

Widow Tricked by Grandson 1937



“It is about the worst case of its kind that we have had during my experience of this Court, and the Bench have no pity for you at all” said Mr J M Swayne, at Salisbury County Police-court on Friday, in sentencing Leonard Bertram Kerley, aged 28, of Winterbourne Earls, to imprisonment.

Kerley pleaded guilty to charges of stealing, by means of a trick, £154 18s, the property of Kate Porter, at Winterbourne, between September 1st 1936 and May 31st 1937; and obtaining by a false pretence with intent to defraud, 22 cheques value 3s 8d from Mrs Porter.

Superintendent H A Wright said the accused was the grandson of the unfortunate woman who was defrauded, and for the past six years he had been residing with her.

On the death of her husband, Mrs Porter had a banking account transferred to her, and she intended to draw about £1 a week for her requirements. For this purpose the sum of £50 was transferred from a deposit account to a current account. Mrs Porter had no knowledge of banking and she relied upon the accused to assist her. She signed cheques and he filled them out.

All went well until September last when Kerley persuaded his grandmother to sign blank cheques and to hand them to him. He told her that he was employed in a dance band, and was paid by cheque, but not having a banking account, he was unable to cash the cheques. He said that if she gave him blank, signed cheques, he would fill them out to the amount of the cheques paid to him by his employer and draw the money, and would pay his own cheques into her account.

Finally, the whole of the amount standing to the credit of Mrs Porter was exhausted and at the end of May, a cheque was returned marked “Refer to drawer.” There were three transfers from Mrs Porter’s deposit account to her current account and the total sum involved was £154 18s

In spite of the fact that the account was overdrawn, the accused continued to obtain cheques from his grandmother and to pass them in Salisbury. There were three outstanding charges with regard to the cashing of cheques after the account had been exhausted. These were in respect of obtaining clothes valued £8 8s, money value £2, and a motor car value £65. Apparently the accused sold the car at Southampton within a few days of purchase for £20 less than he gave for it. At the time of his arrest he had in his possession a cheque for £48, which bore Mrs Porter’s signature.

During the period of the offences, the accused had not been employed, as he told his grandmother, but he paid her £1 a week for his keep. Actually he was paying her with her own money. He (Superintendent Wright) had yet to learn of a more despicable action on the part of a relative.

Kerley told the magistrates he was very sorry for what he had done, and said he would pay Mrs Porter back if ever he had a chance of doing so.

The accused was sentenced to six months’ hard labour for the first offence, and one month for the second, the sentences to run consecutively.

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