

Extraordinary Letter from a Curate 1887

A remarkable charge of assault came before the County Magistrates at Salisbury on Tuesday, the defendant being a boy, aged eight, named Charles Sutton, the son of a farmer, and the complainant the Reverend R.A. Morgan, curate at Winterbourne Gunner.

When the complainant was passing along the public road a stone came over an embankment, but did not strike him. He could not at the time see the defendant, but he went up the slope and saw him and two other lads. He then ascertained that the stone was thrown by the defendant, and he subsequently wrote the following extraordinary letter to the boy's father:

Post-office Winterbourne Gunner, August 10



Dear Sir,

As I passed up the road yesterday evening a stone was thrown over the hedge at me by one of your boys. I shall not tolerate such conduct, and after the demonstration of your own profound ignorance and want of breeding on last Saturday, I have decided that if you will not teach your boys better manners (at least by precept, since you fail to do so by example), I shall. Unless within seven days you send a full public apology, and an undertaking to prevent any repetition of a like offence to my lawyer through your own (Messrs Cobb and Smith), such apology and undertaking to be approved by my lawyer, I shall cause a summons to be issued. You should bear in mind that there is a great gulf between your position and mine, and if you do not teach your children how to conduct themselves properly, you must, like other parents similarly situated, take the consequences.

If you elect to give apology, etc., please to notify your intention of doing so before the hour of 5.30 this evening, in which case you will, of course, pay my lawyer's fees for approval of same, otherwise I shall conclude that you prefer to have the matter decided in court; and I shall refer it to Mr Warner by this evening's post.

Yours truly, R.A. Morgan, Clerk

It not having been proved that the stone was thrown at Mr Morgan intentionally, the Magistrates dismissed the case and the clergyman had to pay £1 6s 6d costs, including £1 1s 0d as a fee to the solicitor for the defence.

Western Times Thursday 25 August 1887

The Curate and the Farmer's Boy

The Rev Edward G Griffith, Rector of Winterbourne Gunner, writing to the Editor of the Daily Telegraph, says:



I grieve to have to request a corner in your impression on Thursday last, to which my attention has been called. Far be it from me to attempt to palliate or defend one word of the wretched letter produced in Court by my most ill-advised curate, and upon which you comment in a manner no less able than amusing.

My object rather is to assure your readers that my curate, Mr Morgan, whatever his faults may be - and who has them not? - is as free as anyone can well be from the detestable and hideous vice of either personal or priestly arrogance and pride. 'I have been young, and now I am old' and I think I can safely say that it has never been my

good fortune to meet with any clergyman more willing to associate with and to befriend the poorest man on earth than Mr Morgan.

I trust, sir, we shall all remember what we learned in our Latin grammar in our boyhood, that "Nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit" as well as the wise apophthegm of our great poet, "If we all had our deserts, who would escape a whipping?" Not you, sir, nor I, it is to be feared; nor even, perhaps, my Lord Mayor nor my Lord Bishop.

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