

both in kind and in amount, not merely the diet of the independent labourer, but that of the majority of the persons who contribute to their support.

It is with still further regret that we state our conviction, that the abuses of which we have given a short outline, though checked in some instances by the extraordinary energy and wisdom of individuals, are, on the whole, steadily and rapidly progressive.

It is true, that by the last Parliamentary Return, (that for the year ending the 25th March, 1832,) the total amount of the money expended for the relief of the poor, though higher than that for any year since the year 1820, appears to fall short of the expenditure of the year ending the 25th March, 1818; the expenditure of that year having been 7,890,014*l.*, and that for the year ending the 25th March, 1832, 7,036,968*l.* But it is to be remembered, 1st, That the year ending the 25th of March, 1818, was a period of extraordinary distress among the labouring classes, especially in the manufacturing districts, in consequence of the high price of provisions, unaccompanied by a corresponding advance in wages; 2dly, That in the year ending the 25th March, 1832, the price of corn was lower by about one-third than in 1818, and that of clothes and of the other necessaries of life lower in a still greater proportion; so that, after allowing for an increase of population of one-fifth, the actual amount of relief given in 1832 was much larger in proportion to the population than even that given in 1818, which has generally been considered as the year in which it attained its highest amount; and, 3dly, That the statement of the mere amount directly expended, whether estimated in money or in kind, affords a very inadequate measure of the loss sustained by those who supply it. A great part of the expense is incurred, not by direct payment out of the rates, but by the purchase of unprofitable labour. Where rate-payers are the immediate employers of work-people, they often keep down the rates, either by employing more labourers than they actually want, or by employing parishioners, when better labourers could be obtained. The progressive deterioration of the labourers in the pauperized districts, and the increasing anxiety of the principal rate-payers, as their burthen becomes more oppressive, to shift it in some way, either on the inhabitants of neighbouring parishes, or on the portion of their fellow-parishioners who can make the least resistance; and the apparent sanction given to this conduct by the 2 and 3 William IV. c. 96, appear to have greatly increased this source of indirect and unrecorded loss. Our evidence, particularly Appendix (D), is full of instances, of which we will cite only those which have been drawn from the county of Cambridge, and are to be

found in Mr. Cowell's and Mr. Power's Reports. Mr. Cowell's Report* contains the examination of a large farmer and proprietor at Great Shelford, who, on 500 acres, situated in that parish, pays 10*s.* per acre poor-rate, or 250*l.* a year. In addition, though he requires for his farm only 16 regular labourers, he constantly employs 20 or 21. The wages of these supernumerary labourers amount to 150*l.* a year, and he calculates the value of what they produce at 50*l.* a year; so that his real contribution to the relief of the poor is not 250*l.*, the sum which would appear in the Parliamentary Returns, but 350*l.* In the same Report is to be found a letter from Mr. Wedd, of Royston, containing the following passages:—

“An occupier of land near this place told me to-day, that he pays 100*l.* for poor-rates, and is compelled to employ fourteen men and six boys, and requires the labour of only ten men and three boys. His extra labour at 10*s.* a week (which is the current rate for men), and half as much for boys, is 130*l.*”

“Another occupier stated yesterday that he held 165 acres of land, of which half was pasture. He was compelled to employ twelve men and boys, and his farm required the labour of only five. He is about to give notice that he will quit. Every useless labourer is calculated to add 5*s.* an acre to the rent of a farm of 100 acres.”

It contains also a letter from Mr. Nash, of Royston, the occupier of a farm in a neighbouring parish, stating, that

“The overseer, on the plea that he could no longer collect the money for the poor-rates without resorting to coercive measures, and that the unemployed poor must be apportioned among the occupiers of land in proportion to their respective quantities, had required him to take two more men. Mr. Nash was consequently obliged to displace two excellent labourers, and of the two men sent in their stead one was a married man with a family sickly, and not much inclined to work; the other a single man addicted to drinking.”

The subsequent history of these two men appears in Mr. Power's Report. One killed a favourite blood mare of Mr. Nash's, and the other he was obliged to prosecute for stealing his corn.

Mr. Power reports the evidence of Mr. Charles Mash, of Hinxton:—

“He occupies a farm of 1000 acres, one of the most highly cultivated in the country. They have the practice there of sharing among themselves all the labourers of the parish, according to an assessment of value. He finds this burthen a very oppressive one, and injurious to him in many ways. He is paying about 1200*l.* a year for labour, and his farm being already in an excellent state, he cannot find work for a great portion of his men. He believes that by discarding those whom he does not want, he should save 200*l.* of the sum above stated.

* Extracts, p. 384.