



Ministers Rally for Feast Day Changes

At Stratton St. Margaret the annual feast was celebrated on Monday, by the customary single-stick and wrestling pro bono publican. For years this strange description of amusement has appeared on the wane in Stratton, and many who are actual spectators have wished that the march of intellect would there, as in other places, render the apparent distaste a positive aversion to such brutality. It is clear that many attend merely from custom, and not from a love of the contests. Perhaps it may be that friends agree to meet festively their homes on this day. In the hope to stir up the well-thinking portion against a continuance of the brutalising scenes which ill accord with the praiseworthy zeal with which the Reading-room and other marks of refinement have been supported, an arrangement was made for a demonstration against the practices of the feast. Mr. Elborough gave the use of a field close by the scene of action - waggons were placed for the speakers and their friends - ministers of persuasions, variously denominated, took their stand; and one would have thought for some quarter of an hour their auditors would have numbered few. Mr. C. A. Wheeler was requested to take the chair, and having complied, stated he felt called upon to make a few remarks. He knew he was inadequate to give force to his appeal, such as the men of God who would have to follow him in addressing them; and he also felt that some of what he would say would be perhaps at variance with those gentlemen, whom he respected none the less for a difference of opinion. For his own part, he approved on manly sports, such as cricket, quoits, football, and, if need be he would add the drolleries of jumping in sacks, climbing the pole for a leg of mutton, or chasing the pig with a greasy tail. Without saying whether he could positively approve morally of steeple-chasing generally, he could say a foot steeple-chase or hurdle-race would be desirable to establish, if it could be the means of decaying from the degrading exhibitions then made close at hand. Single-stick, as practised in the army, he thought desirable, as a means of defence; but the single-stick they were met to repudiate had no such redeeming feature - bound to turn the wrist every third hit, and bound to have the hand confined towards the waist, was altogether an absurdity. He hoped that another year, any man possessing a head would abstain from so useless a mode of testing its thickness.

By the time Mr. Wheeler had concluded an excellent company had assembled, who were addressed by the Reverends Wallace, Breeze, &c. Messrs Morse, Tuck and Blake followed. Mr. Reynolds claimed attention, were it only for the age which he stated he had reached; but the quiet, calm language in which he clothed a pious appeal, had evidently still greater weight with an attentive audience.

It must have been highly gratifying to those who had taken part in the attempt at moral reform, to see how orderly all went off.

Mr. Wallace and Mr. Breeze showed great fervency; and unable as we are to follow them through their respective addresses, which were of considerable length, we can imagine that their good advice,

well followed, will render their cause triumphant. Each one present was piously exhorted to use every persuasion towards his friends and neighbours, declining to sanction the dreadful practices in future. A tea-meeting would next year be likely to have many attractions; and each one present determining to assist, there is no doubt the days of the Stratton revel are numbered.

At dusk, the meeting closed with prayer; votes of thanks having been first awarded to Mr. Elborough for the field, and to Mr. Wheeler for presiding.

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