



An Unfounded Charge

County Petty Sessions - Tuesday

Charles Mills, of Exeter Street, a respectable young man, was summoned for assaulting Mary Ann Ball, of Britford, on the 4th of March. Mr. E. F. Kelsey appeared for the complainant, and Mr. Nodder for the defence. The complainant, an interesting looking young woman, stated that about half-past eight o'clock on the evening in question, as she was returning from Salisbury to Britford, where she resided, someone knocked her down from behind on Harnham Bridge, close to Mr. Snook's shop. She believed it was the defendant who knocked her down. She did not make any complaint but went on to Britford through the fields, when the defendant sprung from the hedge and knocked her down again. She called "William" her brother, who lived half a mile off, and after lying on the ground insensible for some time, went home and made a complaint. She had seen the defendant once at Mr. Attwater's dairy, but she did not know much about him, and had never had any conversation with him. She lived at the house of Mr. Parfitt, and was his niece. Some one was with Mills when she was struck, but she did not know the name of the man. She was struck with a fist. When she got home she told her brother what had happened. She was quite certain that it was Mills who struck her.

In cross-examination by Mr. Nodder she said that her exclamation "William" was a mere outcry. She would swear positively that she saw Mills that evening. She had been to Salisbury shopping, but was not the worse for drink. She did not go across the Close during the evening. She could not remember the last place she was at in Salisbury on the evening in question, but she remembered posting a letter at the post-office, and purchasing writing paper and envelopes at a shop in Catherine Street. She did not lose a chignon, nor did she drop a muff. She did not see Mr. Westmoreland, Mr. Swabey, or Mr. Kellow, one of the constables of the Close. Mr. Westmoreland did not hand her a muff which she had dropped.

Mr. Nodder: Would you be surprised hear that Mills was never in the field at all when you say you were knocked down? In reply the witness said it was the defendant who struck her. Wm Ball, brother to the complainant, said that on the evening of the 4th of March, about quarter past nine o'clock, his sister came home quite heartbroken. He asked her what was the matter, and she said she had been interrupted Mills, who had knocked her down twice. Her clothes were very dirty. She was quite sober, and was not addicted to intemperance. Her frock was torn out of place, and her hair was hanging about her.

Mr. Nodder said the case was one of the strangest he had ever known. He should prove that the defendant, who was a respectable young man, and Sunday school teacher, could not have committed the offence with which he was charged. He did not mean to say that the charge was made intentionally; but the only way in which he could account for the mistake was that the complainant was the worse for liquor on the night in question, and did not accurately recollect what took place.

He then called a young woman, named Ann Mitchell, the sweetheart of the defendant, who stated that she was milliner, and employed by Mrs Humby, and that from half past seven to nine o'clock on the night in question the defendant was in her company. They were walking on the Britford turnpike road, but did not go into the fields.

Mr. W C Westmoreland, one of the lay vicars at the Cathedral, stated that about half past eight or nearly nine o'clock, on the night in question, he and Mr. Swabey saw the complainant in the Close. She was the worse for liquor, and lying under the trees near the west front of the Cathedral. After getting up, she dropped her muff, which witness picked up, and restored to her. He watched her round the corner, on to the Britford Road and had no doubt as to her identity.

The Bench stopped the case without hearing the evidence of Mr. Swabey, and dismissed the information with costs.

16 March 1872, Salisbury and Winchester Journal.