

CHAPTER XXX.

BEDFORDSHIRE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, AND NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

BEDFORDSHIRE.

“ He wears a stuff whose thread is coarse and round,
But trimm'd with curious lace.”

Herbert.

It would be a difficult matter now to determine when and by whom lace-making was first introduced into the counties of Bedfordshire and Buckingham. Authors, for the most part, have been glad to assign its introduction to the Flemings,¹ a nation to whose successive emigrations England owes much of her manufacturing greatness.

On the other hand, certain traditions handed down in the county villages of a good queen who protected their craft, the annual festival of the workers—in the palmy days of the trade a matter of great moment—combined with the residence of that unhappy queen, for the space of two years, at her jointure manor of Ampthill,² lead us rather to infer that the art of lace-working, as it then existed, was first imparted to the peasantry of Bedfordshire, as a means of subsistence, through the charity of Queen Katherine of Aragon. In our chapter devoted to needlework we have already alluded to the proficiency of this queen in all arts connected with the needle, to the “ trials of needlework ” established by her mother, Queen Isabella, at which she, as a girl, had

¹ Who fled from the Alva persecutions, and settled, in 1568, first at Cranfield, in Bedfordshire, then at Buckingham, Stoney Stratford, and Newport Pagnel; whence the manufacture extended gradually over Oxford, Northampton, and Cambridge. Many Flemish names are

still to be found in the villages of Bedfordshire.

² She retired to Ampthill early in 1531, while her appeal to Rome was pending, and remained there till the summer of 1533.