

Manx Notes 407 (2019)

“ROMPING” ON HALLOWEEN”

(1873)

(1)

THOMAS RADCLIFFE *v.* MARY ANN MCGREGOR, ALFRED GOLDSMITH, MARGARET KENNAUGH, JAMES DUGDALE, and THOMAS QUAYLE.—Suit brought for unlawfully and wilfully damaging real and personal property, *viz.*, the walls, doors, and windows of a certain dwelling house belonging to complainant, in the village of Andreas, on the 11th of Nov. last contrary to the 6th clause of the 3rd section of the Summary Jurisdiction Act. Mr Cruickshank for plaintiff, and Mr LaMothe for defendants. This case appeared a very paltry one, and forcibly reminded us of Burn’s “Halloween”:

Some merry friendly countra folks,
Together did convene,
To turn their nits, an’ pon their stocks,
An’ haud their Halloween;
Fu’ blythe that night.

From what we could gather from the evidence (a host of witnesses) it appeared that the cottage belonged to Mr Thomas Radcliffe, of Ballaradcliffe, and that it was getting cleaned down and repaired preparatory to being occupied by Mr John Sayle, whose wife, Sarah, was inside at the time, when these young women, seeing a light in, struck the door; not with a cabbage head (as it should be, and always has been) but with a turnip, which caused great consternation and alarm to those inside. Mrs Sayle informed her husband (who had not been in at the time) of the circumstance, and whilst doing so another bang came on the door. Mr Sayle at once went in pursuit, and captured Mary Ann McGregor, who at once confessed to her guilt. John Sayle stated how he had got hold of the runaway, the terrible blow the door received, and that Alfred Goldsmith and Mary Kennaugh were in the company. Thomas Radcliffe, owner of the cottage, considered the door, &c, had been damaged, which concluded the plaintiffs case.—Mr LaMothe called Benjamin Radcliffe, who had been the last occupier of the cottage, and asked him if he had seen the door since he left. He replied that he had seen it to-day and examined it minutely, and he could not see any more damage than when he left it, except a crack in one of the panels, which might be a little longer, and that might be caused by it being hard to open and shut. The hinges and catch were bad. I don’t think it is a farthing less than when I left it.—Wm. Skinner was called, and said he was in the smithy yesterday, and John Sayle was there when he stated that the girls did no harm, but he thought they should not be allowed to go romping about, as they were so near the church and chapel.—We believe there were other witnesses, who were not examined.—Mr Cruickshank very ably reminded the Bench that a breach of the law had been

committed. Mr LaMothe, on the other hand, contended that there was no damage done; and even it so it being an old custom, it no doubt could have been made up again without bringing it in this form.—Their Worships, after a brief consultation, *non press'd* as to defendant Quayle, and dismissed without costs as to Dugdale. The other defendants were fined one farthing and costs.

[Ramsey and District] Magistrates' Court: Saturday, Nov. 29, 1873."
Mona's Herald 3 December 1873: 2f.

(2)

The time of the magistrates Colonel Thelluson and E.C. Farrant, Esq., was for a long period occupied in trying a suit brought by Thomas Radcliffe, of Andreas, against four or five young persons for throwing turnips instead of cabbages (which are the customary missiles on such occasions) against his house door on Halloween. Nothing nor anybody seem to have been injured, but complainant objected to girls "romping near a church or chapel," and took this method of explaining the wickedness of such conduct. He did not, however, receive such assistance from the magistrates, who considered a farthing and costs a sufficient punishment for so grave an offence. It is positively shocking to hear that young people could be guilty of "romping" on Halloween, and we hope Mr Radcliffe will give a public lecture on the impropriety of such conduct. No doubt, the lecture would be well attended.

"[Ramsey and the North] Petty Sessions." *Isle of Man Times* 13 December 1873: 5c.

"Romping' on Halloween" were James Dugdale, Alfred Goldsmith, Margaret Kennaugh, Mary Ann McGregor, and Thomas Quayle and the object of their turnips was the door of John and Sarah Sayle's cottage, owned by Thomas Radcliffe, of Ballaradcliffe. McGregor was not as able as the others it seems to make a speedy getaway and was caught by Sayle who appears also to have recognised Goldsmith and Kennaugh as being with her. The names of Dugdale and Quayle were later added as being party to the evening's proceedings. In court, Radcliffe was less concerned about the damage to the door than to the impropriety—as he saw it—of "girls 'romping near a church or chapel.'" The correspondents for the newspapers were more struck by the use of a turnip instead of a cabbage—"not with a cabbage head (as it should be, and always has been)"—than the "romping" about aspect of the case. This is not Hop-tu-Naa as the evening is now known—but "Thump the Door Night," when cabbages were the weapon of choice and mischief the object.

