

SERGT. PLUM ACQUITTED

Police Board Dismisses Charges Of Receiving Money.

HEARING STOPPED ABRUPTLY

Accused Officer Interrupted While Testifying And The Conclusion Announced.

Sergt. Frank J. Plum, against whom charges were brought through Marie Colder, who alleged that he accepted money from her for police protection, was exonerated by the Police Board at 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon, after a trial which began at 10 o'clock in the morning.

The Commissioners did not wait to hear the concluding testimony of Sergeant Plum, which had previously convinced them that the charges were baseless. He was abruptly stopped by Colonel Swann and the other Commissioners, Messrs. John B. A. Whittle and Peter E. Tome, who leaned toward each other and for several minutes held a conference. Five minutes later Colonel Swann stood and said:

"The board has decided that Sergeant Plum is not guilty of the charges against him."

"Thank God! Thank the Lord!" exclaimed Sergeant Plum, who left the witness stand, weeping. The courtroom door had opened and the news spread into the assembly room. Crowds surged in and grasped the Sergeant's hands, while he wept and repeated: "Thank God! Thank God! I am innocent—they could not find an innocent man guilty!"

The evidence bearing on the charge that Sergeant Plum had accepted money was not regarded as convicting. The board took this view as soon as Sergeant Plum got half way through his testimony. He had explained his diligence as a policeman, his frequent agitation against disorderly houses and had finished telling that he owns the house in which he lives and that he and his wife have a joint bank account, when Colonel Swann announced the decision of the board.

Testimony Of The Accuser.

The only persons in the courtroom when the trial began at 10 o'clock were the Police Commissioners, Mr. Alonzo L. Miles, counsel for the board; Sergeant Plum and his counsel, Mr. S. S. Field; Mr. James Fluegel, counsel for Dr. J. H. Williams and Marie Colder.

After the charges had been read Mr. Field announced that his client would plead "Not guilty."

Marie Colder was the first witness. She was sworn by Colonel Swann. Her testimony was practically the same as that brought out at the trial of former Captain Bernard J. Ward. She said Sergeant Plum had demanded money from her on several occasions and had placed patrolmen in front of her house because she refused to give it to him.

"I paid him \$5 myself and Mr. Williams (Dr. J. H. Williams) paid him money for me on several occasions," she declared.

In his testimony on this point Sergeant Plum did not deny that he placed men in front of her door, but he emphatically denied taking any money from either Marie Colder or Dr. Williams. Plum stated that he placed men in front of the door of the house occupied by the woman at 818 McCulloh street because he had been instructed to do so by Captain Schleigh, who then commanded the Northwestern district. Captain Schleigh testified that he faintly remembered telling Plum to watch the house, as a number of complaints had been received of disorder there.

What The Sergeant Said.

"I placed men in front of her door," continued Sergeant Plum. "I had her indicted in May, 1907, and several months later complaint after complaint came to me about the house. Captain Schleigh also received complaints about the place and I then said I would put a stop to it and placed four men, alternately, in front of the house. When the disorder broke up, the men were taken away."

Three of the men stationed by Plum in front of the house were Patrolmen Stapf, Mitchell and Ewing. All of them testified that they had been told to stop any disorder and get evidence if any trouble started. Each of these men declared he never heard of Sergeant Plum getting money from Marie Colder, though they frequently saw her while working the post.

Dr. Williams, who is a graduate in dentistry, testified that he took money to Sergeant Plum on four occasions, the first time giving him an envelope containing \$16 and \$5 at each of the other times. He named the places at which he alleged he gave the money to Plum.

Several letters that passed between Sergeant Plum and Dr. Williams were produced. In one of these communications, signed "Dr. Williams," it was stated that if the Sergeant would call on him the interview would be of interest to both.

Mr. Field asked Dr. Williams to explain the meaning of "advantage to both," as written in the letter of January 11.

"I meant," replied Dr. Williams, "that I wanted to see him so that I would not be drawn into this investigation. Sergeant Plum offered me \$100 not to testify about him when I told him I had been called before the board. I got mad when he tried to shove \$40 in my pocket and I told my attorney."

"How did you come to go to Dr. Williams' office on January 8?" Mr. Field asked Sergeant Plum.

"That evening, about 6 o'clock," replied the Sergeant, "a message came to me that I was wanted at Dr. Williams' office at 1822 North Charles street. I was on the lookout for evidence in this case and thought I might get some from this man. When I rang the bell and he came to the door I recognized him. He said: 'Now, Sergeant, I have got you where you had the little girl in 1907.' (He meant Marie Colder). Other words were passed and the question of money was never brought up."

Mr. Patrick J. Kelly, owner of the McCulloh street house, testified that Dr. Williams paid the rent.

Patrolman Brady stated that when he took the police census last year Marie Colder told him that James Williams was a boarder in the house. The name of James Colder is in the City Directory as living at 818 McCulloh street and his occupation is given as commission merchant. Miss Colder was asked if she knew of a man by the name of James Colder and she replied that she did not.