

raging the poor in habits of indolence and beggary was quickly felt throughout the kingdom: and abundance of statutes were made in the reign of king Henry the eighth, for providing for the poor and impotent; which, the preambles to some of them recite, had of late years *strangely* increased. These poor were principally of two sorts: sick and impotent, and therefore unable to work; idle and sturdy, and therefore able, but not willing, to exercise any honest employment. To provide in some measure for both of these, in and about the metropolis, his son Edward the sixth founded three royal hospitals; Christ's, and St. Thomas's for the relief of the impotent through infancy or sickness; and Bridewell for the punishment and employment of the vigorous and idle. But these were far from being sufficient for the care of the poor throughout the kingdom at large; and therefore, after many other fruitless experiments, by statute 43 Eliz. c. 2. overseers of the poor were appointed in every parish.

By virtue of the statute last mentioned, these overseers are to be nominated yearly in Easter-week, or within one month after, (though a subsequent nomination will be valid<sup>k</sup>) by two justices dwelling near the parish. They must be substantial householders, and so expressed to be in the appointment of the justices<sup>l</sup>.

THEIR office and duty, according to the same statute, are principally these: first, to raise competent sums for the necessary relief of the poor, impotent, old, blind, and such other, being poor and not able to work: and, secondly, to provide work for such as are able, and cannot otherwise get employment: but this latter part of their duty, which, according to the wise regulations of that salutary statute, should go hand in hand with the other, is now most shamefully neglected. However, for these joint purposes, they are empowered to make and levy rates upon the several inhabitants of the parish, by the same act of parliament; which has been farther explained and enforced by several subsequent statutes.

<sup>k</sup> Stra. 1123.

<sup>l</sup> 2 Lord Raym. 1394.