



Crime and Punishment

Seend

Discovery of a Child Murder at Seend.

The inhabitants of the usually quiet and well-ordered village of Seend have been much shocked by a discovery which has recently been made of the body of an infant (whose death there can be little doubt was occasioned by violence), on the premises of a farmer named Hart.

The farmhouse in which (Robert) Hart and his wife, (Teresa), have within the last three or four months come to live, and which stands at the entrance to the village from Devizes, was previously occupied by a farmer named Staples, and considerable suspicion is attached to a girl named Rawlings who lived with them as servant, and who during the last week or two of the Staples's occupation of the premises was supposed to be in the family way, and was taken ill just previous to their leaving. Whether there is sufficient ground for this suspicion further investigation may unfold.

At present we can only record what is known with regard to the discovery of the child's body. It appears that for some time previous Mr Hart's family had observed a constantly increasing number of worms about the seat of the water closet, accompanied by a most offensive smell; and as this increased daily, it was determined to remove a portion of the soil, which was easily done at the back part of the water closet as it discharged itself into an open drain). On the top of the soil there had lain ever since the Harts had been at the farm a small bundle of hay, and as this was supposed to impede the flow of the sewage, the first thing was to get it out, when to the astonishment of Mrs Hart, who was watching the operation, a child's arm, and as they progressed further, a leg, were seen protruding from the disturbed bundle. This led to further search, and the entire body of an infant was then discovered, but in so decomposed a state that the head actually dropt from it. Mrs Hart appears to have been so shocked and frightened by the discovery (which took place on Saturday) that she did not make it public until Monday. She then sent for the police, and an inquest has been held; but as yet no satisfactory clue had been obtained to the perpetrator of the deed.

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