twenty hundreds and seven liberties, and the western twenty-two hundreds ; but these divisions have become of less importance, since other divisions have been politically framed by the Reform act, as will be hereafter noticed. The whole county is in the diocese of Bath and Wells; and is ecclesiastically divided into three archdeaconries, under which are thirteen deans, who superintend 482 parishes. There are within the county two cities (besides a part of Bristol), seven boroughs sending members to Parliament, and twenty-nine market towns.

The population of this county at the four decennial periods of enumeration, has been found to be as follows : In 1801, 273,750; in 1811, 303,180; in 1821,355,314; and in 1831, 402,500*. '*

In 1831, the occupiers of land employing labourers

were..... 6,032

The occupiers of land not employing labourers... 3,731

Labourers employed in agriculture 28,107

Labourers in manufactures 4,350

Labourers employed in retail trade or handicraft, 26,672

Capitalists, bankers, &c 4,676

Labourers not agricultural 12,183

Other labourers under twenty years of age 7,074

Males at and above twenty years of age.... 95,556

Male servants 2,801

Female servants 18,333

In the same year the number of families chiefly employed in agriculture was found to be 30,452 ; of those chiefly em- ployed in trade, manufactures, and handicraft, 20,230, and of those not comprised in either of the preceding classes, 25,889∙ The number of inhabited houses was 71,325, occupied by 84,571 families; the uninhabited houses, 3,632, and those building, 939. The annual value of the real property of the county, as assessed in 1813, was L.1,900,651.

The towns whose population in 1831 exceeded 2000, were as follows :

Bath 38,063

Bedminster, a sub-

urb of Bristol 13,130

Frome Selwood 12,240

Taunton 11,139

Bridgewater 7,807

Wells 6,649

Yeovil 5,921

Shepton-Mallet 5,330

Chard 5,141

Wellington 4,762

Bathwick, a sub-

urb of Bath 4,033

Crewkerne 3,789

North Petherton 3,566

Wedmore 3,557

Wivelscombe 3,047

Ilminster 2,957

Martoch 2,841

Glastonbury 2,500

Twerton, sub. of Bath..2,478

South Petherton 2,294

Milverton 2,233

Keynsham 2,142

Wincanton 2,123

Nailsea 2,114

Milborn Port 2,072

Bruton 2,031

Few districts contain a greater variety of soil and situa­tion than the county of Somerset. In the north-east cor- ner, the range of the Mendip hills presents a lofty tract of country, of late improved on the surface, but chiefly valuable for the coal and other mines beneath it. On the west- ern side are the Qnantock hills, an extensive and sterile range, and beyond them the elevated bleak plain called the forest of Exmoor, the highest district in the western counties. One spot in this forest, called Dunkeny, is 1668 feet above the level of the sea ; and from it a prospect over an extended and diversified country is displayed, terminating on one side in the Bristol, and on the other in the English Channel. These hilly, and somewhat barren portions of the county, however, bear but a small propor- tion to the whole ; and between them are to be seen the richest meadows and arable lands, the value of which more than counterbalances the sterility of the hills. In the bet- ter parts of the county, it may rather be described as rich than beautiful. There is a deficiency of woods ; the

streams that run in the valleys are sluggish, and in summer nearly stagnant ; but the extent of orchards, especially when in full bloom, produces a pleasing effect, and in some measure compensates for the want of woods.

The rivers of the county are the Avon, which enters it from Wiltshire, and becomes navigable at Bath, which city it nearly surrounds. It then passes, with many curvatures, to Bristol, and soon after is lost in the Severn. The Axe rises in the Mendip hills in two branches, one of which is- sues from a natural excavation, called Wookey Hole, re- sembling some of the Derbyshire caverns. Its course is short, and it empties itself through some marshes, below Axbridge, into the Bristol Channel. The Brue rises in Wiltshire, and also enters the Bristol Channel, being navigable not more than two miles from its mouth. The Par- ret rises at a village of the same name in Dorsetshire, be- comes navigable at Langport, and in rainy seasons a few miles above that town. It is joined, at Boroughbridge, by the Thone or Tone, which proceeds from Taunton, and passing by Bridgewater, empties itself into the sea. The only navigable canal that has been completed is the Kennet and Avon, which unites together the two great rivers Thames and Severn. It commences near Bath, and soon enters Wiltshire. Other canals have been projected in dif­ferent directions, but none of them has been prosecuted to completion ; though on several of them large sums have been expended.

As Somersetshire contains, on the banks of its rivers, large tracts of the richest meadow lands, the most valuable branch of its rural economy is the fattening of cattle and the management of the numerous dairies. The oxen, bred chiefly in the less fertile pastures of Devonshire, when grazed in this county, afford the best beef, and furnish, in great numbers, the markets of the metropolis, as well as those of Bristol and Bath, in their immediate vicinity. The produce of the dairy is of the best kind. The cheese of Cheddar has obtained great celebrity, but that made in many other parts, and frequently sold as Gloucester, is equal to any in the world. The butter in the southern division of the county is excellent, and much of it, collected in the vicinity of Crewkerne, is sent to the London cheese- mongers, who supply it to their customers under the deno- mination of Dorsetshire butter.

The next agricultural product is cider, which forms almost the universal beverage of the working classes. It is a more pure and yet a stronger liquor than the cider either of Herefordshire or Devonshire. The consumption of it within the county is very large, and some is sent to distant parts. Nature has been so bountiful in furnishing sponta- neous productions, that to those agricultural pursuits which depend on skill and industry less attention is paid in this than in many other districts. Such is the abundiance of natural grass, that the farmers do not find it necessary to grow a crop of clover, or other artificial grass, so uniformly between two corn crops as is necessary in other counties ; nor is the practice of fallowing, or of introducing a rotation by commencing with turnips, much resorted to. Notwithstanding this, they grow good crops of corn, and in the hun- dred of Taunton Dean the wheat is of the very best qua- lity. Barley is not very extensively cultivated, as the ge- neral use of cider causes but little consumption of malt. The barley crops are in general very good. Oats are ex- tensively cultivated, but scarcely equal the demands of the county, and the easy intercourse with Ireland readily supplies any deficiency when it occurs. The soil is well cal­culated for the growth of flax, and it furnishes a large proportion of that used in the manufactures of the county. It is not unusual to rent land for half a year while a crop of flax is raised ; after which it is taken again by the regular occupant, who finds the flax to be an excellent preparative for wheat, from the careful weeding necessary to its growth.