

Many of these fabrics now belong to the past, consigned to oblivion even in the very counties where they once flourished. In describing, therefore, the lace manufactures of the United Kingdom, we shall confine ourselves to those which still remain, alluding only slightly to such as were once of note, and of which the existence is confirmed by the testimony of contemporary writers.

The "women of the mystery of thread-working" would appear to have made lace in London,<sup>8</sup> and of their complaints and grievances our public records bear goodly evidence. Of the products of their needle we know little or nothing.

Various Flemings and Burgundians established themselves in the City; and though the emigrants, for the most part, betook themselves to the adjoining counties, the craft, till the end of the eighteenth century, may be said to have held fair commerce in the capital.

The London fabric can scarcely be looked upon as a staple trade in itself, mixed up as it was with lace-cleaning and lace-washing—an occupation first established by the ejected nuns.<sup>9</sup> Much point, too, was made by poor gentlewomen, as the records of the Anti-Gallican Society testify. "A strange infatuation," says a writer of the last century, "prevailed in the capital for many years, among the class called demi-fashionables, of sending their daughters to convents in France for education, if that could be so termed which amounted to a learning to work in lace. The Revolution, however, put an end to this practice." It is owing to this French education that the fine needle points were so extensively made in England; though this occupation, however, did not seem to belong to any one county in particular; for the reader who runs his eye over the proceedings of the Anti-Gallican Society will find prizes to have been awarded to gentlewomen from all parts—from the town of Leominster in Herefordshire to Broughton in Leicestershire, or Stourton in Gloucester.<sup>10</sup> Needle point, in contradistinction to bone lace, was an occupation confined to no special locality. (Coloured Plate XV.)

In 1764, the attention of the nobility seems to have been first directed towards the employment of the indigent poor, and,

<sup>8</sup> See p. 252.

<sup>9</sup> See p. 259.

<sup>10</sup> In 1753, prizes varying from two

to five guineas were awarded for fourteen pairs of curious needlework point ruffles.