



Crime News - Assaults

*Bishopstone
1875*

Assaults by Charles Cockhead

SWINDON POLICE COURT
Thursday
AN OLD BEAST

Charles Cockhead, a white haired man, 45, was charged with an indecent assault on a little girl named Sarah Martin, aged 12 years, at Bishopstone, on the 18th of March. Parties live at Starveall Farm, Bishopstone. On Monday the little girl was left at home alone, and went out into the garden. The prisoner watched the father away, and then went to the little girl and told her to get some straw down in the barn. She did as she was told, when he threw her on the straw, and pulled up her clothes. The child then narrated the most disgusting proceedings of the old beast. She threatened to tell her mother and father, and he defied her to do so. She got away from him but did not tell her parents.

The same week prisoner told her he had served another girl the same way, and then she told her mother and Mrs Pearce, **Ann Pearce**, a neighbour, gave evidence of the complaints made to her by the little girl. She went and spoke to the prisoner about it at once. He denied that he had injured her, but admitted laying down by the side of her. Another neighbour and P.C. Handcock gave similar evidence. The latter said when he charged prisoner with the assault he denied it, "but admitted" that he had kissed the child. He afterwards heard him ask the child's father to forgive him. On being called on for his defence, prisoner said it was not worth while to say anything, enough had been said already. He should not have touched the girl had she not thrown some straw at him. Supr. North said prisoner had a wife and six children. His son was convicted at this court a short time since for a similar assault on another little girl in a mill at Bishopstone.

There was a second charge against the prisoner of assaulting a child named **Kate Pearce**, aged 10 years, at the same place, on the 12th March. The old beast found the little girl in her father's cottage alone, and then served her in the same way as the girl Martin. Whilst he was there her mother came in. Prisoner, in defence, said it was the girl who commenced by pulling his hat off and then pushing him behind the door. The mother said she saw prisoner go into the house, and thinking he was there to long , she went to see what he was at, when she found him standing inside the door. The girl Martin had told her what he had done to her, and she then, questioned her own child, who told he the same as she had told the Bench.

The Chairman said there could be no doubt the children had told the truth, which, in fact, he had partly admitted. He had committed one of the worst crimes possible for a man to commit and to mark their sense of it they would commit him to gaol for four months on each case. At the expiration of that time he would also have to find sureties to keep the peace for six months, especially to chilfren.

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