



Crime and Punishment

Devizes

BREACH OF PROMISE OF MARRIAGE. MAY v. BOTTON

6 July 1878

This was an action, tried before Sir J. F. Stephen, Q.C., at Devizes. The plaintiff, 25, is the eldest daughter of the rector of All Cannings, near Devizes, and the defendant the son of a deceased bank manager. The defendant, a Cambridge under-graduate, failed to get through his "little go," and the plaintiff's brother, a great friend of his, who had been more successful, undertook to "coach" him for a fresh attempt. During the Christmas vacation the defendant went with his friend to All Cannings on a Monday, and, after going to one or two balls, and dancing a good many dances with the plaintiff, one of her engagement cards being tendered as evidence of the fact, he became engaged to her. Some difficulty was raised by the parents, but at last the engagement was agreed to by all parties. The defendant set to work again to get through his "little go," but without success'. A great deal of correspondence passed, and it was urged for the defence that the engagement had been broken off, as, in answer to a letter from her asking if he wished to break it off, he wrote saying he did, and no other letters passed for ten months. At the end of the ten months there was a further correspondence between the defendant and the plaintiff's father, the latter asking the former whether he was going to carry out his engagement, and the defendant's answering that he understood the whole matter was gone off. He, however, subsequently stated that his grounds for breaking off the engagement were that the plaintiff was not truthful, an accusation founded on the ground that in a letter of hers she had stated that she had travelled with her brother from Bath to Devizes, whereas, in fact, she had only done so from Trowbridge, as her brother, who joined her at Bath, arrived so late that he had to jump into the first carriage he could, and only changed into her carriage when he got to Trowbridge. This accusation against the lady was alleged to be the reason why the action was brought. The jury found a verdict for the plaintiff for £1000.

(From an unknown Australian Newspaper)