

LACE AS WORN IN ENGLAND UNTIL THE ACCESSION OF JAMES I

BY M. JOURDAIN



A SURVEY of various documents would, at first sight, lead to the supposition that the use of lace was as old as that of ribands; the term lace, however, in all cases before the reign of Henry VIII, and frequently after, was used to denote a tape, or tie with a tag (or ferret)¹ for lacing up parts of a garment; and in this sense its use is as early as Edward IV's well-known Act of 1463, in which the entry into England of 'laces, corses, ribans' is prohibited. The use of lace² in France, in the same sense, is even earlier.

In the reign of Henry VII, who adopted various measures to promote the interests of the merchant navy, and materially reduced his import duties on the goods of Venice and other Italian cities, Italy sent to England gold and thread 'laces' as an article of commerce. An Act was then passed to prevent the buyers of such commodities from selling for a pound weight 'a packet which does not contain twelve ounces, and the inside of the said gold, silver and thread lace was to be of equal greatness of thread and goodness of colour as the outside thereof' (4 Hen. VII, 1488-9). Such lace, however, was 'passemment' of gold, silver or silk, to 'gard' the garment decorated.

In the early part of Henry VIII's reign, 'laced' linen is first mentioned in the inventory of Sir Thomas L'Estrange of Hunstanton, 1519;³ and among the privy purse expenses in 1530, eight pieces of 'yelowe lace' are bought for the king's grace.

The increase of Italian imports was tremendous towards the close of this reign. In 1549⁴, a writer upon the troubles of England, of that date, declares that 'twenty years ago there were none of these (Italian) haberdashers; not a dozen in all London; and now from the tower to Westminster every street is full of them, their shops glittering and shining with glasses and other "tryffes from beyonde the sea," such as "cardes, toothpeckers, pynnes and poyntes."' To this influx of Italian wares is to be attributed the

increase in the use of 'lace,' and the expenditure for the king's wardrobe.

Passamane lace appears as early as 1551⁵ in an inventory of apparel lent by the duchess of Suffolk to her sons, the duke of Suffolk and Lord Charles Brandon, and bought by her: to the duke was lent a black velvet gown guarded with 'passamane lace,' which came in his chest from Cambridge; and in the interesting inventory of the effects of John, Viscount Lisle and earl of Warwick, 1545-50,⁷ 'a friscadow cloke edged with a parement (passemment) lace of black silk and goold' is entered as given in 1545 to Mr. Guildford Duddleley (Guildford, the fourth son of Lord Lisle, and afterwards the husband of Lady Jane Grey). Five years later, a 'jerkin of frise leithur with a lace of black silke and goold' is given to James Foteman at Westminster.⁶

At the burial of Edward VI,⁸ fifty yards of gold passemment lace are entered by Sir Edward Waldgrave in his account for garnishing the pillars of the church,⁹ and in 1553 in the account of the keepers of the palace at Westminster is noted 'Five pipes of Venice gold, and rolls of passamayne of Venice gold.' In 1554, Stowe describes Sir Thomas Wyatt as wearing at his execution 'a faire hat of velvet, with broad bone-work lace about it.'

The roll of New Year's gifts accessible in the various volumes of Nichol's Royal Progresses is an invaluable index to the varying fashions in lace, which now seems to be called indifferently purple¹⁰, passamayne¹¹, or bone-work¹².

'Lace,' in the majority of instances, appears to have been coloured green, blue, tawny or black; or of two contrasting colours; or of gold or silver; or of gold and silver combined with silk of various colours and used as a braid laid upon the seams or edges of a garment. The falling collar, the precursor of the Elizabethan ruff, which was worn in the early part of the sixteenth century, was, however, frequently edged with narrow white thread lace of a geometric design.

⁶ *Hist. MSS. Comm. Thirteenth Report. Appendix, Part VI.*

⁷ *Hist. MSS. Comm. Appendix to Second Report.*

⁸ Mrs. Palliser. *History of Lace.*

⁹ Account of Sir Andrew Dudley, Knight, and Arthur Sturton, Esquire, deceased, keepers of the Palace of Westminster. *Calendar of Cecil MSS. Part I. Hist. MSS. Comm.*

¹⁰ In an account of Queen Elizabeth's wardrobe, 1600, a gown of the late queen Mary's is described as 'one Frenche gowne of black vellat with an edge of purple and pipes of gold; the wide sleeves turned up all over with like purple and pipes.' *Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth.*

In 1556, among the New Year's gifts to Queen Mary is a smock and 'collor and ruffes of damaske golde, purple and silver.' *J. Nichol's Manners, etc., of the Ancients.*

¹¹ *New Year's Gifts, 1556.* 'By Mrs. Penne, in a woden boxe six handkercheves, edged with passamayne of golde.' *J. Nichol's Manners, etc., of the Ancients.*

¹² 1556. 'By Mrs. Vincent, a stowle of walnutte, set with bone-work, covered with cloth of golde, and fringed with golde.' *J. Nichol's Manners, etc., of the Ancients.*

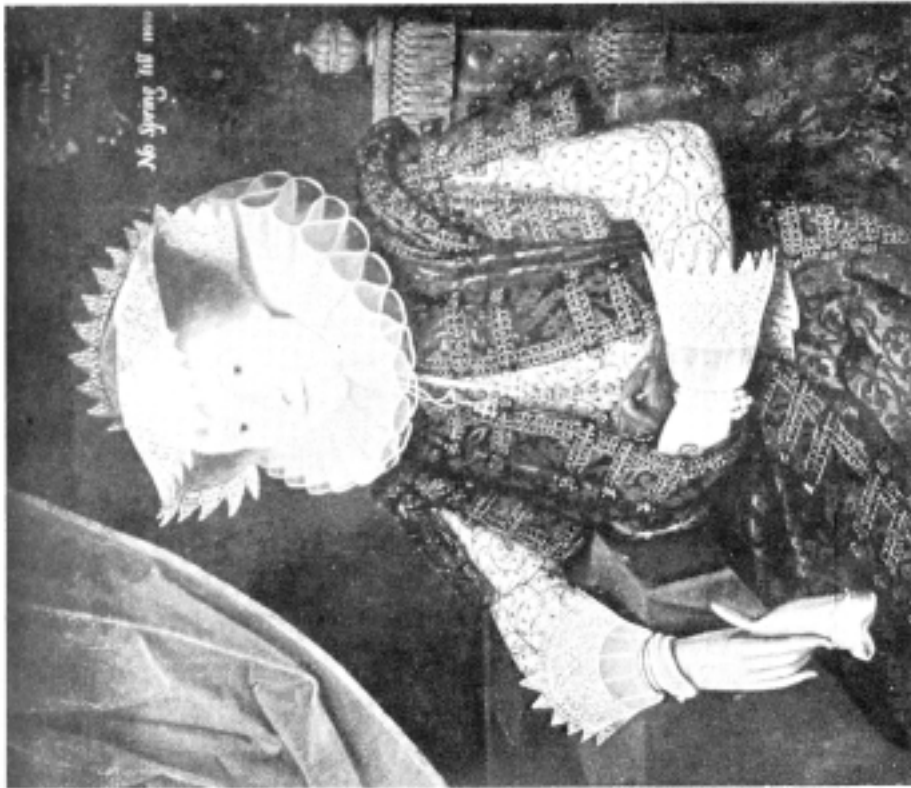
¹ Eg., 'a newe vyolette sadd coloured frisado jerkine gathered in plaites upon the backe, and the sleeves cutte downe all alonge the overside of the arme, tyed with a silke lace.' *MSS. of Lord Kenyon. Hist. MSS. Comm. Fourteenth Report, Appendix Part IV.*

² 'Silk riband woven or braided.' (Halliwell).

³ In the 13th century. In describing his entire stock-in-trade a chapman of the middle ages declares: 'J'ai lacez à lacer lor manges.' 'I have laces for lacing their sleeves.' *Fabliaux inédits tirés du Manus rit de la Bibliothèque du Roi, No. 1830 or 1239.*

⁴ Mrs. Palliser. *History of Lace.*

⁵ *MSS. of the Earl of Jersey, Hist. MSS. Comm. Eighth Report, Appendix.*



Walker, phot.
 PORTRAIT OF THE COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, DATED 1614. SHOWS VERY FINE, BOBBIN-MADE GEOMETRICAL LACE (PROBABLY ITALIAN) ON CAP AND CUFFS. SEVERAL WIDTHS OF INSERTION ARE JOINED TO A DENTATED EDGE TO GIVE WIDTH. THE GOWN IS TRIMMED WITH 'PASSEMENT' OF GOLD THREAD AND BLACK SILK



Walker, phot.
 PORTRAIT OF LADY CARLETON (D. 1627), BY MIEREVELOT, IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY. SHOWS HALF-ICEFF AND TRIMMING OF WIDE BOBBIN-MADE GEOMETRICAL LACE. THE BODICE IS TRIMMED WITH GOLD LACE



Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I in the National Portrait Gallery. Shows ruff and cuffs of geometrical needlepoint lace. The lace consists of 'hand' and 'passement', *i.e.*, insertion and dentated edging, joined.



From a full-length portrait of Queen Elizabeth I in the Royal Gallery of Gripsholm, Stockholm. Shows small ruff and cuffs of cut work and embroidered linen. The gloves, richly embroidered, have a narrow edging of twisted and plaited metal thread.

Lace before the time of James I

With the accession of Elizabeth, the privy expenses, and the inventories of New Year's gifts overflow with notices of *pasement* and *purle*, network, crown lace, bone-lace, cheyne lace, byas parchment, and billament lace, compas lace, and Venice gold and silver, laid upon smocks, sleeves, ruffs, cushion cloths, petticoats, kirtles and handkerchiefs.

Purle seems to be applied to a narrow edging lace whether of gold or thread. One of the earliest instances is an entry among the marriage clothes of Mary Neville, who was married to George Clifton, in 1536, of 'A neyge of perle, 41 4s. od.¹⁸'. Among the New Year's gifts, of the Lady St. Lawrence, is 'one peire of sleeves of fine cameryke, and a piece of purle upon a paper to edge them¹⁴'. The term¹⁵ is also used for embroidery, in the sense of twists of gold or silver, as in the entry¹⁶ of a 'gowne of crimson satten, embroidered all over with purles¹⁷, of damaske golde,' belonging to Edward VI, and preserved as late as 1600, in Queen Elizabeth's wardrobe.

*Crown-lace*¹⁸ is so called from the pattern being worked in succession of crowns, sometimes intermixed with acorns and roses.

Among the New Year's gifts of 1577-8 the Lady Shandowes, jun. (*i.e.*, Chandos) presents her Majesty with 'a cushyn-clothe of lawne wrought with white worke of branches and trees, edged with white bone-lace wrought with crownes.¹⁹

Billament lace is of frequent occurrence in inventories. The term *Billaments*²⁰ is explained by Baret, *Alvearie*, 1580, as 'the attire or ornamentes of a woman's head or necke.'

In an inventory of Queen Elizabeth's wardrobe (1600), there are to be found entries of:—

'One frocke of cloth of gold with a billament lace of Venice golde.'

'One jerkine of clothe of silver, with large cutts downeright (*i.e.*, slashings) bounde with a billament lace of Venice silver and black silke.'

The term, which seems to have been applied chiefly to metal, or mixed metal and silk laces, died out in Elizabeth's reign, though it was once widely used, as appears from the lists of foreigners settled in the city of London in 1571, where

¹⁸ Mrs. Palliser. *History of Lace*. In 1573, Elizabeth Sedgewicke, of Wathrape, widow, bequeaths to her daughter Lassels, 'an edge of perle for a remembrance desiring her to give it to one of her daughters.' [*Ibid.*]

¹⁴ New Year's Gifts 1561-2. *Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*.

¹⁵ Purl (1) Border; hem; fringe; stitch-work; a twist of gold or silver. (*Halliwell*.)

¹⁶ *Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*.

¹⁷ In the New Year's Gifts of 1577-8, there is 'a kyrtell of white satten embrowdered with purles of gold like cloudes.' *Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*.

¹⁸ 1571. 'Lace of crowne purle' occurs among 'Provisions of Sundry kyndes' (including Hobby Horses, Boides of men in timber, dishes for devell's eyes, rushes and gilding) in the *Accounts of the Revels at Court*.

¹⁹ *Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*.

²⁰ See *Colgrave*, in *v. Doreure, Dorlot*.

William Cruttal is described as using 'the craft of making byllament lace,' and Rich. Thomas, Dutch as 'a worker of Billament lace.'

*Byas*²¹ is most probably lace worked in crooked or sloping lines, as in the more detailed description of a 'lace of Venice gold and sylver, with a jagge (*i.e.*, jagged) wrought byas'; that is, a lace with a jagged waving edge.

*Cheyne lace*²² appears in the New Year's gifts of 1558-9, when the countess of Lincoln offers to the queen a 'long-cloake of murry velvet, with a border rounde aboute of small cheyne lace of Venis silver.'

The term *compas lace*²³ refers, no doubt, to a circular pattern:

'Item, one loose gowne of blacke taphata with compas lace of blacke silke, silke and silver²⁴.'

Panement, or *Pasemaine*, although almost always applied to metal laces, or laces of metal and silk in the royal inventories, appears to have been a general term for all gimps, braids and laces, as is instanced by its use in the Scottish 'Pasement Bond,'²⁵ which differentiates between *pasements* which are plain and which are open-worked.

The word *pasement* continued to be in use until the middle of the seventeenth century, and appears to have been applied to lace with a straight edge.

In 1574-5, 'a fayre pasemayne lace of damaske golde and damaske silver' is given at the New Year by the earl of Leicester, and among the New Year's gifts of 1577-8, the Lord Cobham presents a 'petticoate of yellow satten layed all over with a pasement of silver and tawnye sylke.' The royal dress must have been stiff with gold and embroidery, to judge by the description of a petticoat, which was 'leyed al over with pasmane lace of golde and sylver, and flowers, with eight yards of pasmane of gold and silver rownde aboute it.'

In the inventory of the queen's wardrobe in 1600, appears a French kirtle, edged with a *passamaine* lace of gold, and a cap of maintenance,²⁶ 'striped downeright, with a *passamaine* lace of gold to the same.'

At Ashridge, Bucks, the seat of Lord Brownlow, is an interesting relic of Queen Elizabeth—a piece

²¹ *Biaz*. In a sloping manner. *Biace*, a slope or bias (*Halliwell*.)

²² *Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*.

²³ *Compas*, a circle. (*Halliwell*.)

²⁴ Inventory of Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe. *Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*.

²⁵ The *Pasement Bond*, dated 6th May, 1593, by which the duke of Lennox and other noblemen bind themselves not to wear any apparel overlaid with any kind of 'pasement' from the date of the bond till Whitsunday 1594. They refuse to wear any clothing 'begaried, laid ower, or smered with ony kynd of pasementis greit or small, plane or a jowir' (à jour) for the period. *MSS. of the Hon. Mrs. Erskine Murray. Hist. MSS. Comm. Fourth Report Appendix*.

²⁶ *Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*.

Lace before the time of James I

of gold lace that once belonged to her. It is, however, impossible to photograph it, as it cannot be removed from the frame in which it is preserved.

From the reign of Mary onwards, frequent mention is made of *parchment* lace (a term generally applied to metal laces) for needle-point worked upon a parchment pattern.

The earliest entry of this is found in the privy purse expenses of the Princess Mary,²⁷ where she gives to Lady Calthorpe a pair of sleeves of gold trimmed with parchment lace. 'Parchment lace of Watchett and Sylver at vij. viijd.'²⁸ the ounce appears among the 'emptions' in June, in the revels at court²⁹; and in the list of Protestant refugees to England among their trades, it is stated that some live by making matches of hempe stalkes and parchment lace.³⁰

Bone-lace is of frequent occurrence in the wardrobe accounts, and the term refers to pillow-lace. Lace was made on the pillow in the Low Countries by the middle of the sixteenth century, and by the influx of Protestant refugees, exiled by the Alba persecution of 1568-77, it was no doubt introduced into England. Fuller attributes a similar date to the growth of the lace industry in this country, and declares the use of lace to be modern 'not exceeding the middle of the reign of Queen Elizabeth.' He desires that it should 'not be condemned for a superfluous wearing, because it doth neither hide nor heat, seeing it doth adorn,' and claims that it stands the State in nothing, and that it is 'not expensive of bullion like other lace, costing nothing save a little thread descanted on by art and industry. Not to say that it saveth some thousands of pounds yearly, formerly sent over to fetch lace from Flanders.'³¹

Bone-lace is also applied to [bobbin-made] metal laces. Among the New Year's gifts of 1577-8, a kyrtell of white satten (presented by the marquess of Northampton), is 'layed rownde abought with a bone lace of Venice golde' and six handkerchiefs are edged with a bone lace of black and white. In the New Year's gifts of the following year, the Lady Mary Sydney gives 'a smock and two pillow byers of cameryk, . . . edged with a brode bone lace of black sylke.'³²

Metal bone-lace appears to have been set with jewels, spangles and bugles,³³ for among the 'emptions' of June, 1572, occurs an entry to the silkwoman 'Mrs. Mowntagne' for 'Bone lace

wroughte with sylver and spangells,' and in 1573 is an entry of 'perles set upon silver bone lace for the Ladys Maskers heade.' Finally in the inventory of the queen's wardrobe,³⁴ in 1600, is a mantle of 'black stitched clothe, edged with a bone lace of small pearle and bugle' (*i.e.*, bugles).

An account of the furniture of the bedroom prepared for the famous visit of the queen to Kenilworth in 1584, gives a curious instance of the cumbrous magnificence of the day, of barbaric spangles, plumes and gold. 'Fyve plumes of coolered feathers garnished with bone lace and spangells of golde and of silver standing in cups, knit all over with golde, silver and crymson silk' adorn the bedstead, of which the five curtains are 'striped down with a bone lace' of gold and silver.³⁵

Laces of crymson, Spanish lace, and 'white heare laycyng' are mentioned in the account of the revels at court; the latter being lace made of *white hair*, and by no means an unusual entry in Queen Elizabeth's reign.³⁶ Spanish work is also mentioned among the New Year's gifts of 1577-8, when 'Fowlke Grevell' presents the queen with a 'smocke of camerick wrought abowte the collar and sleeves of Spanysse works of roses and tres.'³⁷

Cut-work, with *drawn-work*—geometrical lace—is of frequent occurrence among the New Year's gifts.³⁸

In addition to the already enumerated laces of Queen Elizabeth, there are the *bride laces of blue*, of which Coventry, according to Pennant, had a vast manufacture, which was lost before the year 1581. So famous was its dye that 'true as Coventry blue' became proverbial.

In 1574, the minstrel, as described by Laneham,³⁹ as appearing when Elizabeth was on progress to Killingworth castle, shows from 'his bozome drawne fooath a lappet of his napkin, edged with blue lace and marked with a true love⁴⁰, a hart, and a D, for *Damian*, far he was but a bachelor yet.' The lace was probably a coarse, effective trimming, within the reach of the lower classes, by whom it was worn and given to guests at weddings.

These laces continued in fashion until the Coventry plays were put down by the Puritans.

²⁷ *Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth.*

²⁸ *Kenilworth Inventory.* A.D. 1584.

²⁹ Compare the Chartley inventory of Mary Stuart, 'un petit quarré fait à point tresse ouvré par la vieille comtesse de Lennox elle estant à la Tour' (quoted by *Mrs. Palliser. History of Lace*, page 314).

³⁰ *Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth.*

³¹ 'By the Lady Shandowes, Dowager, a dublet of peche-coloured satten all over covered with white cut worke, and leyd with a lace of Venice gold.' (New Year's Gifts, 1577-8.)

³² *Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth.*

³³ *i.e.*, a true-love-knot.

³⁴ 1536-44. *History of Lace.* Mrs. Palliser.

³⁵ 'Watchet or skie-coloured cloth.' (*Hakluyt.*)

³⁶ Extracts from the *Accounts of the Revels at Court.*

³⁷ *State Papers.* Vol. 82, P.R.O.

³⁸ *Fuller's Worthies.* Vol. I. Devon, page 397.

³⁹ *Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth.*

⁴⁰ Extracts from the *Accounts of the Revels at Court.*