

John Jackman engagement cancellation 1911.

The following story, picked up by a large number of newspapers made me smile.

The most comprehensive, not unsurprising given the closeness, comes from the Croydon Chronicle of Sat June 17th, 1911.

£1,070 Damages.

Wealthy Young Kenley Man Sued for Breach Of Promise

"DETERMINED NOT TO MARRY."

A remarkable action for breach of promise was heard before Mr. Under-Sheriff Burchell and a jury in the London Sheriffs' Court on Tuesday. The dramatis personae in the case were:-

- Mr John Jackman, the defendant, described as an Estate Agent, of The Nest, Kenley.
- Miss Violet Emma Monk, a pretty young fresh complexioned girl of Fernlea, Kenley.

The case had been remitted from the High Court.

Mr. Ernest M. Pollack, K.C., Mr. E. W. Hansell, and Mr. E. le C. Byrne (instructed by Mssrs. Blount, Lynch, and ?Peter?) appeared for the plaintiff; and Mr. Curtis Bennett (instructed by Mr. J. D. Finch) represented the defendant.

A £25,000 Fortune.

Mr. Pollock, in opening the plaintiff's case, said the parties were in a good position, and there seemed to be absolutely no reason why the defendant should not have carried out his promise to marry the young lady. The only excuse he had made was that he had determined not to marry. From December 1906, to March of the present year they had remained as an engaged couple, and Miss Monk from time to time stayed with the defendant's relations and had been accepted as his fiancée. The defendant had a wealthy great-uncle, who died in 1899, leaving him a very substantial fortune, his share amounting to a sum of £25,000. The great-uncle also left to the defendant's father an estate in Devonshire, and this property would also revert to the defendant when his father died.

The plaintiff was getting things together for the purpose of the wedding. In all she expended £72, but on March 6th, when matters were going on well and all was in order, she received the following letter from the defendant:-

Best for Both of Us.

My dear G., - No doubt this letter will give you great pain, but I have come to the conclusion that it would be best for both of us if you would release me from my engagement to you. I have nothing to say against you. It is simply that I do not wish to marry. I tried to summon up courage to tell you last week, but I am sorry to say I found it impossible.

I have heard from Mr. Rawlings to the effect that he cannot give me anything at present, and as I am so unsettled at present, and as I have no prospects to look forward to, I think you will see it is best for both of us. This is not a hasty decision, as I have thought it well over, and I have come to the conclusion that this, however hard it may seem, is best for both of us.

Yours very truly, J. JACKMAN.

Miss Monk's reply.

To this letter, said counsel, the plaintiff replied a few days later in a very proper and dignified manner.

She wrote:

My dear Jack, - I should have answered your letter before this, only the contents upset me too much to do so, and even now I hardly know how to begin. I don't think you can realise all that this means to me. But you ask me to release you from our engagement. I cannot do so. It means all the best of my life, my trust and confidence, lost, never to be regained.

When I think of all your promises for our future and the arrangements made for our marriage in June next, and repeated such a short time ago as Sunday last week, I can never think you can really believe what you say. Why did you let me believe all this if you knew yourself you did not wish to marry? To say it is cruel and thoughtless thing to have done is saying very little.

The plaintiff, continued counsel, had lost probably a future of great happiness, and she was entitled to claim something at the hands of the jury for that loss and for the suffering which she must necessarily incur in consequence of the painful position in which she had been placed.

The plaintiff and her father, Mr. George John Monk, then gave evidence.

Mr. Curtis Bennett submitted that only moderate damage should be awarded. He admitted that the defendant was in court, but his fortune amounted only to £20,000 and a farm in Devonshire.

The Under-Sheriff, in summing up said that the plaintiff had sustained a very severe loss, having been engaged to a gentleman who was coming into a fortune of over £20,000. He warned the jury in awarding damages not to be carried away by sympathy, which could not be put into pounds, shillings, and pence, but try to compensate her for the loss she had suffered by not becoming the defendant's wife.

The jury assessed the damages at £1070, for which amount judgement was given, with costs.

The story was picked up by a number of papers across the country, including-

The Aberdeen Daily Journal of Weds 14th June. It relates the facts as follows:-“In 1906 the defendant proposed and was accepted. On his 21st birthday last December [*actually he was 25, ie of age in Dec 1910*] the defendant came in for £25000. There was no quarrel but on March 6 the defendant suddenly broke off he engagement”. In addition, in Miss Monk’s letter, it reports her finishing “...Sunday last week, when I suggested that your sister Nancy should be a bridesmaid, and you quite agreed to it, I can never think you can really mean what you say.”

The Dundee Courier, also 14th June. It tells the details as for the Aberdeen Journal.

The Henley and South Oxfordshire Standard of 16th June, notes that John Jackman was also of Longacre, London. It also says they got engaged when JJ “came of age” in December [1910]. It states that they were to marry in the summer, and also that there were no witnesses for JJ, who was not “examined” either.

The Preston Herald of 17th June, notes in addition to the points above, that the estate of his great uncle in 1909 was £36279

The Shields Daily News of 14th June has several other items of interest. Its report offers a slightly different slant

and says:

“The plaintiff first became acquainted with the defendant seven or eight years ago, and when he came of age in December 1906, he became engaged to her”

Also following Miss Monk’s letter it says

“.....to this letter the defendant replied that he had fully made up his mind not to marry. After this, the defendant went to Morocco, and substituted service of the writ had to be effected.

Plaintiff, a pretty fresh-complexioned lady, gave her age as 28[?]. She was dressed in a smart pearl grey gown, with lace front and under sleeves, a grey feather boa, and large black hat trimmed with cherries.

In cross-examination Mr Curtis Bennett suggested that there was a serious estrangement between the defendant and his father on the subject of the defendant marrying at all, but the plaintiff said she knew nothing of this.

Plaintiff admitted that in April last year there was a little coolness between defendant and herself, because he did not come to see her.

.....

For the defence Mr Curtis Bennett said that if young people who felt they were not suited to each other would be brave enough to break off their engagements, a good many very unhappy marriages would be avoided.”

There is a record of a J Jackman going first class to Morocco from London on the “Argila”, so this is almost certainly what is implied by the report above. The ship sailed on 10th March (for 23 days), so if Violet received the letter on the 6th, maybe she replied on the 8th and JJ then replied on 9th, setting off the following day.

He then goes back on a 23 day trip starting 24 Jan 1913.

Violet was at “Fernlea”, Golf Lane, Hayes Lane, Kenley at the 1911 Census. Golf Lane was the road next (just South of) Welcomes Road, where JJ lived. The census puts her at 28. She marries Cecil Thompson 10 Sep 1913 at St Luke, Whiteleaf. She dies in Hastings in 1963.