

CHAPTER XVII.

VALENCIENNES (DEP. DU NORD).

"Ils s'attachoient à considerer des tableaux de petit point de la manufacture de Valenciennes qui representoient des fleurs, et comme ils les trouvoient parfaitement beaux, M. de Magelotte, leur hôte, vouloit les leur donner, mais ils ne les acceptèrent point."—*Voyage des Ambassadeurs de Siam*, 1688.

PART of the ancient province of Hainault, Valenciennes, together with Lille and Arras, is Flemish by birth, French only by conquest and treaty.¹ The date of its lace manufacture is unknown, but it early made lace with straight edge and a ground of running pattern, its first productions being attributed to a Pierre Chauvin and Ignace Harent, who employed a three-thread twisted flax. It flourished under Louis XIV., and reached its climax from 1725 to 1780, when there were from 3000 to 4000 lace-makers in the city alone.

Coloured Plate XII. shows the style of patterns till the middle of the eighteenth century—flowers and scrolls of the Renaissance, later replaced with the réseau ground.

From 1780 downwards, fashion changed. The cheaper and lighter laces of Brussels, Lille, and Arras, obtained the preference over the costly and more substantial products of Valenciennes—"les éternelles Valenciennes," as they were called—while the subsequent disappearance of ruffles from the costume of the men greatly added to the evil. Valenciennes fell with the monarchy. During the war of liberty, foreign occupation decimated its population, and the art became nearly lost. In 1790 the number of lace-workers had diminished to 250; and though Napoleon used every effort to revive the manufacture, he was unsuccessful. In 1851 there were only two lace-makers remaining, and they both upwards of eighty years of age.

¹ French Hainault, French Flanders and Cambrésis (the present Dép. du Nord), with Artois, were conquests of

Louis XIII. and Louis XIV., confirmed to France by the treaties of Aix-la-Chapelle (1668), and Nimeguen (1678).