

the effects of Madame de Simiane, dated 1681, were many articles of English point;<sup>19</sup> and Monseigneur the Archbishop of Bourges, who died some few years later, had two cambric toilettes trimmed with the same.<sup>20</sup>

The finest Brussels lace can only be made in the city itself. Antwerp, Ghent, and other localities, have in vain tried to compete with the capital. The little town of Binche, long of lace-making celebrity, has been the most successful. Binche, however, now only makes pillow flowers (point plat), and those of an inferior quality.

When, in 1756, Mrs. Calderwood visited the Béguinage, at Brussels, she writes to a friend, describing the lace-making: "A part of their work is grounding lace; the manufacture is very curious. One person works the flowers. They are all sold separate, and you will see a very pretty sprig, for which the worker only gets twelve sous. The masters who have all these people employed give them the thread to make them; this they do according to a pattern, and give them out to be grounded; after this they give them to a third hand, who 'hearts' all the flowers with the open work. That is what makes this lace so much dearer than the Mechlin, which is wrought all at once."<sup>21</sup>

The thread used in Brussels lace is of extraordinary fineness. It is made of flax grown in Brabant, at Hal and Rebecq-Rognon.<sup>22</sup> The finest quality is spun in dark underground rooms, for contact with the dry air causes the thread to break; so fine is it as almost to escape the sight. The feel of the thread as it passes through the fingers is the surest guide. The thread-spinner closely examines every inch drawn from her distaff, and when any inequality occurs, stops her wheel to repair the mischief. Every artificial help is given to the eye. A background of dark paper

<sup>19</sup> "Deux paires de manchettes et une cravatte de point d'Angleterre."—*Inventaire d'Anne d'Escoubleau, Baronne de Sourdis, veuve de François de Simiane*. Arch. Nat. M. M. 802.

<sup>20</sup> "Inv. après le décès de Mgr. Mich. Philippine de la Vrillière, Patriarche, Archevêque de Bourges," 1694. Bib. Nat. MSS. F. Fr. 11,426.

"Une toilette et sa touaille avec un peignoir de point d'Angleterre."—*Inv. de décès de Mademoiselle de Charollais*, 1758. Arch. Nat.

<sup>21</sup> "Mrs. Calderwood's Journey through Holland and Belgium, 1756." Printed by the Maitland Club.

<sup>22</sup> Flax is also cultivated solely for lace and cambric thread at St. Nicholas, Tournay, and Courtrai. The process of steeping (rouissage) principally takes place at Courtrai, the clearness of the waters of the Lys rendering them peculiarly fitted for the purpose. Savary states that fine thread was first spun at Mechlin.