

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LACE MANUFACTURES OF FRANCE.

FRANCE is a lace-making, as well as a lace-wearing, country.

Of the half-million of lace-makers in Europe, nearly a quarter of a million are estimated as belonging to France.

Under the impulse of fashion and luxury, lace receives the stamp of the special style of each country. Italy furnished its points of Venice and Genoa; the Netherlands, its Brussels, Mechlin, and Valenciennes; Spain, its silk blondes; England, its Honiton; France, its sumptuous point d'Alençon, and its black lace of Bayeux. Now, each style is copied by every nation; and though France cannot compete with Belgium in the points of Brussels, or the Valenciennes of Ypres, she has no rival in her points of Alençon, or her black silk laces. To begin with Alençon, the only French lace not made on the pillow.

ALENÇON (DÉP. DE L'ORNE), NORMANDY.

“Alençon est sous Sarthe assis,
Il luic divise le pays.”

Romant de Rou.

The account given by the historian of Alençon of the establishment of the points de France in that town differs widely from that we have related (p. 128), but as it was the generally received version until the publication of the “Colbert Correspondence,” we give it here.

In 1665, at the recommendation of the Sieur Ruel, Colbert selected Madame Gilbert, a native of Alençon, already acquainted with the manner of making Venice point, and making her an advance of 50,000 crowns, established her at his château of Lonray (Fig. 78), near Alençon, with thirty forewomen whom he had, at great expense, caused to be brought over from Venice.

In a short time, Madame Gilbert arrived at Paris with the