

**EXTRAORDINARY BIGAMY CASE  
TERRIBLE CHARGE AGAINST A WIFE**

**John Hickson**, flatman in the employment of the Manchester Ship Canal, living at Northwich, was indicted for bigamy. Mr Lance Bentley prosecuted, and Mr Colt Williams defended. Mr Bentley said prisoner was married on July 7<sup>th</sup> 1861, at Little Budworth, and he and his wife lived together upwards of thirty years, six children being born. Five years ago, he left his wife, and had not done anything to maintain her since. In July last year prisoner went through the form of marriage with Catherine Barton Eckersley at Birkenhead, his first wife then being alive. = Among the witnesses called by the prosecution was Joseph Hickson, son of the prisoner, who said that his father had said to him that he wished he would leave his mother, and that he wished she was dead. They did not want any maintenance from their father, and had simply brought this case to clear themselves. - Prisoner went into the witness box and stated that he had been 40 years in the employment of the Bridgewater Navigation and the Manchester Ship Canal. Two or three years after he was first married he came home one Saturday night to find that his wife had broken up the home, sold the furniture and eloped with a man. She stopped away about two months, and he forgave her and took her back. When his son was 15 months old she eloped with another man, and on her return he forgave her. One night when he returned home he found a man in his wife's bedroom, and he threw him downstairs and beat him. His wife ran out of the house in her night attire. On another occasion he caught another man in the house, and said, "Now, James, you and I for it". The man brought a chair down on the back of his neck, and then tried to get through the window, but witness caught him, and getting him on the floor jabbed him in the face with the door key. Witness took his wife back after this and lived with her for some years comfortably, and then she took to drink, and notwithstanding that there was plenty of money coming into the house pawned his clothes. One day she threatened that she would put some of Mrs Maybrick's white powders into him. The reason he stayed with her so long was that he was fond of his children. Simeon Fogg, brother-in-law of prisoner, corroborated. - Catherine B Eckersley, the second wife, said prisoner had been very good to her. She knew at the time of her marriage to him that he was a married man. Prisoner never smoked, drank or used bad language. - His Lordship: That is an extraordinary character (Laughter). - An agent to the Manchester Ship Canal named Arthan, gave prisoner an excellent character. - Mr Colt Williams urged that there were very strong mitigatory circumstances. - Mr Lance Bentley said that unfortunately the first wife could not give evidence else she would have denied the prisoner's statements. - Prisoner was found guilty. - His lordship deferred sentence.

**SENTENCES OF BIGAMISTS**

His lordship ordered the prisoners, who on the previous day were either found guilty of, or pleaded guilty to, bigamy to be brought up together, and he addressed them, pointing out the serious nature of the offence, remarking that by law the sentence of seven year's penal servitude or two year's hard labour might be legally passed for it. He sentenced Thomas Johnson, of Disley, whose excuse was that he sold his first wife for 2s 6d, to six calendar months. In the case of William Edge, ex Railway Inspector, his lordship said he did not want to harrow his feelings, because he believed him to be a thoroughly respectable man. If he followed his own sentiment he should like to discharge him on his own recognizances, but he could not do it, because he must not do it. He hoped his words would reach the ears of those who paid his pension, for he hoped that they would not deprive him of his pension in consideration of his excellent character. He would not degrade him by sentencing him to hard labour, but would sentence him to three month's imprisonment as an offender in the second division. Referring to the case of John Hickson, flatman, of Northwich, his lordship said it was the most difficult of the three to deal with. He felt as sorry for prisoner as he did for Edge. He appeared to have had a tremendous amount of ground for leaving his wife, at all events, many years ago. He sentenced him to two month's as an offender in the second class.