

Miscellaneous.

SPARE THE OWLS AND SAVE YOUR WHEAT.—The following letter in favor of the Barn Owl, recently appeared in the *London Times*.—

Sir,—In your impression of the 9th inst., I saw a sensible letter headed “An Owl’s Larder,” from Mr. Ellis, of Leicestershire, who, I make no doubt, is a benign gentleman, from his advocating the cause of a valuable and much persecuted bird, viz.: the white or barn owl. Many sportsmen give an indiscriminate order to their keepers to destroy all vermin but the fox, and among them (in many cases in the ignorance of both) the poor owl is ranked. The consequence is, in some districts they are nearly extinct, and where this is the case the stacks and barns swarm with mice. Last summer I witnessed the getting in of a small stack of wheat in Shropshire, which the owner supposed would yield enough for his family, of wife and three servants, for eight or nine months. All that he got from it fit to send to the mill was four and a half bushels. Four hundred mice were killed, and as many more we suppose, escaped. These animals, as well as young rats, require vegetation and water. At dusk they come out, and out at the same time comes the owl. No doubt they were created by an all-wise Providence to keep these vermin under, as the rook is for the destruction of the wire-worm, and the toad for slugs. If it were not so we should be eaten up.—They know by instinct how to go about their calling better than we do. If the rook and owl do pilfer a little at times when pinched by hunger, the laborer must have his hire; and with all our sagacity we cannot master them like they can. The cat kills more game in a season than the owl in his lifetime, and the farmer with salt and chemicals, which cost him a good deal of money, cannot keep the wire-worm out of his land. In former days, in the country, they had the “owlet” hole in their barns as regularly as the pitching hole, for his ingress and egress, many of which I find are stopped up. During five summers in the vicinity I have mentioned, I have only seen one owl skimming the meadows at nightfall. This year an unfortunate one flew over the cricket ground at dusk one evening, when the first thing that occurred to a young sportsman was to fetch his gun and shoot him. This is being worse than people we call barbarians, for in India they religiously, and by law, protect two useful birds—the Brahmin kite and the adjutant. In Barbary the stock is safe, where they say. “On the houses they choose for their nest no evil cometh.”

THE POWER OF HUNGER.—It is hunger which brings stalwart navvies together in orderly gangs to cut paths through mountains, to throw bridges across rivers, to intersect the land with the great iron ways which bring city into daily communication with city. Hunger is the overseer of those men erecting palaces, prison-houses, barracks, villas. Hunger sits at the loom, which, with stealthy power, is weaving the wondrous fabrics of cotton and silk. Hunger labours at the furnace and the plough, coercing the native indolence of man into strenuous and incessant activity. Let food be abundant and easy of access, and civilization becomes impossible; for our higher efforts are dependent on our lower impulses in an indissoluble manner. “Nothing but the necessities of food will force man to labour, which he hates, and will always avoid when possible.—*Blackwood*.”

THE PROPERTY OF LIFE.—Every man, woman, and child has a property in life.—What is the value of this property? Mr. Charles M. Willich has established an extremely easy rule for expressing this value—this “Expectation of Life” at any age from five to sixty. His formula stands thus:— $e = \frac{2}{3}(80 - a)$; or in plain words, the expectation of life is equal to two-thirds of the difference between the age of the party and eighty. Thus, say a man is now twenty years old. Between that age and eighty there are sixty years. Two-thirds of sixty are forty—and this is the sum of his expectation of life. If a man be now sixty, he will have an expectation of nearly fourteen years more. By the same rule, a child of five has a lien on life for fifty years. Every one can apply the rule to his own age. Mr. Willich’s hypothesis may be as easily remembered as that by De Moivre in the last century, which has now become obsolete, from the greater accuracy of mortality tables. The results obtained by the new law correspond very closely with those from Dr. Farr’s English life table, constructed with great care from an immense mass of returns.—*Athenaeum*.