European Women and Preindustrial Craft

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PART II

The Persistence of Handicraft in the Industrial Age
The Lacemakers of Le Puy in the Nineteenth Century

In February 1799, several months before the coup d'état that was to bring Napoleon Bonaparte to power in France, a government official touring the Haute-Loire wrote: "The two arrondissements of Le Puy and Yssingeaux and the mountainous part of Brioude form one vast lace workshop, occupying all of the young girls and all of the old or feeble women." This description would remain valid for at least another century until changing fashions, the social and economic dislocation associated with the First World War, and competition from improved lacemaking machines dramatically reduced the demand for handmade lace.

Estimates of the number of lacemakers in the departmental capital, Le Puy, and its environs ranged from 30,000 early in the century to between 70,000 and 100,000 in the 1850s and 1870s. Given that the total population of the Haute-Loire in the second half of the century was little more than 300,000, a home without a lacemaker was obviously a rarity. At the end of the century three-fourths of all lacemakers active in France lived in the Haute-Loire. Understandably, the prefects of the Haute-Loire consistently referred to lace as the mainstay and principal industry of the area. Oddly—or perhaps instructively—the same prefects frequently described the contribution of women who made lace in the region as a "supplement" to the family income, even though their husbands' wages in agriculture or as manual laborers often provided little more, and sometimes less, than was brought into their households by the lacemakers.

The nerve center of the lace trade at Le Puy in the nineteenth century was located in two streets, rue Chênebouterie and rue Raphaël, narrow passageways from the center of town, the Place du Plot, just behind City Hall and the Tribunal de Commerce, climbing up to the fountain on the rue des Tables, which offered the most direct access to the great cathedral overlooking the city from its heights. Almost every building on these streets housed one or more lace merchants. On Saturdays and fair days these streets were beehives of activity from earliest light until well into the evening. Contemporary observers witnessed what might have appeared to be two converging processions of lacemakers, the women arriving from the northwest through the Saint-Laurent toll gate (octroi) moving down the hill.
from the Place des Tables, and those entering the town from other directions climbing up from the Place du Plot.

Inside the small boutiques the lacemaker was greeted by the merchant seated behind a large counter, elevated by a couple of steps in his, or more frequently her, cashier's booth. The merchant was separated from the client by a sliding glass window through which lace and money would be exchanged after the strips of lace were measured with a demi-aume (roughly sixty centimeters) or, more often, by a length marked by two nails driven into the side of the counter. A lacemaker who was unhappy with the first price offered her might try two or three shops along the rue Raphaël or return to the first merchant to haggle for a price acceptable to both buyer and seller. Strips of lace bought in the morning would be joined together as required, folded or wrapped around a ploir, a frame used to wind the lace into a bundle, and then prepared for shipping. In the afternoons the "Dames de Raphaël," as the merchant women of the district were called, would sell their packets of lace to agents of fashion houses in Paris or London, or perhaps to the representatives of the larger lace businesses in Le Puy.

This commerce of the rue Raphaël handled a large part of the ordinary lace, "l'article de rue," made with patterns that every lacemaker knew, the classic patterns for trim on dresses, ruffles on shirts, edging on tablecloths, and so forth, that had been produced in the region for generations. The higher-quality lace and the new patterns introduced in hopes of capturing the attention of the trendsetters of Parisian fashion were channeled through the big lace merchants at Le Puy, who provided the lacemakers with thread and patterns for their lace and either picked up the finished lace directly or received it from agents, called leveuses, who selected it for them on fortnightly tours of the region.

This traditional practice of providing the raw materials (thread) and patterns for the lacemakers was the source of frequent disputes between lacemakers and merchants. The merchants who had created the patterns complained that lacemakers sold their lace to other merchants offering a better price or to unscrupulous agents of fashion houses who cut the merchants out of their just due for having created the original designs. In 1843 many of the leading merchants at Le Puy addressed a petition to the prefect asking him to stop itinerant buyers from approaching the lacemakers along the road to Le Puy on fair days. These individuals, who were unlicensed and paid no taxes, were buying the lace that had been commissioned by merchants in Le Puy who owned the patterns used by the lacemakers. Alleging their concern for the unwitting lacemakers who were being taken in by such rogues, the merchants noted that the lacemakers had no recourse when they were cheated by such characters because they had no local address. One may assume, however, that the lacemakers knew what they were doing, and probably sold their lace to such men because they offered better prices than the merchants in Le Puy.

Various methods were tried to limit disputes between lacemakers and merchants, but apparently with little success. Under the first Napoleon, lacemakers were ordered to have livrets (workbooks) as were all other workers, but there is no evidence that the system was enforced at that time. The idea of a livret that would
record the details of each transaction between lacemakers and merchants was revived under the Second Empire and tried by a few merchants, but the experiment was soon abandoned. In the absence of written contracts to record their agreements, complaints of bad faith on both sides continued throughout the century, and when the government introduced the minimum wage and old-age pensions in the twentieth century, merchants argued vociferously that they had no responsibility to contribute to these, asserting that lacemakers were not "workers" but independent artisans who made their own deals with anyone who would buy their lace.

In the late nineteenth century, several of the leading merchants in Le Puy began to alter traditional practices by selling the thread to individual lacemakers rather than giving it to them, allowing them credit only for the amount that had been used in the lace returned to the merchant when he made his rounds to pick up the finished product. With the improvement of rural roads and the coming of the automobile, the merchants could also begin to dispense with the services of the intermediary levées (most of whom had been women) who in the past had collected the lace for them from the isolated hamlets of the region. In a similar fashion the coming of the railroad to the Haute-Loire in the 1860s had reduced the influence of the women in the Raphaël district as railroad stops closer to the lacemakers' homes served as direct channels to the exterior for the lace business; and even in Le Puy several important merchants moved their businesses to the southeastern side of the city for easier access to the rail terminal.

If certain traditional practices associated with the lace trade were altered over time, one thing remained constant—an idyllic notion that lace was the best sort of "women's work," a morally uplifting craft. Given the ideological bias of France's Vichy regime, it was not surprising that a lace conservatory was created under its auspices during the Second World War to try to revive the handmade lace industry in the Haute-Loire. Vichy officials, arguing that lacemaking would foster social harmony, praised it because it would keep women in the home and contribute to the regime's programs in favor of a "return to the land." Sources from the period emphasized as well the idea that lacemaking was an ideal complement to agricultural labor. Because of its poor soil and harsh climate, the land in the Haute-Loire was inadequate in and of itself to sustain a substantial population; families required a "supplementary activity." Without it the mountainous countryside would soon be depopulated and the land would return to nature. According to the prefect of the Haute-Loire, each crisis in the history of the lace industry corresponded to a period of misery and social troubles, whereas when the lace industry was healthy, "the women, while taking care of their housework and the farm, make lace, especially during the winters, and thereby earn the indispensable supplement for their family's livelihood." If these two themes, that lacemaking was ideal "women's work" and that wages from the lacemaker's efforts were a "supplement" to the family income, were congenial to Vichy's paternalistic government, they were by no means an invention of that regime.

Writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, one author, with a peculiar view of the potency of women's breath, observed: "Lacemaking is an industry that is at
once healthy, moral, and lucrative. It is healthy because it forces the worker to pay
attention to cleanliness, without which she could not work. A lacemaker who does
not have fresh breath could produce only a tarnished lace, lacking firmness and
value. This industry is healthy also because the workers are not crammed into work-
shops; it is moral because it is done in the home, associated with work in the fields
under the eyes of the mother, who is thus able to guard her daughter from all per-
nicious contacts; it is moral finally because it is lucrative, something which is very
rare today when life is tough and at the same time so slippery for poor women.\textsuperscript{14}

The police commissioner at Le Puy, writing a generation later during one of the
periodic slumps to which the lace trade was subject, made the same connection be-
tween lacemaking and morality. With the shops overflowing with merchandise, the
lacemakers were unable to find an outlet for their lace. This situation, combined
with the recent arrival of two thousand troops in the city meant that many young
girls, deprived of their livelihood, had turned to prostitution, “seeking in vice the
resources that their work refuses them.”\textsuperscript{15} In a similar vein, when encouraging fash-
onable French women to insist on handmade lace rather than machine-made imi-
tations, the coauthor of a law that required girls to take lacemaking classes in the
schools of the Haute-Loire at the turn of the century pointed out that these women
could have the comforting assurance that in buying handmade lace they were spon-
soring “a little comfort and well-being in some faraway cottage, that they were help-
ing stout peasants to overcome the difficulties of their life, and perhaps preventing
some disadvantaged young girl from coming to ruin in the streets of a big city, end-
ing up God knows how!”\textsuperscript{16} All in all, lacemaking was “really the ideal sort of wom-
ен’s work, not tiring, almost recreational, distinguished, healthy, done in the home
or, in good weather, outside in the fresh air, begun in infancy and continued until
dearth.”\textsuperscript{17} Lacemaking kept the young girls in the house, “preserved them from the
risk of dissipation, gave them an interest in housework, and attached them to their
village.”\textsuperscript{18} Lace was the “good fairy”\textsuperscript{19} who had kept her children in the mountains
of the Velay.

We have seen that women gradually became less prominent, or at least less visi-
ble, in the commercial side of the lace industry at Le Puy in the second half of the
nineteenth century. Were they affected by the “cult of domesticity” influencing
middle-class Frenchwomen elsewhere to accept the idea that their place was in the
home\textsuperscript{20} This is quite possible, although I have found no documentation to prove it. 
Certainly the changes in transportation and the Third Republic’s removal of the
béates from control over primary education in the rural parts of the Haute-Loire had
an impact on the visibility of women in the commercial aspects of the trade.

The béates, members of a lay order, the Filles de l’Instruction de l’Enfant Jesus,
found at Le Puy in the seventeenth century, were women who had traditionally
taught young girls at age four or five to make lace and often served the merchants as
levées for the most isolated parts of the region. Residents of Le Puy at the turn of the
century remembered that fifty years earlier women, as evidenced by their domi-
nance of the commerce in the Raphaël district, had been more obviously prominent
in the business side of the trade. Their husbands were “relegated” to occasional buy-
ing trips at commercial fairs in distant towns, to entertaining foreign clients in local cafés or restaurants, or to looking after their small vineyards which covered the hillsides surrounding Le Puy—and given the difficulty of cultivating grapes in the harsh climate of the area, they probably expended a good share of their wives' lace profits unfruitfully. It was notable that when successive patronal syndicates were organized in the last decades of the nineteenth century in order to try to protect an ailing lace industry, almost all of the prominent spokespersons and most of the members were men.

Aside from this progressive diminution of women in the commercial side of the lace business, there were several aspects of the trade that, despite the occasional exception to prove the rule, were always differentiated by sex. Virtually all of the largest merchant houses, those that received commendations and awards throughout the century for the lace they displayed at the various government-sponsored, commercial expositions, were headed by men. These men were usually merchant-fabricants or fabricants-dessinateurs, indicating that they played a direct role in the production of their lace. The chief role for which these men were distinguished, or failed to receive distinction, was as designers of patterns. For example, Theodore Falçon, by all accounts the most influential lace merchant-designer in the history of lacemaking at Le Puy, reinvigorated a slumping industry in the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s with the introduction of silk threads and highly artistic designs drawn from his research on lace patterns in French and Italian archives. When classes were created at the lycée in Le Puy to train lace designers, the only students were males; and men or young boys were the ones who served as designers of patterns in the merchants' shops. In addition to creating new designs, they also frequently traced the designs onto cartons, the pasteboard patterns used on lacemakers' carreaux (lace pillows—the apparatus upon which handmade lace was produced) to guide their work. Then, using an instrument called a piquaire, they made holes in the cartons to indicate pin placement to the lacemaker. During the long winters, at veillées, traditional evening social gatherings in the homes of lacemakers, while the women worked at their carreaux, old men often made intricately carved plioirs around which the lace would be folded. Otherwise, lacemaking in the Haute-Loire was women's work.

In addition to their activities as merchants and levéuses, women had several important functions in the lace trade. In the lace merchant's shop the work of the échantillonneuse was crucial to the success of a new lace pattern. This highly skilled lacemaker was the person who tried out a new design to determine whether or not it could actually be made, whether the design could hold together and stand up as finished lace. Some of the designer's ideas might be very attractive on paper but impossible to reproduce as lace; and this critical determination was the responsibility of the échantillonneuse. Although some of the best male designers could themselves use a carreau and had a fairly good idea of what might work as a lace pattern, in effect all lace designs were the product of close collaboration between the designer and the échantillonneuse. This expert lacemaker would also produce samples of all of the yard of lace marketed by the merchant for use by salespersons repre-
senting the company, and the time required by the lacemakers to produce a certain pattern would be estimated in relation to the work of the échantillonneuse.

In the lace merchant's workshop women acted as crayonneuses, marking with goose-quill pens in red and black ink the path that the lacemaker's threads were to follow on the cartons attached to the rollers on their carreaux. Others served as apponceuses, joining together strips of lace of various lengths purchased from the lacemakers and preparing them for shipment in standard lengths of thirty-three meters; or as crochetées, specializing at joining together different types of lace for a particular effect or attaching different parts of complicated patterns requiring several cartons to hold the complete design. These workers were so skilled that only the trained eye would be able to detect where the separate patterns or strips of lace had been joined. Finally, a broidreuse might sew embroidery or other types of handwork to the lace or attach the lace to cloth for objects such as tablecloths or fabric for upholstery. Some types of lace were soaked in beer and ironed with special irons to give them more body, and this finishing work would be done by women in the merchant's workshop. The smaller shop would employ one or two workers for all of these tasks associated with the lace trade, whereas the large merchants might need ten to fifteen workers.

The concept of "women's work" as applied to the lacemakers of the Haute-Loire seemed to imply that it was "cheap" labor in terms of employers' payrolls and that it was somehow less significant than the work of the lacemaker's husband, father, or brother. All sources concur that in normal times the lacemakers were paid very little. During the Second Empire, the prefect at Le Puy reported that lacemakers were earning between thirty centimes and one franc, a sum he considered to be the "normal level." Highly skilled workers might make a few centimes more than this. "This salary might seem very low in itself," he wrote, "but one must remember that the lace industry is entirely domestic, so to speak, it is exclusively in the hands of women and is interspersed seasonally with agricultural work." Although acknowledging that there were some women in Le Puy who lived exclusively from their lacemaking, contemporary sources from the nineteenth century, as well as later histories and commentaries on lacemaking, suggest repeatedly that the lacemakers' work was "a supplemental earning, in effect a bonus." Agriculture fed the lacemaker's family, while lace-making allowed a bit of extra money for the home or the individual. Lace provided enough for a bit of white bread or warm clothes for the children: lacemaking meant "a little more well-being, a little comfort in the poor households of this region." According to one observer, writing immediately after the Second World War, for nine-tenths of those involved, lace was "a supplementary trade to agriculture, made necessary by the mountainous character of the region and engaged in during idle time."

It is possible that this last characterization of lacemaking was more valid for the mid-twentieth century, when there were fewer lacemakers and income from agriculture was substantially better, than it was for the nineteenth century. But overall, it would be wrong to imagine lacemakers sitting in their doorways or chatting with their neighbors as their busy fingers twisted threads and placed pins in the carreaux
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on their laps, or out in the field making lace as they watched the sheep or cattle, merely in order to bring in some extra income for "luxuries" or added comfort. The author of the best social and economic survey of the Haute-Loire in the nineteenth century, although adopting the common terminology of "supplemental" work, noted oxymoronically that industries such as lacemaking provided "an essential supplementary resource."29

In fact, the very notion of supplemental work for women in the Haute-Loire during the nineteenth century seems problematic. Virtually all of them had to make lace in order for their families to make ends meet; their wages from lace were as indispensable as the money brought in by the men. In response to arguments at the turn of the century that low wages were "good" for women because they kept them in the home, one perceptive writer commented: "One cannot repeat too often that women workers, whether peasants or not, as a general rule work in order to support their own needs or those of a family; those for whom a salary is truly supplementary, that is to say for buying uniquely superfluous goods, are the most rare exceptions."30 Emphasizing the importance of lacemaking to the Haute-Loire, the author of a statistical survey published at the end of the Second Empire noted: "It gives to the woman a very large part in the work which ensures the upkeep and well-being of the family." Indicating clearly that lacemaking was more than a part-time hobby for the women of the region, this writer even complained: "However, in absorbing the greatest part of female activity in a large number of rural communes and in certain cities, notably the most important town [Le Puy], the carreau distracts women from their housekeeping chores and the interior of their homes are let go to rack and ruin, leaving much to be desired in terms of cleanliness."31 One wonders whether he realized the contradiction between his comments and the prevalent ideology which emphasized that lacemaking developed good habits in young girls by promoting tidiness.

The backbone—or perhaps better put, the fingers—of the lace industry were the thousands of women and young girls who made the strips of lace in their homes, and from whose labor the merchants' fortunes were made. Some lacemakers worked year-round, particularly those living in cities such as Le Puy or Craponne; but far and away the most common practice was that women who worked in the fields alongside their husbands or brothers during harvest time and at other moments when they were needed for agricultural chores produced relatively little lace at those times. These women would produce large quantities of lace during the long winter season. (In the highest parts of the Haute-Loire one might be snowed in for five or six months.) Unfortunately, they could not always count on receiving a good price for the lace they had made. Any number of factors beyond their control might affect the value of their product. In an extremely volatile and insecure business, not surprisingly, the lacemakers themselves were in the most precarious position. The lacemakers of Le Puy and its environs were buffeted by the changing winds of Parisian fashion, subject to the impact of war and revolution, and threatened by competition from cheap, machine-made imitations of their artistry. These problems affected the lace merchants and their families as well, of course, but the fabulous
wealth they had accumulated from their businesses allowed them to ride out many storms that the lowly lacemakers, usually paid the most minimal wage, could weather much less easily.

For approximately 60,000 women in the Haute-Loire, many of whose circum-
stances could be described as bare subsistence, wages from lacemaking were an im-
portant source of income in the nineteenth century. Significantly, a woman who was asked “Do you work?” knew that she was being asked “Do you make lace?” Travailler for the women of Le Puy and the Haute-Loire meant making lace. To establish exactly how much money they derived from this work is difficult if not impossible. Like everything else in the lace business, wages were volatile. One can follow their fluctuations only in the most general manner by examining prefects' reports or documents originating with the Conseils des Prudhommes. A statistical survey taken at the end of the Second Empire suggested a formula based on estimates of percentages that merchant-fabricants paid out in wages in relation to other expenses and profits; but these are very rough gauges of questionable value. In a rough manner these “official” sources suggest a range of fifty centimes to one franc per day as the “average wage” of a lacemaker in the Haute-Loire during most of the century. Whatever the best statistical estimate might be, it is unlikely that the workers with whom we are concerned calculated their earnings in terms of an average wage.

As William Reddy has demonstrated with regard to textile workers in northern France during the same period, given the unpredictability of wage rates, no lacemaker could anticipate with confidence the level of her earnings from one week to the next. She was paid not for her time but for the individual strips of lace whose value differed according to the complexity of the pattern, the quality of her work, and the fashion world's demand as interpreted by the merchant with whom she had contracted. It was not at all uncommon for a lacemaker to work assiduously over the winter months on a pattern that had been in great demand in November only to be told when she delivered her lace in March that, because styles had changed, the merchant could pay only one-half or one-fourth the amount he had paid the previous fall. In Reddy's example, the lacemaker had little recourse when confronted with the merchant's decision. The prefect in Le Puy advised her to bring her complaint before the Conseil des Prudhommes, but local police authorities in the small villages of the Haute-Loire confirmed the lacemakers' claims that they could not afford the time or the expense for a trip to Le Puy, only to have the Conseil des Prudhommes, whose president was inevitably a lace merchant, decide against them.

During most of the nineteenth century, the majority of the lacemakers in the Haute-Loire, working with well-known, popular patterns, probably made no more than fifty or sixty centimes per day. When times were good, they might have averaged one franc, or a bit more. But there were moments (for example, under the Second Empire, when lace-covered crinolines were all the rage, or during the early 1870s, when every fashionable lady had to have a black lace shawl) when the caprice of fashion drove the merchant to offer three, four, or even six francs for a day's
product. At these golden moments even the men of the Haute-Loire were reported to have tried their hands at the carreau.\textsuperscript{37}

Wages in the lacemaking trade were essentially piecework rates. Salaries per se were paid only to a small number of highly skilled lacemakers, the chantillonneuses, who worked in the merchants' shops trying out new patterns in order to determine the approximate length of time, quantity of material, and level of skill needed for the work. The chantillonneuses and other workers employed full-time in the merchants' stores made approximately thirty-five to forty francs per month.\textsuperscript{38} The large majority of lacemakers, however, were paid for each piece of lace produced. For most of the century, women in the Haute-Loire were given thread and patterns by the merchant-fabricant and paid upon delivery of the finished lace (so much for a given length of lace with deduction for flaws). If she lived in Le Puy, the lacemaker would take her lace directly to the merchant's shop. Normally, she would deal only with the merchant who had given her the thread. But if the pattern was one of the traditional ones that all merchants bought, she might shop around for the best price.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the documentation concerning wages is evidence that the lacemakers were not entirely at the mercy of the merchant-fabricants. They did not hesitate to take advantage of favorable conditions to insist on better compensation. Merchants, desperate to beat their competitors to the new pattern that would strike the fancy of the trendsetters in Paris, and pressured by clients to supply the season's hottest item at once, would find that many lacemakers refused to make new patterns unless paid more for their trouble. Even when offered more money, some women preferred to make the old patterns with which they were familiar, although they knew they would be paid very little for this work. To the dismay and perplexity of the fabricants, clearly they were not motivated by money alone.\textsuperscript{39} Similarly, industrial inspectors reported that many young women in the Haute-Loire rejected better-paying jobs in the ribbonmaking factories of the region in favor of lacemaking, because the environment in which they worked was more pleasant and they could control the pace of their work.\textsuperscript{40}

If the lacemaker lived in the countryside, most transactions with the merchants would pass through the hands of an intermediary, a lev\textsuperscript{e}use, who would supply her with materials, pick up the lace, and pay for it. This role was filled frequently by a béate, who taught the catechism and lacemaking to young girls and organized evening veill\textsuperscript{ées} for lacemakers in the small villages of the department. The lev\textsuperscript{e}uses would take the finished lace to Le Puy or to towns such as Craponne or La Chaise-Dieu that served as pickup points for agents of the Ponot (Le Puy) merchants. Standard practice seems to have been for merchants to allow a 5 or 6 percent benefit to the lev\textsuperscript{e}uses on the wages they paid to the lacemakers. The lev\textsuperscript{e}use would also be paid, of course, for the lace she had made herself. Frequent complaints from lacemakers that they were being cheated by the lev\textsuperscript{e}uses suggest that these women may have enlarged their compensation by false reporting of rates offered by the merchants and by excessive charges for flaws in the lace. In any case they certainly drew more income from their activity than did the average lacemaker.\textsuperscript{41}
The chance discovery of the account books for one merchant-fabricant family, the Avond-Portals,\(^4^2\) provides a precise description of the activity of the leveuses in their employ. The register for the first nine months of 1868, for example, indicates that thirty-five women and fifteen men brought lace into the shop under some sort of arrangement with the merchant. In addition to these transactions noted by name, the books record a large number of anonymous purchases of lace under the title “various credits.” For every strip of lace there was a notation of pattern number, length, and wages paid to the lacemaker. Considering the number of transactions recorded, and specific indications of “benefice to the leveuse,” it appears that about one-fourth of the women worked under a regular arrangement with the merchant whereby they combed the countryside—in most cases notations of Craponne, La Chaise-Dieu, Chalignac, and so forth suggest that each leveuse had her own “territory”—and brought packets of lace to Le Puy periodically. Of the nine women who can clearly be identified as leveuses, seven were paid a 5 percent benefice and two were given 6 percent. Most of the leveuses came to Le Puy once or twice a month, although one of them returned with smaller quantities of lace every week. Together they paid out in wages to individual lacemakers almost 20,000 francs. Mlle Fannie Manson, who delivered the largest quantity of lace (7,040 francs’ worth), received the largest benefice, 395 francs. This amount of money, which might have been in addition to payment for lace the leveuse made herself, was approximately twice what a skillful lacemaker could expect to receive for a year’s work in 1868. Ten women with only one transaction and eight others with five or fewer visits to the merchant’s shop may have been selling their own lace or that of their family, because the amount of money paid to them was under 325 francs (and for most, only 100 or 200 francs). No benefice was indicated for any of these transactions.

The eight remaining women present a bit of a mystery. Most came into the shop fairly often—at least once a month for five of them, twice a month for one, and every other month for two others. Half of these women were from out of town (one from Nantes, but the others from towns nearby). All were paid fairly substantial amounts of money (from 550 to 2,235 francs) for the lace they delivered, but none was paid a benefice as such. For three of these women no payment to them was noted, whereas the others were credited with some portion of the amount they had paid out to the lacemakers, from one-third, to one-half, to almost the full amount—one woman who had paid out 750 francs to the lacemakers was paid 696 francs. Clearly, these were not leveuses with the usual 5 or 6 percent benefice, yet they seem to have had some sort of regular association with the merchant, because they paid out wages to lacemakers for him, and they were paid as though they were agents of some sort.

Might they have had some sort of arrangement similar to that of the fifteen men who were also credited with bringing in lace to the shop? Only four of these men are identified as having received payment or reimbursement for their activities. In each case this was far more than a benefice would have produced. One man was even paid 100 francs more than the 1,787 francs he had paid out in wages for the lace he delivered. In contrast to the women, the men seem to have received fairly regular
payments of substantial amounts of money, as if they were regular, salaried employees or agents of the merchant. Since almost all of the evidence available to me mentions only leveuses (or men working as factors in a similar capacity) as the intermediaries between lacemakers and merchants, I am uncertain who these other, apparently more numerous, agents may have been.

In terms of total amounts of money paid out by the company for lace, the nine leveuses handled 18,997 francs, compared to 15,075 for the fifteen men. The most active man paid out only 2,022 francs, less than one-third of Fannie Manson's activity. The eight women in the "mystery" category paid out 8,932 francs, while the eighteen women identified as regular clients who sold their own or their family's lace distributed 2,712 francs. I have concluded that all of these agents or clients had a regular arrangement with the merchant because their names were given with each transaction, whereas under the title avoirs divers (various credits), the company ledgers record 153 transactions for payment to unnamed individuals for their lace. Altogether these avoirs divers total 3,387 francs, but most entries are for small amounts, usually a few francs and even as little as 95 centimes in one case, indicating that individual lacemakers brought their lace to the shop whenever they needed a small amount of money.

Either directly or through these intermediaries, the Avond-Portal company paid 49,103 francs in wages for the lace delivered to them in the first nine months of 1868. If, as has been estimated, an "average" lacemaker might earn 100 to 200 francs per year, the company could be said to have provided work for approximately 250 to 500 women in the Haute-Loire; but in fact, the number making lace for the Avond-Portals was probably larger than this, given the lacemakers who sold their lace over the counter to different merchants on an irregular basis. While suggestive, the evidence we have concerning the income of lacemakers and leveuses is not entirely satisfactory. The account books of the Avond-Portal family do offer, along with census data and notarial records, one of the few concrete traces left by these women. At least we can discover their names: for the leveuses, usually their full names; for the lacemakers who lived in the countryside, normally a first name (Marie, Paulette, Annie), but occasionally only a nickname ("the deaf one" or "the cripple"). The notations of the leveuses, with their deductions for flaws and higher pay for certain strips of lace, may even intimate something about skill levels of individual lacemakers. However, because there were many "Maries" and "Paulettes," one cannot be certain what any one lacemaker was paid by the Avond-Portals in a given year, and even if this were possible, there is no way to determine whether she made lace for sale to other merchants. Whatever the exact amount a lacemaker's income might have been, we do know that in a relatively impoverished part of France, this money was vital to her family's subsistence.

The delicate lace made in the towns of the Haute-Loire and in the most remote hamlets of the region surrounding its commercial hub at Le Puy found its way into an international network of trade reaching clients in England, the United States, and Latin America, as well as the lucrative internal market centered in Parisian fashion houses. Significant fortunes were made in the lace trade in the nineteenth
century, and an examination of the generation of these fortunes illuminates several aspects of the lace business.

In the nineteenth century in the Haute-Loire, the threads of fortune led from a dingy peasant farmhouse or a village assembly through the hands of a leveuse to the comptoir of a merchant on the rue Raphaël in Le Puy to the cash drawer of an haute-couture house in Paris. At each step of the process someone benefited from the lace trade, but the benefits were unequally distributed. The researcher following the flow of money along the lace network from the lacemakers and the leveuses to the merchant-fabricant is still bedeviled by the lack of entirely adequate documentation. In part because the lace trade in the nineteenth century was not subject to the same administrative scrutiny as “factory industry,” prefectorial records offer only the most general comments about levels of wealth achieved by the merchants. Electoral rolls of the Restoration and the July Monarchy and tax lists for the Second Empire suggest the relative importance of lace fortunes among Le Puy’s notable elites.43 Bankruptcy files (especially those including detailed inventories of the merchant’s personal property) underline the risks of a highly volatile trade, but provide valuable insights into the lifestyle that might be enjoyed through the lace trade.44 Here again, the account books of the Avond-Portal family are invaluable. Using these in combination with notarial acts, recording marriage contracts and financial transactions, and including tax documents describing inheritances, one can obtain a striking impression of the wealth achieved by lace merchants, as well as an interesting look at the uses to which they put their fortunes.

Members of the Avond and Portal families were involved in the lace business at Le Puy throughout the nineteenth century. A Portal was among the four merchant-fabricants representing Le Puy at an exposition sponsored by Napoleon in 1802, and the Guichard-Portal company was described as one of the leaders of the industry in the Haute-Loire during the following decade.45 For the balance of the century their names do not appear in the front ranks of the great lacemaking families, but they may be taken as typical of the middling merchant at Le Puy, not fabulously wealthy but leading a very comfortable life. Account books from the 1840s through the 1890s describe the activity of the Avond-Portal business, and marriage records and inheritance documents allow us to follow the growth of their fortune. Like the evidence for wages of lacemakers and leveuses, the sources concerning the fortunes of the merchants are uneven.

Just as the calculation of an “average wage” for the lacemakers was difficult and of questionable utility, estimates of the annual income of lace merchants are at best unreliable and tend to mask the volatility that is the chief characteristic of the lace market. For example, during 1868, the year for which I have analyzed the leveuses registers, we saw that the Avond-Portals paid almost 50,000 francs in wages for the lace they purchased. According to a statistical survey published in 1872, lace merchants averaged a seventeen centime profit on sales for every 100 francs paid in wages.46 This would suggest that after covering other expenses, the Avond-Portals should have earned roughly 8,500 francs (17 × 500). In fact it appears that the family was running a substantial deficit that year. In addition to wages for lacemakers

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43. Hafter, Daryl M. European Women and Preindustrial Craft.
44. Hafter, Daryl M. European Women and Preindustrial Craft.
45. Hafter, Daryl M. European Women and Preindustrial Craft.
and *levseauses*, the Avond-Portals paid 10,679 francs to purchase thread and other supplies for their business, and for the wages of the employees in their shop. Meanwhile, the ledger recording sales to clients in Paris and elsewhere records only 19,683 francs in sales for the year. The ledgers indicate that Paul Portal deposited 21,500 francs in the cash drawer as a "loan for their lace business" in 1868 and another 21,700 francs in 1869. The first of January 1868 there had been an inventory of unsold lace valued at 7,052 francs in the shop.\(^4^2\) All of these indications of a negative balance in the company's affairs correspond to reports from the prefecture at Le Puy\(^4^8\) of a sharp downturn in commerce for the years from 1865 to 1868, with the first hint of recovery for lace in the last quarter of 1868. Although the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune would bring the trade to a temporary halt, the early 1870s were one of the true golden ages for lace at Le Puy. These were the years when it was possible for a skillful lacemaker to make as much as five or six francs a day at her *carreau*, and police reported that mothers were keeping their children home from school to work on lace.\(^4^9\) For these years the bankbooks of the Avond-Portal family record a clear shift in their fortunes. From a negative balance in 1872 of almost 20,000 francs, the company achieved a small positive balance of 4,000 francs in 1874, which they increased fairly steadily throughout the rest of the century.

A favorable balance of more than 70,000 francs in January 1886 seems to have been the high point of their accumulation of liquid capital, but they were able to weather the bad years of the 1880s and '90s because of the prosperity of the 1870s.\(^5^0\) Any given year or even several consecutive years might seem disastrous. In the spring of 1876, for example, Paul Portal wrote to his brother Louis that it was simply impossible for him to contribute to their mother's pension. The lace in his storehouse had lost three-fourths of its value, many merchants at Le Puy faced bankruptcy, and he would go to Paris to try to start some other business were he able to salvage anything from the sale of his lace business. Paul suggested to his brother that he urge their mother to spend less money, noting that she had spent 5,594 francs the year before, which should have been more than enough.\(^5^1\)

The instability of demand for their products encouraged the lace merchants at Le Puy to try to limit wild fluctuations in the market by keeping close tabs on the fashion world and trying to work out arrangements with their Parisian clients that would help to spread the risk they took when commissioning lacemakers to work on a particular pattern. In letters to André Ware, Vaugeoir et Binot, and other Parisian retailers of lace products, Paul Portal begged that he be kept abreast of the latest shifts in fashion and insisted that his clients agree to pay for all of the lace they had ordered at the contracted price. For his part Portal promised to deliver the special lace patterns exclusively to these clients.\(^5^2\)

The Avond-Portal experience suggests that timing might be crucial to one's success in the lace business, but that once established, a merchant might do quite well at Le Puy. The evolution of the Portal fortune as we trace it may not be perfectly "typical," but the impressionistic image it conveys is not out of line with what we know about many of the forty or so established merchants who maintained their
business through the nineteenth century. Jacques Jean Marie Portal, a goldsmith, the son of an employee at the prefecture, married Jeanne Claudine Sahuc, the daughter of a lace merchant, in 1825. Portal brought 6,000 francs and his bride a dowry of 12,000 francs to the marriage contract. When in 1867 one of their sons, Paul Portal, married Anne Marie Georgette Avond, the daughter of lace merchants at Le Puy who were to bring the newlyweds into their business, he brought approximately 20,000 francs to the marriage. Interestingly, the bride retained her family name and became Madame Avond-Portal. This seems to have been a common practice for young women at Le Puy whose parents were in the lace business. The new couple soon moved into a residence on the fashionable Boulevard St. Louis. When Paul Portal died in 1892, he left an estate valued at more than 100,000 francs to his wife and children. In liquid capital alone, 60,299 francs, he was ten times wealthier than his grandfather had been sixty-seven years earlier. Well might he have thought of lace as the golden thread.53

The succession records offer an intriguing guide to what lace merchants did with their wealth in the nineteenth century. Paul Portal had purchased one large house in a suburb of Le Puy, with a garden and so on, worth 48,000 francs. He also owned two rental properties in the countryside at Polignac and Beauzac. This might suggest that late in the nineteenth century, landowning was still considered an important symbol of status for the middle class in France. Perhaps more interesting is evidence that lace merchants at Le Puy were very active investors in French and international financial markets. Paul Portal owned 50,355 francs’ worth of stocks and bonds, representing twenty-four different kinds of securities (especially railroad bonds) from France, Central Europe, South America, the Middle East, Africa, and Russia.54 A rapid survey of the wills of many of the leading lace merchants at Le Puy reveals that all of them made similar investments.55 Stubborn holdovers from the putting-out system of early capitalism, the lace merchants of Le Puy helped to grease the wheels of industrial modernization in nineteenth-century France. Remarkably, the trail of the lacemakers’ thread stretches from rural Velay to Le Puy and Paris to railway construction sites in Argentina and Siberia.

By 1900 there were several indications that the possibility of “striking it rich” in the lace business might be a thing of the past and that the handmade lace industry was faced with a serious crisis; its future as a commercially viable operation was by no means certain. Indeed, although its death was to be a lingering one, a farsighted observer at the turn of the century might have realized that the industry would never recapture the days of artistic perfection achieved during the “Falor era” of the 1830s through the 1850s, nor, despite the occasional short-lived vogue for lace, would the astonishing prosperity of the early 1870s return. Among the factors contributing to the demise of handmade lace were changing tastes in fashion, always a perennial threat to the industry, of course; but following the First World War, women’s fashions were much more sleek and trim, never to return to the layer upon layer of lace that had captured the fancy of nineteenth-century trendsetters. And when lady fashion did smile upon lace again, few women looked closely enough to distinguish between the handmade variety produced in the villages of the Haute-Loire...
and the machine-made imitations that were so much cheaper to produce. Moreover, should a customer demand the "real thing" (that is, handmade bobbin lace), the lacemakers of Le Puy now faced still competition from their far more numerous and less well paid sisters in French Indochina, who had been taught the craft by French missionaries.56

Cognizant of the seriousness of the threat to their livelihood, the lace merchants of Le Puy responded to the challenge in a variety of ways, all of which proved ultimately to be inadequate. Many witnesses believed that the Ferry school laws of the 1880s, by evicting the bêtes from their central position in elementary education, had destroyed the traditional apprenticeship system for teaching young girls in the region how to make lace at an early age. Consequently, two deputies from the Haute-Loire, Monsieurs Engerand and Vigouroux, both former lace merchants, sponsored a bill, passed by the Chamber of Deputies in 1903, providing for obligatory lace classes for young girls in the public schools of lacemaking regions.57 Contrary to the intentions of the sponsors of this legislation, the students spent only a few hours a week learning the craft. Despite evidence that a few of the girls taking these classes produced commendable handiwork,58 often the women teaching the classes knew only the most basic patterns.

A special school, La Dentelle au Foyer, was founded at Le Puy in 1909 with a program to train young women as expert lacemakers who would serve as teachers in their home villages after several months' internship at the school.59 Unfortunately, after being converted to an infirmary during World War I, La Dentelle au Foyer failed to attract many students when it reopened in the 1920s, and like the Engerand-Vigouroux law, it was unable to provide the lace merchants with the large pool of labor they had enjoyed in the nineteenth century. Today, a curious tourist requesting assistance at the central police headquarters in Le Puy may be perplexed by the large inscription emblazoned across the top of the building: LA DENTELLE AU FOYER, marking the site of one failed attempt to salvage the past.

In addition to their ultimately unsuccessful experiments with educational reform, the lace merchants at Le Puy turned to the French government in hopes that tariff reform and laws requiring patents and stamps of authenticity would protect their designs from foreign competition and unprincipled imitation from their mechanized rivals in France and elsewhere.60 As heated disputes raged between France and the United States over war debts in the 1920s, high tariffs on lace that virtually closed the American market to Le Puy's merchants cannot have been the highest priority for French negotiators. Similarly, success in obtaining government regulation of labels for authentic handmade lace neither stopped pirating of designs nor overcame the basic problem that many women who bought lace garments, tablecloths, and so forth simply could not distinguish between handmade lace and the increasingly perfected machine-made product.

In fact, at the turn of the century, several lace merchants at Le Puy became involved in the production of machine-made lace, and they served as champions of the idea that the lacemakers and the machines need not be rivals. Despite improvements in technology, these men argued, the machines, which produced simple pat-
terns very rapidly, and with little difference in quality from handmade lace, could never produce the most artistic designs. Consequently, the "modern" lace merchants urged the region's lacemakers to abandon the simple patterns and concentrate on more intricate work, for which they might receive higher pay without fear that the machines would replace them. Not surprisingly, such merchants were among the supporters of La Dentelle au Foyer's attempts to develop a core of highly skilled lacemakers for the region; and they were heard calling plaintively for the emergence of imaginative new designers to revive the industry through their artistry and leadership as Falon had done in the previous century. While several prominent merchants called for cooperation between the producers of handmade and machine-made lace, the fact that separate patronal syndicates were maintained suggests that their interests were not always identical.

Although the introduction of machine-made lace did extend the life of commercial lacemaking in Haute-Loire, it was not to be the panacea some had hoped for. There were even businesses established in Le Puy to make the machines, and quite a few "factories" took advantage of the region's water power to install machines in abandoned mills along rapidly flowing rivers. By the late 1930s, quantitatively, fourteen times as much lace was produced in Haute-Loire by machines as by women working at their carreaux; yet the much smaller quantity of handmade lace sold for 25 percent more money than the total produced by the machines. In 1938 there were twice as many merchants (110 versus 58) dealing with handmade lace as with the machine-made product. At the end of the Second World War the lace machines employed 740 men and women, whereas there were perhaps 20,000 traditional lacemakers, barely one-sixth the number working at the turn of the century. Twenty years later little more than 1,000 would remain.

Lamenting the precipitate decline of lacemaking in the twentieth century, one former lacemaker noted that as economic conditions and lifestyles were progressively ameliorated in the Haute-Loire, fewer and fewer women showed an interest in lacemaking. The young girls admired and tried to imitate the "typist or secretary with her powder, rouge, painted fingernails, and smartly styled hair," not "the poor old lacemakers, with their sunken shoulders, straight hair, and gnarled hands." Women in their forties who knew how to make lace began to hide the fact. "To say that one made lace was to reveal that one came from a very modest family. One was a bit ashamed of it. With a chance for a better life ... one put away the bobbins and carreaux in the attic, those objects with which one had had to work so hard for so little."
1. ADHL, 2 M 2/1, Préfet Haute-Loire to Conseiller d'État en mission dans la 19ème Région Militaire, 17 Pluvoise, an Neuf de la République Française. Note that all file numbers (côtes) in these endnotes refer to documents conserved in the Archives départementales de la Haute-Loire (ADHL), Le Puy, unless otherwise indicated.

2. ADHL, 163 W 113, “Le dentelle au Puy,” excerpted from La Haute-Loire, 26 February 1904. According to a reporter at the Chicago Exposition of 1893, at that time there were 92,000 lacemakers in the Haute-Loire and 127,000 for all of France. According to a census of lacemakers drawn up in 1851, the Velay accounted for approximately one-fourth of all lacemakers in Europe. Cited in ADHL, 163 W 112, Paul Fontanille, LE PUY Centre Dentellier Sa Dentelle Aux Fiseaux, Conservatoire Départemental de la Dentelle, Le Puy, no date, p. 141.

3. According to Jean Merley, Le Haute-Loire de la fin de l'ancien Régime aux débuts de la troisième République, Cahiers de la Haute-Loire, Archives départementales, Le Puy, 1974, pp. 147-48, women headed 53.8% of the lace establishments at Le Puy at the end of the eighteenth century.

4. ADHL, 163 W 112, Paul Fontanille, LE PUY Centre Dentellier, pp. 126-29, provides a colorful description of the lace trade of the rue Raphaël in midcentury based on H. Achard's interviews of elderly persons at Le Puy around the turn of the century.

5. F/12 2428 Archives Nationales, Paris. The prefect wrote to the Minister of Commerce, 18 October 1843, testifying that the merchants' complaints were justifiable and asking the minister if there was a law he might apply to stop the practice.


7. An example of a livret used by the merchant Theodore Falçon at Le Puy in 1856 is found in ADHL, 20 M 47. The livret indicated the date of the order, the quantity to be made, the type of pattern, the agreed price by meter, time allowed for the work, the design number, the type and amount of thread provided, the date of delivery, the amount, by length, of lace made, the weight of the thread worked and unused, the date, and the amount paid to the lacemaker.

8. Relevant correspondence in ADHL, 20 M 22; also 163 W 1, Procès Verbal de la Réunion des patrons et des ouvriers de l'industrie dentellière de la région du Puy et d'Arlanc-Puy-Amber tenue au Puy le 6 Novembre 1941 sous la présidence de M. Le Préfet de la Haute-Loire.

9. ADHL, 19 MI 3 (2), Hippolyte Achard, Réponses au questionnaire adressée par Mr. le Président de l'Exposition.


11. ADHL, 163 W 112, Fontanille, LE PUY Centre Dentellier, p. 162.


13. ADHL, 163 W 4, Projet de Lettre à la Production Industrielle, 5 May 1944, Préfet Haute-Loire à Ministre de la Production Industrielle.

14. ADHL, 163 W 107, Paul d'Ivo, “L'art industriel de la dentelle,” excerpted from L'artiste, 1857. Also emphasizing the importance of “cleanliness” in the lacemaking process, and perhaps reflecting an odd, male (?) notion of the nature of menstruation, the man who introduced the use of gold and silver threads for lace made in the Velay in the 1830s claimed that lacemakers who had "disagreeable breath, or at the time of menstruation risked tarnishing the brilliance of the gold or silver, had to refrain from making lace with those ma-
materials." ADHL, 163 W 112, Fontanille, LE PUY Centre Dentellier, p. 118, citing Alphonse Richard as the source of his information. Presumably, women were simply considered "dirty" during their periods.

15. ADHL, 5 Mbis 5, Commissaire de Police, Le Puy, to Préfet, 1 September 1876.
16. ADHL, 163 W 107, M. L. Vigouroux, Député, "Conférence sur La Dentelle à la Main," 23 November 1904.
17. ADHL, 163 W 107, "L'industrie de la dentelle en Normandie," no author or date. This document, although describing lacemaking in Normandy, is part of the documentation, reports and commentaries, concerning the Engerand-Vigouroux law of 5 July 1903, which provided for lacemaking classes in the schools of the Haute-Loire and other regions with similar domestic industries.
18. Ibid.
22. ADHL, 20 M 33, 20 M 38, and 17 M 26. Even those workers' organizations whose membership was largely female often had men as the main officers. Overall, there was little syndical organization at Le Puy, and those with women in leadership positions were very rare.
23. Descriptions of various tasks, activities, and skills involved in lacemaking may be found in ADHL, 19 M 1 3(2), Hippolyte Achard, Réponses au questionnaire adressé par M. le Président de l'exposition; ADHL, 163 W 113, P. Mamet, "Au Pays des Dentelles," excerpted from the Almanach de Brioude, 1929; and Michele Rocherieux, La dentelle aux fuseaux en Auvergne et Velay, I Autrefois, la dentelle . . . , Clermont-Ferrand: C.R.D.P., 1977.
24. Mlle Marguerite Jullien, a prizewinner in 1849, was the one exception I have discovered to this general pattern, and in her "Rapport à Messieurs le Jury de la Haute-Loire" (ADHL, 13 M Exposition 1849), she indicates that she had taken over the business because of the premature death of a young fabricant de dentelle, Monsieur Poulhe.
25. ADHL, 2 M 2 1, Rapport Trimestriel, Préfet à Ministre de l'Intérieur, 8 January 1859. The prefect noted that children were paid from five to twenty-five centimes for the lace they made. By way of comparison, the same report indicates the following average salaries for other trades in the region: miners, 2F-2F50; woodworkers, 1F50-2F25; carpenters, 2F; carriage-makers, 2F25; shoemakers, 1F-2F; masons 1F25-2F25; metalworkers, 2F; blacksmiths, 1F50-2F; locksmiths, 2F; weavers, 2F; tailors 1F50-2F; ribbonmakers and workers in velvet and passementerie, 1F25-1F50.
28. Ibid.
30. ADHL, 163 W 107, Honoré Bayzelon, Extraits de l'industrie de la dentelle à la main, no date, but from marginal notation probably written in 1906.
32. Since the total population was under 300,000 it is clear that most women and girls in the Haute-Loire were lacemakers at least for part of their lives. Estimates vary from 30,000 to 120,000 for the total number active in lacemaking, but a figure of 50-70,000 is given most commonly.
34. Malègue, Éléments de Statistique Générale du département de la Haute-Loire, pp. 167-68; Conseils des Prud'hommes reports in ADHL, 20 M 9 and 20 M 10; but especially prefects' reports in ADHL, 2 M2 1, regularly include wages for various occupations.
36. ADHL, 20 M 47, Maire, Chorrières, to Préfet, Haute-Loire, 8 September 1852, and Commissaire de Police, Craponne, to Préfet, Haute-Loire, 12 October 1853. Although local officials (mayors and police) took the side of the lacemakers in these disputes and provided clear evidence that the lacemakers were being "continually exploited in the most unfair manner," the prefect replied that the lacemakers should come before the Conseil des Prud'hommes, where he believed they would receive an impartial hearing.
38. This estimate is based on my analysis of the account books of the Avond-Portal family (Musée Crozatier, Le Puy). According to the doctoral thesis of Louis Lavastre, Dentellières et dentelles du Puy (Le Puy: Imprimerie Poiriller, Rouchon and Gamon, 1911), p. 64, the échantillonneuses might average 50-60 francs per month.
40. ADHL, 20 M 17, L'Inspecteur Divisionnaire Chartarritz to Monsieur le Préfet, 30 June 1889, describes the unhealthy conditions for young women in the small ribbon factories of the Haute-Loire.
41. Lavastre, Dentellières, p. 15, notes that in 1709 the Bishop of St. Flour had ordered priests to use the confessional to encourage leveuses to be more honest in their dealings with the lacemakers. He comments that by the end of the nineteenth century, the merchants had begun to eliminate the leveuses as intermediaries. Better means of transportation made it easier for them to pick up the lace directly from the lacemakers. (p. 45)
42. I was very fortunate to stumble across (almost literally) twenty-four account books and ledgers which had been stored in two cardboard boxes in the attic of the Musée Crozatier. A lace designer at the National Conservatory of Lace at Le Puy told me that he thought he had seen these records when searching through the attic for old lace patterns. The director of the museum, who had no idea that the boxes were there, was happy to let me consult them in exchange for my agreement to label each volume with a brief description of its contents. To my knowledge these are the only records of this sort in existence. In any case none of the other descendants of nineteenth-century lace merchant families have been willing to make their records public. The financial information in the next few pages was drawn from these accounting registers.
43. ADHL, 4 M 177. These lists must be used with caution. One historian, Jean Merley, L'Industrie en Haute-Loire (Lyon: Centre d'histoire économique et sociale de la région lyonnaise, 1972), has been led to underestimate the importance of lace in generating wealth at Le Puy, because second- or third-generation descendants whose wealth originated in the lace business are identified on these lists or in inheritance records as bankers, lawyers, or simply "propriétaires."
44. ADHL, Bankruptcy Files, 41 U 5.
46. Malègue, Éléments de statistique générale du département de la Haute-Loire, pp. 167-68.
47. Avond-Portal collection, Musée Crozatier, Leveuses Registers.
48. ADHL, 20 M 11 (États de l'Industrie); 20 M 9 (Situation Industrielle et Commerciale, Rapports mensuels); and 2 M2 1 (Préfet à Ministre de l'Intérieur).
49. ADHL, 5 Mbis 5, 30 April 1873, Canton de Craponne.
51. Avond-Portal collection, Correspondence, Paul Portal to Louis Portal, June 1876.
52. Avond-Portal collection, Correspondence.
53. ADHL, Notarial Records and Succession Documents, 3 Q 5317, 3 Q 4604, 3 E 520/38, 3 E 474-81, and 3 E 5vo/414, 3 Q 4595.
54. ADHL, 3 Q 4604, Succession Paul Portal.
55. These records are held at the ADHL for the period before 1900. For those who died after 1900, most of the succession documents are at the Hôtel des Impôts in Le Puy.
57. ADHL, 163 W 107, folder entitled “La Loi Engerand-Vigouroux du 5 Juillet 1903, Rapports et Commentaires qui en ont précédé le Vote.”
58. Dozens of notebooks full of examples are preserved in the Archives départementales de la Haute-Loire (ADHL, 163 W 39-43) with notations by the teachers indicating “well-done,” “poor,” and so forth.
60. F 12 7686 and F 12 7622, Archives Nationales, Paris.
62. Most of these were very small family operations with only a handful of employees.
64. ADHL, 163 W 113, Savy, “La dentelle à la main,” p. 4.