

Giving a False Character 1899



Sidney Blandford, of Upton, East Knoyle, who did not appear, was charged before the Bournemouth Magistrates on Monday with offering himself as a servant to Sir Charles Cameron Shute, K.C.B., with a false character.

Sir Charles Shute stated that in May he inserted an advertisement in a newspaper for a footman. He received a letter from Sidney Blandford, dated from Tisbury, Wilts, applying for the situation, stating his age to be 22 years, that he had 14 months good character from his previous situation, and was well qualified for the duties.

In reply to a letter asking for particulars defendant wrote (dated 5th June) stating that his last situation was for 14 months with Mrs. Whales, of Newtown, near Tisbury, Wilts.

In consequence of what resulted from enquiries, witness placed the matter in the hands of the police, and he subsequently received a letter (dated 18th June) from the defendant saying he was very sorry for trying to get the situation in the way he did, but he hoped he (Sir Charles) would look over it, and he would promise it should never happen again.

It was, defendant added, the first time he had ever done such a thing. Considering the importance it was to the public that this kind of thing should be stopped, witness declined to give up the case.

Detective Sergeant Littlewood stated that he visited a place called Upton, near Tisbury, where he saw the defendant, who was employed as a farm labourer on a farm. He told him he was a police-sergeant, and that he had come to see him about letters he had written about a situation at Lady Shute's at Bournemouth.

Defendant said "I saw the advertisement in the paper, and wanting a situation, I wrote for it".

Witness asked him why he got his sister to give him a character, and he replied "The butler I lived with in my last place has left, and I don't know where he is". Asked why he did not apply to the gentleman in whose service he was, he said he could not do so as he had gone to America. Defendant further said that he knew he had done wrong, but if he was forgiven he would never do such a thing again.

Witness also saw Mrs. Whales, who lived in a small four-roomed cottage, rented for 2s a week, in a field. She told witness she was very sorry she wrote the letter giving her brother a character. She received a letter from Lady Shute, and her brother came in about the same time. He asked her to write him out a character, and she did so at his dictation. She hoped they would not prosecute her, as she did it without a thought. Witness added that the summons had been served on defendant by affidavit.

The Bench then proceeded to hear a charge against Mrs. Kate Whales, sister of the other defendant, of giving a false character in writing to Blandford. Defendant did not appear.

Sir Charles Shute produced a letter received from Mrs. Whales, dated from "Cherryfield, Newtown, near Tisbury," in which she described Blandford as a tall, smart, nice-looking young man, whom she had always found clean, honest, sober, and trustworthy, a good plate cleaner, always taking great care of everything under his charge, and being very obliging to his fellow servants.

A subsequent letter was received from the defendant, after enquiries had been made, expressing her sorrow for what she had done, and asking to be forgiven for what she did at her brother's request without a moments thought. Detective-Sergeant Littlewood repeated his evidence, and in reply to the Bench said Mrs. Whales's husband was a farm labourer earning 12s a week. The defendant Blandford had been in service at Harrow School as boots for about a month.

The Bench convicted in both cases, Blandford being fined £1 10s, including costs, or 21 days' imprisonment, and Mrs. Whales 16s, including costs, with the alternative of seven days' imprisonment.

The Chairman added that the Bench wished to thank Sir Charles Shute for his public spirit in bringing the case forward. It was a very disagreeable thing to have to appear in court in such a case, and the public were much indebted to him for doing so.

Sir Charles Shute: "Thank you. I did it to protect the public from a serious fraud".

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