

GROSS CRUELTY TO A CHILD AT APPEBY.

LENIENT MAGISTRATES.

At the Swadlincote Petty Sessions, on Tuesday, before Colonel Milligan (in the chair), Messrs. Barber and Mansfield, Annie Thompson, wife of William Thompson, described as of Wigston, Appleby Magna, was summoned for having ill-treated Ada Louisa Toome, aged one year and 11 months, between the 20th November, 1896, and May 16 of the present year.—Inspector Ritchings, of the N.S.P.C.C., Leicester, was the complainant.—Mr. Henry Deane, of Loughborough, appeared on behalf of the society, and said the facts were that in November last the child, an illegitimate of a domestic servant, was placed with the defendant under certain arrangements as to maintenance. Last Christmas the mother noticed burns or sores on the arms of the child, and the defendant was asked to give some explanation, and she said that the sores were caused through a child putting a hot poker on the arms. Some time in April a postman would say that on several occasions he heard screams from the child, and the defendant using threats. Eventually the postman happened to have cause to go to the house, and he expostulated with the woman for her treatment of the child. She replied that she would serve him (the postman) the same way. Marks which were found on the child were no doubt the result of a number of blows. Eventually the child was removed. Defendant's explanation was that she put the child into a bath of hot water, which caused the bruises. That was impossible.

Inspector Ritchings stated that on the 24th May he made inquiries into the case, and first saw the child in the custody of Mrs. Wheeler. The child was in a very nervous and frightened condition, and on the ankle and hip bone of the right leg he found a number of bruises. The marks were of a yellowish colour, and probably ten days old. There was a small bruise on the left cheek, and one in the centre of the back. He found bruises on the left leg, but not so severe. He also found several scars on the body of the child, and two of them were probably an inch long, and of a month's standing. In consequence he saw the defendant, told her who he was, and asked for an explanation. In the course of a conversation she said she had never ill-treated the child beyond whipping it. He asked for an explanation as to the bruises, and she said that they were owing to putting the child in a bath when the water was too hot. She did not know it was too hot until it cried out. Defendant described the child as a "dirty beggar." In his opinion the marks on the body could not have been caused by the child having been placed in hot water. They were distinct bruises.

Emma Toome, the mother of the child, said about the second week in October last she arranged with the defendant to take charge of her baby while she was in service, and agreed to pay her 2s. per week, and provide the child with clothes. She managed nearly every Sunday to see the child, as she lived near. Witness noticed turns on the child's arms. She knew they were burns, because defendant said that her boy Willie, aged four, had caused them with the poker. She noticed nothing more until the 16th of last month, and then took it to her mistress. They examined it, and found that it was bruised very badly on the leg. Acting on her mistress's suggestion, she took it down to the defendant, who said that she had put it in hot water. On the Tuesday following the Sunday she took the child away. Later it was taken to Mrs. Wheeler. Witness saw defendant some days later, and referred to the bruises on the child, but she made no answer.

Wm. Smith, postman of Appleby, said that he had known defendant about a year. He passed her house frequently in the week. He remembered, about two months ago, hearing a child's scream, and on occasions when he called at defendant's house he heard her shouting in a passion, and the child screaming. He heard her say, "You little devil, I'll make you sick." The child was not crying as if it wanted something. It was crying as if it had got something. (Laughter). He remonstrated with her, and she replied that she would serve him the same. On the 18th of May Mrs. Prince showed him a child which was black and blue from hip to ankle, and he then mentioned to Mrs. Prince what he had heard when passing the defendant's house.

Mr. George Moore, J.P., stated that he was shown the child, and should certainly say it was not nourished. The right side of its leg was covered with bruises from hip to ankle. The bruises appeared to be three or four days' old, and in his opinion had been caused by considerable violence having been used. He communicated with the N.S.P.C.C.

Mrs. Sarah Ann Wheeler, of Appleby Magna, wife of James Wheeler, said that on the 18th May she took the child to her house. She found bruises on the legs, head, and body. There were scars on the arms. The child was very thin, and weighed 18lbs.

Defendant, in answer to the case, said that when she received the child she saved it from "starvation, death, and dirt," and she also befriended its mother.

This concluded the case, and the Chairman, in giving the decision of the Bench, said they had no hesitation in finding defendant guilty. The bruises testified to her cruelty. She would have to pay a fine of 20s. and costs, or 14 days.

The woman was unable to meet the fine and costs, and the Bench liberated her, allowing her until the 20th June to pay the amount.

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