



Crime and Punishment

Knook

A DAUGHTER PROSECUTED BY HER FATHER

On Saturday Jane Williams, a little girl aged between 10 and 11 years, was charged with having stolen, on 17th January, at Knook, a cotton sheet, a canvas bag, and a pair of trousers, of the value of 4s. the property of her father, Charles Williams.

Charles Williams, father of the prisoner, said he worked for Mr Gifford. He had never given his daughter permission to sell any articles from the house. He identified the bag and trousers as his property, but he could not speak as to the sheet.

Jane Williams, grandmother of the child, a very reluctant witness, said she had been in the habit of attending to prosecutor's house. Prosecutor was her son-in-law. She identified all the articles produced as being his property. She has seen them all safe in the house on 17th January, and in the following day they were gone.

Richard Bassett, of Warminster, son of Mr Richard Bassett, of Back-street, said he was going towards Mr Flower's house at Knook, on Monday, 17th January, about 12 o'clock when he met a little girl, not the prisoner, but one much younger, whom he saw sitting in the Court. She said she had some coloured rags for sale, and asked him if he would buy them. He asked her if she wanted money for them, and she said no, she was to have oranges for them, He then gave her five oranges for the bag of things.

Anne Elisa Williams, a little child about 7 or 8 years of age, and who was too young to be sworn, said her sister gave her the bag of things to sell to the boy, and he gave her five oranges for them which she gave to her sister, and she gave her one orange for herself.

Mr Supt. Abbott said prosecutor had frequently lost things, which he had found out his child had taken. She had stolen a half-sovereign from his house, and many other articles had disappeared from time to time. He had tried all mild modes of punishment, but without effect, and his object in bringing that case before the Bench was to endeavor to check the child before she got more hardened. She was evidently connected with parties who encouraged her in her pilfering.

The prisoner pleaded guilty, and wished to have the case settled then. Mr Barton addressed her in a very feeling manner, and said she would be imprisoned for 14 days, and after that be sent to some industrial school for a period of five years, during which time they trusted she would receive such instructions as would quite wean her of her evil

habits, and fit her to take a respectable and honourable position in life, a position they were much afraid she would never sake if allowed to go on in her old course of dishonesty.

The conduct of the father, in presenting his child, gave great dissatisfaction to the populace in the Court, who would have roughly treated him but for the interference of the police, who gave him shelter at the police station till the crowd that had followed him down had got tired of waiting for him, and dispersed.

After giving the decision of the Bench Mr Barton had Bassett re-called, and told him it was the unanimous opinion of the Bench that he ought to be taught better than to go and buy things so very much below their value, and that too of a little child. They could not bring themselves to believe he did not know the transaction he engaged in was unlawful, and it was a question whether he ought not to be himself put in the dock. If he again came before them under similar circumstances he may depend upon it he would find himself in a very awkward predicament. He trusted Mr Abbott would see his father, and let him know what was the opinion of the Bench.

Mr Abbott said he had already cautioned both the boy and his father on the subject, and but for the excuse pleaded, which seemed borne out by the after conduct of the parties, he certainly should have taken proceedings against the boy. His excuse was that he did not know that the bag contained anything but coloured rags, and his mother said that when he got home, and she saw what he had bought, she told him he had done wrong, and kept the bag and its contents on a shelf until it was enquired about by them, when it was immediately given up.

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