



Minety

Sparrows in France and Wiltshire

If, as stated by a French naturalist, a sparrow's nest in the city of Paris was found to contain 700 pairs of the upper wings of cockchafers, we shall have but little reason to glorify ourselves upon our Sparrow Clubs; for here is a bird, whom most people supposed to have been guilty of unmitigated mischief, now shown to be of the greatest service, by those who inquire narrowly into its nature and habits.

And yet, in spite of what our neighbours have said upon the subject – in spite of their seeking legal enactments to preserve sparrows and other small birds – we find that in the county of Wilts a Sparrow Club meets to celebrate its victories in destroying 3491 head of sparrows in the year of 1860-61, and therefore they sing songs, and are “well satisfied with their entertainment.”

Truly, these gentlemen, if they take a good dinner for the service (?) they do in killing birds, might, if they were only wiser, not grudge the small birds an occasional meal, though it may be corn, when it is known that they kill so many noxious insects.

Truly, they want a liberal education! We copy the following report of the doings of the club, in the hope that it will one day be looked upon as a curiosity:-

Ashton Keynes Sparrow Club

In September 1861 about 20 gentlemen sat down to an excellent dinner at the Plough Inn provided by the landlord and the landlady, in connection with the Sparrow Club. Mr Thomas Wheatley presided, and Mr Henry Ellison, of Church Farm, occupied the vice-chair.

After the cloth was removed, the secretary, Mr Edward Dowdeswell, read the accounts for the year, which proved satisfactory to all members, there being £3 7s in hand towards defraying the expenses of the day, after paying the prizes to the persons who had produced the greatest number of heads in the year.

The first prize of 10 s was awarded to Mr J Scutts, of Ashton Keynes, who produced 1195 heads.

The second prize, 5s, to Mr John Westmacott, of Minety, producing 1001 heads.

The third prize, 2s 6d, to Mr Wm Boulton of Ashton, producing 344.

The whole club during the year had produced as many as 3491 heads; and calculating that each bird shall eat one quart of corn in the year, the quantity thus saved to the farmers will be 27 sacks 1 bushel 3 quarts.

After some good songs, well sung, and the company had much enjoyed themselves, the party broke up, well satisfied with their entertainment.

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