

secreted therein : or, if in the latter, it is to hold secret and forbidden intercourse with the inmates, which, though abstractly innocent, acquires an illicit taint, derogatory to the parties, and most dangerous to the purity of the woman.

If such be the effects of the Bothie, what are the results of the Feeing-Market? Now, here we readily admit the vast importance of the labour market being at all times perfectly free. The working classes, the sinews of a country, and the primary source of its wealth and strength, should be entitled to dispose of their labour in the most profitable way possible. Its price is the sole means of their subsistence, and, if reduced by any restriction whatever, their energies may be weakened from want of necessary nourishment, and a gradual paralysis may, at last, pervade the whole community. But are the Feeing-markets and the half-year's engagements the best modes of disposing of labour? Do they raise wages, or regulate and proportion them according to the ability of the workman? Or, do they tend to effect the most suitable arrangements between master and servant? It appears to us, that men and women are not naturally solicitous of change. No one who has a suitable employment, a fair and honest employer, who is well paid, well fed, and well lodged, will ever be desirous to change his situation if it implies the risk of the opposites—an unsuitable employment, a harsh and selfish employer, poor feeding, bad lodging, and doubtful payment. But the Feeing-Markets, recurring every six months—affording a holiday to the working-classes, a place of meeting to friends and acquaintances, an excuse for gaiety, revelry, and dissipation—are eagerly resorted to by the young, the inexperienced, the dissipated and licentious; and, by creating and cherishing a restless spirit, are hostile to steady application and permanent settlement. Within a few days of the Term, the whole agricultural population are in a state of excitement—Feeing-Markets are in every district. There is no forestalling—no previous hiring. On the morning of the market day no one can tell whether the half-year's engagement will be renewed—all hurry to the general rendezvous, servants on foot and masters on horseback. Assembled there, let us contemplate the scene. Observe the farmer curiously examining the form and aspect of the labourer. He desires to purchase the use of so much physical strength for so much meat and money, and all his calculations are made on this principle. The moral character of the servant is deemed of no account, and is seldom taken into consideration. Caution, prudence, foresight, honesty, fidelity, chastity, are not appreciable elements in the Feeing Market in fixing the price of labour, and provided the individuals seeking employment bulk well to the eye, and exhibit a capacity for endurance, it is of no consequence whether their moral character be good, bad, or indifferent. All are brought to one rude level, and the scale of wage is regulated by weight, not worth—by general appearance, not respectable character. Besides, as every one is the herald of his own ability, without any other certificate, it is no wonder that the employer is often dissatisfied with the person he has engaged. But the Feeing Market is not the best place for the labourer disposing of his labour. There is naturally a disposition on the part of employers to keep down the price. A combination of country servants to raise the price of labour is almost impossible. A combination among masters to lower it is easy. Two or three dozen of employers can easily render a large attendance of unemployed, a dull market. They can, by a mutual understanding, offer a few shillings less than the ordinary rate, and abide by the offer till late in the day, when the servants must accept of their terms or risk the chance of missing an engagement. Should the masters fail in their object, they can try the same tactics elsewhere, or, if compelled, can make an engagement at the old rate; but the servants have not always the liberty of standing another market, and they must either hire now, or be cast out of