



FATAL FIRE

On Monday evening last, the quiet village of Wootton Rivers was the scene of a calamitous fire, which was attended with the loss of one life and serious injury to others, besides two cottages being burnt to the ground.

The cottages were situated at the top of the village, and one of them was occupied by Thomas Rawlings and his wife. It appears that they had both been reaping and, after supper, Rawlings went to bed and his wife set about some household work.

Shortly before 10, she went to fasten the door and by some means her clothes caught fire. Her husband, hearing a noise, rushed down stairs clad only in a shirt and nightcap and found the poor woman enveloped in flames. He endeavoured to extinguish the fire, but having no protection in his scanty habiliments, was himself much burnt about the arms and face.

Some seed haulm, which was in the cottage, also caught and the fire spread to the roof, which was thatched, and on to the adjoining cottage. Here the occupants were taken by surprise, so quickly did it spread, and the husband was compelled to rush through the flames (his woodhouse being the only mode of egress) and to smash in a window to get his wife out. In doing this, he sustained a severe scorching. The whole of the furniture in both cottages was utterly destroyed, there being no time to save a single article. The poor woman, in whom the fire originated, was so severely burnt that she expired about half past four the next morning.

An inquest was held on the body on Wednesday and a verdict of accidental death returned. The villagers were of course alarmed by the fire and did their utmost to prevent it extending to the other cottages, in which they were successful. The cottages were the property of Miss O. Neale, of Burbage.

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