

Durant enclosed a set of signed witness statements. One is from George St George; two are from the village constable and a police officer; and the others are by servants. It is clear this was the culmination of a series of events instigated by Ernest and Anguish, asserting their rights to walk through the stable yard. Twice on previous days the village constable had been called to prevent it. But the real causes were deeper. On the 9th June they broke down the fence and came in with six dogs, three servants and a brace of pistols each. The disturbance brought the family out onto the balcony. The party included, George, the second Mrs Durant, their neighbour Mrs Bishton, George St George and Leonard Henry who had just become incumbent. Ernest shouted up to his stepmother *“Get in you decayed, grey faced and grey beaded old villainous scoundrel”* and then said to her *“You infernal whore. Damn your catholic soul. May hell soon find your damned soul. Damn you, you Bloody bitch”*. He then turned on his father *“You are a murderer– You gave my mother venereal disease five times”*. So the resentment of years finally burst out.

With Mr Durant’s agreement, the Bishop’s Legal Officer wrote to Ernest, inviting him to send a written public apology. (The Civil Courts would deal with the matter of the fence and the dog.) On 25th June, Ernest replied refusing to apologise. He asserted that he had a right of way, and went on to say that the accusations of being a whore were not addressed to Celeste, but to Mary Bradbury. The final letter in the correspondence is from George Durant on 3rd July dropping the whole case. It is easy to see why. The accusation about venereal disease was almost certainly true. Marianne had died at the young age of 48. If it went to court all this would become public.

This explains the events of the following year, when George St George was taken to court in Shrewsbury for shooting Ernest Durant. The charge was finally reduced to *“attempting to discharge a loaded pistol”*. (We need to remember that his father was a J.P.) Another brawl with Bruce Durant led to George St George being imprisoned in Shrewsbury for 18 months. In 1841, he left for New Zealand. He settled in New Plymouth, established a medical practice and married one of his fellow passengers. He became the first doctor to the Maoris, and also practised as a chemist. In March 1842, Durant recorded in his diary *“Had a letter from poor George in New Zealand who is very well and happy”*. That year his brother, Edwin, joined him as a business partner.