



Crime and Punishment

Compton Chamberlayne

DREADFUL AFFRAY WITH POACHERS

On the 25th ult., a body of poachers, 14 in number, assembled in Compton woods, and divided themselves into two parties, composed of eight and six. The party of six shortly afterwards fell in with five of the keepers, when one of the latter put his hand on the shoulder of one of the poachers, on which the poacher snapped his gun, which missed fire, at the keeper; he then flung his gun down, went off, and succeeded in making his escape. This event brought the two parties to an equality in point of numbers, and a dreadful battle ensued, which lasted 10 minutes or a quarter of an hour, the keepers being armed with hangers or cutlasses. – Both parties at length drew off, the keepers being frightfully injured, and two of the number being at present in the Infirmary. The poachers were all more or less injured. One of them, who lived at Fovant, is since dead, and two others are lying in a dangerous state, one of whom has his skull fractured, and the tendons of his wrists cut off and laid completely bare. We are sorry to learn that this dreadful event had so little influence on the minds of those lawless men, that on the following Monday night the poachers again assembled in a numerous body in Compton woods, and that the firing was continued incessantly throughout the night. Mr Pitton, of Martin, in whose woods the affray took place, gave instructions that the wounded poachers should receive every requisite medical assistance. -*Salisbury Journal*.

(*Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette* – Thursday 6 February, 1845)

There were, we understand, some considerable errors in the account given in last weeks' Journal of the late melancholy affray between the keepers and poachers in the woods at Compton Chamberlaine. We are happy to say, that no one has died of the injuries received on the occasion, though they have been such as to cause considerable apprehension for some on each side. The injured poachers, four in number, are all doing well. The keeper at Compton, who was confined to his bed, is again able to sit up, and his two assistants, who are in the Infirmary, are, we trust, making sure though slow progress, under the skilful treatment and attention which every patient is sure to receive in that excellent institution. We are happy to also state, that there is no foundation whatever for the report that the same woods were again invaded by a gang of poachers on a subsequent night. The number of poachers on the occasion appears to have been eleven, the leader of whom, with several others, has absconded. The account inserted in our last was furnished by a highly-respectable person, and we are convinced that the errors were perfectly unintentional.

(*Salisbury and Winchester Journal* – 8 February, 1845)
