



Crime News - Assault

*Little Hinton
1861*

SWINDON POLICE COURT
Thursday, November 21

Edwin Kent, a farmer, of Little Hinton, was charged by his servant, **Mary Ann Grubb**, with an indecent and felonious assault upon her on the 11th instant. Mr Whatley appeared for the defendant.

Mary Ann Grubb: I am a single woman and shall be 19 years of age next February. I have been living at Little Hinton, in Mr. Kent's employ as general servant. He assaulted me by pulling me about in an indecent manner on Monday week. I went up to remove the supper: there was a little beer in the cup, and Mr. Kent told me I might drink the beer. I drunk it, and as soon as I had put the cup down he caught me by the frock and dragged me on the sofa. It was about eight o'clock in the evening. On the following morning I made a complaint to Mrs Kent, but master denied it, and said I was d----- liar, and he had a good mind to kick me out of the house. A boy, Richard Allen came through the kitchen whilst Mr Kent was assaulting me. Mrs Kent was ill in bed at the time and Mr Johnson, Mrs Kent's father, and Mr Kent's son were gone to bed. No one else was in the house at the time. Next morning, as I could not write, I got a young man to write to my father. The letter was posted on Wednesday. As my father did not come I walked home. Mr Bouverie sent for Mr Kennard, who came, but he did not examine me, he said I was old enough to speak for myself, and he did not like getting into such cases unless he was obliged.

Cross examination : Richard Allen is in Mr Kent's service. He was in Mr Kent's employ when I went there. I cannot say whether I did or did not a fortnight after I went into Mr Kent's employ tell Richard Allen that I was in the family way. When Mr Kent pulled me on to the sofa I called out, and resisted him as well as I could. Mr Kent's house is a small one. Mr Kent let loose of me when he saw the boy coming. Mr Kent then went to bed, and I went into the brewhouse. I saw Allen again that evening, and I told him that master had got the upper hand of me. This happened on the Monday, and I remained till Friday, but I thought father would come, but finding he did not I went home. I had to walk nine miles. I do not recollect telling the boy I could make Mr Kent pay for it. I said I should fetch a summons for him. I was fourteen years old when I first went out to service I did not tell the boy the next morning that he was not to say anything about it, as it would only cause a "noration" I know Mr Thomas Sargent, and his nephew John. Who is about 14 years of age. I have rompsed and played with him, but nothing more. Mr Sargent did not complain of my corrupting the mind of this young boy.

Re-examined : As I was going home I complained to Ann Smith about this matter. I also told Anthony Edmonds, who wrote the letter for me to my father, all about it. About a week before this took place I told Allen that I should tell Mrs Kent I should leave. I am in the family way, but my father did not know it until I went home. The kitchen has a stone floor, covered with cocoa matting. Mr Kent was sitting on the sofa, and the table was not far from him. I was standing, taking the cloth off the table when he caught hold of me; he caught me by the frock and pulled me back. I did not stumble over the matting; he pulled me back on to the sofa. I drank the beer in the cup, but it was not much. The boy came down stairs and passed through the kitchen, when Mr Kent had me on the sofa. I should think he had me on the sofa ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. The boy afterwards came back through the kitchen after Mr Kent had left me. I took the cloth off the table and went into the brew house. When I went in I do not know that I said anything to him then. I afterwards went up stairs and saw the boy; I went to his room and told him what Mr Kent had done. I usually went to the boy's door to fasten it; he slept in the next room to me. When I went upstairs the boy began about it. He said he saw Mr Kent catch hold of me, and I asked him what he had seen. Had the boy not have come into the kitchen I should have spoken to Mrs Kent the next morning. I could not go to her that night. I was not afraid that the boy would put it about what he had seen. Adams had not said anything about the matter before I told him. I still adhere to my statement, that he effected his purpose, and that it was against my consent.

By the Bench: Mr Kent never before attempted to take liberties with me. There was a lighted candle in the kitchen at the time.

Richard Allen said : I am going in 15 years of age. I live with Mr Kent. Mary Ann Grubb was fellow servant there. I recollect Monday evening week; I went to bed about half past eight. After I had got upstairs I turned back and went downstairs to put a colt in that I had forgotten. I paused through the kitchen. I there saw Mr Kent and the girl on the sofa. I did not hear the girl bellow. I did not hear Kent say anything; he had hold of the girl by her clothes. I then went and attended to the colt. When I came back the girl was in the brew house, breaking up wood. I did not speak to her. I then went to bed. The girl afterwards came to my bed room, and said something about what had happened below, but I forget what it was. The next morning she said she would have a summons, , and take Mr Kent in and make him pay.

Cross examined : Before I came down stairs I did not hear the girl cry out, had she cried out I must have heard her. The other persons in the house must have heard her had she called out. It is a small house. The girl was trying to get away from Mr Kent when I went into the kitchen, but she did not call out. I could not see that Mr Kent was preventing her from getting up, but he had hold of her clothes.

By the Bench: I did not think there was anybody in the kitchen when I came down the stairs to go to the colt.

The magistrates retired to consider the case, and on their return into court the chairman said :- "Edwin Kent, the Bench are unanimously of opinion that you have placed yourself in a very disgraceful and most disreputable position, for whatever may have been this girl's previous character, your duty as her master was to have taken proper charge of her, and not to have led her into immorality. At the same time the Bench are of opinion that the charge against you cannot be sustained, you must therefore be discharged; but the magistrates have a very strong opinion, as all the public must have that your conduct has been exceedingly improper."

The defendant then left the court.

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