

during the eighteenth century. In 1707 the manufacturers demand a remission of the import duties of 1664 as unfair,<sup>6</sup> and with success. Scarce ten years afterwards,<sup>7</sup> notwithstanding the privilege accorded, we again find them in trouble: whether their patterns did not advance with the fashions of the day, or the manufacturers deteriorated the quality of the thread—too often the effect of commercial prosperity—the magazines were filled with lace, “propres, les unes pour l’Italie, d’autres pour les mers du sud,” which the merchants refused to buy. To remedy this bad state of affairs, the commissioners assembled at Montpellier coolly decided that the diocese should borrow 60,000 livres to purchase the dead stock, and so clear the market. After some arguments the lace was bought by the Sieur Jerphanion, syndic of the diocese.

Prosperity, however, was not restored, for in 1755 we again hear of a grant of 1000 livres, payable in ten years by the states of Vélay, for the relief of the distressed lace-makers, and again a fresh demand for exemption of the export duty.<sup>8</sup> This is declared in a memorial of 1761 to be the chief cause of the distress, which memorial also states that, to employ the people in a more lucrative way, a manufacture of blondes and silk laces had been introduced.

Peuchet, with his predecessor, Savary, and other writers on statistics, describe the manufacture of Le Puy as the most flourishing in France. “Her lace,” writes Peuchet, “resembles greatly that of Flanders; much is consumed in the French dominions, and a considerable quantity exported to Spain, Portugal, Germany, Italy, and England. Much thread lace is also expedited by way of Cadiz to Peru and Mexico. The ladies of these countries trim their petticoats and other parts of their dress with such a profusion of lace as to render the consumption ‘prodigieuse.’” “Les Anglois en donnent des commissions en contrebande pour l’Isthmus de Panama. Les Hollandois en demandent aussi et

<sup>6</sup> They represent to the king that the laces of the “diocèse du Puy, du Vélay et de l’Auvergne, dont il se faisait un commerce très-considérable dans les pays étrangers, par les ports de Bordeaux, La Rochelle et Nantes,” ought not to pay the import duties held by the “cinq grosses fermes.”—*Arrest du Conseil*

*d’Estat du Roy*, 6 August 1707. Arch. Nat. Coll. Rond. They ended by obtaining a duty of five sous per lb., instead of the 50 livres paid by Flanders and England, or the 10 livres paid by the laces of Comté, Liège, and Lorraine.

<sup>7</sup> 1715 and 1716.

<sup>8</sup> See p. 51.