

flourished, all English, and even French authors,⁹ citing its "manufactures de dentelles au fuseau" as the staple produce of the town and its surrounding villages, which said lace, however, they pronounce as "inférieure à celle de Flandre."

During the seventeenth century the trade continued to advance, and Fuller testifies to its once more prosperous condition in Bucks, towards the year 1640. "No handicrafts of note," he writes, "(save what are common to other countries), are used therein, except any will instance in bone lace, much thereof being made about Ouldney, in this county, though more, I believe, in Devonshire, where we shall meet more properly therewith."¹⁰ Olney, as it is now written, a small market town, for many years the residence of Cowper, known by its twenty-four-arched bridge, now no more, "of wearisome but needful length," spanning the Ouse—Olney, together with its fellow towns of Newport Pagnel and Aylesbury, are much quoted by the authorities of the last century, though, as is too often the case in books of travels and statistics, one writer copies from another the information derived from a preceding author. Defoe, however, who really did solace the pains of pillory and ear-cropping by visiting each county in detail, quotes "Ouldney as possessing a considerable manufacture of bone lace;" while a letter from the poet Cowper to the Rev. John Newton, in 1780, enclosing a petition to Lord Dartmouth in favour of the lace-makers, declares that "hundreds in this little town are upon the point of starving, and that the most unremitting industry is barely sufficient to keep them from it." A distress caused, we may infer, by some caprice of fashion.

"The lace manufacture is still carried on," says Lysons,¹¹ "to a great extent in and about Olney, where veils and other lace of the finer sort are made, and great fortunes are said to be acquired by the factors. Lace-making is in no part of the country so general as at Hanslape and in its immediate vicinity; but it prevails from fifteen to twenty miles round in every direction. At Hanslape not fewer than 800, out of a population of 1275, were employed in it in the year 1801. Children are there put to the lace schools at, or soon after, five years of age. At eleven or twelve years of age they are all able to maintain themselves without any assistance: both girls and boys are taught to make

⁹ Savary and Peuchet.

¹⁰ "Worthies," vol. i. p. 134.

¹¹ "Magna Britannia," Daniel and Samuel Lysons, 1806-22.