

The Incredible History of the Swan Hotel: Page the Fifth

she is an honourable girl and has a spark of spirit will wonder at you insulting her by offering your hand while you are bound in honour to another woman."

In her last letter she asked for an interview with the defendant which was refused and the defendant also omitted to return her last two letters and she wrote to him:

"Do not be such a despicable coward Brand. Surely you have fallen low enough in my estimation without degrading yourself further. It will avail you nothing. I have kept faithful copies of what I wrote."

After one or two more letters the matter was placed in the hands of legal advisors.

Counsel asserted that the defendant had broken off the engagement upon a pretext so flimsy as that by any man that had endeavoured to escape from a marriage.

His excuse was another girl, a reviving love for another, was that excuse any more satisfactory and when the plaintiff appealed for an explanation he declined to give it to her.

All that was excellent subject for the jury to appreciate the damages.

Counsel then proceeded to refer to the position of the defendant and pointed out that his father in his will that his wife should have a life interest in the property of the Swan Hotel and on her death was to be divided equally between such of his children that had attained the age of 21 years.

There were five surviving children, one was still a minor, so that the defendant had a reversion of the whole of his father's property. The Swan Hotel was valued at £4400 but he believed that the defendant also had interest in hotel property in Bath and Weston super Mare. He had seen the correspondence in which the defendant had been in negotiation with reference to the Star Hotel in Wells. In mar-

riage the defendant could have given the plaintiff a very nice position and one to which she had hopefully looked forward.

The plaintiff, Miss Boys, a tall young lady with a quiet and dignified demeanour, tastefully dressed in black was then called.

She stated she made the defendants acquaintance in 1886. He acted as manager of the Swan Hotel. The Swan was the leading hotel in Wells and there was a succession of distinguished visitors.

It was agreed that the marriage should take place in June 1892 and Mrs George had agreed to leave the hotel on the 1st June and had found a house in which she proposed to live.

Miss Boys understood that she and the defendant were to manage the hotel and were to have all their expenses paid out of the business and to receive a further salary of £150 to £200 per year.

Miss Boys told her father about the Royal Hotel Bath and the Star Hotel Wells. Miss Boys had visited the Swan Hotel at Christmas 1891 and during that visit Mr George slighted her very much. He continually kissed and caressed other girls which was very objectionable she felt very hurt. Eventually she forgave him and he forgave her for having misjudged him.

Mr Mathews of Miss Boys: Among the confidences he made to you, he had said something in regard to his past?

Miss Boys: He told me things in connection with his past life with other girls.

Mr Mathews: And you permitted these confidences to be made?

Miss Boys: I thought it was not his past life I had anything to do with but his present and his future.

Cross examined by Mr Coleridge:

Mr Coleridge: The engagement was not a very prolonged

one. Your father occupies a very good position at Bridgewater therefore you cannot be said to be destitute in any way.

Miss Boys: I still live at home with my father.

Mr Coleridge: There is no reason why your father not having stood in the way of this engagement should stand in the way of another?

Miss Boys: There will never be another.

Mr Coleridge: It was an engagement of affection on your part not a business matter?

Miss Boys: It was. I was extremely fond of him.

Mr Coleridge: The question of how much money it would bring you was never uppermost in your mind?

Miss Boys: No I did not chose him for his money. I understood that the stables and the yard of the hotel belonged to him. Mrs George and I were very fond of each other and it was never mentioned that she gave him an allowance of £50 per year.

Mr Coleridge: Then I take it that you want to limit your punishment to the defendant and you do not wish to involve in that punishment Mrs George and the other children?

Miss Boys: I do not wish to hurt them in any way.

Mr Coleridge then addressed the jury on behalf of the defendant.

He agreed that the defendant had behaved badly and insulted the plaintiff, the question for the jury was by how much.

He could understand a girl who had been badly treated felling hurt and grieved, he could understand that under certain circumstances she might desire to bring those grievances before a judge but he thought he should have the concurrence of a jury when he said the sympathies of juries should not be extended towards the vindictive use of a man for whom a girl had a

previous attachment and had entertained feelings of love and regard.

One of the bright spots in the defendants conduct was that he did not paint himself with false colours, he painted himself with almost a hostile brush and had told the girl frankly what sort of man he was.

As to the plaintiffs future prospects. She was pleasantly attractive, she wrote extremely good letters. She gave evidence in an excellent manner and she would be in all ways excellent for another man and he did not take such a gloomy view of her future as she herself did.

In appealing to the jury for a reasonable amount of damages to be allowed he spoke of the defendants means remarking that at present they were virtually nothing. Indeed if his mother threw him out of the house he had very little. They must look at the defendants' present position and not that in the future he would come into property and if they gave a large amount of damages they would be punishing the mother as it was any damages would have to come from her pocket.

Mr Mathews briefly replied and said that essentially it was for the jury to decide.

The jury after a quarter of an hours deliberation awarded the plaintiff £500 in damages.

Of Edith Boys we hear no more but in the Wells Journal three years later in October 1895 there is a marriage notice to the effect that: "At St John's Church Leytonstone Essex, Brand Frederick George only son of the late F.C. George of the Swan Hotel Wells to Ellen Maria, second daughter of the late John Coster Bryant." So Brand found eventually found true love and he suffered no damage to his standing in the Wells community as he went on to become a town councillor.

Good reviews

Wells Journal

November 8, 1862

Wells and Somerset Agricultural Association - In the evening a dinner took place at the Swan Hotel which was served in Mr Mead's well known excellent style.

Wells Journal

January 29, 1885

Mr Phipp's Fox Hounds met on Friday morning at the Swan Hotel and created quite a stir in the town. The morning was beautifully fine and a considerable number of horsemen and several ladies assembled at the rendezvous. An excellent luncheon was provided and after being partaken of a move was made in the direction of Ebbor Gorge the start being witnessed by a crowd of spectators.

Wells Journal

November 11, 1886

The Mayor's banquet was held in the handsome new dining room at the Swan Hotel and between 50 and 60 guests sat down to a repast commensurate with the importance of the occasion and served in a style for which the hotel has become celebrated. The tables were laid out in great taste with flowers and silver candelabra being judiciously used and giving to the whole a pleasing and attractive appearance.

Wells Journal

May 1890

Amateur Athletic Club - The members and friends of the above club which now embraces a comprehensive field of operations dined together at the Swan Hotel on Wednesday evening when an excellent repast was provided by Mrs George to which between 40 and 50 guests sat down.

Wells Journal

May 12, 1892

The annual dinner of Wells Fire Brigade was held at the Swan Hotel when nearly 50 diners sat down to a sumptuous repast provided by Mrs Louisa George.

Wells Journal

May 18, 1893

British Dairy Farmers Association Conference - In the evening the delegates dined at the Swan Hotel with an excellent repast being put upon the tables by Mrs George and her staff.

Wells Journal

August 25, 1898

The venison dinner - Friday last, at the Swan hotel, the City Corporation and officers were entertained dinner by the Mayor, Cllr J. A. Tate who had received from Lord Hylton the customary haunch of venison which has been sent to the chief magistrate by his lordship for many years past and which took the principal place on the menu.

The menu was as follows; Clear Ox Tail Soup, Tomato Soup, Turbot and Sauce Hollandaise, Soles. Curried Pawns, Haunch of Venison, Frizzled Ham. Roast Beef. Chicken. Boiled Leg of Mutton. Salad. Ducks. Tongues. Apple Puddings. Jellies. Plum Tarts. Creams. Scotch Woodcock. Dessert

Wells Journal

November 1906

The Mayor's Banquet - The dining room of the Swan Hotel

on Friday evening presented a brilliant appearance on the occasion of the Mayor's banquet. The principal table was adorned with the handsome and ancient insignia of the Corporation and all of them with plants and flowers all around and the lighting was effective and pleasant.

The menu was choice and ample and the dinner was served in admirable manner which always distinguishes the hotel.

R.I.P.

Wells Journal

January 24, 1868



On Saturday last the citizens of Wells were much surprised to hear of the death of the respected townsman Mr John Mead the well know caterer and host of the Swan Hotel.

Mr Mead had but a short illness but the nature of his complaint was of such a serious nature that his medical attendants were doubtful of his recovery and on Friday more painful symptoms presented themselves which resulted in his death early the following morning.

Mr Mead leaves a wife and family to mourn his loss.

Boots charged

Wells Journal

August 13, 1870

The Swan Hotel Boots Assaults His Master - Joseph Payton, "boots" at the Swan Hotel, was brought up in custody charged with assaulting Mr Frederick C George, landlord of the said hotel on the previous Sunday morning.

Mr George said he would withdraw the charge if the defendant would apologise and promise to leave the town.

The defendant gave the promise and the magistrates allowed the case to be withdrawn. Mr George said that the assault took place early on Sunday morning and Payton was drunk at the time. The magistrate, A. Andrews Esq, told the defendant that he should be much obliged to Mr George for withdrawing the charge.

Delightful room unearthed

Wells Journal

March 25, 1927

A most delightful room has been unearthed at the Swan Hotel quite recently.

I say unearthed as its beauties were hidden by lathe and plaster. The smoke room will soon appear in old time setting of oak beams and panelling. I am glad that every effort is being made to preserve its appearance dating back to medieval times.

Civic Dinner

Wells Journal

January 22, 1853

The Mayor's Civic Dinner took place at the Swan Hotel. Among the guests were the Rt Hon W G Hayter MP and R C Tudway Esq MP. The arrangements appeared to be very satisfactory and a very pleasant evening was spent.



A Brass Band marching up Sadler Street past the Swan Hotel