

is placed to throw out the thread, and the room so arranged as to admit one single ray of light upon the work. The life of a Flemish thread-spinner is unhealthy, and her work requires the greatest skill; her wages are therefore proportionably high.

It is the fineness of the thread which renders the real Brussels ground (*vrai réseau*) so costly.<sup>23</sup> The difficulty of procuring this fine thread, at any cost, prevented the art being established in other countries. We all know how, during the last fifty years of the bygone century, a mania existed in the United Kingdom for improving all sorts of manufactures. The Anti-Gallican Society gave prizes in London; Dublin and Edinburgh vied with their sister capital in patriotism. Every man would establish something to keep our native gold from crossing the water. Foreign travellers had their eyes open, and Lord Garden, a Scotch lord of session, who visited Brussels in 1787, thus writes to a countryman on the subject:—"This day I bought you ruffles and some beautiful Brussels lace, the most light and costly of all manufactures. I had entertained, as I now suspect, a vain ambition to attempt the introduction of it into my humble parish in Scotland, but on inquiry I was discouraged. The thread is of so exquisite a fineness they cannot make it in this country. It is brought from Cambray and Valenciennes in French Flanders, and five or six different artists are employed to form the nice part of this fabric, so that it is a complicated art which cannot be transplanted without a passion as strong as mine for manufactures, and a purse much stronger. At Brussels, from one pound of flax alone, they can manufacture to the value of 700*l.* sterling."

Of the two kinds of ground used in Brussels lace, the *bride* had, a century back,<sup>24</sup> been replaced by the *réseau*, and was only made to order. Nine ells of "*Angleterre à bride*" appear in the bills of Madame du Barry.<sup>25</sup> Sometimes

<sup>23</sup> It is often sold at 240*l.* per lb., and in the report of the French Exhibition of 1859 it is mentioned as high as 500*l.* (25,000 fr. the kilogramme). No wonder that so much thread is made by machinery, and that Scotch cotton thread is so generally used, except for the choicest laces. But machine-made thread has never attained the fineness of that made by hand. Of those in the Exhibition of 1862, the finest Lille was 800 leas (a technical term for a reel of 300 yarns),

the Brussels 600, the Manchester 700; whereas in Westphalia and Belgium hand-spun threads as fine as 800 to 1000 are spun for costly laces. The writer has seen specimens, in the Museum at Lille, equal to 1200 of machinery; but this industry is so poorly remunerated that the number of skilful hand-spinners is fast diminishing.

<sup>24</sup> "*Dictionnaire du Citoyen*," 1761.

<sup>25</sup> "*Comptes de Madame du Barry*." Bib. Nat. MSS. F. Fr. 8157 and 8.