

## Extracts from the Diary of Mrs Sarah Elizabeth Young<sup>1</sup>

### *Christmas 1894*

We are moving to a new benefice. My wonderful father, Richard Kershaw, has bought the advowson of a place called Alne, near York. My husband, the Rev Hamilton Young, will become the vicar while I and my two small children, with the baby to come, will become important personages in what has been described to me as a small village with just one street and two public-houses, the Blue Bell and the Fox & Goose. There is even a Methodist chapel but it doesn't compare with what will be our own substantial Norman church and beautiful vicarage.



*Alne Vicarage c1910*

### *25-Feb-1895*

My son, Richard Hamilton Young, was born today. I am still living in Hafod-y-Coed in Llangollen.

### *06-Apr-1895*

Today I registered the birth of Richard in Llangollen. I will move to Alne as soon as I am fully recovered from the birth.

### *Autumn 1895*

I arrived in Alne a little while ago and I have been much taken with the Churchwarden in our new abode, Mr Thomas Mintoft. He lives in Alne Low Hall and he has a wife who is somewhat older than he but who possesses a fortune owing to her connections with the Lesley family! Not only has Thomas been paying me much attention, despite it being only a few months since I gave birth to Richard, he has clearly indicated his desire for my company.

### *15-Dec-1895*

There have been ructions tonight!

Mr Young had invited Mr. Mintoft to supper, and afterwards we all three went into the study. About half-past nine Mr Young said he was going to see Squire Strangways, and that he would be back directly, and he pressed Mr. Mintoft particularly to stay. When Mr. Young returned to the house after about an hour, he rushed into the room, carrying a knife and shouting abuse. He said that he had heard me say 'Oh no, he never suspects anything' and had then looked through the keyhole and seen me sitting on Mr. Mintoft's knee and kissing him. Mr. Mintoft got up and said, 'Mr. Young, you're a liar.' And I confirmed it was absolutely untrue and that I was just pouring Mr Mintoft some more whisky and water. But Hamilton was in a frightful temper, and used some strong language. He swore a great deal and called Thomas 'a joiner' and 'a low, diseased fellow'. And he threatened to tell my father. When he had calmed down a bit, I asked him why he had the knife 'Oh. Just going to cut up some tobacco' he said.

### *16-Dec-1895*

Mr Young is still very cross about Thomas Mintoft. He has insisted that Thomas leave the village and that we do not see each other again. Thomas has written to him saying: 'I am willing to leave the

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<sup>1</sup> All the facts in this imaginary diary are as reported in contemporary newspapers and elsewhere, but they have been put by me into this more digestible form. Sources are given at the end.

place, as you desire, to save scandal, but not that I am guilty of what you accuse me'. And Mr Young is even refusing to sleep in the same room as me. It is so unfair, Thomas is the same age as Hamilton and I, while his wife is ten years older. At 40, she is almost old! Why shouldn't we have a bit of fun together?

*April 1896*

Thomas only went away for a short while after Christmas but he then returned and has continued paying me attention. Last night, he took me into a little shed in one of his fields and he indicated his desire for me. I regret we may have been seen together, which is not good for my reputation, but Mr Young is much taken away with parish duties and sporting pleasures, and he has always had an eye for other ladies, so why shouldn't I indulge myself a little?

*Autumn 1896*

My sister-in-law, Mabel Young, is becoming a nuisance. Despite the fact that I knew her and she was my friend before she introduced me to Mr Young, she has now told Mr Young that she has seen Thomas and me in darkness in Alne church and also in the Hotel Metropole in London. We were only in the church because Thomas was looking for three men with a ladder who, he thought, were hunting owls.

And as far as the Hotel Metropole was concerned, I was only there to accompany my father who had duties as the Mayor of Brighouse. We had booked two rooms for myself and my father at the hotel but Father was unexpectedly delayed. I had not communicated with Mr. Mintoft in any way about the visit and it was complete coincidence when he came by the hotel in riding costume. He could not dine at the hotel in that state of dress so we went instead to the Grand Hotel buffet. After dinner we returned to the hall of the hotel and Mr Mintoft left.

And the Strangways boys say that they have seen me with Thomas in the Alhambra theatre in London. I know I was there with Thomas and Mabel – we were in the upper circle and we saw the Strangways there and so we went down into the pit, because we didn't want them to see us and for Mabel to have to tell Hamilton. How can everyone spy on us and all say these things?

*Church Cottage (on the right) in the early 1900s*

For myself, I am become quite suspicious about young Miss Mary Ann Burton. She lives in Church Cottage, just across the road, with her mother and brother, but she is always at the vicarage and spending hours with Hamilton in the study. Mary Houseley, one of our housemaids, tells me that Miss Burton is a frequent visitor to the vicarage when I am away and that she has several times



brought them afternoon tea. She has seen Mr Young leave his rosary and go across to the Burtons in response to a whistle from Miss Burton. And she has seen Miss Burton wave her hand and throw kisses to Mr Young, who waves his hand in return.

*25-Feb-1897*

Last night there was a dance at the village school in Alne. I am quite sure that Mr Young had improper intercourse with Mary Burton. How can he

complain about my seeing Thomas when he is cavorting with a 23-year-old in front of my eyes?

*28-Mar-1897*

Things are blowing up! This Sunday afternoon, Mary Burton visited the vicarage after Sunday School, and went into the study where Mr. Young was. Some little time afterwards, I went in there, and saw Miss Burton in the low wicker chair with her back to the door, and Mr. Young kneeling down in front of her.

I said, *'What are you doing, you cad?'*

*'I am just measuring the hearth for tiles'*, he replied.

*'I think I had better leave you'*, I said, and I walked out of the room. Miss Burton almost immediately left the house – I will never speak to her again.

When I remonstrated with Mr Young later this same evening, he again became very violent. *'If you were a man I would wring your neck'* he said. And his swearing was dreadful – although I am become used to it by now.

*31-Mar-1897*

A day or so later, Miss Burton wrote to me saying: *'Dear Mrs Young, I am afraid I was very rude when you came into the room the other day. You do not know how unhappy I have been. I hope you will please forgive me. Yours sincerely Cissy Burton'* – Cissy is the pet name she sometimes uses. I will have no truck with her and I wrote back at once: *'To Miss Burton. I received your letter. Rudeness is not the offence. I do not wish to have any further communication with you. S.E.Young.'*

*July 1897*

I have discovered that Mr Young went to Brussels on the 11<sup>th</sup> inst. He stayed in a house where Miss Burton was already staying and they were observed kissing and embracing each other in the dining room. He couldn't have told me when or why he was going as we are not only not on speaking terms, we are not even having meals together. But I later heard that he had only gone to Brussels *'on business connected with roses'*. Piffle! He may have one of the largest rose gardens in the country but that is not why he went to Brussels! It was even rumoured that Miss Burton went to Brussels to have a child – Mr Young being the father, which is why he went over there. I cannot believe this, as more people would surely have commented on her size and shape.



*August 1987*

I have heard that an Alne farmer, Frederick Reid, met Mr Young and Miss Burton about nine o'clock last night. Mr Reid said that Mr Young had winked and remarked : *'You know, Reid; keep your mouth shut; good night'*. I am also told that farmer Reid saw Mr Young and Miss Burton again just a couple of hours later. Mr Young appeared to have his arm around her and her dress was dragged with the dew. What were they doing together?

In the meantime, Mr Young continues to be violent towards me. When I complained to him about his selling the pony which I drove, he kicked over the table and chairs. And, one morning, I went with little Richard to my husband's bedroom, and without any cause he told us to get out, slamming the door with his foot, and knocking the panel out nearly into our faces.

*10-Aug-1898*

It is all too much. Mr Young has given the governess a month's notice because she had spoken to Mr Mintoft in defiance of his instruction to the contrary. I am leaving the vicarage and going back with

the children to father's Halifax house in Crow Nest. Thomas swears he will find me a nice house in Alne where we can be together in private but that is for the future.

*27-Dec-1898*

I will have my revenge on the Reverend Hamilton Young. Father has written to the Archbishop of York complaining about all the incidents between him and Miss Burton and suggesting he should be unfrocked. I kept a draft of the letter (all true!) and it is included with this diary.



My husband is a great sportsman but he also neglects his parishioners. I have heard it said that he is the best shot in Yorkshire and a fearless rider to hounds but what he most enjoys is fishing. He sometimes catches the local train from Alne to York on a Sunday evening and then the night train to Inverness so that he can be on the river early next morning. He tells his parishioners 'Five minute sermon tonight; got to catch the night train to Scotland.' I don't suppose they mind but it is not right!

*29-Jul-1899*

Looking back, that was a poor decision of father's. Rev Young and Miss Burton have sued father for libel because of his letter to the Archbishop. And the jury agreed with the deceitful pair! Do you know what they said? That I have cooked up the whole story for revenge and that poor Rev Hamilton Young might have been indiscreet but that there was no evidence of the gross misconduct alleged against him. They have found against my poor dear father and they have awarded damages – Mr Young will get £100 and the treacherous Miss Burton £1,000.

*May 1900*

I am being sued for divorce. I am at the Royal Courts of Justice in London with Thomas, Mabel, Hamilton and Mary Ann Burton and we are all being cross-examined by hateful solicitors and bewigged lawyers. Not only that, the newspapers are everywhere. They want all the salacious details, they want to know who sat on whose knee and when, who was out with whom, who said what to whom. It is unbearable.



Thomas has used detectives to follow Mr Young to report back on his activities. But one of them had a wooden leg and Mr Young could not fail but to spot him going about his business.

And the Alne villagers are frequently in the court room. Many are supporting Mr Young but an equal number are supporting me. I am told that the village is completely split on the issue and that they have hired a special train to bring them to where the excitement is.

*June 1900*

After 14 days in court, the Rev Hamilton Young (no longer my husband) has been granted his divorce decree nisi on the grounds of – I can hardly write it – my adultery with Thomas. Worse still, damages have been awarded against poor Thomas in the sum of £4,000. He can never pay that, he will have to be made bankrupt. The only good thing is that I can still go across to the lovely house in Alne and see him, comfort him, and enjoy our intimacies.

I have made copies of the biased summing-up of the judge and the extraordinary decision of the jury and I enclose them here as evidence of how I have been misused by the Court.

04-Mar-1901

My divorce decree nisi has been made absolute. There is no way back for me with the Rev Hamilton Young.

31-Mar-1901

When they come to open the 1901 census one hundred years from today, they will find that Hamilton Young has insisted that the census officer has written regarding his marriage status: '*Divorced on account of his wife's adultery*'. He is very bitter!

*Sources:*

1895. Birth certificate of Richard Hamilton Young, 25-Feb-1895. Late registration on 06-April-1895. [Cert: Jun-1895 Corwen 11b/357](#).
- 1899.07.25 Tue. York Herald [BNA. Mr Reid]
- 1899.07.29 Sat. Manchester Courier Supplement [AW :Vicar's case for libel]. A report of over 3,000 words, including the Brussels roses, and the text in full of the letter to the Archbishop.
- 1899.07.29 Sat. Newcastle Courant [AW :Vicar's libel action]. A summary.
- 1899.11.24 Fri. The Liverpool Mercury [AW :Appeal for libel retrial]
- 1900.05.16 Wed. Yorkshire Evening Post [BNA. The wooden leg]
- 1900.05.17 Thu. Northern Echo [BNA. Burton having a child].
- 1900.05.18 Fri. Evening Express [BNA. Measuring the grate].
- 1900.05.18 Fri. Yorkshire Evening Post [AW Young petition for Divorce]
- 1900.05.25 Fri. Leeds Mercury [BNA]
- 1900.06.16 Sat. North-Eastern Daily Gazette [AW Alne Divorce]
- 1900.06.20 Wed. The Chester Courant [BNA]
- 1900.06.23 Sat. The Cardiff Times [BNA]
- 1900.08.01 Wed. Manchester Courier etc [AW Sequel 3]
- 1901.03.09 Sat. The Rhyl Record and Advertiser [BNA]
2002. Vicar Norman, as reported in David Newton's Alne Annals (Church Cottage et al.)

**The Libel Letter** [The Manchester Courier Supplement, Sat 29-Jul-1899]

22 Bank-street Bradford. December 27, 1898.

Dear Sir,

On behalf of Mr. Richard Kershaw, of Crow Nest, Lightcliffe, Halifax, who is owner of the advowson of Alne, in the Diocese of York, the present incumbent of which is the Rev. Hamilton Young. I am instructed to bring before his Grace the Archbishop of York (through you as his Grace's secretary) a complaint of immoral conduct on the part of Mr. Young, which in the opinion of Mr. Kershaw and his advisers, unfits Mr. Young for holding the benefice, or indeed, any other clerical office. The specific charge which I am instructed to bring against Mr. Young is that in or prior to the month of February, 1897, he formed an illicit connection with a young person known as Miss Burton, residing with her mother near Alne Vicarage; that on the evening of 24th February, 1897, or early in the morning of the following day, on the occasion of a dance at the village school at Alne, Mr. Young had improper intercourse with Miss Burton. This intercourse was resumed on March 28th, 1897, and has been continued from time to time subsequently down to and including the month of July last. On the 11th July last Mr. Young left home, stating that he was going to London, but instead of doing so he travelled via Hull to Brussels, and at Brussels he stayed at the house of a Madame Flouche at 68, Rue de l'Aurore, where Miss Burton was staying, and remained with her several days, after which he returned home without disclosing his visit to Brussels. The facts above stated as to the Brussels visit were discovered in October and November last, and upon the discovery thereof Mrs. Young (the wife of Mr. Young and only daughter of Mr. Kershaw) decided that she could no longer live with her husband, and accordingly she left Alne with the three children of her marriage, and is now resident with her father at Crow Nest. Mr. Young has communicated with Mr. Kershaw and with Mrs. Young, and has offered to resign the benefice of Alne, and to consent to any deed of separation between himself and his wife, provided that Mr. Kershaw will, to avoid scandal, undertake that Mrs. Young will not take any proceedings in the Divorce Court against her husband, but this undertaking Mr. Kershaw has declined to give. This communication is made by Mr. Kershaw, knowing its serious character, and if Mr. Young choose to treat this letter as a libel upon him, and to bring an action for damages thereof, I am authorised on Mr. Kershaw's behalf to undertake that he would not claim any privilege for this letter, but will in any such action plead that the statements in this letter are true in substance and in fact, and if he should, which I do not anticipate, fail to prove his plea, he will be prepared to accept the consequences in damages and costs. This matter is now a notorious scandal at Alne, and I understand that Mr. Young is now proposing to leave the parish for six months – I am, dear sir, yours truly, Sam Wright [Mr. Kershaw's solicitor]

“T.S. Noble, Esq., York” [The Archbishop's Secretary and a noted York luminary at the time]



### **The Divorce Case Summing Up** [The Chester Courant, Wed 20-Jun-1900]

THE PRESIDENT'S SUMMING UP. Sir Francis Jeune, in summing up on Monday, referred to the length the trial had taken (fourteen days), and said it was one of the longest that had been tried in that court. He expressed the earnest hope that the jury would be able to come to a conclusion on all the issues of the case, otherwise it would be a great misfortune, and a hardship to the parties. As to Mrs. Young's alleged adultery, the case must rest or fall on the view they took of that very remarkable incident on the night of December 15th, 1895, the first time, it was alleged, that there was any impropriety between Mrs. Young and Mr. Mintoft. If they believed the evidence of Mr. Young, it carried them a very long way indeed in this case. It was clear that the conduct of the parties at the time was entirely consistent with Mr. Young having seen something such as he said he saw. After that, there was the remarkable letter which Mr. Mintoft wrote, in which he expressed his willingness to go away from Alne, although he said he was innocent of what Mr. Young alleged. One would have thought that afterwards, when Mr. Young prohibited his wife from meeting Mr. Mintoft, they would not from time to time have seen each other after promise made not to do so. Were the meetings to avoid scandal, as suggested, or were these two persons infatuated with each other, and enjoyed each other's society? With regard to the evidence of Miss Mabel Young, she was a very important witness, and if she was to be believed, no doubt adultery had been committed. She was on terms of the greatest affection with Mrs. Young, and it was hardly possible that Mrs. Young could be carrying on with Mr. Mintoft for a considerable period without Miss Young becoming aware of a good deal of what was going on. But it led to this observation, that she to some extent made herself almost an accomplice of Mrs. Young, and if her story were true, she must have known matters of very grave impropriety passing between her sister-in-law and the co-respondent. As to a modest girl lending herself to this, it was to some extent mitigated by the fact that persons were very apt to lend themselves - he did not say for a moment as an accomplice of the guilty parties - to a flirtation between persons who ought not to flirt with one another. It might be that Miss Young did not appreciate at the time that anything really improper was going on. As to the visits to the sheds, why were these two accused people there? Why should they have gone down a winding lane, at the bottom of which was a shed? It was said that they went there to talk about the slander action which was then pending. The jury would have to consider how far the explanation given was satisfactory to them. Referring to the charge of adultery alleged by Mrs. Young against her husband, Sir Francis Jeune said it was a curious fact that that charge was almost parallel to the one her husband made against her. Both charges related to the study and the same chair. Mrs. Young at the time said it was no place for her, and left the room. It was for the jury to decide whether that was likely to have been the conduct of a woman who found her husband in the position with Miss Burton as given in evidence. As to the new evidence given in the case, which was not before the jury at York Assizes, when testimony of that extraordinary character was given at the last moment, the jury must look at it carefully and consider whether they could believe it. At the rising of the Court his lordship had not finished summing up.

## **The Divorce Case Judgement** [NYCA 114/254/105]

In the High Court of Justice Probate Divorce and Admiralty Division (Divorce)  
Before the Right Honourable Sir Francis Henry Jeune K.C.B. The President sitting at the  
Royal Courts of Justice Strand in the county of Middlesex.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> 17<sup>th</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> 22<sup>nd</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> 25<sup>th</sup> 28<sup>th</sup> 29<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> days of May and on the 1<sup>st</sup> 14<sup>th</sup> 15<sup>th</sup>  
18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> days of June 1900 .

YOUNG (h) against YOUNG AND MINTOFT (BURTON intervening)

A special jury having been sworn to try the questions of fact arising out of the pleadings  
of this cause and the President having in their presence taken the oral evidence of the  
Petitioner and of the witnesses produced on his behalf in support of the petition filed in  
this cause and also of the Respondent Co-Respondent and the Intervener and of the  
Witnesses respectively produced on their behalf and having heard Counsel thereon on  
behalf of all parties the Jury aforesaid by their verdict found

- (1) That Sarah Elizabeth Young the Respondent had committed adultery with Thomas  
John Mintoft the Co-Respondent
- (2) That the said Co-Respondent had committed adultery with the said respondent
- (3) That the Rev Hamilton Young the Petitioner had not committed adultery with Mary  
Ann Burton the intervener
- (4) That the Rev Hamilton Young had not been guilty of cruelty toward Sarah Elizabeth  
Young the Respondent and the Jury aforesaid assessed the damages to be paid by the  
said Thomas John Mintoft the Co-Respondent in respect of the adultery by him  
committed with the Co-Respondent [should be Respondent! RB] at the sum of Four  
thousand pounds. Whereupon the President on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of June 1900 decreed that  
the marriage had and solemnised on the seventh day of October 1891 at St  
Matthew's church in the parish of Lightcliffe in the county of York between the Rev  
Hamilton Young the Petitioner and Sarah Elizabeth Young then Kershaw spinster  
the Respondent be dissolved by reason that since the celebrations thereof the said  
Respondent has been guilty of adultery with the Co-Respondent Thomas John  
Mintoft unless sufficient cause be shown to the Court why this decree should not be  
made absolute within six months from the making thereof and condemned the said  
Co-Respondent and Respondent jointly in the costs incurred and to be incurred on  
behalf of the said Petitioner in this cause.

And it is further ordered that Mary Ann Burton the Intervener be dismissed from this  
Cause and that the costs of her intervention be paid by the said Respondent out of her  
separate estate. And it is further ordered that the said Co-Respondent do within 14 days  
from the service of this Order pay into Court the sum of £4000 the amount of damages  
assessed by the Jury aforesaid.

A. Musgrave Registrar.