

value and richness of their points. The former at one time commenced a history of lace, though what was the ultimate fate of the MS. the author is unable to state. The Countess of Blessington, at her death, left several chests filled with the finest antique lace of all descriptions.

The "dames du grande monde," both in England and France, now began to wear lace. But, strange as it may seem, never at any period did they appear to so little advantage as during the counter-revolution of the lace period. Lace was the fashion, and wear it somehow they would; though that somehow often gave them an appearance, as the French say, "du dernier ridicule," simply from an ignorance displayed in the manner of arranging it. That lace was old seemed sufficient to satisfy all parties. They covered their dresses with odds and ends of all fabrics, without attention either to date or texture. We recollect one English lady appearing at a ball given by the French embassy at Rome, boasting that she wore on the tablier of her dress every description of lace, from point coupé, of the sixteenth, to Alençon, of the eighteenth century. H. R. H. the Count of Syracuse was accustomed to say: "The English ladies buy a scrap of lace as a souvenir of every town they pass through, till they reach Naples, they sew it on their dresses, and make one grand toilette of the whole to honour our first ball at the Academia Nobile."

The taste for lace has again become universal, and the quality now produced renders it within the reach of all classes of society; and though by some the taste may be condemned, it gives employment to thousands and ten thousands of women, who find it more profitable and better adapted to their strength than the field labour which forms the occupation of the women in agricultural districts. To these last, in a general point of view, the lace-maker of our southern counties, who works at home in her own cottage, is superior, both in education, refinement, and morality:—

"Here the needle plies its busy task;
The pattern grows, the well-depicted flower,
Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn,
Unfolds its bosom; buds, and leaves, and sprigs,
And curling tendrils, gracefully dispos'd,
Follow the nimble fingers of the fair—
A wreath that cannot fade, of flowers that blow
With most success when all besides decay."²⁴

²⁴ Cowper, "The Winter Evening."