

boring village, and at which they used to meet some of the farm-lasses of the locality, and dance and drink whisky till morning. I know not how their money stood such frequent carousals ; but they were, I saw, bare of every necessary article of clothing, especially of underclothing and linen ; and I learned from their occasional talk about justice-of-peace summonses, that the previous term-day had left in the hands of their shoemakers and drapers unsettled bills. But such matters were taken very lightly : the three lads, if not happy, were at least merry ; and the monthly ball, for which they sacrificed so much, furnished not only its hours of pleasure while it lasted, but also a week's talking in anticipation ere it came, and another week's talking over its various incidents after it had passed. And such was my experience of the bothy system in its first beginnings. It has since so greatly increased, that there are now single counties in Scotland in which there are from five to eight hundred farm-servants exposed to its deteriorating influences ; and the rustic population bids fair in those districts fully to rival that of our large towns in profligacy, and greatly to outrival them in coarseness. Were I a statesman I would, I think, be bold enough to try the efficacy of a tax on bothies. It is long since Goldsmith wrote regarding a state of society in which "wealth accumulates and men decay," and since Burns looked with his accustomed sagacity on that change for the worse in the character of our rural people which the large farm-system has introduced. "A fertile improved country is West Lothian," we find the latter poet remarking, in one of his journals : "but the more elegance and luxury among the farmers I always observe in equal proportion the rudeness and stupidity of the peasantry. This remark I have made all over the Lothians, Merse, Roxburgh, &c ; and for this, among other reasons, I think that a man of romantic taste—'a man of feeling'—will be better pleased with the poverty but intelligent minds of the peasantry of Ayrshire (peasantry they all are below the Justice of Peace), than the opulence of a club of Merse farmers, when he at the same time considers the Vandalism of their plough-folks." The dete-