, a raving lunatic, after the last and most appalling mutilation of the whole series.'

The following year, on 5 April 1903, and again in 'The Referee', he wrote that:

. . . the body of the man suspected by the chiefs at the Yard, and by his own friends, who were in communication with the Yard, was found in the Thames. The body had been in the water for about a month . . . 'Jack the Ripper' was known, was identified, and is dead. Let him rest.

The public could have been forgiven for wondering where this insider information had come from as, to all intents and purposes, the killer had escaped unidentified. Significantly, though, Arthur Griffiths was a friend of Sir Melville Macnaghten who almost certainly passed the information on to Griffiths.

Druitt as a Ripper suspect: the Macnaghten memorandum

No further insights into the identity of the Ripper were forthcoming until 1959. The broadcaster Daniel Farson was preparing a television documentary on the case when he was introduced to Lady Aberconway, Sir Melville Macnaghten's daughter. It was discovered that she had a copy of Sir Melville's original draft notes on the Ripper murders, which revealed the names of his three prime suspects for the first time. At Lady Aberconway's request, however, the resulting programme² only referred to the number one suspect by his initials: MJD. It was writer Tom Cullen who finally identified and revealed Druitt's full name to the public in his 1965 book *Autumn of Terror*. Cullen and Farson, who published his book *Jack the Ripper* in 1972, thus became major proponents of the theory that Montague John Druitt was the Ripper.



Sir Melville Macnaghten

It should be noted that two versions of Macnaghten's notes exist, the Aberconway copy and the official police version, which was discovered later in the Scotland Yard files and brought to public attention in 1966 by writer Robin Odell in his book 'Jack the Ripper in fact and fiction'. They are similar but do differ somewhat in the wording and language used.

In his draft notes Macnaghten stated his belief that:

. . . the 'ripper's brain gave way altogether after his awful glut in Miller's Court and that he then committed suicide, or . . . was found to be so helplessly insane by his relatives that they . . . had him confined in some lunatic asylum . . . I enumerate the cases of 3 men against whom police held very reasonable suspicion. Personally . . . I have always held strong opinions regarding no. 1, and the more I think the matter over, the stronger do these opinions become. The truth, however, will never be known, and did indeed, at one time lie at the bottom of the Thames, if my conjections be correct.

² *Farson's Guide to the British*, November 1959, Associated Rediffusion.

No. 1, Mr M J Druitt a doctor of about forty-one years of age and of fairly good family, who disappeared at the time of the Miller's Court murder, and whose body was found floating in the Thames on 31 December: i.e. seven weeks after the said murder. The body was said to have been in the water for a month or more . . . From private information I have little doubt but that his own family suspected this man of being the Whitechapel murderer; it was alleged that he was sexually insane.

Two decades later, in his memoirs *Days of My Years* published in 1914, Macnaghten claimed that the killer 'resided with his own people' and had committed suicide 'on or about the 10th of November 1888'. This latter date was the day after the murder of Mary Kelly.

Sir Melville was not personally involved in the investigation of the case—he joined the Metropolitan Police as Assistant Chief Constable in June 1889—but as a senior officer he would have been only too aware of the case and would have had contact with the investigating officers. Enquiries into the case continued for several years while he was at Scotland Yard; indeed, in his memoirs Macnaghten admits that the police were not in possession of certain facts until after he became a detective.

Certainly, in reference to Druitt's suicide, the timing would explain why the murders apparently ceased after Mary Kelly's death. If the police did suspect Druitt, it would also go some way to explaining why they scaled back on the number of patrols in Whitechapel in the early months of 1889, as undoubtedly happened, as if they believed the immediate danger had passed.³ The verdict of the inquest into Druitt's death attributed his suicide to him being 'of unsound mind', which neatly ties in with Macnaghten's note that he was 'sexually insane'.

At first glance it appears to outline a strong case against Montague Druitt. On closer inspection, however, problems start to appear.

Factually Macnaghten makes some fundamental mistakes in his writings. In both versions of the notes he erroneously claims Druitt was a doctor. In the draft version he states Druitt was about forty-one years old when he was actually thirty-one (interestingly, his age was omitted from the official version). In his memoirs he states Druitt lived with 'his own people'; records of the MCC and the Blackheath cricket club indicate he resided at 9 Eliot Place, the address of the boarding school. He claims Druitt committed suicide on or around 10 November as, according to the notes, 'the rippers brain gave way altogether' after the murder of Mary Kelly (the official version of the notes actually states that he committed suicide 'immediately' after). Druitt's presence, however, is recorded in the minutes of a board meeting of the Blackheath cricket club on 19 November, and the train ticket dated 1 December found on his body also proves he was alive well after Macnaghten's quoted date. There is no evidence his mind 'gave way' and the claim he was, or was alleged to be, 'sexually insane' appears also to be groundless.

On what evidence, then, did Macnaghten base his belief about Druitt? It seems to hinge on the 'private information' that he claims to have been given. From this he says he had 'little doubt but that his own family suspected this man' of being Jack the Ripper (the official notes substitute the word 'suspected' for 'believed'). Having 'little doubt' however is not the same as having firm evidence. There are no clues in Macnaghten's writings to allow an identification of the person(s) who passed on this information. It has been assumed to have been a family member given the subsequent statement, but the wording doesn't exactly *confirm* this. Indeed it is interesting to note the statement by George Sims, from 'The Referee' of 5 April 1903 at this point, reiterating that of Arthur Griffiths, that the body found in the Thames was of the man 'suspected by the chiefs at the Yard, and by his own friends, who were in communication with the Yard'. Could one or more of these friends have been the informant(s)? If so, how close were they to Druitt? Given the lack of accuracy in the details of the real Montague Druitt's life, if they

³ This fact in itself is interesting. If the police did suspect the Ripper was dead, does it mean they already had Druitt lined up as a suspect in early 1889? Sims, in 1903, does say the drowned man was 'suspected by the chiefs at the Yard'. It may seem unlikely, however, given the views of Inspector Frederick Abberline.

were the source they do not appear to have known him very well! In any case, the notes clearly state that the family 'suspected' or 'believed', not that they 'knew' or had *evidence* that he was the killer. As suggested by Philip Sugden and others, it could be that the 'private information', was more rumour or opinion rather than hard facts, gained at second- or even third-hand. Macnaghten himself declares that 'the truth will never be known' and speaks of his 'conjections [sic]'.
Unfortunately for anyone today attempting to discover Macnaghten's source of information, he stated in a *Daily Mail* interview of June 1913:

I have destroyed all my documents and there is now no record of the secret information which came into my possession at one time or another.

Perhaps there were items among those now-lost documents that provided more concrete evidence of Druitt's guilt or, at least, items which caused the suspicion of the police to fall on him more roundly. Short of a miraculous discovery, such 'proof' will remain lost.

Druitt as a Ripper suspect: further evidence

The case for Montague John Druitt being the Whitechapel murderer of 1888 has been built around the suspicions of Sir Melville Macnaghten in his writings. But other arguments have been proposed in favour of Druitt being the Ripper.

It was suggested, not least by Dr George Bagster Phillips, that the Ripper may have had a degree of surgical or anatomical knowledge. While Druitt was not a doctor, his father was a surgeon, so the young Montague would have grown up around medical books and texts, maybe even watching his father work. As a keen sportsman too, champion in fives and cricket, he would have had the strength to overpower his victims.

It is generally believed by researchers that the Ripper was a local of the Whitechapel area, able to escape from the police because of his knowledge of the streets. While Druitt actually lived miles away in Blackheath, (a significant rail journey at least) Daniel Farson suggested Montague may have visited his cousin Lionel who, before his emigration to Australia in 1886, worked at a surgery at The Minories, not far from Whitechapel, and Mitre Square (where Catherine Eddowes body was found) and thus gained knowledge of the East End. There is no evidence of this however.

Tom Cullen referred to the fact that his chambers were located at King's Bench Walk, to the west of the City, and in walking distance of Whitechapel. He suggested that, with his home some distance away, Druitt may have used these as a base for the attacks. This theory, however, has been challenged by Philip Sugden. King's Bench Walk, where his chambers were located, lay to the west of Mitre Square, the scene of Catherine Eddowes' murder. However, Sugden says it is known the killer fled eastwards following the murder because he took a part of her apron with him, discarding it in Goulston Street. Unless he was supremely confident enough to attempt to throw the police off his scent, it seems unlikely he would have run in the wrong direction if he was trying to escape to safety.

Several witnesses who gave descriptions of the man they saw talking with the victims reported that he had a moustache, looked respectable and was aged around thirty to thirty-five—which, on comparison with surviving photographs, could well describe Druitt. On the other hand, the man was also described as 'foreign-looking', stout and of medium to heavy build, while Druitt was clearly slim.

Philip Sugden has attempted to use the schedules of trains at the time in order to discount Druitt as a suspect. It is believed from records, as stated above, that he lived in Blackheath. Sugden discovered that the last train to Blackheath from central London left at 12.25am, with services not resuming until 5.10 am. While it is possible he could have made for a station after killing Annie Chapman at around 5.30 am or Mary Kelly, whose death was

estimated at about 4 am, he would have had a long wait after killing Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddowes at between 1 am and 1.45 am—and, as noted above, he did not run for the refuge of his chambers. He may possibly have rented a room in a lodging house, though he probably would have attracted some attention, being a 'respectable' man.

Through August and September 1888, Druitt continued to play cricket and the dates of his matches have been used in his defence. He played in Canford, Dorset on 1 September, necessitating a significant journey, the day after the murder of Mary Ann Nichols at around 3.45 am. On 8 September he played in Blackheath at 11.30 am, just six hours after the murder of Annie Chapman. It would not have been impossible to make the fixtures, but it would have been difficult, especially in the latter case.

Conclusion: Was Montague John Druitt Jack the Ripper?

Montague John Druitt, teacher and barrister, educated at Winchester and New College, Oxford, was first publically connected with the identity of Jack the Ripper in the mid-1960s, through the researches of Tom Cullen and Daniel Farson. Subsequently, he became for many people one of the principal suspects, if not *the* principal suspect, in the mystery. The case against him was founded on the discovery of the notes written in 1894 by Sir Melville Macnaghten, then Chief Constable of the Metropolitan Police, in which he clearly stated his strong suspicions that Druitt was the killer.

However, as has been noted in this article, there are many problems attached to using the Macnaghten Memorandum as evidence against Druitt, not least the numerous factual errors contained within, as well as the uncertainty concerning the 'private information' he had received, or had seen (and subsequently destroyed), which obviously strengthened his belief in Druitt's guilt.

It is a fact that Druitt died in the early days of December 1888, his body being discovered in the Thames on the last day of the month. He was dismissed from his post at the boarding school, apparently on 30 November a few days before. There is no evidence to suggest *why* he was dismissed but, from the note he left his brother, it is possible that he was worried the mental illness that had afflicted his mother and others in his immediate family may have been beginning to affect him, though in what way remains unknown. There is no evidence to support Macnaghten's assertion that he was 'sexually insane' or that he was a man capable of inflicting the mutilations seen on the body of Mary Kelly. It has been suggested that Druitt was a homosexual and this may have led to his dismissal but there is no evidence for this either. If he was homosexual, and such a secret had become public, or had it emerged that he was suffering from a debilitating mental condition, attitudes to both at the time would have made his life, both personal and professional, extremely difficult. Such a situation could have contributed to his apparent suicide.

In the months leading up to his death, he seems to have been leading his life much as normal, working at his legal chambers and the school, and playing in cricket matches for the Blackheath Cricket Club, even on or around the days the Ripper murders occurred.

Theories propounded in recent times, suggesting that the Ripper murders were actually the result of a conspiracy of individuals and/or secret societies, have sought to involve Druitt to a greater or lesser degree. These are certainly imaginative but have little basis in hard fact.⁴

Crucially, in terms of the views of senior police officers at the time of the murders, Sir Melville would appear to have been alone in his suspicion of Druitt. Sir Robert Anderson, Assistant Commissioner of the CID, seems to have favoured Aaron Kosminski, who was the second name in Macnaghten's notes. Detective Inspector Frederick Abberline, the leading

⁴ Examples include Stephen Knight's *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution* (1976), centring on a cover-up of the affairs of Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence and Avondale, with Druitt as a scapegoat for the murders; and Martin Howells and Keith Skinner's *The Ripper Legacy: The Life and Death of Jack the Ripper* (1987) suggesting Druitt's involvement with the society known as the Cambridge Apostles.

officer on the Ripper case, in an interview for the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1903 stated in no uncertain terms what he felt about the Druiitt theory:

It is simple nonsense to talk of the police having proof that the man is dead . . . I know all about that story. But what does it amount to? Simply this. Soon after the last murder in Whitechapel the body of a young doctor was found in the Thames, but there is absolutely nothing beyond the fact he was found at that time to incriminate him, A report was made to the Home Office about the matter, but that it was 'considered and conclusive' is going altogether beyond the truth.

There is no firm evidence to confidently say that Druiitt was the Ripper. Equally, however, it is not possible to conclusively prove him innocent. If it is accepted that Jack the Ripper only claimed the 'canonical five' victims, Druiitt will probably remain a suspect, principally owing to the uncertain circumstances of his death and the possibility that Sir Melville Macnaghten had access to information now lost. If certain other murders are to be included in the list, namely Alice Mackenzie and Frances Coles, then Druiitt should be exonerated of blame, as he was already deceased when they were killed. It may be that, but for the coincidence of the timing of his death, Montague Druiitt may never have become a suspect at all.

In recent years, new names have emerged from research: James Maybrick, Francis Tumblety, Joseph Barnett and Carl Feigenbaum have joined Druiitt, Aaron Kosminski, and Michael Ostrog amongst others as prime suspects and, no doubt, others will be added to the list as further research occurs. Perversely, perhaps, unless universally accepted proof is uncovered, the identification of each new suspect will only serve to prolong the search, as each one will come with their own supporters and detractors. This enduring and intriguing mystery is set to continue for some time yet.

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