



Crime and Punishment

Minety

Court Case

George Oldship, Patrick Sextie and James Burge

On Tuesday last, George Oldship and Patrick Sextie, two very active members of the Rutland Street swell-mobsmen, and James Burge alias "Jemmy the runner," were brought up before the Cirencester bench of magistrates, the Rev T Maurice and W H Hinton, Esq., charged with stealing from the person of Mrs Mary Knapp, of Minety, a cinnamon-brown silk purse (with silver beads and two silver rings), containing three sovereigns, one half-sovereign, two half-crowns, a fourpenny piece, a threepenny piece, a two-shilling piece, and a crooked sixpence, and two gold rings, her property. Mr Williams, attorney, of Cheltenham, appeared for Sextie and Oldship.

Mrs Knapp stated that she was the wife of William Knapp, and lived at Minety. On Monday, the 16th instant, she came to Cirencester market, and between half-past twelve and one o'clock she was standing near Mr White's shop in the Market place. She had not been standing there many minutes when she felt a slight push on the left shoulder; she turned round and saw a person close to her, whom she believed to be the prisoner Sextie. She then put her hand into her pocket, and missed her purse, which she had safe when she started from home. She directly communicated her loss to her husband, and information was given to the police. In about twenty minutes, PC Beard brought the purse to her, but the contents were gone. The purse and the crooked sixpence produced were her property, and which she had so lost.

PC Beard proved that on receiving information of the theft, he went to the Bell inn, and there saw Thomas Hall coming out of the water closet with the purse now produced in his hand, and which Mrs Knapp identified. In the purse he found the crooked sixpence, which had also been identified. The next day he went to Cheltenham, and in company with another officer, he apprehended the prisoners Sextie and Oldship. At the police office, at Cheltenham, he told the prisoners they were charged with picking a lady's pocket in Cirencester market. In reply to the charge, Oldship said, "That has got to be proved, I have been brought here before on a similar charge." Sextie said, "If I had known that, I would not have come here."

Thomas Hall proved that he lodged at the Bell inn, Cirencester, and that between one and two o'clock on Monday, the 16th instant, he was skinning a couple of rabbits in the Bell yard. While he was so employed, he saw a man with a nut basket and a bundle come out of the water closet, and go down the back yard into the street. In two or three minutes, he saw a tall man go into the water closet, and return as quickly as possible. He thought there was something wrong, and went into the water closet, where he saw two bits of tassels belonging to a purse on the floor. He looked down through the seat, and saw a shilling lying on a piece of timber. He got it out, and found that the shilling was marked with two H's. He again looked down, and saw a ring and a purse beside it. He went into the kitchen and informed Sergeant Beck, of the

Militia, and then got a stick and took the purse out. PC Beard came in at the time, and he gave the purse to him. He afterwards found another purse in the vault of the water closet.

The person with the nuts was neither of the prisoners. All the prisoners, with another man not in custody, slept together at the Bell on Sunday night, and on the following morning they had breakfast together. The man not in custody was the man who came out of the water closet with the nuts, but he had changed his dress since the morning. Beck, the armourer, asked him if he was going to split upon Jem the runner (Burge). He had told the whole truth.

Mr Williams asked the Bench to deal with the case summarily.

Mr Supt Riddiford said there were two previous convictions against Sextie, and one against Oldship.

The Bench decided on sending the case to the sessions, and the prisoners reserved their defence. Sextie and Oldship were committed for trial, and Burge, the only evidence against whom being that he was in the other prisoners' company at the Bell, was discharged with a caution.

Cheltenham Chronicle 1 July 1856

Trials of prisoners before J C Hayward Esq., in the Crown Court on Wednesday

Patrick Sextie, for stealing money, &c., from Wm Knapp, at Cirencester, and George Oldship (an accomplice) was acquitted.

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OPC Note; Swell-mobsmen-----a criminal (such as a pickpocket) who dresses fashionably and conducts himself with seeming respectability for professional purposes.