

Theft from Innkeeper 1919



At Tisbury Police-court on Tuesday, before Sir Walter Grove and Mr. Hugh Morrison, M.P., a private in the Canadian Forestry Corps, Alexandre Lazimuch, was charged with stealing a cash-box containing £15 in gold, £60 in Treasury notes, and £10 in silver, the property of Ethel Sophia Staplehurst, of the Boot Inn, Tisbury, on December 23rd.

The accused is a Russian, and he stated that he did not understand English sufficiently to follow the evidence. One of his comrades acted as interpreter.

Mrs Staplehurst, whose husband is serving in the Army, stated that she knew the accused as a customer at the Boot Inn.

He came to the inn at 12 o'clock on December 23rd, and stayed till 2.30. He said he was going to Salisbury but had no money. He asked her to lend him some money until pay-day, and she lent him 5s.

Mrs Staplehurst re-opened for the evening at six o'clock, and returned to her kitchen. Whilst there she heard the bar door open, and immediately afterwards she heard the squeak of the cash drawer. She ran to the bar, but did not get there quickly enough to see anyone. She heard the back door shut. The cash-box had disappeared from the cash drawer. It was in the drawer when she closed the house at 2.30, and it contained £15 in gold, £60 in Treasury notes, £10 in silver, and a farthing. She gave information of her loss to the police.

By Supt. Hillier: When the accused was in the house at mid-day he occupied a chair in the little bar, which would give him a full view of the cash drawer. She had occasion to go to the drawer several times for change whilst he was sitting in the room. He would be able to see the cash-box when she opened the drawer.

Continuing, Mrs Staplehurst stated that P.S. Randolph had shown her some money taken from the prisoner, including a three penny -piece, a five shilling-piece, and a farthing. She identified the three penny-piece as her property by a hole and some peculiar dents in the coin. She had had it for a long time. There was a five shilling piece and a farthing among the gold in the centre compartment of the cash-box.

Mrs Victoria Haynes, wife of Albert Haynes, of 114 Hindon-road, Tisbury, stated that she knew the prisoner, and had invited him to stay at her house for his leave. He came on December 20th, and slept in the house three nights. He went out at noon on December 23rd, and returned a little before three. He stayed in the house till half-past five. She gathered from his conversation that afternoon that he had no money. He did not ask her for anything but she offered him sixpence, which he declined. Afterwards he looked so downhearted that she offered to lend him 2s, but he refused to take it. This was just before he went out in the evening.

P.S. Randolph stated that after making enquiries respecting the robbery at the Boot Inn he went to the Railway Station and discovered that a Canadian soldier had tried to purchase a ticket to Salisbury, but there was no train till 8.30. Witness went into the bar of the Arundell Arms, and saw the prisoner there. He kept observation on the man, and when he left followed him to High street. He asked the prisoner if he would give an account of himself during the day, and in reply he said he had been to Salisbury, and had returned by the 6.10 train.

Witness took prisoner to the Police-station and searched him. In his trousers and tunic pockets there were silver coins to the value of £12 7s 6d, and in the left leg of his trousers £5 in Treasury notes. After the prisoner had undressed witness found £6 10s in gold, a five shilling piece, and a farthing concealed in the band of his trousers. The three penny-bit with the hole in it was amongst the silver.

In reply to the Bench, P.S. Randolph said he had no difficulty in making the prisoner understand, and he could follow what the accused said. When he read the charge the prisoner made no reply. He informed prisoner that he had found the money concealed in the trouser band. He said "It is my money."

Towards the close of the case the prisoner acknowledged that he could understand the evidence without the assistance of the interpreter. He pleaded guilty, and made a statement by way of explanation of his conduct. His story was that he had lost or had been robbed of £25 at the inn, and seeing money in the drawer he took it, not knowing whether it was the landlady's or his own.

Supt. Hillier said the police had been able to recover only £24 2s 6¼d out of £85 stolen. The cash-box had not been found. The Chairman said it was open to the prisoner to render assistance if he cared to do so. Prisoner said the money found on him was all he took from the drawer. He denied that he stole the cash-box. An officer from the Canadian Forestry Corps said the accused's military record was satisfactory. There was only one minor entry against him during two years' service.

The prisoner was sentenced to six month's hard labour, and the Chairman said the Bench would recommend his deportation.
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