

August 10 1864

SELLING A WIFE FOR A SHILLING At the Liverpool Assizes, on Monday, Hannah Green was indicted for marrying Samuel Thompson, on the 7th March 1861, her husband, Thomas Parker, puddler, Northampton, then being alive. Another indictment was laid, charging her with marrying Henry New. Considerable amusement was created by the examination of the witnesses in this case. The prisoner had been married to Thompson, from which time it appeared that he lived with her, ill-using her frequently. **Rachel Woodward**, a boatwoman on the canal, proved that Thompson had often threatened to sell her, and did so for a shilling at "Brummagem" Fair, about nine years since, *selling her with a halter round her neck*. Both parties were agreeable to the sale. It was before her last marriage with New. Samuel Thompson bought her. She married New in October, in 1859. New died shortly after she married him, being very ill at the time she married him. When taken into custody, prisoner said she had done what she had done with her first husband's consent. Mr Swetenham urged, for the defence, that the prisoner had not been married to a man named Parker, puddler, of Northampton, but one named **Sparkes**, boatman of Runcorn, and that she had not been legally married, but only lived with him as his wife, and called him "her husband". His Lordship, in summing up, said that the notion that a man could rid himself of his uncomfortable helpmate by taking her to the market with a rope around her neck was formerly very prevalent; but he thought it had fallen out of date before now. It was a notion that the minds of ignorant people should be by all means disabused of. The jury returned a verdict of not guilty.

January 27 1870

SHOCKING BRUTALITY TO A WIFE

Yesterday, in the Wolverhampton Police Court, before the Stipendiary, a boatman named **Joseph Mincher** (44) was charged with assaulting and threatening his wife, Martha, a woman about 30 years of age, who was married in Shropshire when she was 16 years old, and who has had ten children, five of whom are still living. The woman's face had been shockingly disfigured by her husband in beating her on the previous evening, but she now said that not her husband but herself was to blame.

The Stipendiary (to the prisoner) : Look at your wife, and see what you have done to her.

Witness : It was my own fault.

The Stipendiary : What have you got to say for making your wife such a figure?

The Prisoner: She was drinking and tipsy all day, and the children were undressed.

The Stipendiary, to the complainant : Were you tipsy?

Witness : Yes, sir.

The Stipendiary, to the prisoner : Go on, have you anything else to say?

The Prisoner: No, sir.

Police-constable Thomas Smith was called, and deposed as follows:- Last night, about eight o'clock, I was on duty in Southampton Street, near the locks. I heard cries of "Murder" and "Police". I went down to the lockside. The prisoner's boat was in the pound. Mincher and his wife had just come out of the cabin. There was a rope around her neck.

Prisoner : No such thing.

The constable produced the rope, which was a piece of a boat line, of the ordinary size.

Continuing his evidence, witness said that the prisoner with one hand held his wife by the hair of the head, and with the other he attempted to lift her over the side of the boat. He said, "I'll drown her like a --- dog". I pulled him on to the wharf.

The Stipendiary : Were the woman's eyes like they now are?

Witness : Yes.

The Stipendiary : Was she drunk?

Witness : Yes.

The Stipendiary : Was the rope tight?

Witness : No, sir, Part of it was wrapped up in the hand with which he held her hair.

The Stipendiary : Now, what have you got to say, Mincher?

The Prisoner : Nothing.

The Stipendiary : Joseph Mincher, the tale that has been told is as bad as it can be. I need not repeat it. It must have struck everyone who has heard it as a most terrible tale. The policeman interrupted you, and saved you from probably committing murder. What your intention was is perfectly clear from your words. You were going to put your wife into the canal, and even if you did not intend to drown her, it would have been almost impossible for her to escape in her drunken condition. When a woman is helpless is the time when, above all others, a man is called upon to withhold his hand. Your wife, no doubt, ought not to have got drunk; but that's not the smallest excuse for your conduct. The sentence of the Court is that you be imprisoned and kept to hard labour for six months, and when you leave prison to find two sureties in £25 each, and to enter into your own recognisances for £50, to keep the peace for a year.