

**THE CASE AGAINST MRS SARAH WORGAN, WIFE OF DR JOHN WORGAN, FOR
ADULTERY &C.**

Libel heard in the Consistory Court of the Diocese of London June 13th and July the 17th 1768¹

Mr John Worgan, organist, and Miss Sarah Mackelcan were married September the 1st 1753. They first became acquainted by a brother of Mr Worgan's teaching her music.²

The manner in which Mrs Worgan's adulterous conduct was first discovered is as follows:

About Christmas 1767 Mr Worgan was seized with a pleuritic fever and his life being thought in great danger, his sister, Mrs Gregg,³ came up from Betchworth, in Surry, to attend him, with her companion, Miss Jones. Mrs Gregg did not lie in Mr Worgan's house in Milman-street at night, but came every day; but Miss Jones staid in the house seven or eight days. From Miss Jones's first going to the house, the two maid-servants constantly complained to her of Mrs Worgan's bad management; that bills were brought every day to the house which she secreted from her husband, and that as soon as he recovered he would be arrested, that though Mr Worgan allowed handsomely, his wife squandered away the money in other things; and that it was a pity their master was not acquainted with his wife's bad conduct.

All this information Miss Jones repeated to Mrs Gregg, not thinking it prudent to communicate it to Mr Worgan during his illness.

Mr Worgan had not the least suspicion of his wife's abandoned behaviour, for in the summer of 1767 he said to Miss Jones, that he looked upon his wife to be a very virtuous, sober, good woman.

Ann Nichols deposed, that about eight years ago she lived with Mr Worgan as a servant for about a month;⁴ that [Robert] Rowe often dined at Mr Worgan's, and frequently came to see her mistress in Mr Worgan's absence, and supped with her alone; by his coming in that manner, she and the other servants suspected them of an improper connexion; one evening when the parlour bell rung, as she was coming down stairs, she opened the door almost as soon as the bell rung, when she saw Rowe turned round, and putting, as she verily believed, his shirt into his breeches, and at the same time, both he and Mrs Worgan appeared to be very much confused and hot, from which she believed they had committed the foul crime of adultery together.

Katherine Bates, about six years ago,⁵ lived as a servant with Mr Worgan for about nine months; that during that time Robert Rowe was employed by Mr Worgan as one of his assistants, Mr Worgan being an organist. Rowe frequently dined and supped with Mrs Worgan in the absence of

¹ Extracted from F. Plowden, *Crim. Con. Biography: or Celebrated trials in the Ecclesiastical and Civil Courts for adultery and other crimes connected with incontinency, from the period of Henry the Eighth to the present time* (M. Lys, London 1830), 332-41. The text has been reordered to place the testimony in the chronology of the events described.

² This is almost certainly James Worgan (1713-53), organist and composer.

³ Mary Gregg, née Worgan (1717-74); married Liell Gregg in 1753. She was an accomplished musician, being appointed organist at St Dunstan's in the East before her marriage, in succession to her brother, James.

⁴ i.e. in about 1760.

⁵ i.e. in about 1762.

her husband, who on Sundays was at some churches in the city as organist, and on weekdays in summer at Vauxhall; on such occasions no servant was suffered to wait at dinner or supper; sometimes a child of Mr Worgan's about three years old was with them;⁶ Rowe also often came to drink tea when Mr Worgan was at Vauxhall, the evidence believes unknown to Mr Worgan. One Sunday when Mr Worgan was in the city all day, Rowe officiated for him at St John's chapel, Bedford Row, and dined with Mrs Worgan; soon after dinner this evidence hearing the child cry, and as she thought her mistress call, she attempted to go into the parlour, but found the door fastened; Mrs Worgan came and opened it, her cap and neck handkerchief almost off, her apron greatly tumbled, and Rowe and she appeared in a very great heat and confusion. She took the child downstairs and asked him what Rowe had been doing to his mamma, and he said Rowe had been kissing her, and putting his hands about her neck, that soon after Rowe and Mrs Worgan went to St John's chapel to attend evening service, Mrs Worgan first desiring her to sweep the carpet and clean the room by their return; that having great suspicion that Rowe and Mrs Worgan had been lying with each other, she was attentive to every thing that might discover it; that on sweeping the room, she observed on the floor what convinced her that Rowe and Mrs Worgan had on that day committed the crime of adultery together. Several times after when Rowe and Mrs Worgan dined together alone, the evidence on going into the room has observed them both in great heats, Mrs Worgan's handkerchief almost off her neck, and her clothes greatly tumbled; and that towards the latter part of the time this evidence lived with Mrs Worgan, she said Mrs Worgan was brought to bed,⁷ and after she had lain in about three days, Rowe came up into the bedchamber, where she was then in bed, and kissed her in the presence of this evidence.

William Bromfield, Esq. of Conduit-street, surgeon, deposed that in July or August 1764, Mr Worgan applied to him for advice in a secret complaint, which Mr Worgan said he was sure could not be so, unless he had got it from his wife, who had been ill for a long time. Mrs Worgan desired him to keep it a secret from her husband, which he promised to do, and did for some time; he gave both of them proper medicines, and cured them both.

Charles Webb, gentleman, aged thirty-eight years, deposed, that he was intimately acquainted with Robert Rowe, that being with him on a Sunday morning at St John's chapel, in Bedford Row, after chapel was over Rowe said to him, "Come, you shall go over and see Mrs Worgan, and you shall dine with me there." This evidence said, he must go home to dinner, but he would just go over and see Mrs Worgan. They went over, and Rowe introduced him to Mrs Worgan as an acquaintance of his, but he only staid a few minutes, having promised Mrs Worgan to dine with her the next Sunday. Before this introduction to Mrs Worgan this evidence had often been told by Rowe that he could do what he pleased with Mr Worgan's house, by asking whom he pleased to dine there, and in all respects to make it his own; and also said, he had often been *concerned* with Mrs Worgan, particularly in a coach. He went, according to promise, to dine with Mrs Worgan; her husband was absent; between coming from chapel and dinner time, Mrs Worgan took him upstairs to shew a harpsichord of her husband's, Rowe accompanied them, and when in a little room, a study, next the

⁶ The male child was probably Richard Worgan, born in 1759

⁷ James Worgan, seventh child and fifth son of John and Sarah Worgan, was born in 1762.

dining room, Rowe kissed Mrs Worgan, and put his hand into her breast; she did not appear in the least angry or surprised at his freedom, but said, with a kind of a sneer, “fy, Mr Rowe.” From this slight notice, he concluded Rowe had been accustomed to take such freedoms with her. About three weeks after, on a Sunday afternoon, in passing the door, Rowe asked him to go in; he did so, Mrs Worgan was alone, they all went to the chapel, and after service returned to Mr Worgan’s; that either before or after they went to the chapel, Rowe took very great freedoms with Mrs Worgan, pulling her about, and kissing her face and bosom, her handkerchief being loose upon her neck, and attempted to put his hands up her petticoats, which last she prevented by getting away. Mrs Worgan, at this time, seemed to be very angry, and told Rowe he ought to be ashamed of himself; she seemed greatly affected and burst into tears, on which Rowe said to her, “*Damn you, madam, you know you are a whore.*” At the same time he kept pulling her about and kissing her, and putting his hands into her bosom; Mrs Worgan then said to this evidence, “Mr Webb, you see his behaviour and hear what he says, pray take me from him.” Upon which he told Rowe his behaviour was very bad, that he would not stay any longer, accordingly he came away, and Rowe with him. In going home he told Rowe, it was a shame he should behave so to Mrs Worgan, as he had a family at home, to which he replied, “Damn it, I can do anything with her.” Meaning, he could have the carnal use of her at any time. This evidence also saw Rowe kiss Mrs Worgan in the organ loft, in St John’s chapel, during service.

All this happened but a short time before Rowe was arrested,⁸ for this evidence deposed it was about twelve months before Rowe’s death; now Rowe was a twelve month in the Fleet Prison.

Mrs Sarah La Lauze, wife of Charles La Lauze,⁹ of Leicester Square, became acquainted with Mr Worgan by his teaching her daughter music. Mr Worgan had declined taking any money for instructing her, and on that account the evidence thought herself obliged to him, therefore she visited Mrs Worgan and an intimacy commenced. That about July or August 1767, she went to pay a morning visit to Mrs Worgan at Mr Worgan’s house, Milman-street, Bedford Row, Mr Worgan then being out of town for his health; that Mrs Worgan seemed greatly discomposed and low spirited, and on being asked what was the matter with her, she said, she had been drawn in to do a very foolish thing, which was to lend Arthur Kimpland, a pupil of Mr Worgan’s, thirty pounds unknown to her husband; that to replace the money, she had pawned a silver tea chest, and other plate, for which she had paid ten guineas interest.

Richard Synge, of White Cross-street, Cripplegate, upholder, deposed; that he was well acquainted with Robert Rowe, that he died about a year ago in the Fleet Prison, being confined for some money concerns that passed between him and Mrs Worgan; that before Rowe was confined, he told this evidence, that Mr Worgan’s business as an organist obliged him to be from home on Sundays, he Rowe was often at his house on Sundays, and had often lain with Mrs Worgan; that the first time that he lay with her was one day at her husband’s house, when after several liberties had passed between him and Mrs Worgan, such as kissing each other, and he putting his hand into her breast, she said to him, *that he was going to cuckold the honestest man in the world*; that at that time he had the carnal use and knowledge of Mrs Worgan in a parlour in her husband’s house, and that he

⁸ i.e. around October 1766.

⁹ Charles La Lauze, or Lalauze, a Frenchman, was ballet master at Covent Garden.

often afterwards repeated the same. After Rowe was confined, Mrs Worgan came to the house of this evidence, to meet Priscilla Vokins, to endeavour to get Rowe released, when Mrs Worgan said, in the presence of this evidence, that if she pawned her rings, she would raise half the money to get Rowe released, if Vokins would find the other half; but the affair was not settled, and Rowe died in prison.

Priscilla Vokins, wife of Joseph Vokins, Cripplegate, deposed; that her son Robert Rowe had been employed to play the organ for Mr Worgan; and that Robert Rowe her son died in the Fleet prison on the 8th or 9th of November 1767; before he was arrested he told her that he had been very intimately acquainted with, and often out on parties of pleasure with Mrs Worgan, in which they expended great sums of money; that Mrs Worgan gave him the money to pay these expenses; which, together with a note of twenty five pounds which he had given to one Mr Batty, to pay a debt of Mrs Worgan's to her butcher, amounted to fifty seven pounds; that he never borrowed any money of her, but had given her a memorandum of the whole sum, but not a promissory note; that in September or October 1766, her son Rowe was arrested by Mr Batty for the twenty five pounds, and not being able to pay, was put into the Fleet and died there; that she believed the promissory note signed R. Rowe to be the handwriting of her son deceased. That she was with her son while in prison almost every day, that he wrote two letters to Mrs Worgan, charging her with having seduced him, reminding her of their criminal correspondence and begging her to get him released; and in one of these letters he threatened to discover their criminal correspondence to her husband, if she refused. Mrs Worgan answered she would contrive to do it soon. That her son when in prison told her the particulars of his connexion with Mrs Worgan, that he had lain with her several times, as well upon the carpet as upon her own bed in her husband's house; that during the illness of which her son died he said that Mrs Worgan had been the ruin of him, for if she had not first tempted him to be criminally concerned with her, he would never have thought of it; she also deposed to a copy of one of the letters sent by her son to Mrs Worgan, which had been in the hands of Mrs Rowe, her son's wife, from the time the original had been sent to Mrs Worgan, till she gave it to Mr Worgan, in order to commence the suit.

Anne Beckley deposed, she went about a year and a half ago to live as a servant with Mr and Mrs Worgan, and lived with them about eleven months;¹⁰ during that time John Mully attended Mr Worgan to learn music, and often used to visit Mrs Worgan in Mr Worgan's absence, and dined and drank tea with her; Mully and Mrs Worgan used to be several hours alone; some of the time they were so together, she heard the door of the room where they were lock and unlock; about four months before she left their service,¹¹ Mully dined alone with Mrs Worgan, Mr Worgan was then in the country; this evidence, about tea time, going suddenly into the parlour with the tea kettle, on opening the door, saw Mrs Worgan leaning back in a great chair, and John Mully, on the door opening, jump from her knee, and sat himself down on a chair, as if he wanted to hide his breeches being down; that when he jumped from Mrs Worgan, she observed that her petticoats were half-way up, her handkerchief all off, and her clothes and apron very much tumbled; that they both appeared much confused and surprised, and she believed they had been lying together, and committed the crime of adultery together.

¹⁰ i.e. around January 1767

¹¹ i.e. around August 1767

Elizabeth Hill, aged twenty six years, deposed that she went to live as a servant with Mr and Mrs Worgan on the 30th of November 1767, and lived with them four months; the Sunday after Christmas day, Mr Worgan was taken ill of a pleuritic fever, and was confined to his bed for three weeks; Mrs Worgan was then far gone with child;¹² that Mrs Gregg, Mr Worgan's sister, came two or three times a day to see him, and he was attended by Miss Jones, who lived with Mrs Gregg, as a nurse during his illness. This evidence was cook, and one day Miss Jones came into the kitchen and told that Mr Worgan had been saying to her, that if it should please God he should die, he was very happy he should not have his family distressed, for he did not know he owed twenty pounds in the world. This evidence then told her, he was greatly deceived in her mistress, for in the little time since this evidence had come to the house, she had taken in bills to three times twenty pounds; that among such bills were the baker's, butcher's, a hosier's, a mercer's, and a brazier's.

That next day Mrs Gregg and Miss Jones came to her, and she repeated what she had said, and added that Mrs Worgan was not so good as she should be, with regard to men, for once on going unexpectedly into the parlour, where she and one Mr Langshaw, a deputy of Mr Worgan's then were; she found Mrs Worgan sitting with her arm around Langshaw's neck, and her hand on his; that on her opening the door, and discovering them in that situation, they appeared much confused and discomposed. This evidence also deposed, that Mrs Worgan was of a very violent temper and disposition, and much given to swearing and using wicked words, and had often in her hearing sworn at Mr Worgan her husband to his face.

Mrs Gregg deposed, that Miss Jones had informed her of Mrs Worgan's conduct as above mentioned, and also that the servants had said there had been bad doings in their master's house, between their mistress and one Mr Langshaw, and one Mr Mully; on this Mrs Gregg went home to her house in town, and next day sent for Mrs Worgan's brother, Mr Richard Mackelcan, sugar refiner, and acquainted him with what she had heard, and also that Mrs Worgan had pawned her husband's plate and that he, her brother, had redeemed it. This Mr Mackelcan owned. Mrs Gregg then appointed Mr Mackelcan to meet her at Mr Worgan's house next Sunday, to enquire of Mrs Worgan into the truth of the matter. On the Sunday before Mr Mackelcan came Mrs Gregg desired to hear the particulars from Elizabeth Hill and the other maid-servant, Eleanor. They both told her, their master would be ruined if he did not look into his affairs, for such numbers of bills were sent in, that there must be much money owing. Eleanor, the nursery maid, said she had caught her mistress in a very indecent posture with one Mr Langshaw, a deputy of Mr Worgan's. Mr Mackelcan being come, Mrs Gregg, in his presence, charged Mrs Worgan with imprudent management of her husband's money, insisting on knowing what bills were outstanding, and also charged her with being improperly connected with several men. Mrs Worgan denied the charges, but confessed having been improperly connected with one Rowe, also a deputy of Mr Worgan's.

Mrs Gregg at that time, being January 1768, did not inform her brother, on account of his illness, but went out of town, and returned again at the end of February, and inviting her brother to dine with her, she then informed him of his wife's ill conduct. At first Mr Worgan would not believe her, saying servants were sometimes full of scandal, till Mrs Gregg showed him some of the bills

¹² The child would have been Joseph, the youngest of the Worgans' nine children, who was baptised in April 1768.

brought to the house for payment, which she had got from Mrs Worgan. Since that time Mrs Gregg believed Mr Worgan had not bedded with his wife; for after some farther conversation he hit his hand upon the table, and said, "it was fixed for ever." Mrs Gregg asked him "what was fixed?" To which he only replied "it was no matter." Next morning Mr Worgan said to her, "I will never bed with that woman more; for I have laid things together in my mind, and my eyes are now open."

Mr Gregg also deposed to Mrs Worgan's handwriting, and that Mrs Worgan had written a letter to Miss Jones to intercede with her husband for a reconciliation.

Sentence passed in the usual form against Mrs Worgan for committing adultery with certain strange men, calling them selves Robert Rowe and John Mully.