

excellent in their kinds, especially bacon and cyder; and its rivers afford as great plenty of fish, especially salmon from the Severn, together with lampreys and conger-cels. But, to give a truer idea of this county, we shall consider it in three parts, according to its usual division, viz.

1. Coteswold, the hilly part of the county, bordering on Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire. It is not very fertile, and lies exposed to the winds and cold, so that its corn is slow in coming out of the ground; from whence arose the proverb in this county, It is as long in coming as Coteswold barley; but then it is healthy, and feeds a multitude of sheep, whose wool is exceeding fine, and so improved by the inhabitants, that they may be reckoned as golden fleeces to the county, many of whose towns are so eminent for the clothing manufacture, that they have no others fit to be named with it. It has been computed that before English wool began to be clandestinely exported to France, fifty thousand cloths were made yearly in this shire, which are estimated at ten pounds a cloth, the fine with the coarse; and the number of sheep kept in the county, of which most are fed in this part of it, is computed at four hundred thousand. It is said, that the fine Spanish wool came originally from the Coteswold sheep; one of the English kings, either Richard the First, or Edward the First, having made a present of the breed to the then king of Spain.

2. The Vale, which is the middle part of the county, and spreads into a fruitful plain lying on both sides of the Severn, is a quite different clime from the Coteswold, where, if it be true that there are eight months in the year winter, and four too cold for summer, here it is certain are eight months summer, and four too warm to deserve the name of winter. It is in this part of the county that excellent cheese is made, which is the fattest and most agreeable to the palate of any in England; though that which is so called in London comes, for the most part, out of Wiltshire; the real cheese of this county going more to Bristol than to London.

3. The forest of Dean, which is the most west part of the county, lies between the Severn and the Wye. It was heretofore covered with wood, and contained thirty thousand acres of it, being twenty miles long, and ten broad; and it was then such a harbour for robbers, especially towards the banks of the Severn, that in the reign of Henry the Sixth an act of parliament was made on purpose to restrain them. But since so many rich veins of iron have been discovered, and forges established here by act of parliament for working it, which require vast quantities of wood to support them, the woods are not only reduced to narrower bounds, but many towns and villages have been built in the forest, as is usual where any manufacture is carried on; insomuch, that here are three hundreds, twenty-three parish churches, three market-towns, one mayor-town, one castle, and one abbey. Where the woods are still preserved, the oaks are reckoned the best in England; the soil, which is a wet clay, being proper for the growth of them. The oak timber of this forest was anciently so famous, that most of that employed in building of English ships was fetched from hence: and this was so well known to the Spaniards, that their invincible armada, which was sent in 1558 to invade England, was ordered expressly to destroy this forest, in hopes thereby of quite ruining the English navigation. Formerly, I was told, the vallies of this county, which now are with more profit to the owners turned into orchards, were full of vineyards. In a word, this county abounds in corn, wood, wool, iron, steel, cyder, salmon, and cheese.

We still kept within land, and arrived in Monmouthshire, which was formerly a Welsh county. Its air is temperate and healthy, the east parts are woody, and the west parts are a little mountainous; but in the general it is fruitful enough, and the