

season for sowing it, and the middle of May for cropping it. It is best in a dry year; but more plentiful in a wet one. It is cropped commonly four or five times a year as it comes up; but the first crop is best, and every one after it gradually worse. When gathered it is immediately ground small in a mill, till it becomes fit to ball; and when balled, it is laid upon hurdles to dry; and then ground into powder. After this it is spread on a floor, and watered, which is called couching; and then it is turned every day till it is perfectly dry and mouldy, which is called silvering. After silvering, it is weighed, and put into a bag containing two hundred weight, and then sent to the dyer to try it, who sets a price on it according to its goodness. The best is commonly valued at 18*l.* a ton.

Adjoining to Bedfordshire is the county of Bucks, taking its name from beech-trees, in which it abounds, as I am told, more than any other part of England. Consequently this shire is diversified with pleasant woods and fine streams, which render it a desirable country: besides the quality of its air, which is generally good, especially on the Chiltern-hills, so that there is not a better in the whole island: and even in the vale, where it is not altogether so good, it is much better than in other low dirty counties. Its chief rivers are the Thames, the Ouse, and the Colne. The soil, being generally marl or chalk, is very fruitful, especially in corn; and though it is stony on the Chiltern-hills, yet amidst those stones there come up good crops of choice wheat and barley. It abounds too with physical plants, perhaps more than any other county. As the land in the vale is proper for grazing, so it abounds with cattle. There are some graziers here, who perhaps have 4 or 500*l.* a year in land of their own, and yet rent three times as much, which they keep all in their own management: and it is very certain, that one single meadow, called Buryfield, in the manor of Quarendon, was let not many years ago for 800*l.* a year. But the soil here, though so good to feed sheep, is too rich to breed them; and it is common to give 10*l.* for a ram to breed. The sheep of the vale of Alesbury are the biggest in England, and their mutton is very good; yet whoever has eaten of that of Banstead, Bagshot, and Tunbridge, must own there is better. The beef here is so good, that Buckinghamshire bread and beef was formerly a proverb; meaning, that the former was the finest, and the latter the fattest in England.

The manufactures of this shire are paper and bone-lace; the former made at Wycomb mills, and the latter at Newport-Pagnel, where the lace is very little inferior to that of Flanders. And here I can't forbear remarking how far the English degenerate from their native capacity of improving manufactures, in the particular case of paper, which, notwithstanding they have a greater plenty of the best rags, they commonly make out of old rotten materials, the shavings and cuttings of paper, till it will not bear the weight of the press; and sell their best rags abroad so cheap, that the Dutch, French and Genoese, are able to import paper, made chiefly of English rags, cheaper and always better than any that is made in England, which is a great oversight.

My tutor, who was an Oxonian, having brought us to the confines of Oxfordshire, assured me that it would be worth my while to see and spend a few days in the famous city and University of Oxford; to which I readily condescended, but shall refer my minutes of that agreeable seat of learning to its proper place; and, at present, I only observe, that Oxfordshire enjoys a sweet healthful air, and is a very plentiful country; for the plains are judiciously disposed into corn-fields and meadows, and its few hills exalt their heads with lofty woods, and harbour great plenty of all sorts of game. I did not meet with any particular manufacture in the whole county.

From Oxford we departed for Gloucestershire, which abounds with all sorts of grain, cattle, fowl and game, and every thing that other counties produce, and altogether as