

Glo'stershire Industries.

Origin of some of the County's More Notable Manufactures.

Those who have glanced through the foregoing pages (in which upwards of one hundred of Glo'shire's leading industries are described) cannot fail to be impressed with the variety and importance of the county's manufacturing interests. The following additional particulars, pertaining to the origin of several forms of industry, and illustrating the high reputation the county's manufactured products have always enjoyed, may also be of interest.

The manufacture of the comestible product known as "🎖 is the first of the foodstuffs manufactured in Glo'shire to be considered.

In this respect Glo'shire has been, and is, peculiarly favoured, its climate topography and soil adapting it to every form of husbandry. For centuries Glo'shire cheeses (particularly those produced in the far-famed Vale of Berkeley) were celebrated throughout Great Britain; and, indeed, the art of cheese-making is the prerogative of the county, to have originated in this county. It is gratifying to know that the manufacture of this valuable product has now found a outlet in foreign markets. In that play Sir John Falstaff says of one of his companions that his wit is as thick as Tewkesbury mustard. As applied to the object of the jest the comparison may not have been flattering, but it unmistakably indicated the strength and pungency of the mustard. Many other products of the soil, some of which are not now cultivated, owing to the easier importation form other countries, were scarcely less famous, particularly the vineyards in the Stroud Valley.

Treading—always one of the staple industries in the county—originally owed its great importance to the fertility of Glo'shire and the adjoining counties. The improved means of transportation made possible by the construction of railways and canals has given the county a new lease of life. In consequence, the industry has been greatly extended, and it Still supplies a considerable part of the Midlands and the West of England with flour. In Glo'shire also are located the oldest, and still one of the largest, inlaid wood and cake mills in the kingdom, dating back nearly a century and a-half, their establishment having originally been due to the flocks and herds bred in Glo'shire pastures.

The manufacture of food products generally Glo'shire has in recent years gained an increasing prominence. There are in the county several noted firms devoted to the manufacture of steam fruit preserves, from the fresh fruit gathered in the orchards. Another very thriving and progressive firm has erected large works for the manufacture of scientific health foods, such as malted milk, maltose, diabetic bread and biscuits, etc., this being the only factory of the kind in the district. This firm has also recently begun the manufacture of a chocolate which has been pronounced as being fully equal in texture and flavour to the best Swiss makes. Bacon curing is also extensively carried on here, and has been for one hundred years, the county having the first firm that is known to have employed factory methods in the production of the famous Wiltshe bacon.

Pre-eminent amongst the industries of the county that has sprung directly from Glo'shire soil is the weaving of cloth, with the allied industries of the manufacture of shirts, wearing apparel, &c. In the early years the Cotswold sheep were famous for the fineness of their fleeces, and the greatest wool kettles in the kingdom were located in this county. Several of our Cotswold villages—notably Chipping Campden and Painswick—give unmistakable evidence of their former wealth and importance as wool kettles, in their large and finely-constructed stone mansions, once inhabited by the more celebrated wool-staplers in the kingdom. The word "Nailsworth" (the name of one of our thriving Cotswold towns) is a corruption of two obsolete words, meaning "wool mart."

For a long period much of the wool was exported to be woven, being returned to the county as finished goods. This situation was changed when King Edward III, early in the fourteenth century, brought into the county the first Flemish weavers. From that date to this the "West of England cloth" has been everywhere esteemed as representing a very high class of manufacture.

Glo'shire's topography gave further great advantage to the early weavers. Owing to the configuration of the county, almost every part of it was intersected by small streams which furnished excellent water power. The wool industry was also largely responsible for the fine colours which have always been a distinguishing feature of Glo'shire cloth. The stone and timber of which the mills were constructed were also taken from the hills in the immediate vicinity, every part of the industry being supported by the power of operating the building the mills, the power for operating them, and the raw material to be used in them were all found in the same spot.

But the manufacture of Glo'shire cloth is scattered throughout the county, and particularly in and near the Stroud Valley. The application of steam and the construction of railroads have largely neutralised the first advantage given by water power, and one by one the mills were suspended, until now scarcely a tithe remains. Wherever one goes in the cloth weaving district he may see ruins of older mills, or what were once cloth factories, now deserted by some other branches of manufacture.

From this circumstance many have naturally supposed that the cloth industry in Glo'shire has declined. Nothing could be more erroneous. To-day there is more, and better, cloth woven in Glo'shire than in any other part of the country. The quality of the fabric as compared with those of a century ago, and the wonderful increase in the productive power of the operatives brought by modern science and invention, have more than counterbalanced the loss to the industry occasioned by the suspension of operations.

A striking illustration of the enormous superiority of the present mills over those of but fifty years ago is afforded by several of the cottages shown in the accompanying engravings (to give but a single instance) shows a bird's-eye view of a part of the premises over eight acres of ground, probably one-half of which is under roof. Other engravings showing interior views afford convincing evidence of the greatly improved manufacture that has been in effect in the mechanical processes.

The iron and engineering trades have sprung naturally from the wealth of Glo'shire's mineral deposits. From the time of the Romans until comparatively recent years the iron obtained from the Forest of Dean district was the best in the kingdom. The high value of the iron deposits was greatly enhanced by the proximity of excellent steaming coal, these collieries still being worked on a large scale, mostly by the iron trade. A part of the iron ore was shipped abroad owing to the discovery of richer and more accessible seams elsewhere. In the latter forms of iron working were probably those connected with agricultural implements, dairy appliances, &c., and the manufacture of these yet forms one of our most important industries. In Glo'shire, by the way, was invented the steam plough—an implement which has much been put to such good use in other countries. To-day our engineers successfully engage in the manufacture of almost every article of which iron forms a part, as aparagus cutters, railway trucks, rolling, cloth weaving, and linoleum making machinery, paint and colour grinding machinery, electrical appliances, spades and shovels, and innumerable specialties are to be found in every part of the globe.

The timber trade, which is now, and which has long been, one of the most important industries of the county, originated in the forests which once clothed both hill and valley. Everyone is familiar with the prominent past oak obtained from the Forest of Dean has taken in the creation of England's sea power. In the same manner a number of our industries which would now seem to be arcana—the manufacture of umbrellas and walking sticks, rakes, hoe, axe, and brush handles, all kinds of turned work, furniture specialties, &c.—found their origin in the variety and peculiar excellence of our native woods.

With the growth of commerce Glo'shire's geographical position has favoured the importation of foreign woods, and several of our timber importing firms are among the most important in the kingdom. Until easy means of transportation were provided by the railways the manufacture of brick, tile and terra-cotta goods, and the quarrying of stone for building purposes was restricted to local needs. But to-day the normal mode of transport for these products is at a lower rate. The flat-bottomed barques, now only used for the transport of agricultural produce, are in demand in distant parts of the kingdom, while the quarries are now being very extensively worked. As is pointed out in a separate article on the geographical characteristics of the county, Glo'shire is peculiarly rich in the variety and extent of its clays and building stones, the latter comprising nearly every shade and varying in hardness from those which can be cut with a knife to those which are almost too hard to be worked.

But although many of the county's industries resulted from its natural advantages, there are many more which owe their origin entirely to the inventiveness and adaptability of our people. The electric telegrapher of to-day is the natural development of a wonder of our age—had it its inception in the brain of a Glo'shire inventor in the early part of the last century. The art of enamelling slate was invented here, now forming the basis of a very important industry. The best existing specimen of the art of enamelling on stone is a panel bearing a representation of pins, hair-pins, and hooks and eyes was invented here, and to-day there are made in the county a greater number of pins and hair-pins and hooks and eyes than in any other locality in the world.

Paper making, through one of our cotswold towns, is another industry highly developed; and our letterpress, lithographic and photo-mechanical printing, paper-bag making, and similar establishments are reckoned among the best in the kingdom. Among the first railway trains made in the country, and the first railway vehicles constructed by an industry suggested by, and since keeping pace with, the rapid development of railways. And scores of other thriving industries which have now become established to the county from our industrial poverty owe their origin to wise inventive genius, and their prosperity to intrinsic worth.