

THE BOTHY SYSTEM.

Most of our readers must know what the bothy system is. A very considerable number of the farmsteadings of the country, built on the most approved plan, with roomy courts and sheds for the breeding of cattle, and stables constructed on the best possible principle for the horses,—with all, in short, that the modern system of agriculture demands,—have no adequate accommodation for the labourers by whom the farms attached to them are wrought. The horses and cattle are well provided for, but not the men. A wretched outhouse,—the genuine bothy,—furnished with a few rude stools, a few deal bedsteads, a few bowls of tin or earthenware, a water-pail, and a pot,—serves miserably to accommodate some eight or ten labourers, all of them, of course, single men. Here they kindle their own fire, cook their own victuals, make their own beds. The labours of the farm employ them from nine to ten hours daily ; the grooming and feeding of their horses at least an hour more. The rest of their time falls to be passed in their miserable home. They return to it often wet and fatigued, especially in the briefer and stormier months of the year, just as the evening has fallen, and find all dark and chill : the fire has to be lighted,—in some districts even the very fuel to be procured ; the water to be brought from the well ; the hasty and unsavoury meal to be prepared. It is scarce possible to imagine circumstances of greater discomfort. The staple food of the labourer is generally oatmeal cooked in careless haste,—as might be anticipated in the circumstances,—by mixing a portion in a bowl with hot water and a little salt ; and often for weeks and months together there is no change in either the materials of this his necessarily heating and unwholesome meal, or in the mode