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July 31<sup>st</sup> 1903

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**ROMSEY COUNTY BENCH.—MONDAY.**

Before the Right Hon. Evelyn Ashley (in the chair) and C. Vandrey, Esq.

**A PRISONER IN LOCK.**—*Albert Woods*, labourer, Broughton, was brought up in custody charged with feloniously entering a dwelling house in the occupation of *Welhelmina Tucker*, at Broughton, with intent to commit a felony between the hours of 11.30 on the night of the 22nd July and 6.30 on the morning of the 23rd.—*Dorothea Edwards*, residing at the Lindens, Broughton, a house in the occupation of *Miss Tucker*, said on Wednesday night, the 22nd, she went to bed about 11 o'clock. She was in the habit of leaving her window open. At 11.30 she was aroused by a scrambling noise. She looked towards the window and saw a figure crouching on the sill. She got out of bed and went to her sister's room and told her. They returned as quickly as possible with a light, but saw no one there. She went back to her sister's room. About 12.30 they both woke up and heard screaming coming from the direction of the servant's bedroom, and she came rushing towards the witness' sister's room. She told them there was a man in her room and that he had put a hand over her mouth. They shut the door of the room and locked it, and after, she should think, a quarter of an hour's time they opened the window and called for help. Some neighbours came to their help, and *P.C. Andrews* shortly after arrived. The prisoner had been engaged to work at the Lindens a day and a half and sometimes two days a week. He was to come on the following day, Thursday, but did not do so. When she woke up it was too dark to recognise anyone.—The Chairman congratulated *Miss Edwards* on the way in which she had given her evidence.—*Eva Shaw*, servant at the Lindens, said she went to bed about 10 o'clock on the night of the 22nd. She left both her windows open. The same night she was roused by hearing something moving about her room. She first thought it was a cat. It first went to an unoccupied bed in the room. She turned over and was again going to sleep when she felt a hand under the clothes touch her on the leg. She screamed, and a hand was placed over her mouth to stop her; but she jumped from the bed and ran to her mistress' bedroom. *Miss Edwards* was there, and they locked the door. She could not discern anything till she saw someone pass between her bed and one of the windows.—*Thomas Woods*, labourer, of Broughton, and father of the prisoner, said his son had been lodging at his house and was in the habit of sleeping there every night; but on Wednesday night witness did not see him there and the bed was shown to have been unoccupied. On the morning of the 23rd about a quarter past four *P.C. Andrews* brought him an eleven rung ladder, which he identified as his property. It was usually kept beneath an apple tree close to his back door. Witness had not seen the prisoner till that morning.—*P.C. Andrews*, stationed at Broughton, said on Wednesday night, the 22nd, he received certain information from *Miss Tucker* in consequence of which he proceeded to the Lindens, reaching there at a quarter to two on the morning of the 23rd. When he arrived he saw a ladder raised to the servant's window, which was about 10ft. from the ground. The ladder was about 9ft. long. Witness, with a man named *Blake*, entered the house and searched it throughout, but failed to find anyone there. Whilst in the servant's bedroom he saw a lot of confetti (produced) both in the room and on the window sill. He traced the confetti from the windows of the servant's and *Miss Edwards*' rooms to the gate leading to the prisoner's father's premises and to the apple tree, underneath which the ladder was supposed to have been. He then took the ladder to *Mr. Woods*, who identified it as his property. He saw the prisoner the previous evening about twenty past ten and he was covered with confetti. He searched for the prisoner and found that he had not slept at home that night. He then reported the facts to the superintendent at Romsey police station.—By the prisoner: Witness saw the prisoner at the flower show on the evening of the 22nd. He appeared

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to have had some drink, which surprised him, and thought he was a teetotaler.—Both Miss Edwards and Miss Shaw said they did not miss anything from their rooms nor found anything put ready to be moved.—P.S. Vincent said on Thursday night, the 23rd, at 9 p.m. he received a report of the case, and in consequence watched the trains to Horsebridge. At 9 o'clock he took the prisoner from a carriage of a train going from Southampton to Horsebridge. He charged him with entering a bedroom at the house of Miss Tucker, the Lindens, Broughton, about one o'clock that morning with intent to commit a felony. Prisoner said "That's a lie." Witness took him to the police station, where he said "I met a girl named Rose King at the flower show, Broughton, last night. I was with her at 9 p.m. for about a quarter of an hour. We left and met again, by appointment, in Dog's Lane about half-past ten. I took her to Mottisfont and left her about half-past one. I then walked on into Romsey, and went into the Railway View and had two pints of beer about 6.30, and then went on the drink again until now." Prisoner was then suffering from the influence of drink. On the following morning he made enquiries at Mottisfont for the girl King, and found she had left Mottisfont in April last and went to Taunton. He could not trace her since that time, and he could not find anyone at Mottisfont of the name of King. On Sunday morning at 11 a.m. prisoner said "I want to write a letter, sergeant, and to make a statement to the police and magistrates." Witness said "If you make a statement I shall produce it in evidence either for or against you." He said "That's what I want." Witness gave the prisoner some paper, pen and ink, and he wrote the statement produced and signed it. This was read, and was to the effect that he had been drinking for two or three days, and that after going to the flower show he got a ladder, put it against the window of Miss Tucker's house, and fell into the room. He was sorry he had given way to drink, and if he got out of it he would give no more trouble to anyone.—Eva Shaw, recalled, said the man did not try to prevent her from leaving the room, and he did not come after her. The door was on the other side of the bed to the window.—The Chairman said this was a very difficult case and was one where the prisoner ought to be punished, for it was an outrageous thing to do (hear, hear), to go into bedrooms frightening everyone. Let him mark intoxication was no excuse, and they would not let him off because he was drunk, for that in many ways was an aggravation. The Act of Parliament said "Whosoever shall enter a dwelling-house at night time with intent to commit a felony"; but they could not commit him for burglary, which they might have done had not the window been open. Had he lifted a latch or so on they should have done so. As ministers of justice they regretted there was no evidence of intent to commit a felony. Prisoner had an opportunity when he first entered the room to take what he liked, but he took nothing and moved nothing. In the maid's room he took nothing, and, therefore, as far as felonious intent of stealing was concerned they could not convict him. They could not say that the prisoner intended to commit a forcible act with the girl, as it was natural that he should put his hand over her mouth to prevent her screaming. They regretted it very, very much; but they had to decide the case according to law, and therefore it would be dismissed.—Prisoner, who appeared very much surprised at the turn of events, then left the dock.

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