



School & Education News

Seend

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Before the Melksham Magistrates.

Miss Josephine Perris, mistress of Seend National School, was charged with assaulting a child three years of age, by striking it with a stick. From the evidence it seems that the child had been sent to school for the first time, and had been a scholar about a fortnight. The other day the schoolmistress tried to make it read, so it was said, and the child replied "I won't, I won't I won't". Thus, the defendant said, setting her authority at defiance. For this she struck it across the shoulders with the weapon produced. The "rod" seemed to be the thick end of a lance-wood pointer, about an inch in circumference at one end.

The mother took the child to Mr Locke, the magistrate who gave evidence. He said he saw a large weal, three inches in length and half an inch wide, and very much discoloured and inflamed, across the child's back. He considered it a most disgraceful action to strike a child of such tender years in that shameful manner. The clergyman, the Rev F Gough and his wife, said they saw the bruise, but it was not of the size or appearance as described by the magistrate. Mr Gough said that he should be sorry to defend an act of cruelty.

The schoolmistress admitted the charge, and said she should have done the same if the magistrate had been present. Mr Locke: I should not have allowed it if I had been present, you may depend upon it.

The clergyman said the schoolmistress was bound to maintain discipline in the school. The Bench said that was perfectly correct; but at the same time the formidable weapon produced was not such an instrument as a child three years old should be beaten with. A little twig would be more suitable. They denounced the affair as disgraceful, and recommended the schoolmistress to use different means for maintaining her authority in the school. The exposure was considered sufficient punishment. Case dismissed.

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