



Extraordinary Case of Incendiarism

CODFORD – In this village lives a labourer named Sparey, his wife and son, the latter a lad about 15 years of age. The wife has for some time past shown symptoms of insanity, but not such as apparently to render it necessary to put her under restraint. She was very changeable in her feelings and had lately expressed a great dislike to her elder son and his wife, saying that she would burn their house down. On Monday her husband left Codford to visit his son. After he had gone she said, “He has gone to visit those devils, I will be revenged on him.” In the middle of the night the lad was awoke and found his mother at his bedside calling him to come out, as the house was on fire. He was only just in time to escape with a few clothes, for the smoke was already suffocating and in a short time the whole cottage was in flames. From the appearance of his mother’s room the boy thought that she had set the upper part of the bed on fire. The cottage, we understand, is insured, but not the furniture. The woman was taken before N. Barton, Esq., at the Magistrate’s Clerk’s Office, Warminster, on Friday. The evidence adduced brought the matter clearly home to her and she was fully committed for trial at the next Assizes.

(Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, Thursday 9th February, 1865)

Ann Sparey was charged with setting fire to a dwelling house, the property of Henry Godolphin Biggs esq., at Codford St. Mary. She was acquitted on the ground of insanity.

(Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, Thursday 2nd March, 1865)

Threatening To Stab, At Codford

Ann Sparey, wife of *John Sparey*, was charged with having assaulted her husband. In March last, *Sparey* preferred a complaint against defendant for beating him and threatening to beat his brains out with a poker. She was then dismissed with a caution. This time he summoned her for threatening to stab him. In his evidence he said she took up a knife and threatened to stab him to the heart. He said he went in fear of his life every day and he begged the Bench to bind his wife over to keep the peace towards him. The court ordered her to find two sureties in 5 l. each and one in 10 l., to keep the peace against her husband for six months and in default of finding sureties, they sentenced her to a month’s imprisonment.

(Salisbury and Winchester Journal, Saturday 8th December, 1866)