

GOBELINS, a celebrated manufactory, established at Paris, in the Fauxbourg St. Marcel, for the making of tapestry, and other furniture for the use of the crown. The house where this manufactory is carried on was built by two brothers, Giles and John Gobelins, both excellent dyers; and the first that brought to Paris, in the reign of Francis I. the secret of dyeing that beautiful scarlet colour still known by their name; as well as the little river Bievre, on whose banks they fixed their dye-house; and which is now known by no other name than that of the river of the Gobelins.

It was in the year 1667 that this place, till then called "Gobelins' Folly," changed its name into that of "Hotel Royal des Gobelins," in consequence of an edict of Louis XIV. Monf. Colbert having re-established, and with new magnificence enriched and completed the king's palaces, particularly the Louvre and Thuilleries, began to think of making furniture suitable to the grandeur of those buildings: with this view he called together all the ablest workmen in the divers arts and manufactures throughout the kingdom; particularly painters, tapestry-makers, sculptors, goldsmiths, ebonists, &c. and by splendid offers, pensions, privileges, &c. called others from foreign nations.

And to render the intended establishment firm and lasting, he brought the king to purchase the Gobelins, for them to work in, and draw up a system of laws, or policy, in seventeen articles.

By these it is provided, that the new manufactory shall be under the administration of the superintendant of the king's buildings, arts, &c. that the ordinary masters thereof shall take cognizance of all actions and processes brought against any of the persons in the said manufactory, their servants and dependants; that no other tapestry work shall be imported from any other country, &c.

The Gobelins has ever since remained the first manufactory of this kind in the world. The quantity of the finest and noblest works that have been produced by it, and the number of the best workmen bred up therein, are incredible; and the present flourishing condition of the arts and manufactures of France is, in a great measure, owing thereto.

Tapestry work, in particular, is their glory. During the superintendance of M. Colbert, and his successor M. de Louvois, the making of tapestry is said to have been practised to a degree of perfection, scarce inferior to what was before done by the English and French.

The battles of Alexander, the four seasons, four elements, the king's palaces, and a series of the principal actions of the life of Louis XIV. from the time of his marriage to the first conquest of Franche Comté, done from the designs of M. Le Brun, director of the manufactory of the Gobelins, are master-pieces in their kind.