



Libel & Richard Ludlow Bruges

Seend

A Magistrate in the county of Wilts, named Bruges, who lives at Seend House, Melksham, was brought up at Marlborough Street on Monday charged with having written a scandalous libel upon the Countess of Lonsdale. The libel was contained in the letter to the Earl which he received the day after his recent return to England. It was said to be so offensive that it could not be read in Court. The prisoner was remanded on bail, but it was ordered that notice of the sureties should be given.

Exeter and Plymouth Gazette Daily Telegrams Thursday 19 May 1881

At the Marlborough Street Police Court, London, on Monday, Mr Richard Ludlow Bruges, of Seend House, Melksham, surrendered to his bail on a warrant for writing, sending and publishing a false, scandalous and defamatory libel on Gladys, Countess of Lonsdale. Mr George Lewis appeared for the prosecution, and Mr Montagu Williams, instructed by Mr Armstrong, for the defence.

The evidence taken on the previous occasion had already been reported and it was stated that the defendant was a justice of the peace for the county of Wilts. Mr Lewis now called Mr Alexander Cochrane postmaster of Melksham, who deposed that the letter and envelope produced were in the prisoner's handwriting. Witness sold similar paper, and had seen the letter at the post office. Mr Ernest Dalton Locks, solicitor at Melksham, and clerk to the justices, also gave evidence that to the best of his belief the writing produced was the prisoner's. Mr Thomas Newman gave similar evidence.

By Mr Montagu Williams: I know the prisoner's eldest brother to be a lunatic, and that some years ago the prisoner suffered from paralysis, and that he had been thrown from a dog cart and twice injured, once on the head. I took the prisoner home, and the next day he had no recollection of what had occurred.

Mr Lewis: he had admitted writing the letter.

Mr Montagu Williams admitted that the letter was a most disgraceful one.

Mr Newton said he considered that such a man as the prisoner ought to be restrained.

Mr John Frederick Nicholls, a medical practitioner at Devizes, said he attended the prisoner in 1870; the following year he was suffering from epileptic fits; six weeks afterwards he was paralysed. There was a great change in him after the attack.

Mr Joseph Rumble King, FRCS, Melksham, said the prisoner was thrown out of a dog cart twice, and he only recovered consciousness the following day.

Mr Walker Long, MP for North Wilts, said he had noticed a marked change in the prisoner. At one time he was a hard drinker, by now took large quantities of zoedone (**OPC Note: A seltzer like mineral water**) – seven or eight quarts a day. He did not think the prisoner was master of himself at times. He asked him when he wrote the letter, and he said he had not the slightest idea of having written it.

Other evidence of a similar character having been given, Mr M Williams stated that Lord Lonsdale, having received an anonymous letter, felt it his duty to bring the matter before a court of justice, and having done so he felt bound to leave it there.

The evidence having been read over, and the prisoner cautioned, he said: I am bound to make a most ample apology to Lord Lonsdale. I was not in my right senses, or I should not have written such a letter. I know neither Lord Lonsdale nor Lady Lonsdale. I had no malice, and no man in his senses would go to the post office, borrow a sheet of paper, and write a letter like that produced. I believe I was suffering from the effect of zoedone.

The prisoner was committed for trial, the bail as before tendering themselves and being accepted.

Gloucester Citizen Tuesday 24 May 1881

27 July 1881 the Old Bailey

Richard Ludlow Bruges

Charge – Libel

Sentence – Recognizance to hear judgement when called.

Sourced from the Criminal Registers

15 September 1881.

R Ludlow Bruges Gentleman of England married Jesette Hamilton at Anglican St. James the Apostle, Montreal, Quebec.

Sourced from Canadian Records.