

The Hobarton Mercury

Wednesday 30 July 1856

Absent Seamen

Yesterday Charles Wilson and William Hollister, seamen of the Morayshire, were charged at the Police Office, with absenting themselves from the ship without leave, on the previous day, and before the ship was placed in security.

Mr Roberts stated, that the Captain judged the men a good character for general conduct, but believed, they had been led away by the man, Cox, who had been tried for assaulting the mate; he merely wished, that they should know the state of the law on the subject.

The men plead'd not guilty, and said, they wanted to lay a complaint against the Captain; they asked his permission to go on shore, when he told them to go to the devil. Captain Mathers was then sworn and proved that the men left the ship about two o'clock, were absent more than an hour: he had given them no permission. Mr Thomas, the Chief Mate, also proved, that the men were absent, and that he had not given them leave to do so: they did not return until after the ship was placed in security. Mr Burgess told the defendants, that they had rendered themselves liable to forfeit, each, a months' pay, but as the Captain had interceded in their behalf, they were discharged to the ship.

Assault on board the Morayshire

Yesterday at the Police Office, John Cox, a seaman on board the Morayshire, was charged before Mr. Burgess and Captain Bateman with assaulting John George Thomas, the chief mate on board that vessel on the previous night.

The chief mate stated that the defendant rushed into the cabin at half-past 11 o'clock, swearing and saying that he would "do" for him; witness ordered him out, when he rushed upon him, pulled out some of his hair, (which he produced), and struck him several blows; he was not sober, and, being over powered, was given in charge to a constable: witness had given him no provocation.

Mr. Roberts, who appeared for the complainant, stated that Captain Mathers was under heavy penalties to the Sydney Government, not to allow any communication between the crew and the Pitcairn Islanders, and was obliged to keep a tight hand over his men, which made them dissatisfied. Constable George, of the Water Police, deposed to receiving the defendant from the chief mate; he (witness) produced the hair which had been torn from the mate's head, and stated that he saw the defendant tear some more from his whiskers; his conduct was so violent that witness was compelled to handcuff him.

The defendant said that the hair produced was pulled from his own head, and stated also that as he was being brought to the watch house he dropped ten sovereigns; he wished to have all the ship's company called, as they witnessed the occurrence. George Heald, the steward, was then called, who corroborated the chief mate's statement, and said there were two drunken men in the cabin who wanted to take the defendant away. Captain Mathers informed the Bench that the defendant was a sort of sea-lawyer, and the spokesman of the crew; he jumped overboard in Sydney, attempting to desert. He was sentenced to twelve weeks' imprisonment with hardlabour.

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