then much taken notice of. Hence it should seem that the invention of silk knit stockings originally came from Spain. Others relate, that one William Rider, an appren­tice on London Bridge, seeing at the house of an Italian merchant a pair of knit worsted stockings from Mantua, took the hint, and made a pair exactly like them, which he presented to William earl of Pembroke, and that they were the first of that kind worn in England, anno 1564.

The modern stockings, whether woven or knit, are form­ed of an infinite number of little knots, called *stitches, loops,* or *meshes,* intermingled in one another. Knit stockings are wrought with needles made of polished iron or brass wire, which interweave the threads and form the meshes of which the stocking consists. At what time the art of knitting was invented, it is perhaps impossible to determine, though it has been usually attributed to the Scots, as it is said that the first works of this kind came from Scotland. It is added, that it was on this account that the company of stocking-knitters established at Paris in 1527 took for their patron St Fiacre, who is said to have been the son of a king of Scotland. But it is most probable that the method of knitting stockings by wires or needles was first brought from Spain.

Woven stockings are generally very fine. They are manufactured on a frame or machine made of polished iron, the structure of which it is needless to describe, as it may be seen in almost every considerable town in Great Britain. The invention of this machine is, by Mr Anderson, attri­buted to William Lee, Μ. A. of St John’s College, Cam­bridge, at a period so early as 1589. Others have given the credit of the invention to a student of Oxford at a much later period, who, it is said by Aaron Hill,@@1 was driven to it by dire necessity. This young man falling in love with an innkeeper’s daughter, married her though she had not a penny, and he by his marriage Jost a fellowship. They soon fell into extreme poverty ; and their marriage pro­ducing the consequences naturally to be expected from it, the amorous pair became miserable, not so much on ac­count of their sufferings, as from the melancholy dread of what would become of their yet unborn infant. Their only means of support was the knitting of stockings, at which the woman was very expert. “ But sitting constantly together from morning to night, and the scholar often fixing his eyes, with stedfast observation, on the motion of his wife’s fingers in the dexterous management of her needles, he took it into his imagination that it was not impossible to contrive a little loom which might do the work with much more ex­pedition. This thought he communicated to his wife, and joining his head to her hands, the endeavour succeeded to their wish. Thus the ingenious stocking-loom, which is so common now, was first invented ; by which he did not only make himself and his family happy, but has left his nation indebted to him for a benefit which enables us to export silk stockings in great quantities, and to a vast advantage, to those very countries from whence before we used to bring them at considerable loss in the balance of our traffic.”

STOCKPORT, a town in the hundred of Macclesfield and county of Chester, 173 miles from London. It stands on the banks of the river Mersey, over which is a neat stone bridge of a single arch, resting on rocks on both sides. By means of a canal this town has water communi­cation with the rivers Dee, Ribble, Trent, and Severn, and thus with the greater part of the kingdom. The trade which it carries on is very extensive. It was formerly con­fined in a great measure to making cotton goods ; but of late years the silk-manufacture has been introduced, and has been prodigiously extended. There are two parish churches. The oldest, called the Red Church, is built on a solid rock, and has a neat square tower, with a good set of bells. There are also many places of worship for the various dissenting sects. By the act of 1832 it has been created a borough, and returns two members to the House of Commons. There is a large market on Fridays. The inhabitants amounted in 1801 to 14,830, in 1811 to 17,545, in 1821 to 21,726, and in 1831 to 25,469.

STOCKS, or Public Funds *in England.* See Fund­ing System.

STOCKTON, a town in the ward of that name, in the county of Durham, 248 miles from London. It stands on the river Tees, which is navigable to it ; and consists prin­cipally of one well-built, long, and wide street, in which is the church, the town-hall, and grammar-school. It is an ancient borough, governed by a mayor, a recorder, and al­dermen, but elects no members to the House of Commons. It formerly contained a castle, which has been demolished, and the stones applied to the erection of more modern buildings. The bridge over the Tees is an elegant ob­ject. The inhabitants carry on a considerable trade in making coarse linens, huccabacks, table-cloths, and sail­cloths ; and several ships are built on the river. Stockton is well supplied with coals, vegetables, fruit, fish, and other necessaries ; and it has a market on Wednesday and another on Saturday. The number of inhabitants amounted in 1801 to 4009, in 1811 to 4229, in 1821 to 5006, and in 1831 to 7763.

STOKESLEY, a town in the north riding of the county of York, and in the wapentake of Langborough. It is 242 miles from London, and forty-three from York. It stands on the river Lcven, and consists of one well-built, long street, with no remarkable building except the manor-house, adjoining to the churchyard, which at an early pe­riod was granted to Guy de Balio), whose family came to England with William the Conqueror. The town depends on the fertility of the land around it, from which a market on Saturday is well supplied. The parish comprises four small townships. The population amounted in 1801 to 1755, in 1811 to 1759, in 1821 to 2290, and in 1831 to 2376.

STOICS, the name given to a sect of Grecian philoso­phers, from Σ*τοα*, the porch in Athens, which the founder of the sect chose for his school.

STOLE, a sacerdotal ornament worn by the Romish pa­rish priests above their surplice, as a mark of superiority in their respective churches ; and by other priests over the alb, at celebrating of mass, in which case it goes across the stomach ; and by deacons over the left shoulder, in the form of a scarf. The stole is a broad swath, or slip of stuff, hang­ing from the neck to the feet, and is marked with three crosses.

*Groom of the Stole,* the eldest gentleman of the king’s bedchamber, whose office it was to present anil put on his majesty’s first garment, or shirt, every morning, and to order the things in the chamber.

STOLPE, a town of Prussian Pomerania, in the govern­ment of Koslin, the capital of a circle of the same name. It stands on the river Stolpe, which is navigable to it. It contains 650 houses, with 5840 inhabitants, who are chief­ly employed in linen and woollen manufactures, in fisheries on the river for salmon, and in distilleries and breweries. Long. 16. 50. E. Lat. 54. 27. 29. N.

STONE, a town in the hundred of Pirehill and county of Stafford, 141 miles from London. It is pleasantly situat­ed on the banks of the river Trent, is neat and well built ; and by means of a canal has an easy communication with most parts of the kingdom. The church is a fine structure, with a square tower and a good set of bells. The inhabi­tants amounted in 1801 to 2305, in 1811 to 2314, in 1821 to 2855, and 1831 to 3460.

@@@, See an Account of the Rise and Progress of the Beech Oil Invention, &c. 8vo, 1715.