

Daring Attempt at Highway Robbery & Murder 1841

Between 6 and 7 o'clock on Saturday evening last, as Isaac Crofts of Crockerton was returning from Knoyle, where he had been with a load of coal, he was attacked by two men on the Down near Pertwood, about four miles and a half from Warminster, one of whom gave him a violent blow on the back part of his head, which knocked him from the cart into the road. They then commenced rifling his pockets but being disappointed at not finding any money, one of them, with a knife, cut the poor man's throat in a shocking manner, and also inflicted a severe cut from the corner of the right eye down the nose, and then left him.

As soon as Crofts recovered himself, he contrived to hold fast by the hind part of the cart, and soon overtook a little boy, who, after assisting the poor man into the cart, immediately gave an alarm; when Targett, the policeman stationed at Crockerton, and a labourer named Holton, went in purusit of the villains.

Information was also conveyed to Mr Cole, the superintendent, who started others of the police to assist in the search, and also went himself. They searched all the public houses at Knoyle without success; but after returning again to the Black Horse Inn (the first they entered) and waiting for a few minutes, two suspicious characters entered, whom Holton, who was then alone, in a very courageous manner collared, and by two policemen entering soon afterwards the fellows were secured. They were, by the superintendent's direction, kept there until the following (Sunday) morning, when they were sent off to Warminster handcuffed.

Upon their persons were found a double-tongued rattle, a lock, a quantity of keys, matches, tinder and two knives. They gave their names as David Chipp and William Goulden.

They were brought before Lord Heytesbury and Mr Ravenhill on Monday, and remanded until Wednesday; Crofts, who is confined to his bed, being too ill to appear against them. The surgeon states that the wound extends along the side of the neck three inches in length, passing over the carotid artery, which it exposed to view, and close to which the wound was three quarters of an inch deep.

Chipp was the principal in a robbery committed a short time since in Dorsetshire, in which his father, brother and mother were concerned. The three latter were apprehend by one of the Constabulary Force in the Hindon division, and tried at the last Dorsetshire sessions, when the father and brother were transported for 7 years and the mother was acquitted.

The prisoner contrived to escape but since his apprehension on the present charge, the Dorsetshire constables have written to state that they hold a warrant against him. The uncle of Chipp was also transported for 15 years, about a twelvemonth ago.

The prisoners were yesterday again brought before the Magistrates, when additional evidence was adduced; but Crofts not being sufficiently recovered to appear against them, they were further remanded until to-morrow.

On returning to the prison yard Goulden made a desperate attack upon the policeman and effected his escape. He was, however, almost immediately reapprehended by a man who, seeing him running down Weymouth-street, gave him such a violent blow on the head, that a surgeon has been obliged to dress it.

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