

Vicar's Servant in Court for Theft 1847

Salisbury Assizes



Eliza Hopgood, the wife of Thomas Hopgood, was indicted, for that she being a servant of the Rev Samuel Cosway, and whilst she was single, had stolen two boxes and other articles, the property of the Rev Samuel Cosway.

Mr Slade was counsel for the prosecution and Mr Saunders for the prisoner.

It appeared that the prisoner, a very respectable looking young woman, had lived as housemaid and lady's maid in the service of the rev. prosecutor for upwards of five years.

She had the care of the clothes of her mistress, and was trusted in the family. She was a single woman.

About two years since a small watch stand was missed. the prisoner left the service last October and went home to her father, who is a respectable labouring man, living in another parish, and about three weeks since, she was married to a young man who is a carpenter, residing in the parish of Chute, of which the rev. prosecutor is the vicar.

In a very short time after the marriage, the rev. prosecutor caused both the husband and wife to be apprehended on a charge of felony, for stealing two deal boxes of the value of 2s each, two piece of calico of the value of 1s each, and other small articles of equally small value. The bill against the husband was ignored.

From some cause or other which did not appear, the rev. prosecutor caused the houses of the prisoner's father, and her husband, to be searched. In the former they found one deal box about 2ft by 1ft., and two other deal boxes in an outhouse. It was shown that this first deal box had been used by the prisoner when she was in the service of Mr Cosway to keep her clothes in, and that box she had taken away with her when she left the service.

In the house of the prisoner and her husband were found, over the fireplace fixed up, a print of Blundell's school, which Mr Cosway had had in his possession at one time, but he had not seen it for two years. A watch stand was on the chimney piece, which Mr Cosway had missed two years ago. On a shelf in a cupboard upstairs was a piece of carpet which had been cut off another carpet on Mrs Cosway removing to a different house, but which Mr Cosway had not seen for eight years; it had been put in a box in the servants' room.

There were also two knife-cloths included in the indictment, as to which, however, the proof failed. A piece of printed calico was in the indictment; this was about 18 inches square, but it turned out that Mr Cosway had this calico from London to cover furniture with, and that it had been given to a tailor in the neighbourhood to make, and Mrs Cosway could not say but that he might have kept some of the remnants.

In addressing the jury for the prisoner, Mr Saunders observed, that he did not envy the feelings of those who had instituted such a prosecution.

Mr Justice Cresswell, in summing up, observed that the only thing for the jury to consider was, whether the prisoner had stolen this deal box; for as to the other things, they were out of the question.

The jury found the prisoner Guilty of stealing the box. Sentence deferred.

Devizes & Wiltshire Gazette Thursday 11 March 1847

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Eliza Hopgood, convicted of stealing a box from the Rev Mr Cosway, was sentenced to three months imprisonment with hard labour.

Salisbury & Winchester Journal Saturday 13 March 1847