



Marden - Petty Sessions Martha Smith

(appeared in Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette Thursday 22nd August 1844)

Tasting Forbidden Fruit. - Martha Smith was charged by Charles Curtis, a police-officer, with stealing apples from the garden of the Rev. Mr. Bliss of Marden. Mrs Smith, had it seems, viewed for some time with longing eyes the tempting fruit, which hung so fresh and rosy in the garden of her pastor. She had (she said) looked on the forbidden apples, and could not rest till she had tasted them.

By day and night they haunted her, till goaded by desire she could go unsatisfied no longer, and two o'clock on Sunday morning found her in the garden of the rev. curate. Another moment, and "she seized a twig, and up the tree she went." But lo! (like her mother Eve), scarce had she tasted 'ere she fell-in the policeman's arms: for perceiving her wicked ascent, with most provoking gallantry the ready official was instantly in attendance to receive her. What followed, if the woman's statement is to be believed and it was neither denied by Curtis nor the Rev. Mr. Bliss (to whom she had shewn her bruises) was not very creditable to the policeman, either as a man or an officer: for, instead of taking the woman (who was in a state which not admit of rough usage) quietly into custody, he struck her across the head and legs in a most scandalous manner, till her cries brought out her husband to her assistance, who seizing a grub-hoe, threatened to bring it on the policeman's pate if he did not release his wife.

For this he had to pay 18s.6d and Martha was debited in the same sum for her visit to the apple-tree. The Magistrates informed the defendant that she make take out a summons, if she thought proper, against the policeman, which they would hear at their next sitting.

