

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LACE MANUFACTURES OF ENGLAND.

“Yon cottager, who weaves at her own door,
Pillow and bobbins all her little store;
Content though mean, and cheerful if not gay,
Shuffling her threads about the livelong day:
Just earns a scanty pittance, and at night
Lies down secure, her heart and pocket light.”

Cowper.

THE bone lace manufactures of England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries appear to have extended over a much wider area than they occupy in the present day. From Cambridge to the adjacent counties of Northampton and Hertfordshire, by Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, and Oxfordshire, the trade spread over the southern counties of Wiltshire, Somersetshire,¹ Hampshire, and Dorset, to the more secluded valleys of Devon—the county which still sustains the ancient reputation of “English point”—terminating at Launceston, on the Cornish coast.

Various offsets from these fabrics were established in Wales.² Ripon,³ an isolated manufactory, represented the lace industry of

¹ “Wells, bone lace and knitting stockings.”—*Anderson*.

² “Launceston, where are two schools for forty-eight children of both sexes. The girls are taught to read, sew, and make bone lace, and they are to have their earnings for encouragement.”—*Magna Britannia*, 1720.

Welsh lace was made at Swansea, Pont-Ardawe, Llanwrtyd, Dufynock, and Brecon, but never of any beauty, some not unlike a coarse Valenciennes. “It was much made and worn,” said an aged Wesleyan lady, “by our ‘connexion,’ and as a child I had all my frocks and pinafores trimmed with it. It was made in the cottages; each lace-maker had her own

pattern, and carried it out for sale in the country.”

³ At what period, and by whom, the lace manufactory of Ripon was founded, we have been unable to ascertain. It was probably a relic of conventual days, which, after having followed the fashion of each time, has now gradually died out. Twenty years since, broad trolly laces of French design and fair workmanship were fabricated in the old cathedral city; where, in the poorer localities near the Bond and Blossomgate, young women might be seen working their intricate patterns, with pillows, bobbins, and pins. Now, one old woman alone, says our informant, sustains the memory of the