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Mr. Thomas Tuck Accused Of Forgery

Another most interesting trial took place at our assizes, which was that of Mr. Thomas Tuck, brewer, of Swindon, for the high crime of forgery. It appeared that Mr. Tuck was in partnership with Mr. Shepherd, at Swindon, and they carried on business as brewers and wine merchants.

Roger Coale, the prosecutor, was examined: he stated that he had kept a public-house at Swindon, and dealt with Tuck and Shepherd for beer and spirits. There was a running account between them, kept in a small book, in which was entered the beer and spirits delivered to Coale, and on the opposite leaf (the credit side) the cash paid at different times by Coale to Tuck. This book remained in the possession of Coale, and when goods were received by Coale, or cash paid by him to Tuck, the book was taken and the entry made. On comparing books, however, it appeared that in the 1813 account a payment of £30 had been made, and credit given to Coale for £50; and in another place that a payment of £20 had been made, and credit given for £40. Tuck mentioned the mistake to him: the figure 5 was erased and a 3 substituted in its place, the 4 was also taken out and a 2 put in, making the sums in the account according to the monies paid. These alterations were made with the knowledge and approbation of Coale: for the credit account, as diminished, was carried on, from page to page, till the whole was finally balanced and settled by Coale in February 1814. Another account then commenced between the parties, in which no mistake occurred but one, which was, that Coale forgot to settle it. For this he was sued by Messrs. Tuck and Shepherd, and they obtained a verdict for the full amount at the last summer assizes. On the next day he preferred a bill of indictment against Tuck, for forging or altering the 5 into a 3, turning the 4 into a 2, turning the £50 into £30: another indictment for altering the 4 into a 2, turning the £40 into £20, and to make "assurance double sure" he preferred another against him for a fraud. He succeeded in persuading the Grand Jury that the sums so changed belonged to the current account, and were part of the monies for which a verdict had been obtained. On this Mr. Tuck was apprehended for forgery, but bailed by the Judge. Coale was afterwards taken in execution, and removed to the fleet prison, from whence he was now brought at the expense of Tuck, by a writ of Habeas Corpus, to substantiate his charge against him. The evidence of Coale the prosecutor himself, and the overpowering testimony of the account book (which was balanced after the alleged forgery was committed) were so strong, that the Judge gave a decided opinion, the prosecutor's counsel threw up their briefs, and the Jury honourably acquitted Mr. Tuck on all three indictments. Serjeant Pell applied on behalf of Mr. Tuck for copies of the indictments, on which to ground future proceedings against Coale, and the Judge immediately ordered them. Coale retired in the custody of the officer who brought him from London.

Salisbury and Winchester Journal 14 March 1818

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