

Crime and Punishment

Hankerton



Trial of Nathaniel Tyler

Nathaniel Tyler was indicted for assaulting Mary Ann Peters at Hankerton, on 26th May.

Mr Swayne was counsel for the prosecution, and Mr H T Cole and Mr Yonge for the prisoner.

The prisoner was a farmer about 42 years of age. Mary Ann Peters was in his service. The prisoner went to Tetbury market on 26th May. His family consisted of this girl, two daughters, a niece and a son. The females slept in one room, and the prisoner with a little daughter and son slept in a kind of ante-room adjoining. The girls went to bed early. Peters slept in a bed alone close to that occupied by the daughter and niece. Peters went to sleep directly, but was awoke by something which she thought was her crinoline. She went to sleep again, but was awoke and found her clothes were all off her, and the prisoner lying by her side, with his hand on her thigh. She squal'd out, and awoke the other two girls. The prisoner had crept to the bottom of the bed. The daughter called out "Father, is that you?" The prisoner said "Yes. I want the keys to get something to drink." The daughter said they are down stairs, why did you not come in a proper manner and not frighten a body to death?

The girl Peters, in cross examination, said --- I sent to my mother the next morning, but as she did not come I went to her on the following Tuesday. I did not tell the daughter or niece what had happened. The prisoner had threatened to summon me for leaving his service without notice. My sister made a similar charge against her master and got some money, but I don't know how much. Miss Emily got into my bed after this happened. We did not talk about ghosts. I did not say I thought it was a ghost. The prisoner had never taken any liberty with me before.

Susannah Peters --- I am the mother in law of the last witness. I received a letter from her. My daughter came home on Tuesday and went to the magistrates, and then we went to the prisoner and told him that we had been to a magistrate. He said ***** and ***** the magistrates. If you had not been there I would have made it up with you.

Mr Cole asked the Jury if there was any necessity for him to address them.

The Jury said there was no necessity.

Mr Cole said he had 14 or 15 gentlemen in Court who would have said that the prisoner was a man of the highest respectability. The girl must have been mistaken.

The prisoner was acquitted.

Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette Thursday 21 July 1864