



Legal News - Slander Bishopstone 1879

THE EXTRAORDINARY SCENE AT BISHOPSTONE VESTRY MEETING

ACTION AGAINST THE REV. R. K. CORSER FOR SLANDER

Our readers will recollect an account published in these columns on the 19th of April last, of the extraordinary scene at the Easter Vestry meeting at Bishopstone, at which Mr. Corser, curate in charge, made use of expressions highly detrimental to the character of Mr. Wm. Dore. It appears that after the meeting Mr. Dore consulted his solicitor, and instructed him to at once put in motion the remedial process of the law for the vindication of his character. An action was commenced on the 26th April by Mr. Dore in the Exchequer Division of the High Court of Justice against Mr. Corser, for an apology and retraction of the slanders and expressions said to be uttered by him. The trial of the action was fixed for Monday last, at the Wells Assizes, before a special jury, the place of trial having been removed from Salisbury to Wells under an order of Mr. Justice Field, on an application of the defendant, who paid £50 into court, and made an affidavit that Mr. Dore was highly popular in the counties of Wilts and Berks, and popular generally, and that he (Mr. Corser) would not have a fair trial at Salisbury. By the time Mr. Justice Lopes had taken his seat on the bench, and the special jury been called into the box, the court was crowded, the nature of the actions having become known in the city, as was the fact that the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol was to be examined as a witness, his Lordship having been subpoenaed to attend the trial by Mr. Dore's solicitor to give evidence on his behalf.

Mr. Cole Q.C., M.P., and Mr. Kinglake, instructed by Mr. G. Mayor Cook of 9 Gray's Inn Square, London, appeared for the plaintiff: Mr. Collins, Q.C., and Mr. Bullen, instructed by Messrs. Pownall, Son, Cross and Knott, of 9 Staple Inn, London, for the defendant.

Mr. Cole said: My Lord, in the case of Dore against Corser, I am happy to inform you an arrangement has been come to between my learned friend and myself which I trust will be satisfactory to all parties. The plaintiff Mr. Dore, is a gentleman who for a great many years, I hardly know how many, carried on the business of a farmer in Wiltshire, farming over a thousand acres of land, and is a breeder of race horses, amongst them some of the most distinguished on the turf, but he is not a turf man himself. Victor Chief and other horses of that character were bred and sold by him to various noblemen and others. The defendant, in the year 1877, became curate in charge of the parish of Bishopstone, in Wiltshire, where the plaintiff lives. And most unfortunately, soon after he came to the parish, he circulated rumours of the most painful character against Mr. Dore, in fact, he charged Mr. Dore with keeping a harlot and having four bastard children. He also insinuated, and afterwards openly stated that Mr. Dore was not married, although Mr. Dore. Poor gentleman. Has been married 28 years. He had two sons, one 25 and the other 22, who had lived happily and respectively with their neighbours, and this defendant, in the church of all

places, stated most distinctly that Mr. Dore was not married, that his children were bastards, that he had forged baptismal entries when he put the names of his children in the baptismal register. We took every course we could. We applied to the vicar, who referred us to the Bishop. Unfortunately, the slanders that he uttered at first were not actionable, because he merely made a statement with regard to his not being married, which was not actionable. At last an opportunity occurred to Mr. Dore, he charged him with it in public meeting, and Mr. Corser then charged him with making the forged entries. I need hardly tell you we seized the opportunity of bringing the action to make him justify the painful slander against Mr. Dore, and the action has now come before your lordship, and has come into the judicious hands of my friend Mr. Collins, and he has informed me that he is prepared to come forward and make a most full and ample retraction of everything he has said of Mr. Dore, and express his apology in the fullest terms in this Court to Mr. Dore, and give such a verdict as will carry costs as between solicitor and client, and will pay ten guineas to an Infirmary. My, Lord, by this course, Mr. Dore's object will be entirely gained. He is not anxious to put a sixpence in his pocket. In fact, before the action was brought, he offered to accept those terms if Mr. Corser would come forward and do what a Christian gentleman ought to do. It is impossible for me to explain to you the pain and suffering that Mr. Dore and his family have undergone for more than a year under these painful charges. My friend now tells me he is prepared to make the fullest retraction. I have advised Mr. Dore it will vindicate his character before the county, unfortunately not his own county, because the cause has been removed by the defendant into this county, on the ground that he could not have a fair trial in Wiltshire. Still we do it in the adjoining county, and I know that will be a full vindication for Mr. Dore. Under those circumstances I am prepared to take the terms my friend has offered, to allow the case to be settled in the way I have mentioned, and I trust Mr. Dore will be able to return to his parish and gain that peace of mind which has been disturbed by the defendant.

Mr. Collins: May it please your lordship, I am bound to say Mr. Corser has unreservedly put himself in my hands. I have examined the whole facts of the case and apart from the authority given to me by Mr. Corser, I am satisfied none of the imputations made by Mr. Corser on Mr. Dore are well founded. Unfortunately, Mr. Corser went into the parish a stranger, he heard a good deal of tittle-tattle, and, unfortunately for himself, without looking into the truth of these matters, he came to the conclusion that they were true, and in a vestry meeting and on other occasions he made the charges against Mr. and Mrs. Dore that they were not married, and that Mr. Dore had forged the marriage and baptismal certificates. On this Mr. Corser has put himself in my hands entirely, and I, on behalf of Mr. Corser, unreservedly withdraw any of the statements Mr. Corser has made respecting Mr. Dore's character; and Mr. Corser, as one gentleman to another, withdraws all those statements, and submits to the terms stated by my friend, together with the taxed costs as between attorney and client.

Mr. Justice Lopes: The slanders which Mr. Corser appears to have uttered, which, of course, I have seen, because I have read the pleadings, beyond all question demand the fullest and most unreserved retraction and apology; that retraction and apology has now been made, and I am quite certain it is a termination of this unfortunate affair at which everybody must rejoice.

Mr. Cole: The record will be withdrawn.

Mr. Justice Lopes: It must be a judge's order. There is a provision with regard to the costs.

Mr. Collins: The ten guineas to be given to what infirmary?.

Mr. Cole: It should be a Wiltshire infirmary. Let it be ten guineas to the Salisbury infirmary.

Mr. Justice Lopes: Then it is, record withdrawn subject to those terms.

His Lordship then, at the request of Mr. Cole and Mr. Collins, signed and handed to Mr. Dore's solicitor the order, which was in the following terms:- " I do order that the record herein be withdrawn, the defendant by and through his counsel retracting and apologising to the plaintiff for the slanders and expressions uttered by him, and forthwith to pay to the plaintiff, or to Mr. G Mayor Cooke, his solicitor, £10 10s 0d for the Salisbury Infirmary, and all plaintiffs costs in action to be taxed between solicitor and client, in default the plaintiff to be at liberty to sign judgment and issue execution. Dated this 28th day of July 1879. HENRY C. LOPES."

Mr. Dore was thanked for his forbearance towards the defendant by the latter's counsel and on leaving the court was warmly congratulated by his friends.

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## BISHOPSTONE

BELL RINGING. - On the news of the settlement of the action of Dore v. Corser – reported in another column, reaching this village on Monday morning the ringers repaired to the parish church and set the bells going, merry peals being rung until late in the evening. Peals were also rung on Tuesday.

**Swindon Advertiser and North Wilts Chronicle, 2 August 1879**