



**Punto de Aguja and Point d'Espagne** **Part II.**  
**By Bernhard and Ellen M. Whishaw**

ONE more specimen (No. vi.), lent to us by the Very Rev. Sr. de Torres, Dean of Seville Cathedral, looks at first sight as if it must have been copied from Brussels appliqué; and indeed, until we had examined it under the microscope, we took it to be legitimate Brussels *point plat appliqué* on machine-made net. The history of the lace, however, as related by the Dean, made it difficult to understand how this could be, for it belonged to an old priest living in the remote little town of Lucena, in the province of Cordova, and he said that it was made by the ladies of his family in their own home, half a century or so ago. On comparing it closely with the earlier *punto de aguja* (Nos. iv. and v.), we find identical stitches in the *toile* of all three, while the peculiar combination of *punto* and pillow-lace applied to the net appears in the Lucena as well as in the Seville example. Inspection under the microscope further reveals that the ground is not machine-made tulle, but a pillow-net (No. vii.) unlike that of Brussels. The application is far below the level of the pillow-work and the *punto de aguja*, the net being left intact under the pattern in the greater part of the lace, in a careless way which the lace-transferers (*entoladoras*) of Seville would consider a disgrace. This supports the late owner's assertion that the flounce is of amateur make, for it suggests that different members of the family shared in the work, some being considerably more skilled than others. Indeed, we are inclined to think that the *punto de aguja* and pillow-work are much older than the net, and were transferred to it, instead of made with it, at least fifty years ago.\*

We have already alluded to the degraded product which is the last melancholy survival of the exquisite

*punto de aguja* of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, only recognisable as such from the fact that one of the stitches used in the antique work (No. viii.) reappears here, though in a very coarse form, and that one of the traditional Seville designs, simple though it be, is almost the counterpart of a detail in a design for "*pasement au fuseau*" given by Mignerak. It is curious that in Mignerak's outline we discern a stitch seen in the Philippine example and in the sixteenth-century portrait, and always employed in the modern *punto de aguja*. Moreover, the sixteenth-century pattern-book, in the same figure, shows us something by no means unlike the braid made on the *horquilla* to-day, and imitated in the machine-made product.\* Possibly this braid was the progenitor of the narrow guipure quoted by Mrs. Palliser (p. 33) as "*tête de More, ou moire*," which she suggests may have been derived from the hoods or capuchons of black *moire* worn by Italian women. We think it more probable that this "*tête de More*" was the Moresque or Morisco heading still in constant use in Andalusia.

Before leaving the question of the product to discuss the origin and outcome of the name, we should like to call attention to certain specimens preserved in museums or recorded in history, which might be, if not the actual Andalusian product, at any rate its immediate offspring.

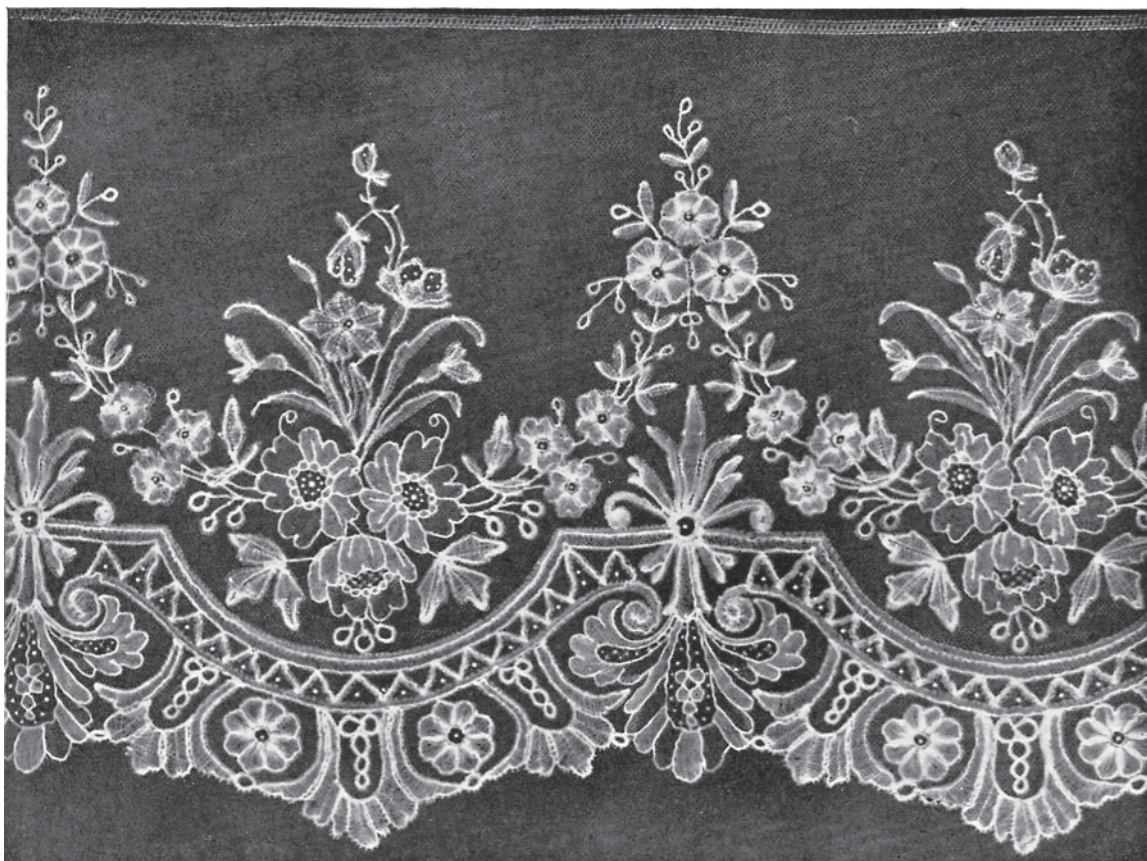
In the museum of Stockholm there is a collar worn by Gustavus Adolphus, which from its appearance seems to be *punto de aguja*. In this connection it is significant that "Point d'Espagne" was the favourite occupation of Swedish ladies in the seventeenth century.†

After the marriage of Anne of Austria with

\* This interesting example is now the property of Mrs. Francis Halsey, of Chelsea.

\* See reproduction of this design, Palliser, p. 30, Fig. 14.  
 † Palliser, p. 223, Plate XIV., and p. 226.

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NO. VI.—PUNTO DE AGUJA ON PILLOW-NET, ABOUT 1860  
(THE PROPERTY OF MRS. FRANCIS HALSEY, OF CHELSEA)

FROM LUCENA, PROVINCE OF CORDOVA

Louis XIII., Madrid inspired the fashions of France, and everything was “à l’espagnole,” the consequent increase in luxury leading to numerous royal edicts, to which the Queen paid not the least attention.\*

In the inventory of Marshal de Marillac, beheaded in 1632, appears “broderie et pointz d’Espagne d’or, argent, et soye.” † In 1697 Marie Louise of Orleans wore, on her marriage with Charles II. of Spain, a cloak of gold “point d’Espagne,” nine ells long. In 1698 the Duchess of Burgundy wore a little apron of “point d’Espagne” valued at a thousand pistoles. In 1722, at a ball at the Tuileries, all the gentlemen wore costumes of cloth of gold or silver trimmed with “point d’Espagne.” In the same year the King of France had his carriage adorned with gold “point d’Espagne,” and at the birthday fête of the Duke of Burgundy, in 1751, the gentlemen of the Court all wore costumes of cloth of gold or velvet trimmed with gold “point d’Espagne.” ‡

It is clear that this precious “point d’Espagne”

must have been made in great quantities and in extremely fine qualities, since its vogue endured for over a century, not only in Spain, but at the Court of France at the time of its greatest splendour. If it were nothing more than the gold or silver pillow-lace of coarse make shown in the examples quoted by Lefébure, Palliser, and others, it could never have held its own against the rivalry of the now rapidly developing Flemish, French, and Italian products; while to another hypothesis often put forward—that it was merely a later variant of Italian point—it may be replied that in that case it would have been called Italian, not Spanish. It does not seem likely that, at the time when the Italian laces were daily growing in favour and Spain was declining in the race, an Italian product should have been labelled with the name of Spanish.

But if “point d’Espagne” were, as seems entirely probable, the French name for the Spanish *punto de aguja*, the mystery is cleared up at once; and when we see the marvellously fine and delicate work executed after ancient Arabic designs by the skilled hands of the Moriscos in the sixteenth century, as

\* Palliser, pp. 117-19. † Palliser, p. 117, note.  
‡ Palliser, p. 80, note.



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shown in the pictures of Doña Victoria of Puerto de Santa Maria and her nameless contemporary of Seville, the rage for so dainty an adornment in the Northern Courts becomes intelligible, as also does the enormous value of the Spanish lace, produced "at the cost of thousands of ducats and years of work."

We are indebted to Mr. Alan Cole, C.B., for calling our attention to the exhibit No. 270 in the South Kensington Museum, which is reputed to have been the property of Philip IV. of Spain. Owing to prolonged absence from England, we have not been able to study this beautiful piece of lace at the museum, but the illustration and description given in the catalogue are so clear that we feel justified in hazarding the conjecture that this also is *punto de aguja*, or "point d'Espagne," of the sixteenth century. Not only does it bear the double-headed crowned eagle of Charles V., but the method of working, as described by Mr. Cole, is precisely that of the curiously combined "hook-stitch" and pillow-work of our *punto de aguja*, even to the little loops or stitches made by the *aguja*. The ground-work surrounding the eagles, also highly characteristic, is seldom or never absent from the true *punto de aguja*. The wing feathers of the eagles resemble in design and method of working similar designs in the antique *Redaño* pillow-lace found in the provinces of Seville



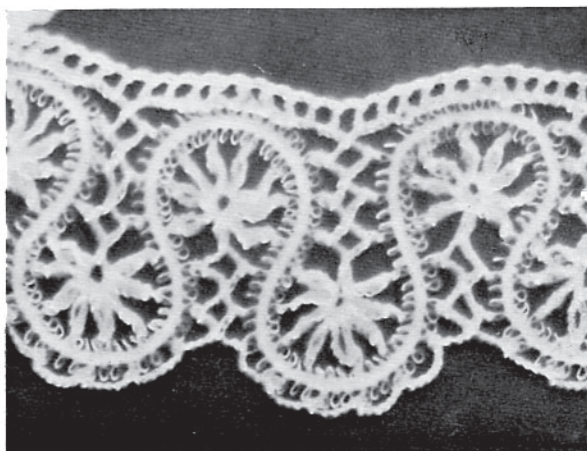
NO. VII.—RÉSEAU OF LUCENA, PUNTO DE AGUJA, RECONSTRUCTED UNDER THE MICROSCOPE BY E. M. W. THE DOUBLE THREAD IS TWISTED FIVE TIMES, OCCASIONAL ERRORS OCCURRING IN THE TWIST

and Huelva, and the imitation of the soft plumage on the breast by means of small loose "picots" or loops of thread is seen in fifteenth-century embroidery here, precisely this method having been adopted at that time to indicate the fleece of the lamb or the breast feathers of the pelican on chasubles and copes of Morisco workmanship. We take it, therefore, that this remarkable bed-cover, the origin of which is admitted to be uncertain, was made in Andalusia for Charles V. and inherited by his great-grandson Philip IV. Lacemakers who

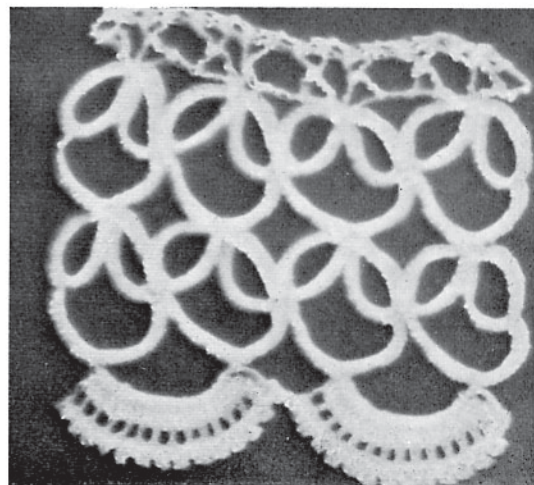
could produce such work as the ruff worn by Doña Victoria would certainly have been quite competent to make the bed-cover here described.\*

We have already shown (THE CONNOISSEUR MAGAZINE, June, 1909) how the Spanish *puntas* passed into history as *point coupé*, and how much confusion was thereby introduced into the popular view of Spain's share in the development of the textile arts. And when we find, in French and Italian, lace-terms which seem to have a close connection, in their literal sense, with the terms for similar work which are met with in Spanish earlier than they seem to be found in the other languages, and are still in use here to-day, it becomes worth while to examine into the possibility

\* *Catalogue of South Kensington Museum*, p. 48, Plate XV.



NO. VIII.—PUNTO DE AGUJA ON MACHINE-MADE BRAID SEVILLE, 1909



NO. IX.—CROCHET, PROFESSING TO IMITATE PUNTO DE AGUJA SEVILLE, 1909

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of a connection between them which has not yet been recognised.

The Italian *merletto* is the diminutive of *merlo*, one meaning of which is "a battlement." The French *dentelle* is supposed to be derived from *dantelé* (battlemented). And the points with which the traditional *red de pez*, or *malla* (netted lace), of Andalusia is always finished, are still called *almenillas*, the diminutive of *almena* (a battlement).

In an engraving by Abraham Bosse, called "The Warehouse of Laces in the Gallery of the Palace," \* fifteen out of the eighteen pieces of lace displayed are edged with *puntas*, rounded or peaked, suggesting that "points" were the fashionable shape as well as

the fashionable stitch at that period. All the earliest pattern-books, no matter what their nationality, show designs finished in "points." Possibly, as many writers suggest, these *punti in aria* were introduced by Italian workers as a protest against the restraints imposed by the linen foundation out of which the geometrical reticella and cut-work laces were, so to say, abstracted. But the *punto de aguja* of Doña Victoria bears no trace of derivation from geometrical drawn-thread or cut linen, yet nothing could be more manifestly *punti in aria* than the edges of her ruff.

We know that *puntas* of extremely fine *pasamaneria* were made by the Moriscos, and these are still made in Andalusia and still bear that name. Any pointed edging to needle or pillow lace, drawn-thread, or

\* *Lefébure*, p. 197, Fig. 92.



NO. X.—PUNTAS OF PASAMANERIAS OR FLECO MORISCO THE TASSELS, MADE OF THE THREADS WHICH CONSTITUTE THE FLECO, NOW HAVE BECOME ENTANGLED THROUGH FREQUENT WASHING



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embroidery, modern or antique, is still called *puntas*. On the other hand, the ground-work or *réseau* of both needle and pillow lace is here called the *punto*. No Spaniard could confuse *punto* and *punta*, but it is not unlikely that such a confusion should have arisen abroad in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, when there was a rage for *puntas* of different *puntos* in the Spanish style.\* The French "point" is no doubt a literal translation of the Spanish "punto," but how uncouth and far-fetched is the English term "needle-point"! Why needle-point? Why not the far more obvious needle-made, or simply needle lace?

In the titles of the early English pattern-books named in Mrs. Palliser's bibliography the term needle-point nowhere occurs: according to the same authority (page 250), it first appears in the wardrobe accounts of William and Mary. But if we accept the English "point" as a popular mistranslation of the Spanish "punto" (stitch), its use becomes natural and inevitable.

To sum up, we still find, in Andalusia, not only the distinctive terms, but the distinctive patterns and work known as—

*Punto de aguja* (hook-stitch), with the implements traditionally used for its production, and an Arabic feeling in its designs.

*Punto de bolillos* (bobbin-stitch), including a class of lace called indifferently *punto de doce bolillos* (twelve bobbin-stitch) and *punto morisco*.

*Fleco morisco* (Morisco fringe) or *pasamaneria*, which is also called *puntas*, and forms sharp points or peaks. This decoration is found, as we have already shown (THE CONNOISSEUR MAGAZINE, June, 1909), on thirteenth-century tombs in Seville Cathedral. That much of it was of lace-like fineness is proved, we think, by the specimen reproduced here (No. x.), worked on home-spun linen of about the seventeenth century. That from it sprang the French and English "*passemens*" and "*passemens dentelés*" of the sixteenth century seems probable from the fact that the word has in Spanish, as applied to the Arabic work, an appropriate

meaning which has been sought in vain in the English and French versions.

We suggest that the *pointas* of Le Puy were the *buntas* of Spain, while the "*points*" of France and the "*punti*" of Italy were the "*puntos*" of various classes in which "*puntas*" were made by the Moriscos before the sixteenth century, and that England, after long use of the actual words "*punto*" and "*punta*" without a clear understanding of their precise meaning, eventually merged them both in the general term "point-lace."

It is worth observing also that the German word for lace—*Spitze*—means a point or peak. In the dearth of German books of reference in Seville we cannot find out at what date this word first acquired the meaning of "lace," but through the kindness of a friend in England we have a reference to a book by Hulsius, published in 1616, in which it is defined as "cuspid, cacumen, sommet, point." This suggests that at that date the word did not yet bear the secondary meaning of "lace" which it now has, and it would be interesting to find out whether here too a translation or mistranslation of the Spanish "*punto*" or "*punta*" has got into the language.

If our hypothesis is correct, the earlier use of the word "point" as applied to the pillow-laces of Flanders, Mechlin, Valenciennes, etc., is correct, and not, as is so often said, a misuse of the term. The Northern lace-makers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would have been as much justified in calling their bobbin laces "Point de Malines" or "de Flandres," as were those of Italy in speaking of "Punto di Venezia" or "di Genova." The people really in error were the English dictionary makers of a later date, who translated the French "*point*" into "point" instead of "stitch."

We venture to suggest in conclusion that these distinctive Spanish lace terms furnish in themselves strong evidence that Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was the most advanced of the lace-producing countries of Europe; while the Arabic designs in the Morisco *pasamaneria*, and the Arabic characters in the ruff of Doña Victoria, practically prove that Spain learnt to make lace under the Moslem dominion.

\* The inventories of the English Court, from the time of Henry VIII., are full of Spanish products (Palliser, p. 238).

