

manufacture reached its height in that town about 1780, when there were some four thousand lace makers employed upon it; but fashion changed, lighter laces came into vogue, and in 1790 the lace workers had diminished to two hundred and fifty. Napoleon made an unsuccessful attempt to revive the manufacture, and in 1851 only two lace makers remained, and they were over eighty years old. At one time this manufacture was so peculiar to the place that it was said, "If a piece of lace were begun at Valenciennes and finished outside the walls, the part not made at Valenciennes would be visibly less beautiful and less perfect than the other, though done by the same lace maker with the same thread and pillow." The city-made lace was remarkable for its richness of design, evenness and solidity. It was known as the "beautiful and everlasting Valenciennes," and was bequeathed from mother to daughter like jewels and furs. It was made by young girls in underground rooms, and many of these workers are said to have become almost blind before they were thirty years of age. When the whole piece was done by the same hand the lace was thought much more valuable.

Valenciennes lace was made in other towns of the province, but "vraie Valenciennes" only at Valenciennes. The Lille makers, for instance, would make from three to five *elles* a day (an *ell* is forty-eight inches), while those of Valenciennes would make not more than an inch and one-half in the same time. Some lace makers made only twenty-four inches in a year; hence the costliness of the lace. Modern Valenciennes is far inferior in quality to that made in 1780.

The manufacture of this lace is now transferred to Belgium, to the great commercial loss of France, for it is the most widely consumed of any of the varieties of lace. It is the most important of the pillow laces of Belgium. Ypres, which is the chief place of its manufacture, began to make this lace in 1656. In 1684 it had only three forewomen and sixty-three lace makers, while in 1850 it numbered from twenty thousand to twenty-two thousand. The Valenciennes of Ypres is the finest and most elaborate of any that is now made. On a piece not two inches wide from two hundred to three hundred bobbins are employed, and for greater widths eight hundred bobbins are sometimes used on the same pillow. The large, clear squares of the ground contrast finely with the even tissue of the patterns. The Ypres manufacture has greatly improved since 1833, and has reached a high degree of perfection. Irish Valenciennes closely resembles the Ypres lace. Valenciennes lace, as fine as that of France, was at one time made in England.

Three specimens of Valenciennes lace are given in Fig. 61. The top specimen was made at Brabant, the middle one at Belge, and the bottom piece at Puy. All are so-called Modern Valenciennes.

Mechlin is a fine, beautiful lace, made in one piece on the pillow, and is distinguished by the flat thread which forms its flower. Before 1665 all pillow lace, of which the pattern was relieved by a flat thread, was known as Mechlin lace. "It is essentially a summer lace, not becoming in itself, but charming when worn over color."

*IT IS A PLEASURE TO HAVE YOUR SILK IN A HOLDER.*