

alone. All these little girls are become mistresses, and finding that Laperrière gained a great deal, they determined to work for themselves and to their own profit, so that in their turn they employed others; this industry has thus by degrees so increased that above 8000 persons work in Alençon, Falaise, Sées, Argentan, and all the surrounding parishes of the Pays de Maine, at Fresnoy, Beaumont, and Menars. It is a real blessing of heaven sent into the country, by means of which little children of even seven years of age find the means of gaining a livelihood, and others of supporting their parents and their whole family. The old men work and find it answer. As soon as the work is finished, they are able to sell it, and are paid. It is this which makes them so miserable, because all sorts of persons are not fitted to work at the fine point they wish to make, and the children will be frustrated and sent away, because they cannot be sufficiently skilful to work at the fine point; and all those who gained their subsistence cannot succeed, being accustomed to a point of which they have now the sale.

“This it is which causes the resistance, thinking their trade is being taken away from them and the means of paying their taxes. The little shepherdesses of the fields even work. This is what in conscience I am obliged to represent to you, and to make you know all that they wished to do to a country favoured by heaven with this industry, which gives life and maintenance to so many thousand souls. This is the truth of the matter.”

The remonstrance of the worthy intendant met with the attention it deserved.

On September 14 following, after a meeting headed by Prevost and the Marquis de Rasnes, intendant of the city, it was settled that after the king had found 200 girls, the rest were at liberty to work as they pleased; none had permission to make the fine point of the royal pattern except those who worked for the manufactory; and all girls must show to the authorities the patterns they intended working, “so that the king shall be satisfied and the people gain a livelihood.”

The “*maîtresse dentellière*,” Catherine du Marcq, writes to Colbert, November 30, 1665, complaining of the obstinacy of the people, who prefer the old work. “Out of 8000 women, we have got but 700, and I can only count on 250 who at least will have learnt to perfection the Venetian point, the remainder merely working a month and then leaving the establishment.”