



Spinning Gallery, Adamthwaite Farm

still to be seen in the gallery at Newbiggin; and the owner of this has a ball of linen thread made from flax spun there. The flax was bleached in the yard below. Adamthwaite is a lonely sheep farm deep in a hollow of the Howgills. Next to its gallery is a wool-room still used as such. A member of a family who had lived there for fifty years said that she had known as many as three years' clips stored there. She herself had 'thrown up many a fleece.' Someone stood at the bottom of the gantry¹ steps, and another on the spinning gallery ready to catch each fleece and throw it through the wool-room door. She also told us that her grandmother could spin when she was a child, and that her great-great-grandmother always used to spin her own knitting wool.

¹ attic.

Lord Brougham gave an election address from the gallery at the Black Swan in 1826, and was so struck by the amount of knitting done in the locality, and by the sight of the women and lads knitting whilst he was speaking that he suggested that the dale should be renamed 'Knitting Dale.' Knitting schools were established in the village, and one woman, Dolly Coupland, taught three generations to knit¹.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century the trade in good quality hand-knitted stockings had slumped. After that bump instead of worsted was given out to the knitters, and it was mostly made up into coarse stockings, mittens, and seamens' jerseys and caps. The bump from Kendal was delivered to the Black Swan where the garments knitted the previous week were collected and returned to Kendal where they were washed and shrunk to the requisite size. A Mr. Allen of that town brought as much as £50 in wages for knitting each week into the dale. The people of the villages in the vicinity used to 'go forth,' as they called it, to knit whilst they gossiped and told stories during the evening at each other's houses. Some were so poor that to save fuel they went to bed, and knitted under the blankets. The method was here called 'waving,' (weaving) as in Swaledale, and a good knitter was described as a good waver. The people used to knit furiously, as if their lives depended on it, as indeed at one time they probably did. Though the knitting ended about eighty years ago and all the old knitters have gone, there are not many dalespeople's homes in which a knitting-stick or two may not be found put away in a drawer, and at Newbiggin, if you are lucky, you may still see a woman knitting as she walks up the street.

Although but a few miles from Shap Fell, Orton lies in flatter, more arable country than Ravenstonedale. Little becks, tributaries of the River Lune, crossed here and there by road and foot bridges, trickle quietly through the village; and paths lead through fields from one cluster of pink-and-white-washed or stone-built houses to another. In Orton almost all remembrances of the knitting have gone, and the industry was dwindling away soon after the middle of the last century. In 1795 'women are mostly employed in knitting worsted stockings for the Kendal manufacturers, by which they earn about 4d. or 5d. a day';² and 'In 1868 there were six elderly knitters in Orton who knit 72 pairs of stockings each month for Edmondson of Kendal, when their united ages amounted to

¹ *History and Traditions of Ravenstonedale*. Rev. W. Nicholls (1877).

478 years." The bump from Kendal used to be delivered, and the garments collected from May Bland's shop. She sold toffee and especially tasty kippers! Whilst in Orton we were shown several knitting sheaths. One was described as a good knitter; and its owner told us that her mother was able to spin. No industry survives, but it is still possible to buy hand-knit stockings in the village.