



The ROMANCE of LACE



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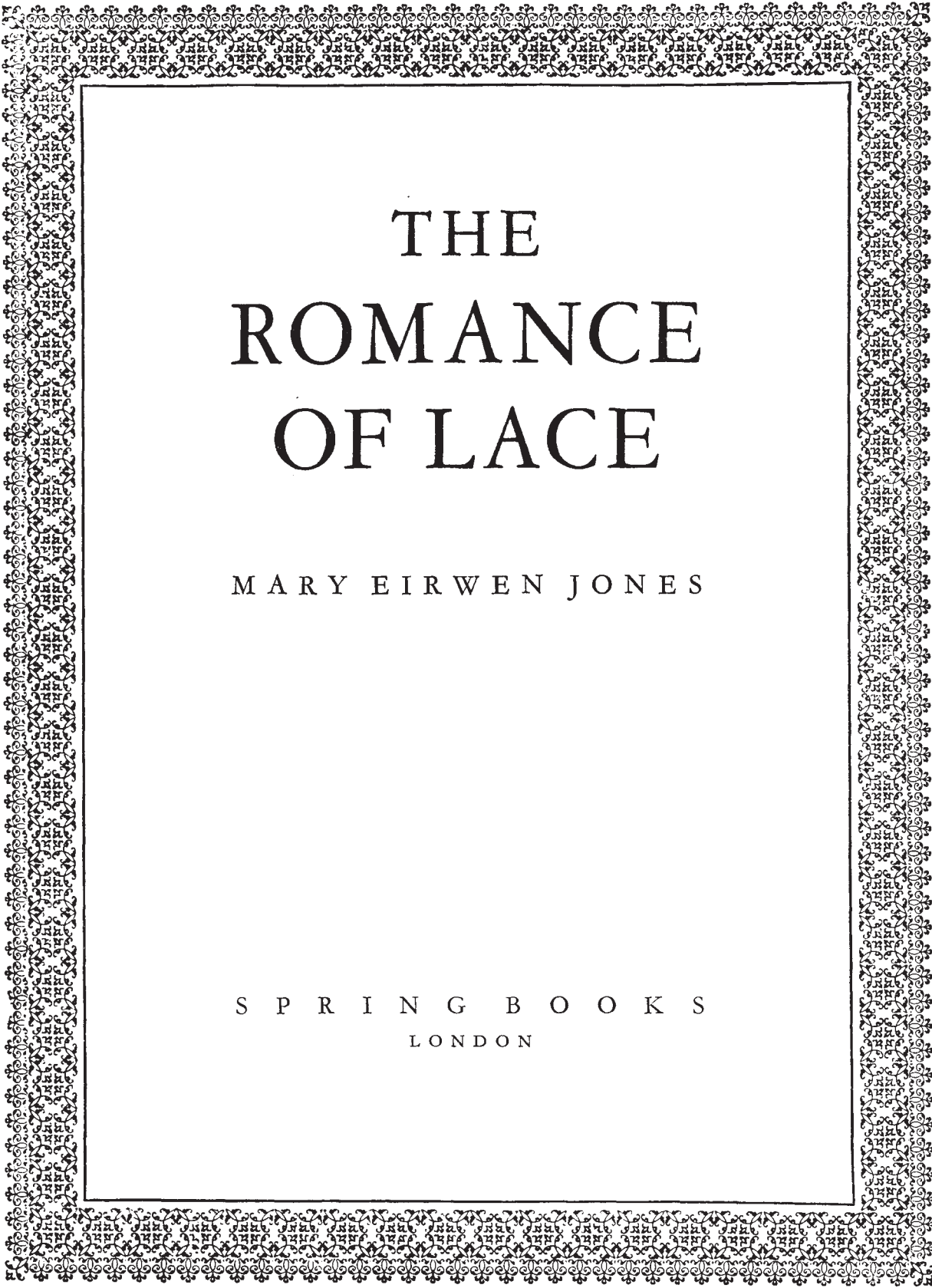
The Laughing Cavalier

Franz Hals

*The lavish use of lace on ruff and cuffs is
shown in this seventeenth-century costume*

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THE
ROMANCE
OF LACE

MARY EIRWEN JONES

S P R I N G B O O K S
L O N D O N

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Author's Note

'Art', declares John Galsworthy in the *Inn of Tranquillity*, 'is the great and universal refreshment.'

It is with faith in that dictum that this book has been compiled to serve in the nature of an *hors-d'œuvre* to the feast that awaits all those who care to pursue the enchanting study of lace-craft in all its many facets.

The author wishes to express heartfelt gratitude to H. M. the Queen for the use of illustrative matter and also to the authorities of the National Gallery and the Wallace Collection. She has received invaluable help and encouragement from the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, and the Needlework Development Scheme, Glasgow. She has received kindly assistance from the Librarians at Windsor Castle, the Keeper of the Folk Museum of Wales, St Fagans, Cardiff, and the Sisters of the Order of the Poor Clares, Kenmare, County Kerry, and from others who have contributed with information and illustrations.

Her sincere thanks are tendered to Mr William Rees, M.A., for various suggestions and criticisms and for the reading of the proofs.

INTRODUCTION

THE CHARM OF LACE has been acknowledged throughout the ages. A knowledge of the art and the romance attached to its historical evolution serves to emphasize and accentuate the worth of this delightful fabric. Museums and art galleries are rich in the possession of magnificent pieces of lace and many fine specimens have been preserved by private collectors.

Many of the laces represent the work of abbesses and nuns for lace was used extensively as a trimming for ecclesiastical garments and furnishings. Lace has, however, a broader significance for the layman. The greater proportion of old lace in existence today is a legacy from the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is representative of times when lace was an important and an elegant accessory of dress.

In the Middle Ages, lace-workers achieved a high standard of excellence in their art. Continental lace-workers were the most expert. Inspired and trained by these, however, the lace-workers of Britain also created beautiful lace.

The lace fabrics of several countries enjoyed a vogue in turn. Sometimes the standard of achievement was raised as a result of rivalry. Demand invariably exceeded supply; large sums of money poured into that country where the lace created took precedence in fashion.

Sumptuary Laws

So extravagant a fashion did lace become at times that several monarchs passed at intervals sumptuary laws to control its use. Fundamentally, these sumptuary laws were intended to maintain class distinctions, to repress luxury and to discourage extravagance especially among what were termed the lower classes. These sumptuary laws were regulations controlling ostentatious expenditure on dress, ornament, furniture and food. From the early sixteenth century onward, the sumptuary laws which were passed in Britain may be said to have had an additional motive. They were occasioned largely by a desire to promote home industries.

The possession of fine lace was coveted, much of it being preserved in the nature of family heirlooms. Old laces were prominent items in wills. In 1728, Samuel Johnson wrote a letter to Boswell stating:

‘Greek, sir, is like lace; every man gets as much of it as he can.’

Lace Honoured in Other Arts

Artists and poets realized the charm of lace and honoured it. Holbein in his *Portrait of a Lady* recorded an early development of ‘lakis’ on the linen head-dress she favoured. The

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Venetian, the Flemish and the Dutch painters spent hours in representing the beauty of the fabric and were eminently successful in depicting it. Van Dyke's portraits testify to the generous use of lace on the elaborate costumes worn in the Stuart Period. Later, skilled artists such as Le Brun, Bailly and Berain, directed by court patronage, created beautiful patterns to be worked on net grounds.

Writers – poets in especial – praised the grace and beauty of lace. The lyric poet, Robert Herrick, writing in the second quarter of the seventeenth century, paid tribute to the charm of a wayward lace when he catalogued the details of 'A sweet disorder in the dress':

An erring lace which here and there
Enthrals the crimson stomacher.

Changes in Fashion

Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, the extravagances of linen and velvet and lace gave way to a simplicity – a simplicity which savoured of artificiality as sponsored by the royal court of France and copied with unreasoned slavishness by the other countries of Europe.

This pseudo-simplicity was not without its virtues. Clothing began to assume a more hygienic character. Robert Burns wrote his poem *To a Louse* at the close of the eighteenth century.

Ha! whare ye gaun ye crowlin ferlie!
Your impudence protects you sairly
I canna say but ye strunt rarely
Owre gauze and lace;
Though faith I fear ye dine but sparely
On sic a place.

The wearing of lace fell into decadence from the time of the French Revolution. That political and social tumult affected all classes of society. Relative values were changed drastically. The aristocracy sold their treasuries of lace. The lace industries of many countries were affected adversely. The dress of men and women became simpler and lace came to be regarded as an ornamentation for women's costume only.

Machine-made Lace Flooded the Markets

A super-abundance of machine-made lace in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led to its becoming an ubiquitous fabric. Nevertheless, hand-made varieties were still treasured. The hand-made lace industries of the Continent were given a fillip from time to time by royal patronage. In Britain too, hand-workers were given encouragement. Queen Adelaide and Queen Victoria took special delight in the laces made in Britain – a delight which has become hereditary in the Royal house.

Collectors of Lace

The twentieth century has witnessed a discriminating interest in the laces of the past. In the auction rooms, connoisseurs congregate to compete for the possession of choice pieces. Beautiful specimens in public collections have their devotees. Everywhere there are lovers of the 'fairy fabric'. It may be that as they gaze at the exquisite designs and the gossamer thread, they crystallize within themselves something of the spirit of that charming poem by Mrs Thomas Ellis Baker,

Let me grow lovely, growing old:
So many fine things do;
Laces and ivory and gold
And silks need not be new.

LACE: ITS EVOLUTION

Lace is an open-work fabric formed by interlacing, braiding or twisting threads of flax, cotton, silk or metallic fibre.

Terms used in Lace-craft

THE WORD LACE is derived from the Latin *lacinia*, the fringe or the hem of a garment. In the statutes of the Plantagenet period the term 'lacez', meaning an open-work fabric, is confused with 'laces', meaning the braids used for fastening sections of a garment.

Passement, a word spelt in many ways, was a general term for braids, gimps, laces made in a variety of threads. *Passement dentelle* came to be used for a lace with a toothed edge; this was abbreviated to *dentelle*.

Lace consisted of the ground, the 'entoilage' and the 'toile', or pattern, which at first was so firmly made that it resembled closely-knit linen.

The ground was made in needlepoint or 'au fuseau', on the pillow. The ground was termed à *réseau*, *fond*, *champ*, *treille*. These had specialized names such as *fond clair*, *fond double*, Brussels ground, wire ground, trolley ground.

Brides, or bridges, united different parts of the fabric. These were usually very fine and showed exacting workmanship often being composed of one strand of thread button-holed over and bearing tiny picots or minute stars. The open-work stitches used as fillings were called *modes* or *jours*.

A raised cord, or *cordonnet*, introduced high relief into needlepoint laces. This was worked over with overcasting stitches or covered separately and then sewn in place. Venetian workers enhanced the *cordonnet* with *courommes*, raised ornamentations superimposed to as many as four times.

The outer edge of a lace was also called a *couronne*. The term *engrélure* was given to a narrow edging which served to secure the stitches of the ground and which served as a border for sewing the lace on to a garment.

Lace-makers were often paid in lace-tokens. These were accepted as legitimate currency in the eighteenth century. Lace fabric was measured in ells. The English ell was fixed in 1101 and measured 45 inches. The Scotch ell was 37.2 inches. A French ell was 54 inches and a Flemish ell 27 inches.

Guipure lace involved the use of twisted silk and cartisane. The latter was a narrow strip of vellum or parchment covered with silk or metallic thread and used to form a stiff, raised pattern. This lace was made with the needle or with bobbins; the less cartisane used

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the better the lace, for it was not washable. Later *guipure* was used for pillow laces bearing a tape-like design.

Guense was a lace made of thick thread. It was known as *beggar's lace* and was used extensively by the poorer classes in France. The pattern consisted of flowers and was worked loosely in thick thread.

Mignonette was a fine pillow lace made in the neighbourhood of Paris, Normandy, Auvergne and Lorraine from Lille thread. It had a clear ground and was about two or three inches wide.

Campane was another narrow pillow lace. When made of white thread it was used to trim – and sometimes to repair – wider laces. It was also made in gold, silver and coloured threads.

Early Varieties

EARLY FRINGE WORK Ancient civilizations have bequeathed materials in the form of garments, furnishings and rugs ornamented with elaborate fringes. Worn edges and the unravelling of threads probably suggested a fringe. This was enhanced by the addition of ornamental stitches and the more elaborate combinations of these stitches formed the beginnings of lace.

As increased skill was attained, geometrical precision and design were introduced into the knotting of the fringe. Many garments taken from the ancient tombs of Assyria and Egypt were decorated in this way.

The netting of threads was known at an early epoch. Ancient manuscripts make frequent reference to it but some confusion is wrought by the failure of the Chaldaic, Hebrew and Arabic writers to distinguish clearly between network and early lace.

EARLY NETWORK Elaborate forms of early network have been found in the tombs of Ancient Egypt. The weavers of this fabric are described in *Isaiah* XI. 9. 'They that work in fine flax and they that weave networks.' Network was used as a covering for the head and the breast. It may have had some religious significance, for, fastened to many of the specimens taken from the ancient tombs, were miniature deities of remarkable workmanship fashioned in metal or porcelain.

VARIETIES OF NETTING It is known that the oldest processes of Coptic netting involved the use of a four-sided frame. A double warp was stretched across and a special rod was used to keep the threads apart. The weaver knotted or plaited the threads with his fingers and commenced the work from the centre of the frame.

By another process, the warp and weft threads were twisted at the places where they intersected. The weft was called the *buratto*, a name which has been preserved in the Italian name for this kind of netting. This simple form of network was almost universally known among early civilizations. It was much in use among the early Egyptians. The Swiss lake-dwellers practised the craft. The Incas of Peru in the nineteenth century created fabrics

made from cotton and vicuna wool, beautiful in texture and in colouring. These they adorned with what have proved to be some of the finest specimens of knotted netting with geometrical designs.

Another early variation, also created on a frame, was that in which warp and weft were knotted at each intersection in such a way that a design was built up from the actual knotting. The pattern was elementary but it served as a foundation for the type of lace which was known in later ages as *réseau* or *filet brodé*.

A more ambitious form of early network and possibly representative of a more advanced stage of civilization, was that of netting over a circular disc. The pattern was adapted to the shape and size of the disc. Later lace-workers retained this process as a basis for their work. It is shown in the *toile d'araignée* of France, in the sun pattern of the *punto de Cataluna* and the *nanduti* of South America.

PREHISTORIC LACE SPECIMEN Homer makes reference to net veils made from woven gold, and it is recorded that the Emperor Nero wore a net covering of gold threads. Gold lace in a simple form was in established use. When an early Scandinavian barrow was opened at Wareham in Dorsetshire, a small piece of gold lace was discovered. It was worked in a lozenge pattern. Gold thread netting was used to trim the garments of the nobles and ecclesiasts in Anglo-Saxon times and its use was continued in the Middle Ages. The finest qualities of this early gold lace were obtained from Cyprus. Later there was an increased demand for the 'fringe of gold of Venys', the gold and silver threads of which were obtained from Genoa and Lucca.

Medieval Varieties

DARNED NETTING Lace in the Middle Ages had a wide connotation. An early form was that known as darned netting. It was sometimes called darned lace or spider work. It was also known as *Ouvrages Masches*, *Opus Araneum* and *Lacis*. This form of lace-work had many devotees in Italy, particularly in Siena. The work was, as a consequence, sometimes referred to as *Siena Point*. The plain net of square meshes was called *réseau*, *rezel* or *rezueil* and was used for bed-curtains and vallances. On this ground a pattern was darned. Sometimes the effect was colourful and brilliant for coloured silks were intermingled with gold and silver thread. The work resembled tapestry both in the counting of stitches and in the finished work.

RETICELLAS Reticellas or Greek point lace took precedence among other types of laces in the period 1480 to 1620. This variety of cut-work enjoyed a great vogue for it was used extensively on ecclesiastical garments, church cloths, shrouds and lay garments. It was familiar to many as a motif appearing on samplers. The pattern books relating to early needlework were expensive and difficult to obtain, and teachers taught the various patterns by means of 'sam-cloths' or samplers. Young folk showed their competency in the arts of needlework on these, causing the samplers to become treasured objects in themselves.

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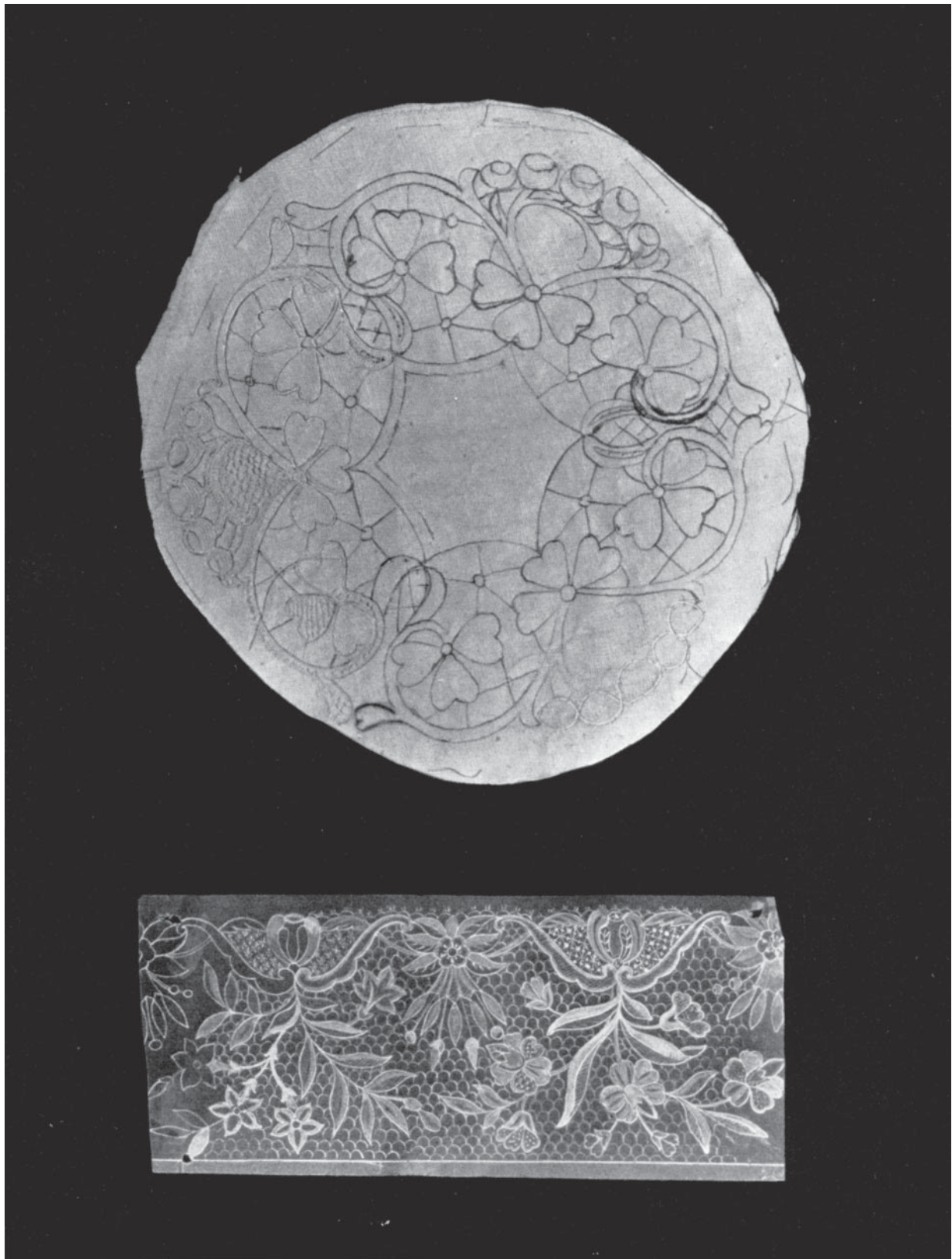
In reticella work geometrical patterns were popular, particularly in the earliest specimens. The work was done by means of buttonhole stitching. Picots or pearls were introduced at intervals. As time went on designs became more ornate but the stiff lines of geometrical patterns were still adhered to for the worker took heed of the right angles in the linen fabric caused by the intersection of threads. But even in the Middle Ages the needleworker negotiated circles, triangles and stars and created elaborate bars to link the units of the pattern.

CUT-WORK When linen was closely woven, the fabric was cut. Buttonhole stitching secured the edges and the spaces were filled or partly filled with decorative stitches. At first these spaces were small but as the workers grew more expert more and more of the foundation cloth was cut away. The stitchery used to block in the spaces grew more and more elaborate and ornamental. A high standard of work was achieved when the foundation was reduced to a few linen threads only. These were buttonholed over and the lines so formed were incorporated into the design.

THE QUINTAIN Yet more elaborate work was introduced into later forms of cut-work. Certain types were made on a light wooden frame. Threads were attached to the sides of this frame and these were crossed and interlaced according to a preconceived plan. A panel of fine cloth was attached beneath the threads. A usual name for this cloth was 'Quintain', a name derived from the town in Brittany where lawn of the best quality was manufactured. By means of firm buttonhole stitching, the network of threads was attached to the foundation of fine cloth. The stitching followed the lines of the pattern and the remainder of the lawn was cut away. The design itself remained on the foundation cloth and the buttonhole stitching served to introduce high relief. As the workers gained in experience and inspiration, methods and stitches of a more complex nature were introduced. By the early years of the sixteenth century many workers had dispensed with the foundation cloth. A pattern was drawn and worked on a parchment which was removed when the design was complete. The worker paid obeisance no longer to the right-angles of the warp and weft of a closely-woven linen.

DRAWN WORK Another form of early needlework which may be regarded as a forerunner of lace was drawn work. This was done on loosely-woven linen. This work was known by a variety of names – *Opus Tiratum*, *Punto Tirato*, *Fil Tiré*, drawn work, and Tönder lace. Geometrical designs were used. The threads of the linen were subservient to the pattern. They were preserved in those areas demanding high relief; they were withdrawn or caught together when an open-work effect was required.

ASSEMBLING OF NEEDLEWORK SQUARES Much of the medieval needlework was done in small squares which were easy to handle. These were alternated with squares of plain linen in order to show them up in full effect when large coverings were required for



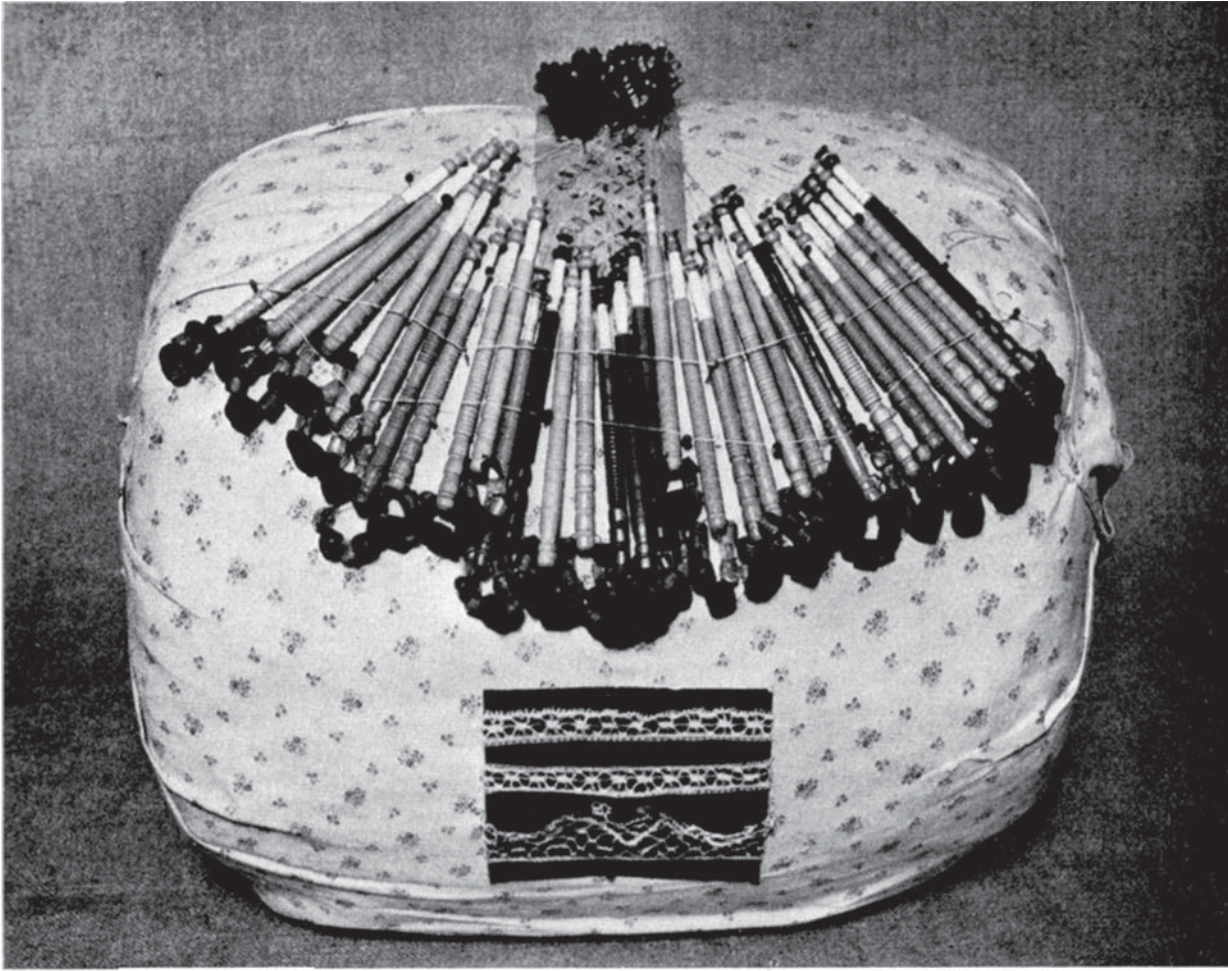
By Courtesy

The Order of Poor Clares, Kenmare Convent

Needlepoint lace in the making

ABOVE: Working of the design on linen

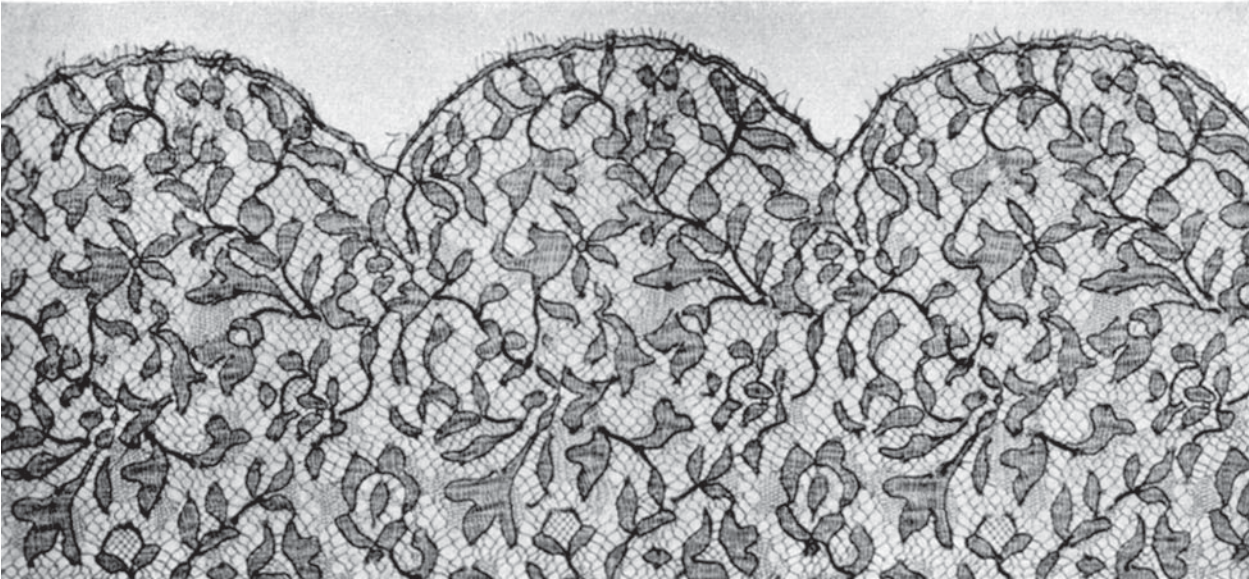
BELOW: Design on parchment



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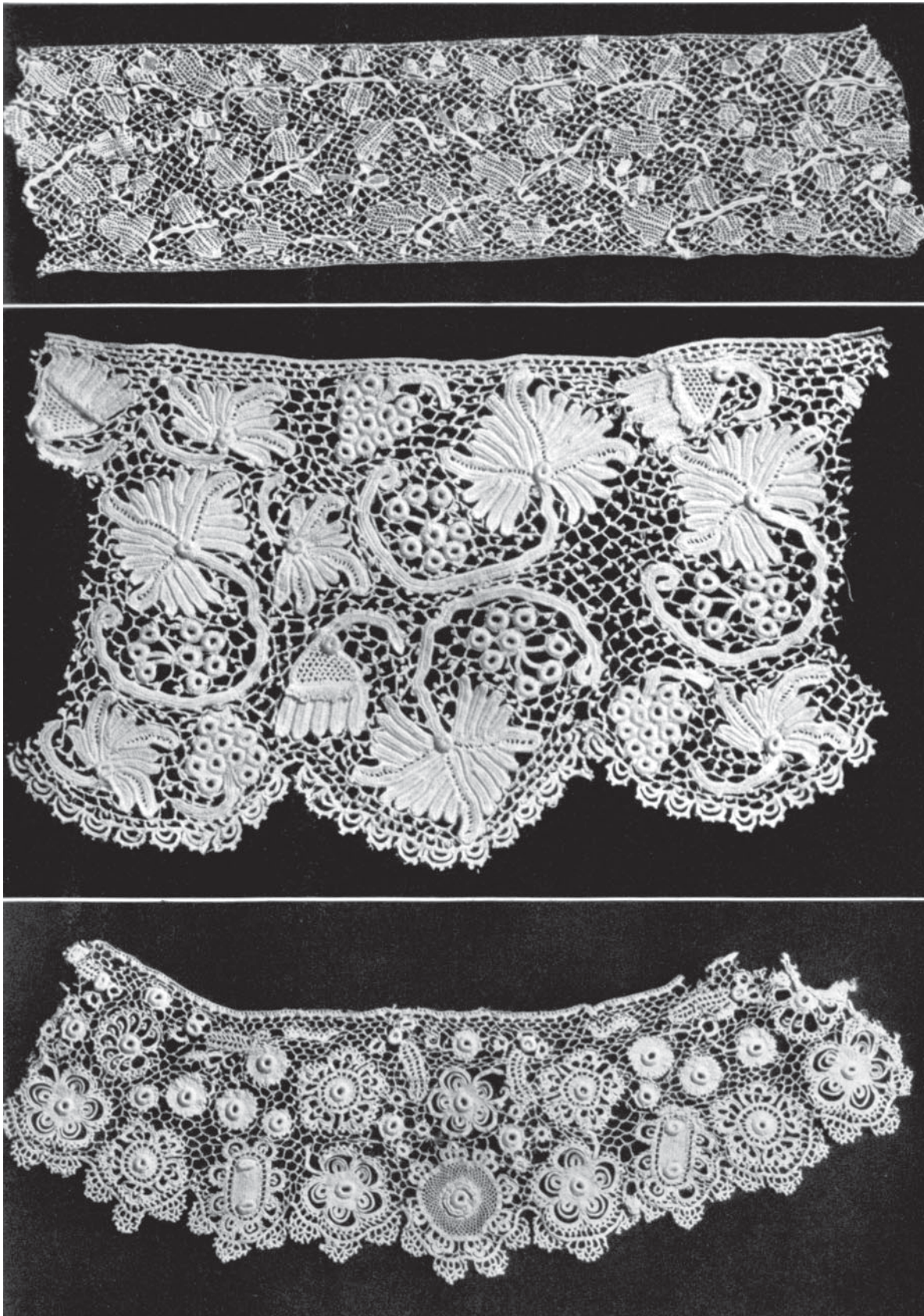
The National Museum of Wales

*Lace Pillow with Bobbins
in the collection of lace-making instruments in the Welsh Folk Museum, St Fagans*



English. Flounce of machine-made lace. Twentieth century

Author's Collection

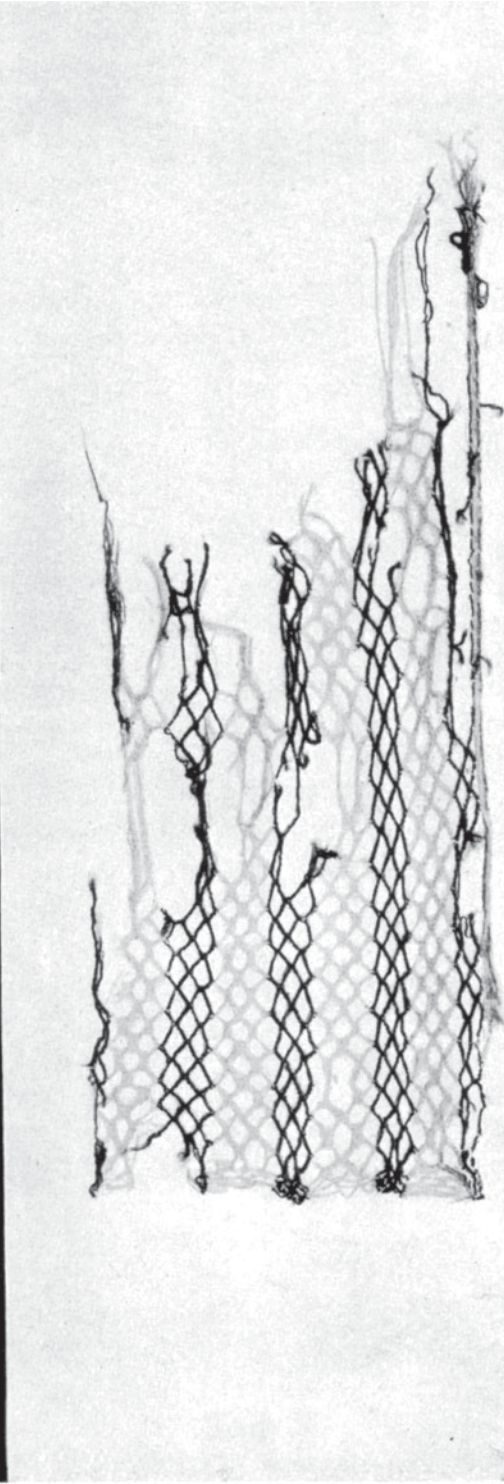
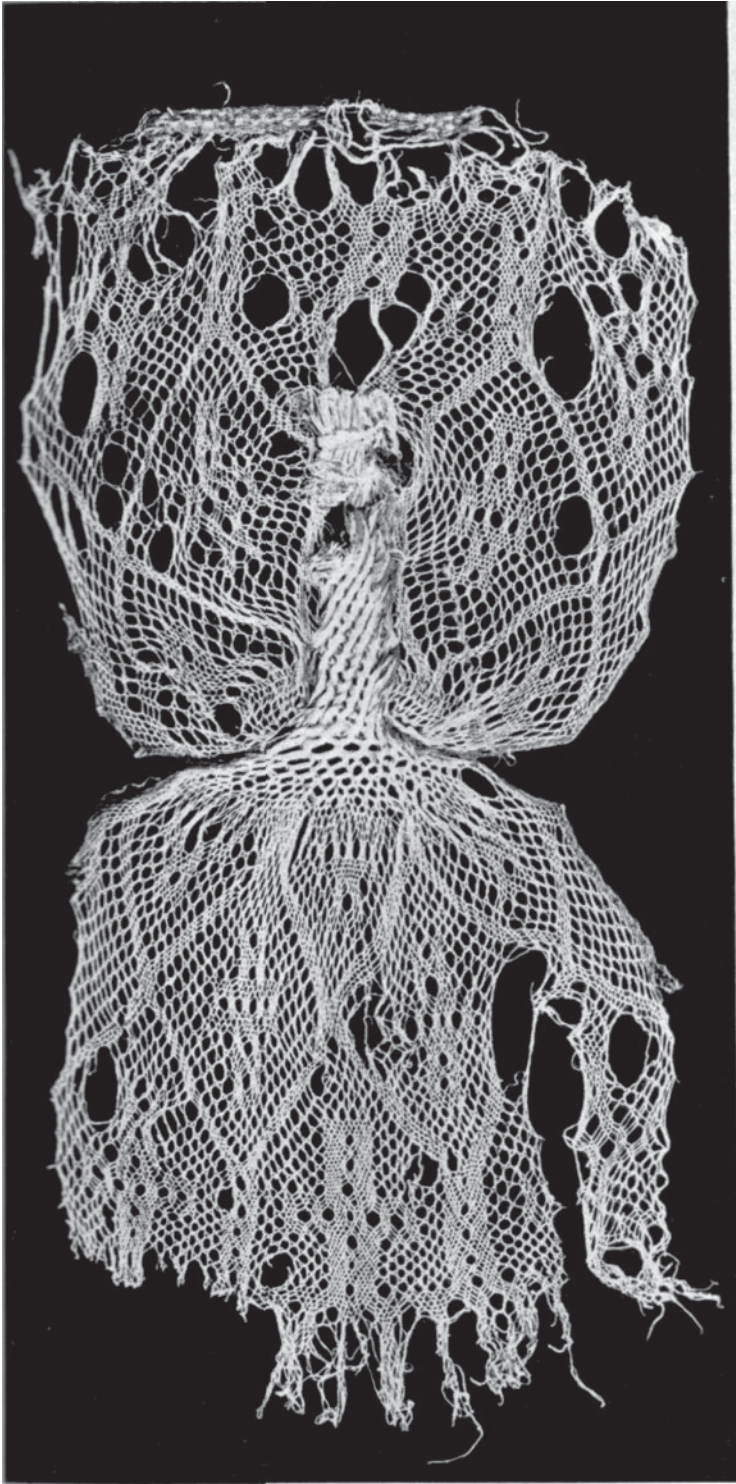


By Courtesy

The Needlework Development Scheme, Glasgow

English. Crochet lace. Nineteenth century

ABOVE: Insertion MIDDLE AND LOWER PANELS: Edgings, showing the use of cotton padding for fillings



Crown Copyright

Victoria and Albert Museum

Egypto-Roman netting in linen and woollen threads. From tombs in Egypt

UPPER FRAGMENT found at Khnasya (Herakleopolis Magna) during the excavations of 1903-04. Length: 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

Greatest width: 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches

LOWER FRAGMENT from Akhmin (Panopolis), Upper Egypt. Length: 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Greatest width: 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

bed-curtains and coverlets, curtains and altar hangings. The practice probably spread to personal attire. The *Ballad of Hardyknute* refers to

An apron set with many a dice
Of needlework sae rare,
Wove by nae hand, as ye may guess
Save that of Fairly fair.

The working of these squares was the amusement of provincial ladies in the later Middle Ages. Their designs portrayed the apostles, angels and saints. The beasts of the Apocalypse, the armorial shields of noble families, monograms, coronets, fleurs-de-lis and *sacrés cœurs* were other patterns created. Cut-work palls were appurtenances of the medieval church; the designs on these included cross bones, death's head, and tears with the sacramental cup.

Needlepoint Lace

Needlepoint lace evolved naturally as a development of open-work embroidery. The foundation of this needlework was a fine linen fabric. When counted threads had been removed and spaces made in the fabric in accordance with a design, the pattern was worked by means of buttonhole stitch or some other close-wrapping stitch. The technique was known in Britain as needlepoint, in France as *point à l'aiguille* and in Italy as *punto in aco*.

PARCHMENT PATTERN As the lace-workers gained in proficiency, the linen foundation was abandoned. Where it did exist, it served merely to carry the design. A practice was soon established of drawing the design in ink upon yellow parchment. This was gummed on to the linen. A single thread was laid on the design and sewn down very closely and carefully to maintain the details and intricacies of the pattern. This process was known as cording. Into this foundation cord, the whole fabric of the cord was worked. When the pattern was completed, the yellow parchment was removed from the linen by means of some sharp instrument and the fastening threads were cut. In this way the lace was set free. In making needlepoint lace, many workers took a technical pride in accomplishing the work with a single needle and thread.

RELIEF INTRODUCED White thread was almost invariably used; coloured, gold and silver threads were used rarely. Gradations of relief were introduced by the needle in elaborate designs. This relief work is seen clearly in exquisite work such as *Gros Point de Venise*. The lace-workers raised the outlines by laying down threads to serve as padding and then working over them. The more expert of the workers were not content until they had emphasized the outlines in double and triple relief. The needle was called on to form varied and ingenious stitches as fillings and as brides or loops linking units of a pattern.

Point laces were very fine and especially so when the brides were formed into part of the pattern. Light meshwork ground supplanted the heavier buttonholing in lace such as

the Venetian *Point à Réseau*. France specialized in needlepoint with a *réseau* comprised of hexagonal-shaped brides.

It would be extremely difficult to decide which country achieved the highest standard of excellence in needlepoint lace. Many of the European countries would claim precedence and substantiate their claim by producing wonderful specimens created in the past. Yet most of them would agree in acknowledging the excellence of the needlepoint lace made in Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. From the workmanship and the artistic designs of Italian specimens many neighbouring countries drew their real inspiration.

SUPERIORITY OF NEEDLEPOINT Needlepoint was granted a universal prestige above other forms of laces. It was the recognized fabric for state occasions and its higher value was established. Charles Blanc compared the relative merits of needlepoint and bobbin-made lace.

‘The dominant character of pillow-made lace’, he said, ‘is the soft blending of its forms : the needle is to the bobbin what the pencil point is to the stump. The pattern – of which the definition becomes softened when wrought in pillow lace – is depicted with crispness by the needle.’

Crochet

Crochet was known and practised universally in Europe from the sixteenth century onward. The word is derived from the French *crochet* or *croc*, a hook, and the Danish *Krookse* and refers to the hooked tool used.

Crochet lace was made by looping a thread of cotton or silk with this hooked needle to form a design. The worker started with no foundation. The work was done wholly by hand. The thread was looped, pulled through a loop and knotted. Elaborate patterns were made in this way ; many of these owed their inspiration to the patterns made in needlepoint and bobbin lace. Some designs had a padded effect achieved through the introduction of a cotton filling which was covered with crochet stitchery.

Crochet lace had the quality of lasting beauty. Unlike many forms of handwork which were exquisite when new but which wore out easily, filet crochet often outlasted the material to which it was applied. The actual technique in crochet work was fairly simple but it required a fair amount of practice before perfection was attained.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries much crochet work was made in nunneries. Lace-work generally was often called nuns’ work.

Some of the finest crochet work was called Irish point and much work of fine quality was made in County Monaghan and other centres in Ireland. To meet the demands of crochet workers, many fine cottons were manufactured. Crochet lace enjoyed a great vogue in the Victorian and Edwardian eras when it became fashionable as fancy-work for the leisured classes. Fine designs demanding exacting and intricate workmanship were made and called Irish Point. Other varieties included *Point de Tricot*, Honiton crochet and Raised Rose crochet.

Bobbin Lace

Bobbin lace was made with the aid of pins and pillow; hence the name pillow lace. It was sometimes called bone lace because the bones of fishes and of animals were used both for pins and bobbins.

Before pegs and bobbins were used for making lace, the lace-worker manipulated the thread on her fingers. Sometimes she had to call in the assistance of three or four others in order to have a sufficient number of pegs to complete her work. A Harleian MS. dating from the time of Henry IV of England (1421-1471) shows that small instruments were also employed for making 'Lace Bascon'.

It is a matter of dispute as to whether bobbin lace is older than needlepoint. Many authorities believe that their growth was contemporaneous. Italy and Flanders have each claimed priority in the creation of bobbin lace.

AN OLD LEGEND A pretty legend of Venice tells how a young girl first made bobbin lace in imitation of the pretty coralline known colloquially as mermaid's lace, a gift bestowed on her by her fisherman lover.

SUPERIORITY OF FLEMISH BOBBIN LACES There is no clear evidence as to where bobbin lace originated but Flanders soon established a high reputation for bobbin-work. Seguin wrote: 'As soon as Belgium acquired the art of pillow-making, she unremittingly applied herself to it, and in a short time converted it into a widespread industry, possessing well-merited reputation on account of the delicacy and beauty of its productions. All countries turned to her for them, and she became, as it were, the classic country of pillow lace. Credit for the invention of the special process was readily given to her and no one has since taken the trouble to closely examine her title to it.'

PATTERN BOOKS Bobbin lace was at its best towards the middle of the seventeenth century, a time when needlepoint lace also reached its highest standard of excellence. In the early part of the century Vinciolo and Parrasoli gave special attention to bobbin laces in their pattern books. They gave examples of *merletti a Piombini*, that is, lead bobbin laces, and stated under their designs the number of bobbins required. Patterns of bobbin laces had, however, appeared as early as 1596. Two patterns of bobbin lace suitable for ornamenting household linen appeared in Giacomo Franco's *Nuovo Inventione*.

The quality of bobbin lace improved with the advance of the lace-worker in the degree of precision with which the bobbins were thrown and twisted. The plaiting and twisting of the threads was a characteristic of bobbin lace and was a distinguishing feature.

During the seventeenth century, the bobbin workers invariably turned to the needlepoint laces of the period for their patterns. *Gros Point de Venise* was copied on an extensive scale.

FINE SPECIMENS OF BOBBIN LACE Among the more celebrated of bobbin laces was that made at Mechlin. In accordance with a custom prevalent at the time, the Mechlin

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lace-workers sent around to neighbouring countries pedlars equipped with lace boxes. One lace edging was known as *Trolle Kant*; it was in the nature of a sampler showing the various patterns which the Mechlin workers were prepared to create. This lace sampler proved to be one of the most popular of edgings. The bobbin lace-workers of Brussels also achieved renown. They specialized in fine work. The mesh of their *réseau* was hexagonal in shape. In Britain the bobbin laces of Buckinghamshire became celebrated in the eighteenth century.

Bobbin lace was known in France as *dentelle à fuseau* and in Italy as *merli a piombini*; these terms came into international use among lace-workers. Flemish lace-workers, in particular, favoured this method of lace-making; their term for it was *spelle werke*.

USE OF THE TERM 'POINT' It is well to safeguard against the confusion sometimes wrought in the study of lace owing to the prefix *point* made with reference to certain pillow laces; for instance, *Point de Malines* and *Point de Valenciennes*. These are not needlepoint laces; they are bobbin-made. Further confusion has occurred at times through the use of the term *point* with reference to a particular stitch in lace-making as in *Point de Paris* and *Point de Neige*.

TECHNIQUE EMPLOYED As with needlepoint lace, the pattern for bobbin lace was drawn on parchment or 'roller'. Ample supplies of thread were wound round the bobbins attached to the pillow. The technique of working was elaborate, involving the passing and plaiting of threads. The work demanded much skill, though the ease and dexterity with which the pillow lace-workers manipulated the pins and bobbins seemed to belie the statement. Each bobbin was worked independently and the thread was passed around the pins stuck in the pillow. Several lace-workers making patterns independently made them in uniformity. The various parts were easily united to make up a wide portion of lace.

Pillows and their Accessories

TYPES OF CUSHIONS AND THEIR SEVERAL USES Pillows were made in great variety. Some were cylindrical, others had flat bases. Some were pyramid-shaped and some were square. Many lace-workers used small flat cushions on which they made single ornaments and flowers for appliqué lace. Portuguese lace-workers used cushions on basket stands which they held between their feet. In Spain long cushions were used. Makers of silk laces in Bayeux and Northern France used big cushions capable of taking as many as six hundred bobbins.

Each type of cushion had its special uses. A collar or head-dress or some article requiring repeats of a design was best worked on a rotating cylinder. The use of a flat cushion facilitated the working of filings and elaborate stitching for the lace-worker was able to spread out the threads in all directions. A large piece of lace was not suitable for flat cushion work for when one section was finished the worker was obliged to take out all the pins before commencing on a further section.

Since the accessories used in the making of pillow lace attract the collector almost as strongly as do actual specimens of old lace, some reference to the charming bobbins and jingles used in the making of bobbin laces is justified.

BOBBIN The bobbins used were small elongated spindles. They were reels holding the thread. They were bulbous at one end for ease of manipulation. Their size varied according to the thickness of the thread used. Bobbins used for guipure and torchon laces were large because of the heavy thread used. Fine fabrics like Mechlin and Valenciennes laces called for superfine thread and light, thin bobbins. Local characteristics crept into the bobbins. Those used in Normandy were of white wood; they were very straight, without a neck and bore a shield of horn called a *noquette* to ensure that the thread was kept clean. The lace-makers of Auvergne also fitted this device on their bobbins. They favoured bone bobbins of many sizes with long, thick-set necks. Flemish workers used bobbins of wood, dark and highly polished. These were turned attractively and were usually slender in shape. Danish bobbins were also prettily turned and were fitted with rings of gaily-coloured beads. Portuguese bobbins were of an attractive shape and were mellow with time and use.

The old lace bobbins were seldom bought in the shops. Like the actual art of making pillow lace, they were handed down as heirlooms in families.

Some of the most attractive bobbins of Britain date from the Queen Anne period. There are others, too, of earlier date. Many of the bobbins used were of boxwood. They were small and light for they were used to make exquisite lace of gossamer thread. When coarser thread was used in lace-making, bead spangles were fastened to the edge of the bobbins. The main purpose of these beads was to weight the bobbin so as to keep it in place on the pillow; but they served for ornament also.

In order to preserve the thread from injury, the bobbins were made from closely-grained wood. Dark bobbins were made from ebony, plum and damson; light bobbins were made from apple, oak, maple and spindle-wood. When the bobbins were fashioned in bone, they were dyed in many colours and were weighted with beads, pewter, copper and brass.

SPECIAL TYPES OF BOBBINS One of the oldest forms was that known as the 'bitted bobbin'. This had an elegant shape and was usually made of dark wood. A pattern was inserted in light wood. The 'tinsey bobbin' was of wood or bone; it received this name because small pieces of tin were let into the main body to form a design. Most of the patterns were very pretty and many were curious. The 'hip-bobbin' received its name from its elegant shape and slim waist. The 'wire bobbin' had fine wire twisted around the wood. Metal rings were attached to some bobbins and served to hold the thread or gimp. Sometimes bobbins were made in three sections, two being of wood and one of bone, each fitting closely into the other.

INSCRIPTIONS Of peculiar interest were the names and mottoes carved on bobbins. Sometimes the initials of a husband and wife were interwoven to form a puzzle on the face of a bobbin. Many a 'John', 'Thomas', 'William', 'Owen' and 'Giles' created, through

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succeeding generations, yards and yards of fine lace. Women's names were often inscribed and an assembly of bobbins often formed a calendar of the lace-worker's life, each bobbin commemorating some special event. The motto bobbin was ubiquitous: 'Let no false lover gaine my heart'; 'To me, my deare, you may come near.' Bobbins commemorated events of personal importance: 'George Read, died February 19 1832 aged 6 months.' Sometimes the collector of today comes across a bobbin bearing some historical reference – to the death of Queen Adelaide, a patroness of lace-making, or to the death of Nelson, a national hero.

BOBBIN SPANGLES A complete set of spangles attached to a bobbin consisted of nine beads. The two 'top beads' were usually a pair, set one on each side; the six beads which followed, divided into three each side, were called 'square cuts'. The centre beads were red and were set among white beads. The 'bottom bead' was the most important and was, in turn, weighted with a thimble, a baby's tooth or some foreign gewgaw.

The old beads forming the spangles retained their charm through many years. Some beads were clear; some were mottled. Some were of glass; others were of china. The fragrance of romance still clings to many a 'bottom bead', weighted with keys and seals, with rings and with tassels from a soldier's uniform or with the 'luckiest' of keepsakes, the bottom button from a sweetheart's waistcoat.

BOBBIN PINS The pins used in the making of pillow lace were often curious. Originally they were of bone, usually fish bones; later they were of thorns or wood and then of brass with removable caps. These brass pins were pushed half their length into the pillow and beads of various colours were put on. The colours of the beads facilitated the working of the design. Burrs from the hedgerows were the traditional pin caps in some districts. They were gathered and placed in the sun to dry; they were then put into a brass thimble with vinegar and salt. Alternatively, they were smoked in damp hay placed in the cottage chimney. When placed on the pins, the burrs dried; they shrank into shape and tightened.

Machine-made Lace

Machine-made lace is, more accurately speaking, machine-made net. The advent of this type ousted to a considerable degree hand-made lace, for it was cheap and plentiful and within easy reach of all classes of society.

In the early stages of development, machine-made lace was created on looms which were operated by hand; later, looms were operated by power.

ENGLISH ENTERPRISE IN MACHINE-MADE FABRICS Britain claimed a leading part in the development of machine-made lace and France followed her closely.

Cycles of development are apparent in the development of machine processes. It was in the year 1798 that net was first made by machinery. The year 1809 marked a distinct advance; machine bobbin net was invented. In 1837, what was known as the Jacquard system, was applied to the bobbin-net machine.

One of the prime inventors of a machine capable of making an open-work mesh was a man named Hammond, a stocking framework knitter of Nottingham. The loop net machines were in essence a development of the stocking machine. The principles underlying the working involved the removal of prescribed loops from one set of needles to an adjoining set and the creation of small holes in the fabric. Hammond's machine (1768) and kindred machines produced a kind of knitted lace comprised of running loops and stitches, resembling closely that which was to be known later as 'Brussels ground'.

In 1777, two Nottingham men introduced what was called 'the pin'. This point net machine was so called because of the sharp points or 'pin' fitted into it. Improvements in point net followed rapidly and several varieties such as 'barley-corn', 'square' and 'spider net' were available. An open stitch, known as 'Derby rib' was also much in demand. This had been invented for a stocking machine by Jedediah Strutt as early as 1758.

Despite all the improvements and new stitches, net was as yet only a kind of knitting. The process involved was that of passing a single thread from one part of the frame to another. Any break in the thread meant an unravelling of the work. As a precaution against such breakages, the thread was stiffened with gum; this introduced stiffness and solidity into the net. When the warp or chain machine was invented breakages were less frequent. In this machine the processes employed by the knitter and the weaver were united. Many people claimed a share in its invention, and it is difficult to legislate among the claimants.

HEATHCOAT'S INVENTION Much patience and ingenuity were spent to improve Hammond's invention in order to create a ground of pillow lace. John Heathcoat, of Leicestershire, succeeded in creating a skilfully contrived bobbin-net machine. He called it 'Old Loughborough'. The term 'bobbin-net' was used because the threads were wound round bobbins. At first, net a little more than an inch wide was made. Later this was advanced to a yard and then to three yards.

The social historian finds romance and drama revolving around Heathcoat's bobbin-net machines. In that wave of vandalism known as the Luddite Riots (1811), twenty-seven

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of Heathcoat's machines were destroyed. The year 1823 witnessed what was termed the 'bobbin net fever', for Heathcoat's patent expired in that year and many people, drawn from all sections of society, were moved by a desire to have the legal use of net machines in the hope of getting rich quickly. Vast quantities of bobbin net were made; consequently, prices fell. Nottingham remained, however, the main centre of supply and the net created there took precedence over the finely-finished, machine-made products of France and the Netherlands.

France took a practical and early interest in the manufacture of machine-made lace since 1778, when Caillon succeeded in manufacturing a kind of *tricot dentelle*. True to tradition, royal patronage came to the assistance of industry and art in France. The Duc de Liancourt was sent by Louis XIV to England to observe the latest improvements made in stocking and net machinery. Any progress on the part of France was, however, negated by the breakdown of commercial intercourse between England and France during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods.

SMUGGLING OF NET AND OF MACHINERY Napoleon prohibited the buying of English-made nets, but so strong was the desire for it that bales of Nottingham net were smuggled into France. Knowledge of this led to very deliberate efforts to obtain bobbin-net machines from England. The English Government retaliated by making stringent laws against the export of English machinery. Strict vigilance was kept at the Channel ports and on the Nottingham factories. Nevertheless bobbin-net machines of the English type came into use in France. According to tradition, a man named Cutts, a workman who had been employed by Heathcoat, took a machine to Valenciennes in 1815. He set up a similar machine at Douai in 1816. Soon bobbin net was being manufactured in France on a spectacular scale. Calais became a thriving centre for machine-made lace. In 1816, a man named James Clark introduced an English machine into the town, having smuggled it across the Channel with the aid of French sailors. French lace-workers were soon improving the machine-made net by embroidering it by hand.

BELGIAN PRE-EMINENCE IN MACHINE LACE Belgium had long coveted the use of bobbin-net machines. By 1834 she had succeeded in obtaining possession of eight machines which were set up at Brussels. These manufactured double and twisted net. On these nets pillow-made flowers and ornamentations were sewn. The net was of very fine ground and was soon to achieve international renown as 'Brussels net'. Ghent and Alost, St Fosse and Termonde were other thriving centres and Belgium soon achieved pre-eminence for machine-made lace and surpassed both England and France in the production of it.

TECHNIQUE OF DECORATING BOBBIN NET A distinction gradually arose between workers in machine bobbin net and machine-made lace. England clung tenaciously to her claim to the invention of bobbin net. France applied the Jacquard system to the net frame and consequently claimed the invention of machine lace.

Flounces and shawls of the latter half of the nineteenth century were in 'run lace'. The pattern which was to be run was printed by means of an engraved block and the ground was stretched on a frame. The lace-worker was known as the 'lace-runner'. She supported the net with her left hand and followed the lines of the pattern with her right. The filling-in of flowers and leaves was known as 'open-working' or 'fining'.

Bobbin net had many of the characteristics of bobbin lace. In 1820 a Nottingham man named Symes invented a pattern called 'Grecian net'. This was popular until it was supplanted by the spot pattern or '*point d'esprit*'. Various fancy nets such as buttonhole and tatting followed in rapid succession.

French laces were complex in pattern and of fine texture. The Calais lace-workers emulated those of Valenciennes. They manufactured a square-grounded mesh. Popular, too, were the *dentelles de laine* of Le Puy, the black and white blonde laces of Calais and the fine nets of complex character made there.

STITCHERY OF APPLIQUÉ LACE Sewing and stitching machines were improved upon and these were used for the enhancement of machine-made lace. Among the many and varied stitches made by these early machines were the 'overlock' and 'Bonnaz' and those used for what was known as 'Cornelly embroidery'. Decorative stitches were applied to a form of cut-work by means of which an opaque fabric was placed over net. The nature of the foundation fabric determined the form and treatment of the design. Stitchery was applied to the outlines only of the pattern in some laces; elsewhere, stitchery was used as a filling. When the design had been treated, all superfluous material was removed so that the net foundation was fully revealed.

ARTISTIC VALUE OF HAND-MADE LACES Old hand-made laces were copied by machine and many of the replicas were admirable. Profusion of machine-made lace and bobbin net resulted in increasing the value of hand-made specimens and, consequent on this, collectors have sought out yet more eagerly the exquisite laces of the past. M. Didron, in his *Report on the Decorative Arts at the Universal Exhibition of 1878*, referred to the cheap machine-made substitutes of hand-made lace and said: 'Cheapness is never commendable in respect of things which are not absolute necessities; it lowers artistic standard. Lace must inevitably lose the best features of its delight for us, on the day that it ceases to be precious and relatively rare.'

RUSKIN ON HAND-MADE LACE Ruskin, that veteran champion of aesthetic worth, has written: 'There is still some distinction between machine-made and hand-made lace. I will suppose that distinction so far done away with that, a pattern once invented, you can spin lace as you now do thread.'

'Everybody then might wear not only lace collars but lace gowns. Do you think that when everybody can wear them, everybody would be proud of wearing them?

'A spider may perhaps be rationally proud of his own cobweb, even though all the fields in the morning are covered with the like, for he made it himself; but suppose a

machine spun it for him. Suppose all the gossamer were Nottingham made. If you think of it, you will find the whole value of lace as a possession depends on the fact of its having BEAUTY which has been the reward of industry and attention.

‘That the thing itself is a price – a thing everybody cannot have; that it proves by the look of it, the ability of the maker; that it proves by the rarity of it, the dignity of its wearer – either that she must have been so industrious as to save money which can buy, say, a piece of jewellery, of gold tissue, or of fine lace – or else that she is a noble person to whom her neighbours concede as an honour the privilege of wearing finer dress than they.

‘If they all choose to have lace too – if it ceases to be a price, it becomes, does it not, only a cobweb. The real good of a piece of lace then, you will find, is that it should show first, that the designer of it had a pretty fancy; next that the maker of it had fine fingers; lastly that the wearer of it had worthiness or dignity enough to obtain what is difficult to obtain and common sense enough not to wear it on all occasions.’

The Identification of Lace

The identification and exact classification of lace is often a difficult task. Throughout the centuries, there was a ready interchange in the technique and styles favoured by the lace-makers of different countries. Photographs of lace serve to reveal interesting features but the study of actual specimens with the aid of a magnifying glass brings a richer and truer reward.

TEXTURE OF FABRIC The amateur begins by learning to distinguish broadly between the more general types of lace. Certain well-defined characteristics are easily assimilated. The groundwork or *réseau* of pillow-made lace is made of threads which have been twisted or plaited. The *réseau* of needlepoint lace is made of buttonhole stitching. Machine-made net on which lace embroideries have been applied are easy to distinguish. The *réseau* is hard and stiff to the touch, it refuses to roll up under pressure from the fingers in the silky-supple response of hand-made lace. The meticulous accuracy of the mesh reflects machine process. The mesh of hand-made lace, even in the finest specimens, varies considerably.

MIXED LACES When classifying lace, recognition must be made of the existence of *mixed* laces. These seem to baffle too minute a classification. The *réseau* is made on the pillow and the pattern or *toile* with the needle, or the alternative order may obtain.

THREADS OF DIFFERENT VARIETIES The threads of needlepoint lace do not unravel easily for the knots impede action. The threads of bobbin-made lace can be unravelled but the process is tedious because of the plaiting. Machine-made lace will, however, unravel easily and with a continuous flow. The number of threads in the unravelled portion serve as a distinguishing clue. In needlepoint there is a single thread only; in bobbin lace there are several.

The *date* of manufacture is an important factor. The unravelling of threads will provide useful information. If a thread of about twenty inches is unravelled, it can be examined for joins. If the thread reveals no joinings, it is probable that the work dates from the early nineteenth century onward. Thread prepared by machine has few joins. Hand-prepared thread had, of necessity, many joinings occasioned by the limitations of the spinner using her distaff.

PATTERNS A CLUE TO DATE OF MANUFACTURE *Design* is another important factor in tracing the date of a specimen. Geometrical designs were usual in the sixteenth century. The sampler work of the period proved less of a source of information than an end in itself. The angularity of the designs is noticeable in especial in the working of petals, leaves and other motifs demanding a more natural and rounded treatment.

The patterns of the seventeenth century were more ambitious. Backgrounds were dispensed with. Lace-workers concentrated on the working of scroll patterns which were linked together and supported by tie-bars, known technically as brides or bridges. These tie-bars are particularly fine in needlepoint lace, being made of one or two threads, button-holed over closely. These brides are in themselves a clue to the date of a specimen. They first appeared in the fifteenth century, at first in a plain form and later ornamented with a knot or dot. The tie-bars of the sixteenth century had a single or double loop. Those of the seventeenth century bore a star motif.

The bar joinings of fifteenth-century lace-work were in a simple V-shape. In the succeeding centuries, it was usual to make a looped bar to intersect the V. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the barettes were unsymmetrical and uneven.

The seventeenth-century lace-workers introduced into the main design picots or *fleurs volantes*. These were diamond shaped and worked round a raised cordonnet.

A certain uniformity characterized eighteenth-century designs. There was a pronounced tendency to balance all details symmetrically. Lace designs imitated very closely those created on silk and linen fabrics. Stylistic and naturalistic patterns strove together in close rivalry amid an array of festoons, garlands and bouquets.

When machine-made lace appeared, designers gave greater attention to the mesh background. It was given greater prominence and became more elaborate. Over-elaboration of design set in and the later years of the nineteenth century witnessed a continuous decadence. The processed fabric proved to be an unsuitable medium for the ultra-naturalistic patterns created upon it.

The edging or *couronne* of a lace may indicate its age. Angular points edged the laces of the Middle Ages. A softer note was introduced by the rounded scallops of the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century, the scallop was ornamented with a dot. In the following century it was usual to alternate a large scallop with a small one and ornament each with a small dot in the centre.

USE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF 'ENGRÉLURES' *Engrélures*, footings or headings, also varied with the centuries. These were narrow laces which were attached to the upper edge of

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a flounce or of a border of lace. Their purpose was to preserve the actual flounce from injury when it was sewn to the main foundation of a garment. The *engrêlure* in itself is unsafe evidence of date of manufacture for, being subject to hard wear, it was sometimes renewed, and the renewed portion was of a later date than the main flounce. Flax thread was used for making old hand-made *engrêlures*, but those made by machine were of cotton thread. The rules regulating tie-bars applied to footings as well as to the main fabric. The earliest footings were simply a series of crossed bars. These were ornamented with knots and picots as the lace-workers grew more expert.

It is sometimes difficult to decide on the country of origin. The lace-workers migrated to different countries taking with them their patterns and special methods. Innovations crept in and these were deliberately fostered when it was realized that the orientation was establishing a new vogue.

UNITS OF DESIGN The actual units of lace patterns are an indication of the time of working. Lace patterns of the medieval period are true to type, comprising the representation of sacred animals, symbolic groups, trees, figures and monsters. All lines are hard and stiff; rounded effects are absent. A unit was repeated again and again. At first, lace was joined by straight lines only and uniform repetition was necessary. The lace-workers of the sixteenth century discovered another method of joining and this gave scope for the introduction of rounded motifs as well as angular ones.

Geometrical patterns comprised of squares, circles, triangles, were used freely until the middle of the seventeenth century. Gradually, the flowing lines of the Renaissance designs were asserting themselves; these included scroll patterns, wreaths, festoons and garlands. These were unified into compact designs which were linked together with brides or bridges.

In the eighteenth century, rococo styles grew popular. The ungraceful patterns, fantastic attributes, stiff forms and unwieldy bouquets were accepted. A marked decadence in design set in.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century there grew up an inclination to dispense with formal designs. The Dotted style was accepted. Lace specimens of this period are powdered with dots and sprigs, with tears, rosettes and insects.

THE LACES OF ITALY

THE decrees of fashion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries resulted in the extensive use of lace. The demand brought about an increase of interest among the lace-workers and a greater supply was ensured.

PROSPERITY OF ITALIAN CITIES The Renaissance era witnessed a great vogue for Italian laces; money poured in from all European countries into the treasure chests of Venice, Milan, Genoa, Florence and other cities, making the citizens rich and prosperous. One of the prime ambassadors of Italian lace-craft was the handsome Medici collar, so named because the Italian-born French Queen, Catherine de Medici favoured it. Venetian points of exquisite workmanship formed its main trimming and gros point was used when heavy collars were required.

The beauty of Italian lace-work was established at an early period. Many competent judges regarded Italian work as unrivalled. Fine needlepoint lace was being made in the fifteenth century. During the sixteenth century it was one of the main occupations of the convents. One of the oldest paintings depicting the use of lace is a portrait of a lady by Carpaccio and dated 1523. Edgings of lace trim the cuffs of the lady's dress. The design of the lace was probably common at the time and it was to find a place in the pattern book of Vecellio when this was published some eighty years later.

CHURCH LACE Much lace was required for ecclesiastical purposes and the splendour of the Roman Catholic Church inspired the lace-worker. Devoted women spent many years making laces to adorn the vestments of the priests, the cope, the surplice, the tunic, the veil, the stole, the chasuble, the dalmatic, the amice, the alb, the girdle and cassock. Guipure laces were made for altar hangings and for veils for the Host. Laces were made to adorn the many statues within the churches.

In the early stages of the Renaissance, the term 'lace' had a wide connotation for it included *passement* and *dentelle*. At a period when elaborate velvet costumes were favoured by men and women alike, *passement* was used lavishly as a trimming. *Dentelle* referred to early needlepoint and bobbin lace. *Passement* was made of a broad flat braid or gimp and gold, silver or metallic thread was used in the making of it.

WIDE CONNOTATION OF THE TERM 'LACE' The elaborate dress of the sixteenth century occasioned the prosperity of the lace-maker's art. Venice appears to have been dubious of the true worth of its success at the commencement of the lace industry. The officers of the Republic issued several ordinances prohibiting under pain of heavy fines the

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wearing of *punto in aria* in towns. A sumptuary law of 1514 limited the use of lace in 'ladies' cloaks, laces, gloves embroidered with gold and silk embroideries generally, fans, gondolas, sedan chairs'.

EXTRAVAGANT USE OF LACE The demand for lace continued, however, and so successful did the lace-makers of Italy become that, at an early stage in the history of the lace industry, they were exporting large quantities of their work to many of the European countries and in particular to the royal court of France. The demand for needlepoint increased steadily so that in the reign of Louis XIII courtiers were wearing it to an extravagant degree. Rank and wealth were signalled by the amount of lace used on collars, cuffs, knee garters, the tops of gloves and of boots and on the silken scarves worn diagonally across the body.

RETICELLA WORK The high standard which the Italian workers attained did not confuse them concerning the necessity both to maintain and better their achievements. In reticella work, only the very finest cloths were used and accuracy of workmanship was sought meticulously. No effort was spared in the counting of threads and in their grouping. In the cloisters of the convents, in the halls of the nobility, in the lace schools of the proletariat, the finest craftsmanship obtained.

GEOMETRIC PATTERNS The earliest Venetian reticella work shows the popularity of geometrical patterns. At first this work had been called Gothic Point or Greek Lace, but gradually the term reticella was established. By tradition, the Italian needle-workers were accustomed to coloured embroidery. When the lace-workers wearied of the geometric patterns, they reverted to the past to seek inspiration for new designs. The beautiful and intricate scrolls and festoons which had decorated the missals and psalteries of the medieval church were developed to serve as designs for reticella work. Other designs incorporated those already well established in the Levant through the skilful hands of the Moorish and Eastern leather-workers and tapestry-workers.

A decided advance was soon made in technique also. The linen foundation depreciated in value; in so far as was possible, it was abandoned. Reticella work continued to increase in popularity. Sumptuary laws regulating the use of gold and silver thread gave it a further fillip. Interest became focused on the charm and beauty of white work.

PUNTO TAGLIATO A close rival in popularity was that form of needlework known in Italy as *punto tagliato* (punto=stitch; tag=cut). This, like early reticella, was worked on a linen foundation. Rectangular spaces were made in the linen by the withdrawal of warp and weft threads. These spaces were filled in with fine needlework. On this foundation of stitchery a design in the form of a scroll or garland of flowers was worked. The working of this superimposed design was termed *punto in aria*. This type of lace was faithfully recorded for future generations by the Venetian school of portrait painters.

PUNTO IN ARIA In 1542 a book of designs giving guidance and inspiration for *punto in aria* was published by a Venetian pattern maker, Mattheo Pagan. Pattern books for lace-making were not numerous. It was the practice to copy designs from samplers which were far less expensive than books. There were, however, several editions of pattern books. The South Kensington Museum possesses patterns by Vinciolo, Vicellio and Isabella Parasole.

Another type of Italian cut-work was that termed *intagliata*. Here also, the main principle was the removal of threads in a linen cloth and the filling in of the spaces created with geometric patterns, arabesques and fruits. The patterns in this variety of cut-work were much more ambitious than in other types. Workers of *intagliata* were happy only when all the spaces in the linen had been filled completely with conventional cut-work designs, with heraldic devices, and, later, with human and animal forms.

Technique was of a high standard and gradually the needle-workers began to regard the linen foundation of their work not as a framework but as a redundancy. After successful experimenting, the old system of using a linen cloth was abandoned. Instead, a cloth-backed parchment on which the design had been traced was used. A fine thread was couched closely along the outline of the design; the stitchery of the lace-work was then made on the *surface* of the parchment. The couched thread of the pattern served as a framework on which to hang the looped stitches of the actual lace. When the surplus material had been cut away, the beauty of the design was evident.

As lace-workers attained greater dexterity, they became more ambitious in their designs. Geometrical designs were now abandoned or were merely incorporated as accessories to the main design. Deep points and foliated scrolls were now favoured.

USE OF THE CORDONNET Contemporaneous with this advance in technique and design, there was an ever-increasing demand for fine and elaborate lace. This was required as a trimming for the rich fabrics, cloth, velvet, brocade and silk which were being used for costume. Largely in answer to this demand, *punto in aria* orientated in form and began to incorporate a well-defined *cordonnnet*. This was a raised cord which served to outline the design. There were alternative methods of working this *cordonnnet*. Some workers covered the cord with fine buttonhole stitching in gossamer thread before attaching it to the outline of the design; other workers preferred a method involving the covering of the cord with buttonhole stitch and applying it to the design, all in one process. An excellent use of *cordonnnet* was made in raised Venetian point. It introduced high relief into the pattern and it was usually edged with fine picots. The use of the *cordonnnet* was soon practised by most of the lace-workers of Europe for *Point de Venise* was for long the most popular of European laces.

PUNTO ROSELLINE In the eighteenth century there was a further development of Italian needlepoint lace. *Punto roselline* or rose point established for itself a European reputation. Fine workmanship and delicacy of design were its main characteristics. It received its name from the tiny roses or stars worked in every available space on the design. Such was the enthusiasm of the workers that they superimposed stars upon stars and created them on

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the brides as well as on the actual designs. This variety of lace was often referred to as *Point de Neige*, for the heavy showers of white roses or stars were reminiscent of a snowfall.

POINT DE VENISE À RÉSEAU Surpassing *Point de Venise* and *Point roselline* in fine workmanship was yet another variety of Italian needlepoint; this was known as *Point de Venise à réseau*. But few specimens have been preserved and these are sought after zealously by connoisseurs. A flat point was worked on a ground of needlepoint; characteristic of this ground was the working of the mesh to follow the lines and curves of the pattern instead of forming the threads to lie horizontally and vertically without cognizance of the lines of the design.

PEASANT LACE Many beautiful peasant laces were made in Italy. These bore traditional designs. *Punto avorio* made in the Valle Vogna of Northern Italy involved the uniting of bands of silk and of linen as well as actual lace-work.

DECLINE OF ITALIAN LACES The lace industry of Italy decayed when that of France grew prosperous. Colbert, the astute minister of Louis XIV, encouraged Italian lace-workers to settle in France in order to foster the lace industry of that country. The French soon proved themselves to be apt pupils. The large supplies of Italian lace were no longer imported, for the French were able to manufacture their own. Moreover, they were called on to supply other nations of Europe when they showed that they were capable of producing such beautiful laces as their renowned *Point de France*.

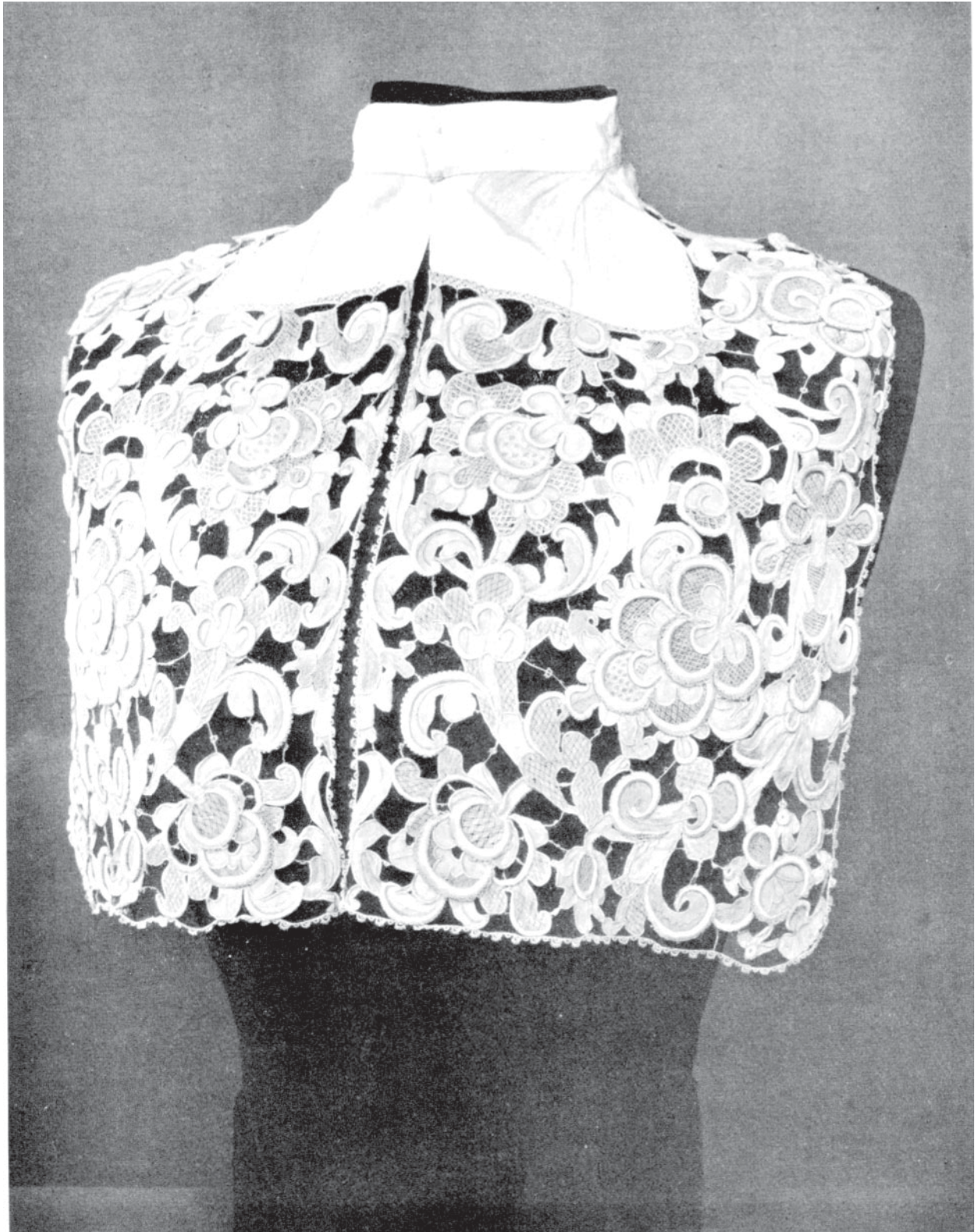
Italian Needlepoint Lace

Venetian Needlepoint

Venice stands out pre-eminently among all centres manufacturing needlepoint lace. She was primarily responsible for teaching the art of needlepoint to the other countries of Europe. One can only surmise at this juncture as to where she learnt the art of needlepoint. There is much evidence to support the theory that she learnt many of the rudiments from the Saracens who had settled in Italy.

VENICE THE CENTRE OF FASHION IN THE MIDDLE AGES Throughout the Middle Ages, Venice was not only a focal point of trade; she was also the centre of fashion for all the courts of Europe. Not only did she supply silks and satins and brocades and laces together with many other articles of adornment and luxury, but she also decreed their mode of use. Not until the late Middle Ages did she give way to Paris as a centre of fashion.

WIDE USE OF VENICE LACE The medieval wardrobe accounts of England signify the wide use of lace from Venice. 'Fringe of Venice and mantle laces of white silk and Venice



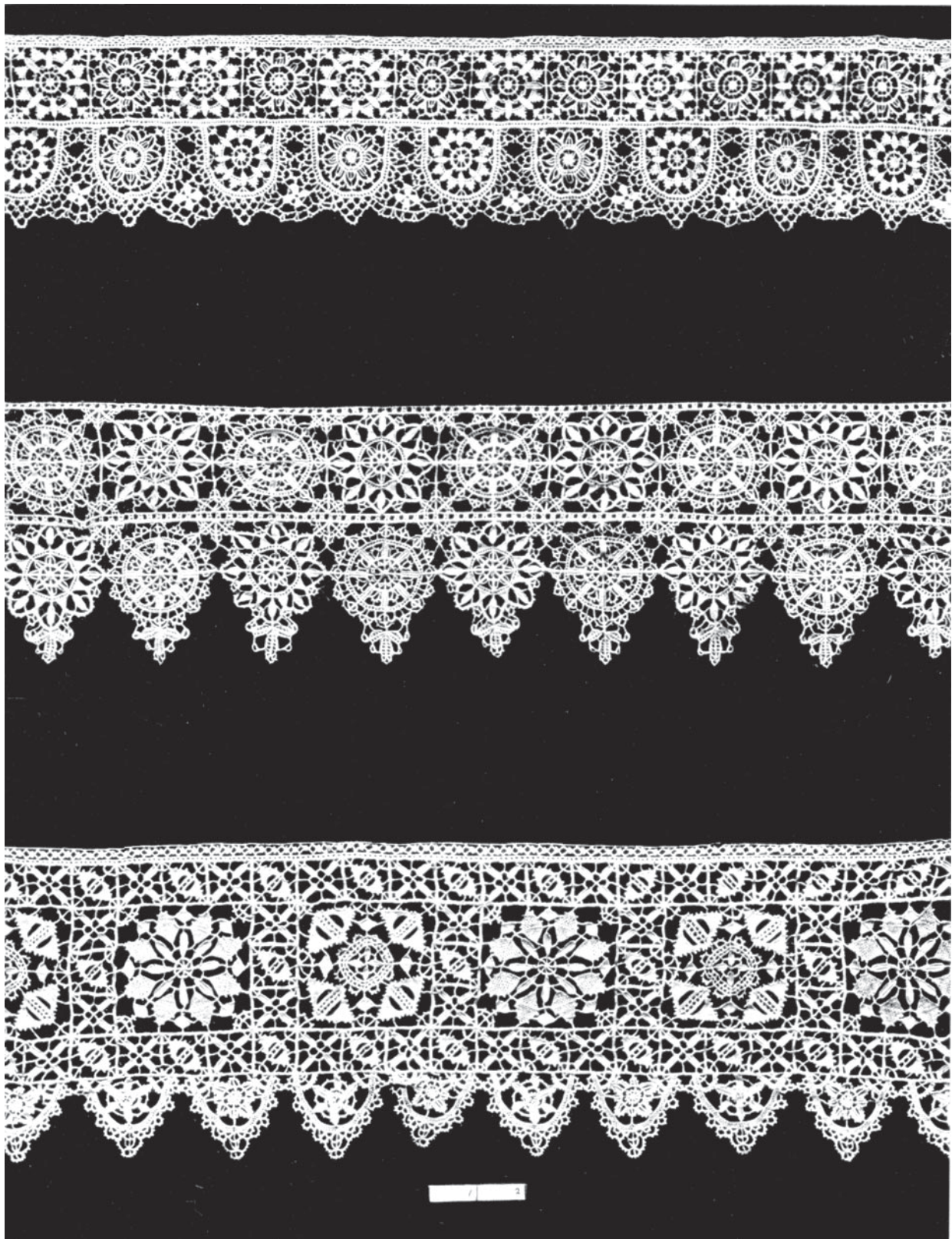
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Victoria and Albert Museum

Collar of needlepoint lace

Venice, Gros Point de Venise, Seventeenth century

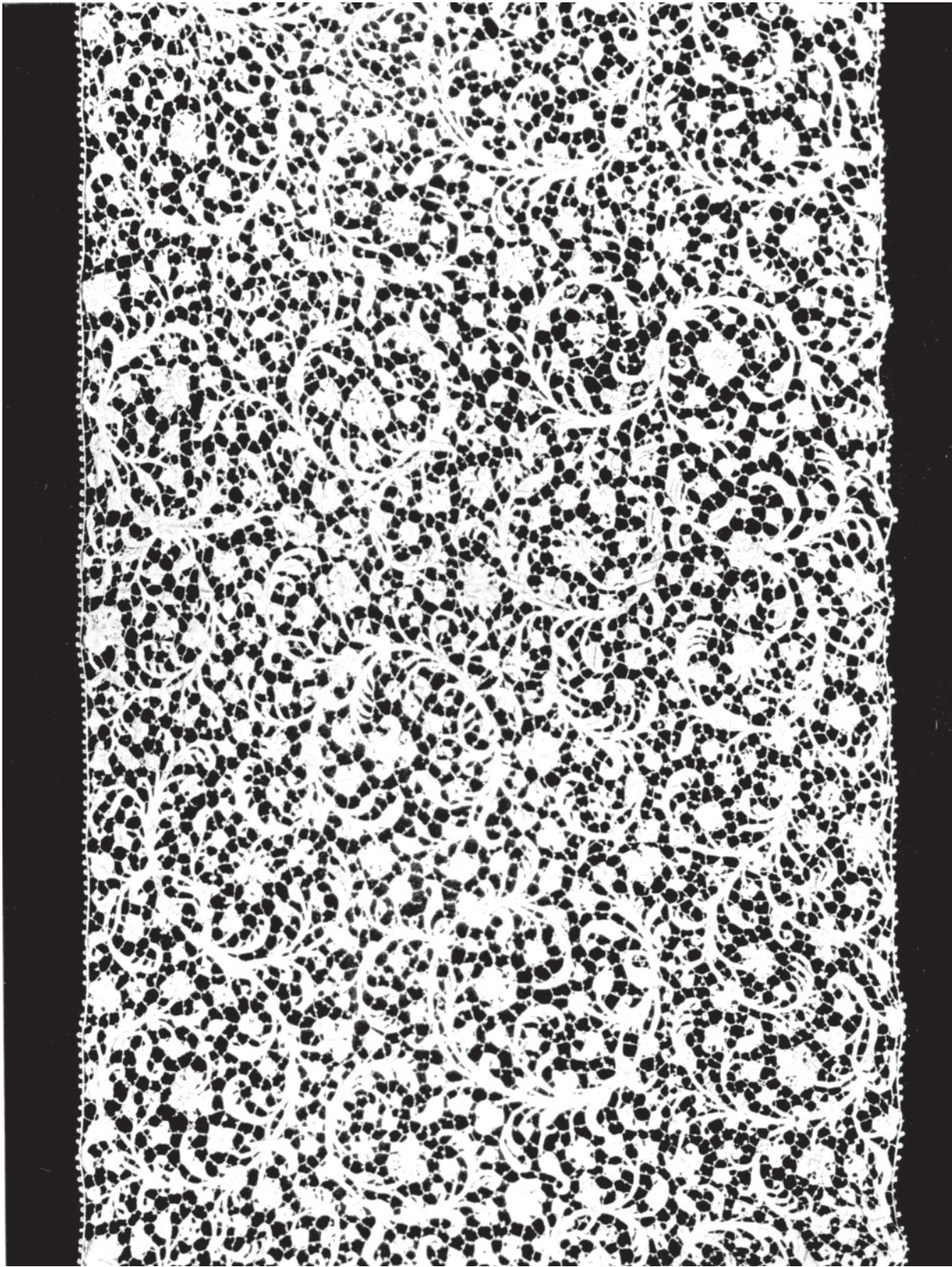
High relief is introduced to emphasize details on heavy needlepoint lace



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Italy. Three borders of reticella lace. Late sixteenth century



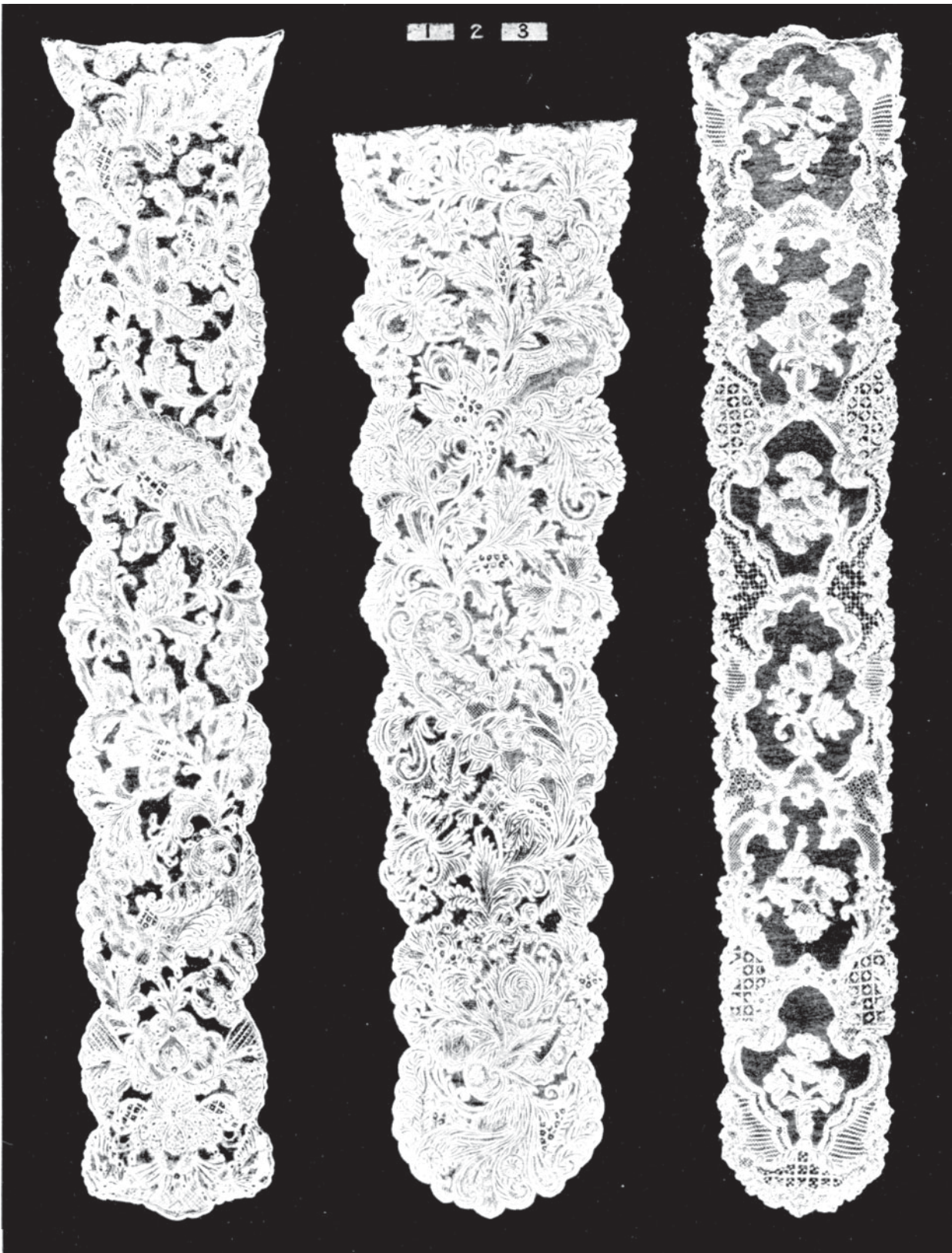
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F-louise of needlepoint lace

Italian. Point flat de Venise. Second half of the seventeenth century

Length: 9 feet. Depth: 22 inches

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Lappets in needlepoint lace

Venice. Point de Venise à réseau. First half of the eighteenth century

A needlepoint lace of the greatest delicacy

gold', were used at the coronation of Richard III. There are also references to 'partlets knit caul-fashion of Venice gold'. Elizabeth of York purchased 'gold of Venice and other necessaries'. In the Tudor period, Italian cut-work and Venice lace were purchased on a generous scale.

Catherine de Medici took with her to France collars of rich point lace. Their popularity was immediate. Frenchmen and others sent to Venice for large supplies of Italian needlepoint which came to be known for a period as *Point de Medicis*.

VARIETIES OF VENETIAN LACE Reticella, or Greek lace, *punto intagliato*, or cut-work, *punto in aria*, an open lace or guipure, were among the more usual varieties sought. Much favoured for household furnishings was *punto in maglia*, a form of darned netting, and also *punto à groppo*, knotted lace in thick thread.

Most celebrated of all, however, was a variety which was practised at a time when the lace industry of Venice had already begun to decline in the seventeenth century. This was the famous *Punto Tagliato à Fogliami*. It was worked on a parchment pattern, the mesh net-work ground being abandoned. The units of the design were linked with bars. By means of padding threads, the outlines of the pattern were shown in high relief. Double and triple relief were introduced into some of the most treasured specimens such as the Rose or Raised Venetian Point and the *Gros Point de Venise*. Designs were conventional comprising flowers, festoons and scrolls. Some of this lace was made in silk; most of it was in natural or cream colour but some was in yellow, blue or purple. Portrait painters did full honour to these laces and delighted in portraying them in their many intricacies.

VENICE INSPIRES FRANCE When Colbert established lace manufactories in France, he turned to Venice for guidance. Monseigneur de Bonzy, Bishop of Biers, was the French ambassador in Venice. His communications to Colbert throw light on the prosperity of Venice: 'All the convents and poor families make a living of this lace-making . . . I see how easy it would be for you to establish the making of Venetian needlepoint laces in France, if you were to send over here a few of the best French lace-makers' daughters to be taught, so that in time they should impart their instruction to others in France.'

Of the convents mentioned that of San Zaccaria was the most famed for its needlepoint laces. In 1673 Colbert wrote to the new French ambassador in Venice, M. le Comte d'Avaux: 'I have gladly received the collar of needlepoint lace worked in relief that you have sent me and I find it very beautiful. I shall have it compared with those now being made by our own lace-makers, although I may tell you beforehand that as good specimens are now made in this Kingdom.'

DECLINE OF VENETIAN LACE Colbert's enterprise and his establishment of a lace factory at Alençon together with the rise of the fine needlepoint laces of Brussels resulted in the decline of Venetian lace. She adapted herself to the changed times. The lace-workers realized that men wore less lace as women wore them the more, and concentrated on laces

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of finer texture. They abandoned the heavy scrolls and rich reliefs for the more graceful branches of Rose Point designs.

BURANO LACE Efforts were made to create needlepoint laces with meshed grounds. At Burano, an island five miles north of Venice, meshed grounds were made with single threads. The mesh of the groundwork did not follow the curves of the pattern. The whole bore a handsome effect, achieved unintentionally perhaps and due to the fact that the thread used was spun unevenly.

Point d'Argentella

Much indecision exists as to the true origin of this lace. Many authorities declare it to be the work of French lace-workers; others locate it at Venice and others at Genoa where lace-workers were said to be endeavouring to copy *Point d'Alençon*. If this was so, then the lace-workers of Genoa achieved the creation of a new type of lace. *Point d'Argentella* resembled *Point d'Alençon* very closely but there were distinguishing features. Characteristic of it were the well-defined partridge-eye ground, the numerous finely-worked *jours*, or fillings, and the mayflower pattern.

This lace represented in part a gesture of the Italian needlepoint workers to create a light lace of fine fabric when heavy points had become *démodé*. They made no effort to emphasize the outline but kept it flat. Many of the Argentella laces are *semes* or powderings, featuring circles, ovals and sprigs upon net grounds. Because of the whiteness of the thread used and the grace of the designs many preferred *Point d'Argentella* to Brussels lace.

Italian Bobbin Laces

Genoa

Genoa and Milan were the two main centres of pillow lace in Italy. It was the custom to copy the least complicated of the needlepoint laces or to adapt them for the use of pillow-makers. Skilful pattern designers, among them being Isabella Catena Parasole, later created patterns for pillow laces and indicated under them the number of bobbins required for working.

As early as the mid-nineteenth century, Genoa was a flourishing centre producing *passamenteries* and lace in gold thread.

The English wardrobe accounts of the sixteenth century testify to the lavish purchase of silk laces from Genoa for the trimming of costume. At the time of her death at the age of seventy, Queen Elizabeth is said to have possessed one thousand dresses. Many of these were diapered with gold and silver laces. Several were brought from Genoa and were inset with pearls and jewels. More than seventy years later Marie de Medici purchased *Point de Gènes* on a lavish scale. Towards the end of the seventeenth century this variety of lace was in general use in most of the European countries.

By a sumptuary law, the Genoese Republic forbade the wearing of gold and silver lace without the walls of the city. Both needlepoint and bobbin laces were important articles of trade, the latter known as *a piombini* being considered the more valuable. The Genoese workers specialized in the making of piece lace rather than lace by the yard. They specialized in making handkerchiefs, collars, aprons and fichus. Just as Venice was the centre for needlepoint lace in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so was Genoa at that period the centre for the bobbin lace industry. The main seats of the industry were at Santa Margherita and Rapallo.

GENOESE 'COLLAR' LACE The cut-work or early laces made in Genoa was altogether coarser than that of Venice. Nevertheless it was much in demand as a trimming for costume, particularly for out-of-door clothes. So extensively was it used for collars that Genoese lace was often referred to as collar lace. The custom arose of working the design of a grain of wheat into the lace as a symbol of Genoese workmanship.

MIXED LACE Genoese lace is usually classified as bobbin lace, but in reality it is a 'mixed' lace, being created of both needlepoint and bobbin laces. First, the design was traced on a pillow; later the mesh groundwork and fillings were added in needlepoint. Brides or tie-bars were usually adorned with picots. A special type of Genoese lace was evolved in the seventeenth century. This incorporated the use of a flat bobbin braid. It was termed Greek lace or *Point de Gênes grisé*. A woven braid was worked into a coarser and cheaper lace which was known as *Punto Mezzo*. The braid itself formed part of the design. It was puckered and shaped to conform with the lines desired.

Milan Lace

Milan lace is given precedence by many modern connoisseurs. There is a decided individuality in the laces made at this centre.

The lace-workers of Milan had achieved work of real merit in their *passemets* into which they worked patterns of scrolls and flowers similar to those in the *Venetian Punto Tagliato à Fogliami*. The rich reliefs of the Venetian work were, however, lacking.

GUIPURE LACE Guipure lace became a speciality of Milan. Braid was used and the designs were rich with armorial bearings, crowns, eagles, flowers and scrolls. Later, in the nineteenth century, the Milanese confined themselves to making torchon laces.

Milan has the distinction of creating lace at a very early period. The earliest mention of Italian lace refers to Milan. A document dated 1493, sharing out property between two sisters, Angela and Hippolita Sforza Visconti, refers to Milanese lace.

English wardrobe accounts refer to this variety. Henry VIII was the proud possessor of an edging of lace made of purple silk and ornamented with gold and which had been brought from Milan. Anne of Denmark, the wife of King James I, possessed in 1606 'a suit with cannons thereunto of silver lace, shadowed with silk Milan lace'.

Other Laces of Italy

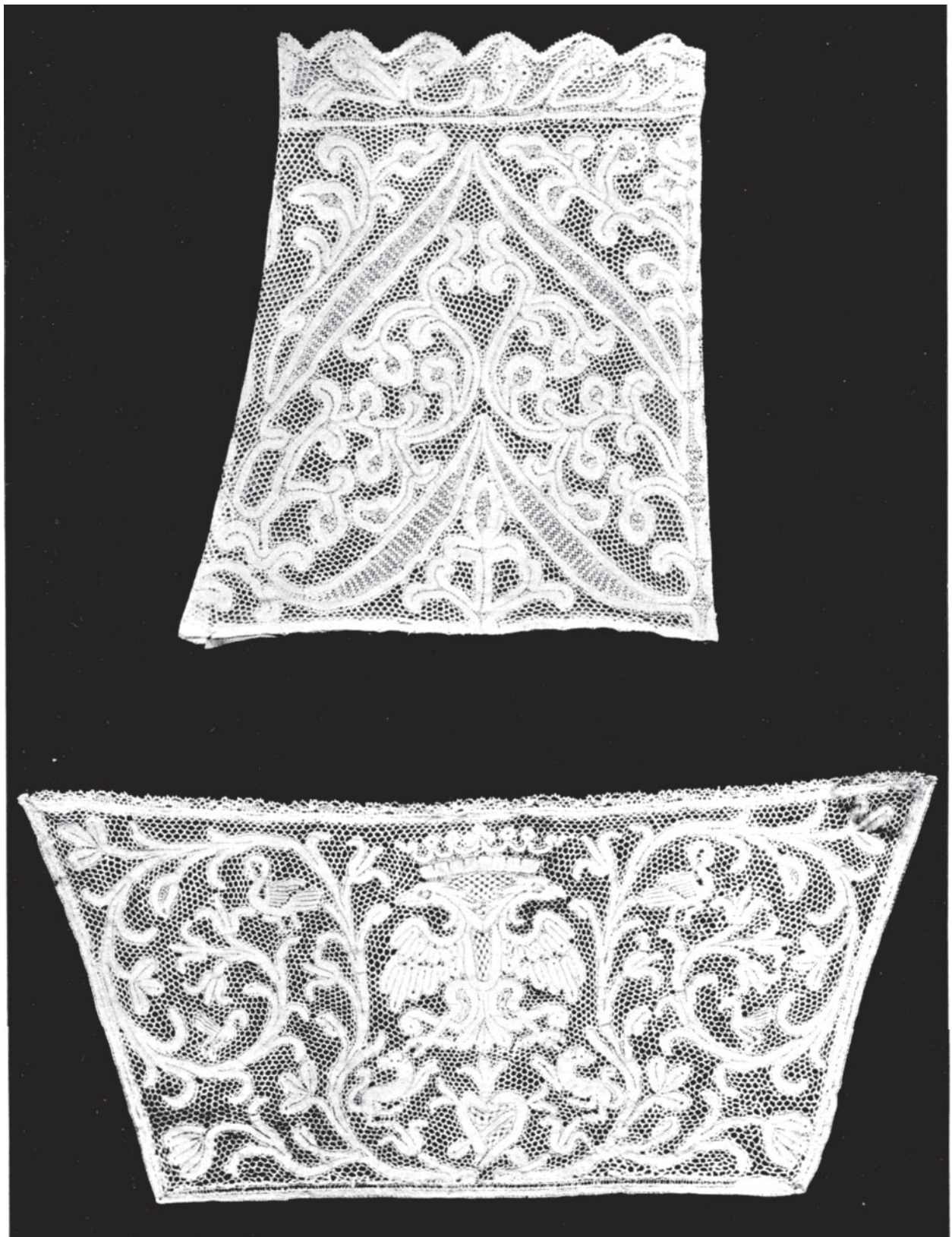
Bobbin lace was made on the island of Pelestrina in the nineteenth century. As at Burano in the same period, the industry represented relief measures in time of need. The lace made at Pelestrina was much in demand for household furnishings, for curtains and blinds, for counterpanes and chair trimmings.

Macrame lace was made in various centres in Italy, Milan being the chief. It was a popular variety in convents and was much used for the decoration of church furniture as well as for household trimmings. It was a knotted lace of Arabic origin.

BLONDE LACE At Albissola, near Savona, a black lace in imitation of that made at Chantilly was made. This industry rose to meet the current demand for blonde lace. Large quantities were exported to Spain. A special technique was required to make this lace, involving the use of huge cushions. Four or more women sat at one of these pillows manoeuvring sixty dozen or more bobbins. The Albissola workers made lace for the coronation of Napoleon.

Of interest rather than of importance was a fabric known as *Aloe lace*. It was made at several centres in Italy and was called *Fino d'Erbe Spada*. It was a coarse lace made from the fibres of the aloe. It was made either by tatting or by the twisting and plaiting of threads. Some threads were left natural-coloured; others were dyed black before being worked. The prosperity attached to this industry declined for the lace did not bear washing; it became mucilaginous.

The importance of the Italian lace-workers in both needlepoint and bobbin laces cannot be fully assessed. They provided the world market with lace during the greater part of the seventeenth century – a period when lace was used extensively. Not only did the lace-workers supply a current need but their work served as a foundation for the art of lace-making in other countries.



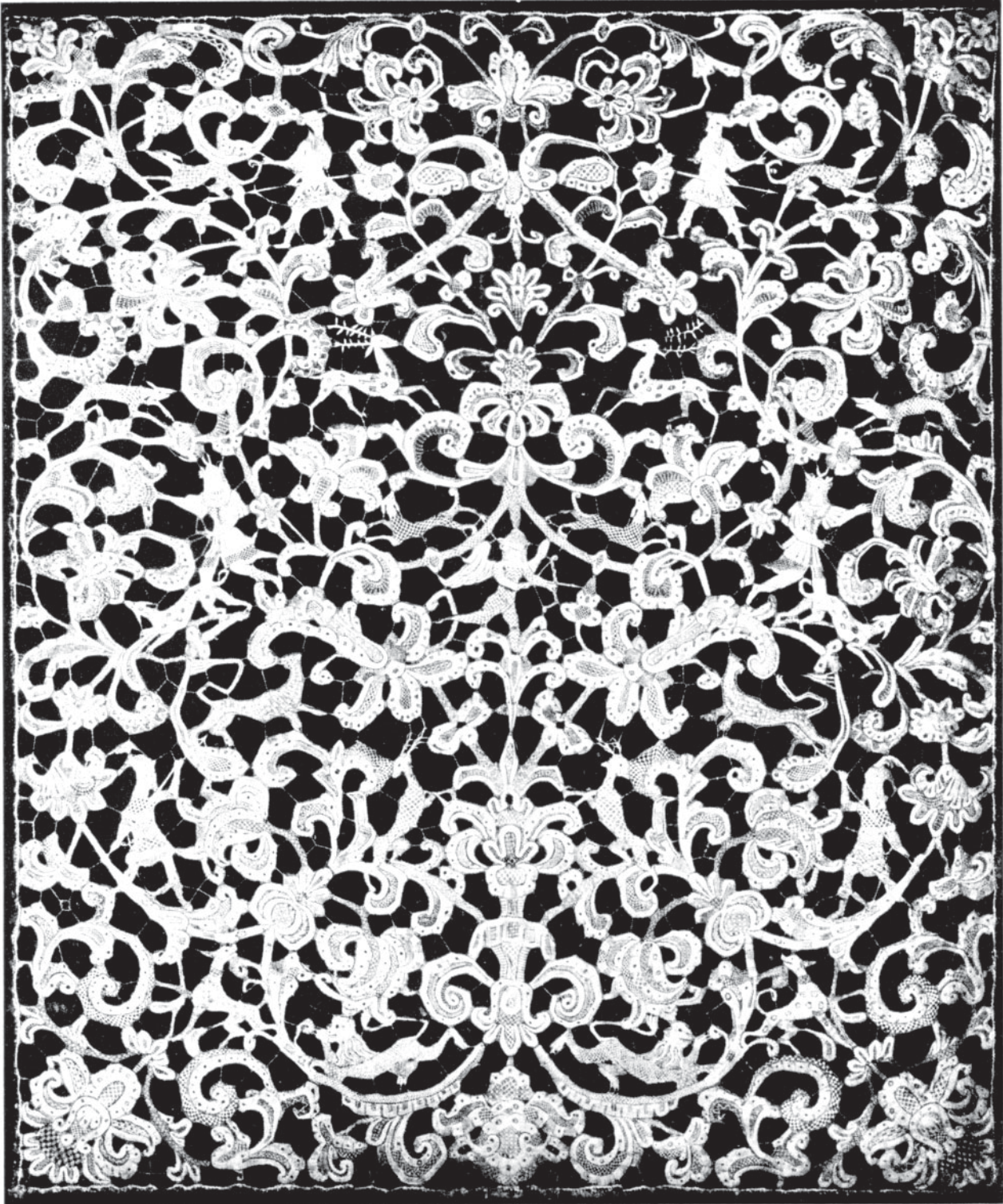
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North Italy. Bobbin lace. Cuffs. Second half of the seventeenth century

UPPER: Length $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Greatest width $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches

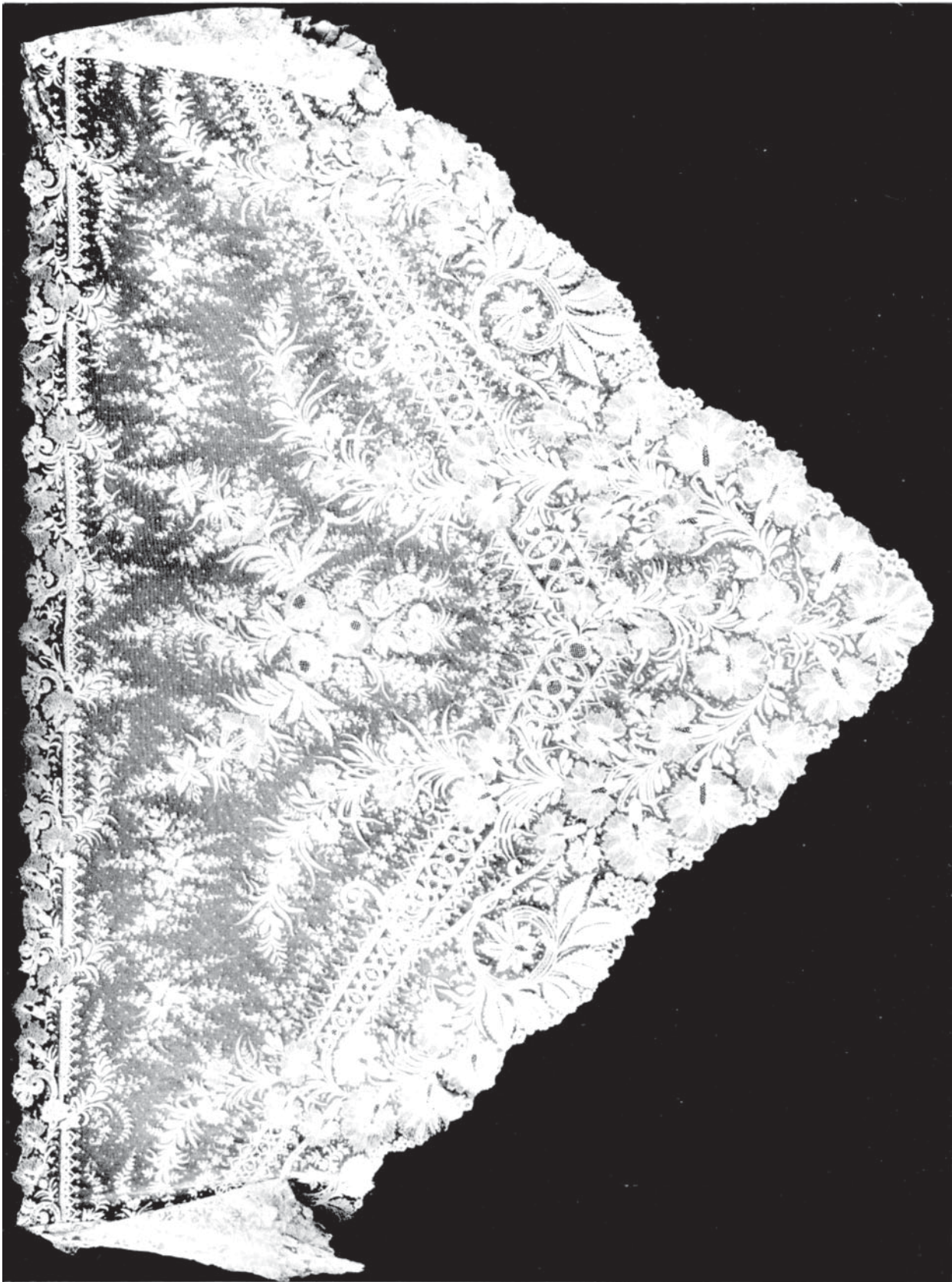
LOWER: Length $15\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Greatest width $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches



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Italy. Milan. Bobbin lace panel à brides. Seventeenth century
The motifs show the influence of the art of the Near East

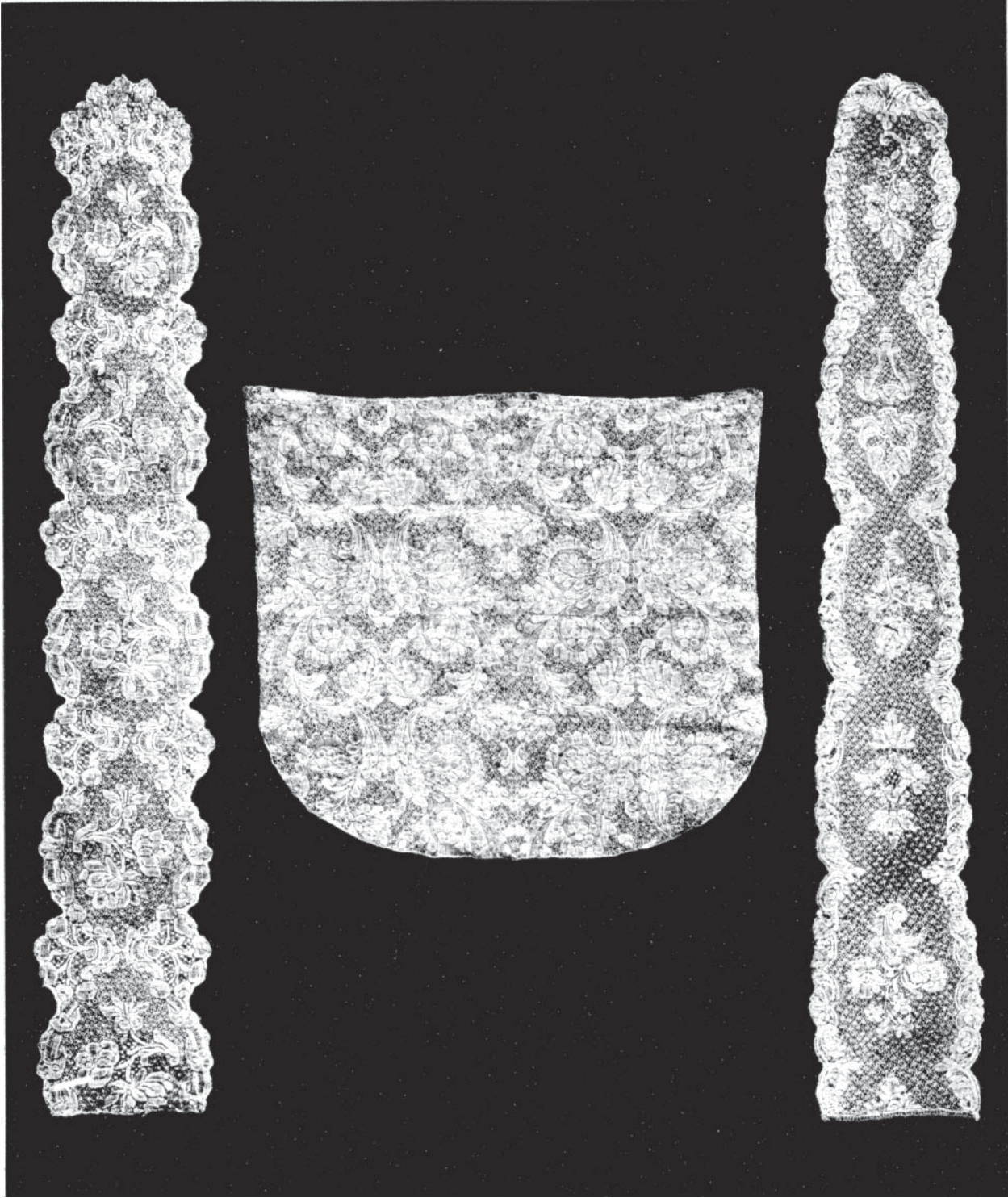


Victoria and Albert Museum

Brussels. Shawl of pillow-made lace. First half of the nineteenth century

The pattern is applied to a ground of machine-made bobbin net

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French. Probably Binche. Bobbin lace. Cap crown and lappets .

First half of the nineteenth century

CAP: 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches by 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches LAPPET: 21 inches by 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches

THE LACES OF THE LOW COUNTRIES

IN time sequence and in craftsmanship, the laces made in the Low Countries rivalled those of Italy with reference to both needlepoint and bobbin laces. It was in the latter type, however, that Flanders excelled.

CLOSE BOND BETWEEN ITALY AND FLANDERS It is significant that Italy and Flanders were European leaders in the industrial arts. It is noteworthy too that these two countries produced the finest pictorial art in the medieval and Renaissance period. These influences had far-reaching repercussions which had their bearing, among other things, on the making of fine lace.

There has been much discussion and dispute concerning the real originators of lace. Most authorities give preference to Italy in the matter of needlepoint lace but grant priority to Flanders in bobbin varieties. Whatever the truth, it must be borne in mind that a close bond united the two countries and there must have been inevitably a strong interplay of ideas and practices. The beauty and aesthetic charm of Italian art and craftsmanship proved an inspiration to the hard-working, artistic artisans of the Low Countries. In needlework, the close connexion between the two countries is evidenced by the pattern books of the late sixteenth century which were published simultaneously and which were very similar in character.

EARLY ILLUSTRATIONS OF FLEMISH LACE Portraits of the fifteenth century show that the people of Flanders delighted in wearing lace. The lace cornette or cap was much favoured. On an altar dated 1495, in the church of St Peter at Louvain, Quentin Mastys portrayed a girl making pillow lace with the aid of bobbins. It is thought that the occupation was an usual one at that period. Engravings by Martin de Vos, 1581, show a girl engaged in the same craft.

EULOGY OF A FLEMISH POET Writing verses in Latin in 1651, Jacob van Eyck, a Flemish poet, praised the lace-makers of his country:

‘Of many arts, one surpasses all; the threads woven by the strange power of the hand, threads which the dropping spider would in vain attempt to imitate and which Pallas would confess she had never known.

‘For the maiden, seated at her work, plies her fingers rapidly and flashes the smooth balls and thousand threads into the circle. Often she fastens with her hands the innumerable

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needles to bring out the various figures of the pattern, often, again, she unfastens them; and in her amusement makes as much profit as the man earns by the sweat of his brow; and no maiden ever complains at even of the length of the day.

'The issue is a fine web, open to the air with many an aperture, which feeds the pride of the whole globe; which encircles with its fine border, cloaks and tuckers, and shows grandly round the throats and hands of kings; and, what is more surprising, this web is of the lightness of a feather, which in its price is too heavy for our purses.

'Go, ye men, inflamed with the desire of the Golden Fleece, endure so many dangers by land, so many at sea, whilst the woman, remaining in her Brabantine home, prepares Phrygian fleeces by peaceful assiduity.' – *Urbium Belgicarum centuria*.

COMMERCIAL WORTH OF FLEMISH LACES Both needlepoint and bobbin laces became in the early sixteenth century articles of commerce. All Europeans coveted these fabrics and consequently lace was an important source of revenue to the Low Countries. For two centuries this commerce thrived. The prosperity of the lace industry was accounted for, not only by the quality of the fabrics themselves, but by the patronage, encouragement and industrial liberty bestowed upon the lace-workers. The foundations of this prosperity were so firm that the industry remained secure at a time when every other industrial art was blighted by the severity and horrors of religious persecution.

This religious warfare in the Low Countries reacted to the good of the lace industries of surrounding countries. Many thousands of lace-makers settled in them with the result that the secrets of Flemish lace-craft were dispersed into every city of Northern Europe. The laces of the Low Countries are therefore noteworthy not only in themselves but because they form the source from which the lace-workers of many countries obtained their technique and designs.

When Colbert founded the lace manufactories of France, Flanders grew alarmed at the success which attended the efforts to lure her workers across the border. Colbert settled the foreign artisans in towns such as Aurillac, Sedan, Rheims, Le Quesnoy, Alençon, Arras and Loudun, where the townsfolk were already engaged in lace-making. At the expense of Louis XIV, the foreign lace-makers were engaged to teach all the processes of lace-making. According to Voltaire, thirty of these teachers came from Venice and two hundred from Flanders. This number was increased by mass migrations, and in 1698 an Act was passed by the Flemish government threatening dire punishment on all who should suborn Flemish craftsmen.

FLEMISH LACE SCHOOLS Lace-making was an integral part of female education in Flanders. At the age of five, a girl began her apprenticeship in an *école des dentelliers*; at the age of ten she earned sufficient to maintain herself. By that time she was able to manipulate the bobbins with wonderful dexterity.

These schools were much admired. There was a suggestion that similar schools should be set up in England. A tract published in London in 1577 and written by Andrew Yarranton, Gent., gives a graphic description of one of the Flemish lace-schools:

‘Joining to this spinning school, is one for maids weaving bone lace ; and in all towns there are schools according to the bigness and multitude of the children.

‘I will show you how they are governed. First, there is a large room, and in the middle thereof a little box like a pulpit. Second, there are benches built around the room as they are in our play-houses. And in the box in the middle of the room, the grand mistress with a long white wand in her hand.

‘If she observes any of them idle, she reaches them a tap, and if that will not do, she rings a bell, which by a little cord, is attached to the box. She points out the offender and she is taken into another room and chastised. And I believe this way of ordering the young women of Flanders is one great cause that they have so little twit twat and I am sure it will be well if it were so in England.’

The advent of the machine age did not mean the destruction of the lace-making industry of the country. Machine lace proved to be an abundant source of revenue, employing many thousands of the inhabitants. Belgium secured for herself a pre-eminent position and maintained this position despite the keen competition of France and of England. Brussels, Ghent, Alost and other centres had busy factories and derived handsome profits from machine-made nets and laces.

VARIETIES OF FLANDERS LACE Flanders lace is a comprehensive term and covers all those laces which were made in Flanders in the early period of development. It included among others, Flemish Point, Brussels Point, and much work that passed under the name of a misnomer, *Point d'Angleterre*. Gothic and Venetian styles were imitated in the earliest of the Flemish laces and then followed efforts to imitate the guipure laces of Genoa. The next progression was to *Point Gaze* which developed later into *Point de Bruxelles* and the modern appliqué.

The early laces were of a gossamer fineness. Design and *réseau* were worked flat ; there was no cordonnet. Neither was there evident in any form that characteristic which was later to be a distinguishing feature of *Point d'Angleterre* and of Brussels lace, viz. the presence of loose threads on stems and leaves.

FLEMISH FLAX The lace-workers benefited by the close proximity of the much-coveted flax of Flanders. Thread made from this flax ensured that gossamer-like nature of the fabric which was so much sought after by the lace-workers and which they attained in so remarkable a degree.

SMUGGLING The story of lace has many facets. Among the most romantic are the stories of the smuggling of the treasured fabric. Much Flemish lace was smuggled into France by means of dogs. A dog was caressed and made a pet of in a French home ; after a period of time it was taken across the frontier to a house where it was kept in a state of semi-starvation and ill-treated. Then the coat of a bigger dog was fastened securely to its body. This served to conceal a quantity of lace. The dog was set at liberty and encouraged to return to its French home.

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That this smuggling by means of dogs was a common practice is evident from the statistics of the French Customs House. In the period 1820 to 1836 as many as 40,278 dogs were destroyed for smuggling lace and tobacco. The French government paid the reward of three francs for the capture of each of these dogs which were described as being of big size and capable of carrying as much as twenty-six pounds of contraband.

CLASSIFICATION OF FLEMISH LACES Eugene Van Overloop, in his authoritative guide to the laces of the Brussels Collection, lists the laces of Flanders under four general headings. Priority is given to the laces of Brussels and Brabant. Next are classified the laces of Flanders generally, then those of Mechlin and Antwerp; and finally the laces of Valenciennes and Binche. Technically the two main types, needlepoint and bobbin laces prevailed.

Bobbin laces were in three varieties. The lace-workers of Valenciennes, Mechlin, Binche and certain other areas in Flanders used the method known as *fil contenu*, wherein a continuous thread was worked upon a stationary pillow and so lace was formed. Much of the work was in *trolle Kant*. High relief was introduced by outlining the design in heavier thread.

Another technique involved the use of a movable pillow. By using a cushion of this type, the lace-worker could turn and adjust it in order to work the curves of the design with ease. The pattern was worked first and then many tie-bars or brides were added to form a mesh. A crochet hook was used to join the mesh and *toile*. This technique was favoured in particular in the making of the guipure laces of Brussels and of Bruges. It was known as *à pièces rapportées*.

Another variety of pillow lace was that known as *vrai réseau* or *droschel*, a type often referred to as hand-made bobbin net, a variety much favoured by the lace-makers of Brussels. The work was made in narrow strips which were joined together with the *point de raccroche*. The mesh of the one-inch strips which formed the lace was in itself a work of art and an achievement of which Brussels was justifiably proud.

The technique used by the Flemish needlepoint workers was the usual one of forming a framework of needle-stitching on parchment or paper bearing the design.

The lace-workers of the Low Countries at times combined needlepoint and bobbin laces. The usual procedure was to work the design on a pillow and add tie-bars to create a mesh in needlepoint. Lace of recent date made by this method was termed *Point d'Angleterre*, thus giving an additional connotation to a name already confused as to its meaning.

APPLIED LACE The popularity of Brussels appliqué bears witness to the prosperity of the applied lace industry in the Low Countries. The patterns were worked with a needle or with bobbins and were applied to a groundwork of machine-made net. Large pieces such as shawls and bridal veils were made by this method and were considerably cheaper than the hand-made specimens.

Another technique practised involved the embroidering of machine-made net. The design was embroidered in chain stitch or by stitches made with the aid of the crochet

hook. This was called Tambour work or *tulle brodé*. When the design was embroidered with a needle it was sometimes called *broderie à l'aiguille*. The beauty of this work lay in the fillings of the designs. The fabric was inferior to *vrai réseau* for it was coarse and wiry, being made of cotton and not of the pure, superfine flax thread used in the making of *Vraie Angleterre* laces. The durability was lessened because of the practice of powdering the cotton fabric with white lead to bleach it.

Brussels Lace

Brussels enjoyed a favoured position in the Low Countries in that it was a court centre. The fine lace produced there, however, ensured for itself a pre-eminence by its own merits for the finest fabrics manufactured in the city rivalled those of Italy.

Lace was made in Brussels in the early fifteenth century, and elaborate specimens were presented to the churches by the princes of Brabant.

Point d'Angleterre was a name in common usage in the seventeenth century. When made in England by Flemish lace-workers it was inferior to the finest fabrics created in Flanders, for England could not produce the necessary flax which ensured lace fabrics of fine quality. Much of the choicest Brussels lace was smuggled into England and sold as English point. In 1678 the Marquis de Nesmond seized a vessel bound for England carrying as contraband a cargo of lace. Among the goods confiscated were 744,953 ells of lace and an incalculable number of collars, aprons, fichus, fans, gloves, handkerchiefs, all made of lace.

Writing in 1756, Mrs Calderwood in her *Journey Through Holland and Belgium*, described the lace-making industry of the time :

‘A part of their work is grounding lace ; the manufacture is very curious. One person works the flowers. They are all sold separate and you will see a very pretty sprig, for which the worker only gets six sous.

‘The masters who have all these people employed give them the thread to make them ; this they do according to pattern, and give them out to be grounded ; after this, they give them to a third hand, who “hearts” all the flowers with the open-work. This is what makes the lace so much dearer than the Mechlin which is wrought all at once.’

SUPERIORITY OF BRUSSELS Brussels excelled above all other centres in the making of lace. Antwerp, Ghent, Binche and other towns emulated it but they did not succeed in creating fabrics of equal quality.

Much of the beauty of Brussels lace was due to the extraordinary fineness of the thread. Lace-workers who tried to copy the laces of Brussels despaired in their efforts for they could not hope to compete with the fineness of the thread.

SPINNING OF LACE THREAD Flax of a special kind was cultivated solely for the purpose of making thread for lace and cambric at St Nicholas, Tournai, Cambrai, Hal and Rebecq-Rognon. The thread made from it was of so fine a texture that it was liable to break and

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as a preventative the flax of finest quality was spun in dark, damp, underground rooms, where only one shaft of light was allowed to penetrate. The spinner was content to *feel* rather than see the gossamer thread as it passed through her fingers. A panel of dark paper was fixed so as to throw the thread into relief. The spinner worked meticulously, examining in detail the thread drawn from her distaff.

The work demanded the greatest skill. Wages were proportionately high but they did not compensate for the conditions of work in a damp, unhealthy workroom. Brussels guarded closely the secrets of the spinning of this fine thread for she realized that it was this medium which contributed so largely to the high reputation of her laces.

NAPOLEON'S INTEREST IN BRUSSELS LACE Brussels lace was much favoured at the court of the first French Emperor. When Napoleon and Josephine made their first official entry into Brussels, the Empress received a gift in the form of a collection of the finest lace of the *vrai réseau* type. She also received an elaborate curtain made in Brussels point. It carried designs portraying cupids bearing cradles. These were supposed to be prophetic and emblematic of the birth of the King of Rome. Napoleon was well pleased with these gestures and gave in return orders for the manufacture of albs which were to be made in the most exquisite point for he intended them as a gift for the Pope.

After the Battle of Waterloo, a lace manufacturer of Brussels, M. Troyaux, converted his workshops into a hospital for forty English soldiers and provided them with all necessaries. His action, motivated by high and humane principles, brought him material reward. When he resumed business, so great was the demand from England and by British tourists for his lace fabrics that he soon retired, having amassed a great fortune.

PATTERNS OF BRUSSELS LACE The earliest patterns of Brussels lace are in the Gothic style. The motifs have precision and clear-cut lines. Gradually, the flowing lines showing Renaissance influence, were introduced into the designs. The outlines of scrolls, festoons and leaves were emphasized by a raised treatment. Among others, the English lace-workers of Devon became enamoured of these raised effects and they learnt the technique readily when Belgian teachers taught them. At the time when Brussels lace experienced its greatest demand in the period of the First Empire, designs included a multitude of flowers, sprigs, wreaths, columns and *petits semés*, including spots, stars and crosses. There was an Egyptian note in the introduction of palms and pyramids. These were discarded at the Restoration and flower designs prevailed once more.

GROUNDS OF BRUSSELS LACE Two grounds characterized Brussels lace. The bride was the earlier. This became very rare and expensive as time advanced. The other type was the *réseau* ground. This was made by hand, *à l'aiguille*, or on the pillow, *au fuseau*. The former was the superior kind and was worked in small sections, each strip being an inch wide. These strips were joined by a stitch much favoured by Brussels and Alençon lace-workers. It was called *Point de raccroc* or *assemblage* and it was known in England as fine joining.

THE LACES OF THE LOW COUNTRIES

The *réseau à l'aiguille* was seldom made after the invention of machine-made net. Grounds made *à l'aiguille* were three times as expensive as those made on pillows; but they were better for their wearing qualities and were not liable to ravel. The solidity of the needleground was ensured by the passing of the needle into each mesh for as many as four times. In the mesh of pillow lace this firmness was wholly lacking. The needleground had a further advantage in that it could be repaired quite easily and imperceptibly; pillow lace, when repaired, showed the joinings.

The motifs of Brussels lace were also of two kinds. Those made with the needle were called *à l'aiguille*, those on the pillow *point plat*. The latter were characterized by their yellow hue as they came from the hands of the lace-workers. To counteract this, the practice arose of placing the motifs in a small bag containing white lead and beating it with the hand. This had a dire effect on the health of the lace-workers and did not contribute to the preservation of the lace. When fabric treated in this manner was exposed to heat or to sea air, it invariably turned black and resisted all efforts at restoration.

SPECIALIZATION IN LACE-WORK So complicated were the methods employed in the making of Brussels lace that it was thought best to perfect the lace-worker in one of the highly specialized techniques and assign work to her in that particular process only. The *droscheleuse* made the *vrai réseau*, the *dentellière* the footing. The *fonneuse* made the open-work in the *plat* and the *jointeuse* united the different sections together. The *plat* flowers were made by the *plattense*; the motifs were attached to the ground by the *appliqueuse*. As many as seven workers were required for a single specimen of Brussels lace.

POINT GAUZE A more modern variety of lace made in Brussels was, however, made by one worker only. She used the same thread throughout the fabric. This lace was known as *Point Gauze* or gauze point. The lace was needle-made, with a hexagonal mesh. The pattern and ground were made simultaneously. The fabric was made in small sections. These were joined together and the joinings were covered as in early point lace with leaves, sprigs and other motifs. The designs reflected Renaissance influences and effects of shading were produced by needle-darning.

Mechlin Lace

Mechlin lace was one of the prettiest of all lace fabrics and was termed by many the 'Queen of Laces'. It was made at Mechlin, Antwerp, Lierre and Turnhout. It was made in one piece on a pillow and, though called *Point de Malines*, it was not a point lace. Flowers were an essential part of the design. The lace was often called *Broderie de Malines* for the treatment of the flowers was reminiscent of that used in embroidery.

Up to the year 1665, Malines lace was a general term for all Flanders lace. The lace-workers of Bruges, Ypres, Dieppe and Courtrai were content to sell their work under that name.

THE ROMANCE OF LACE

A ban was placed by Charles II on all foreign laces and as a result but few pieces of Mechlin lace found their way into England at the period. When the ban was removed in 1699 Mechlin lace became one of the prime favourites and its popularity was maintained in eighteenth-century England.

MECHLIN LACE FAVOURED IN ENGLAND Press notices form some of the most fascinating of documentary evidence in the study of the history of lace. The *London Gazette* of August 17 to August 24, 1699, announced in its columns:

‘Lost from Barker’s coach, a deal box containing . . . a waistcoat and Holland shirt both laced with Mechlin lace.’

Before the repeal was established, Queen Mary bought, according to the Great Wardrobe Accounts, two yards of knotted fringe for her Mechlin ruffles. Mechlin lace was one of the favourites of Queen Anne. A memoranda of her expenses shows that on one occasion she bought eighty-three yards for £247.

During the Regency Period, Mechlin lace was much used in England. A favourite variety was that resembling the insertion of later centuries known as *campane*. It was light and fine and suitable for ornamenting gathered trimmings, for it had an edging on both sides. Mechlin lace was essentially an additional trimming. It did not in itself serve for the *grande toilette*. Yards upon yards of it were used for nightcaps, ruffles, cravats, lingerie; it was used yet more lavishly when Fashion decreed the use of India muslin.

AN EYE-WITNESS’S ACCOUNT OF THE MECHLIN LACE-WORKERS Writing of the town of Mechlin in 1756, Mrs Calderwood, an observant traveller, recorded:

‘All the town is full of convents. Mechlin lace is all made there; I saw a great deal, very pretty and very cheap. They talk of giving up the trade, as the English, upon whom they depend, have taken to wearing the French blondes.

‘The lace-workers employ the workers and all the town with lace. Though they gain but twopence-halfpenny daily, it is a good worker who will finish a Flemish yard (28 inches) in a fortnight.’

Napoleon’s admiration for Mechlin lace accounted largely for the great demand for it under the First French Empire. An oft-related anecdote tells that when Napoleon first saw the exquisite tracery of the spire of Antwerp cathedral, he exclaimed, ‘*C’est comme de la dentelle de Malines*’.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MECHLIN LACE Mechlin lace was light and filmy, finer in texture than the finest Valenciennes. Its suppleness was treasured by those who applied it as an edging to muslin frills. It was easily recognized among other laces by a fine bright thread which outlined the designs.

Early Mechlin laces showed a number of varied grounds, the best known being the snow ground, *fond de neige*. Ultimately, after much experimenting, the lace-workers favoured a ground of small hexagonal meshes, reminiscent of the ground of pillow-made Brussels lace.

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Designs varied with the time of production. At the height of its glory, the rococo style prevailed. Delicacy and transparency characterized the massed motifs. At the close of the eighteenth century, the lace-workers introduced into their fabric floral sprays and festoons which gave them a wide field for demonstrating their skill at making *jours* or fillings. When Napoleon was interested in this variety of lace, the patterns were not so concentrated. They were scattered as sprigs, blossoms and symbols over the fabric, an arrangement which showed in full effect the regularity of the meshes which formed the groundwork.

Antwerp Lace

Antwerp was an important centre of the lace industry. In the seventeenth century the city exported vast quantities of lace to the Spanish Indies. When the overseas market was lost, the lace-workers of Antwerp suffered severe hardships.

Lace continued as a local industry and supplied a home demand. Traditional designs were made, a favourite being the *potten Kant*, or pot lace. The flower-pot was symbolical of the Annunciation. In early illustrations of the visit of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, the flower-pot was shown. It was usually filled with lilies. With the decline of Roman Catholic fervour, the vase alone remained. Embroiderers had favoured it as a design and lace-workers introduced it into their fabric. The flower-pot varied in shape and size and also in its position on the lace. Large flowers were also prominent in the designs of Antwerp lace. These were held together by brides.

EARLY PATTERN BOOK What is accredited as being one of the earliest pattern books was published at Antwerp. It was printed by Vosterman and was illustrated by six woodcuts. These showed six women and one man making lace on frames. The title was in English:

‘A neawe treatys; as cocernynge the excellency of the nedle worcke spannishe stitche and weavyng in the frame, very necessary to al theym wiche desyre the perfect knowledge of seamstry, quiltinge, and brodry worke, coteinyng an cxxxviiij figures or tables, so playnli made and set tout in portraiture, the whiche is difficyll; and natolye for crafts me but also for gentleweme and ioge damosels that therein may obtayne greater conyng, delete and pleasure.

‘These bokes be to sell at Andwarp in the golden Unycorne at Willm Vorstermans.’

Ghent

THE INTEREST OF THE BÉGUINES IN LACE-WORK Many travellers passing through Ghent on the ‘Grand Tour’ in the eighteenth century wrote accounts which testify to the flourishing lace industry of the city. The chief lace work was done by members of the religious sisterhood, the Béguines in the lace schools attached to the béguinages.

THE ROMANCE OF LACE

The industry continued to flourish down to the close of the nineteenth century but the demand for the laces of Ghent was somewhat reduced. A valuable letter, 'Answer to Sir John Sinclair', written in 1815 by Mr Hey Schoulthem, portrays the lace industry of the time. The writer explained that at the time of the French invasion of the Low Countries, the lace trade of Ghent was flourishing. Men and women were engaged in making lace. Holland, France and England were the main commercial markets. Many of the laces made in charitable institutions were exported to Spain and her colonies.

PROSPERITY IN THE MACHINE AGE Ghent had no reason to lament the invention of machine-made fabrics. The fame of Ghent as a centre of the lace industry was not eclipsed. The city turned its attention to the making of machine net and laces. The net made at Ghent was a very fine variety which served as an excellent foundation for elaborate embroidered work. Limerick lace, as it was made in the earliest period of that industry, was copied very closely; in fact, the similarity was so close that differentiation between the two was often difficult even to the eyes of the initiated. The lace workers of Ghent also made great quantities of hand-made imitations of Valenciennes lace when an earnest demand for these types was made.

Holland

The rich lace fabrics of the Flemings overshadowed the laces of the Dutch. Nevertheless, lace of lasting worth was made in Holland. Much of this supplied a ready market in France.

When large numbers of refugees settled in Holland following on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, they were welcomed heartily. Lace-workers were among the artisans who settled in the country. At the Orphan House at Amsterdam, a factory was established for making a special kind of point lace known as *dentelle à la Reine*. It was mainly due to a Huguenot named Simon Chatelain that the industry of gold and silver lace-making was introduced into Holland.

No foreign laces were imported into the country but the Dutch exported laces to Italy. In 1770 Maria Theresa crippled the expansion of the lace trade of Holland by issuing a declaration prohibiting the importation of Dutch lace into any of her hereditary dominions in Germany.

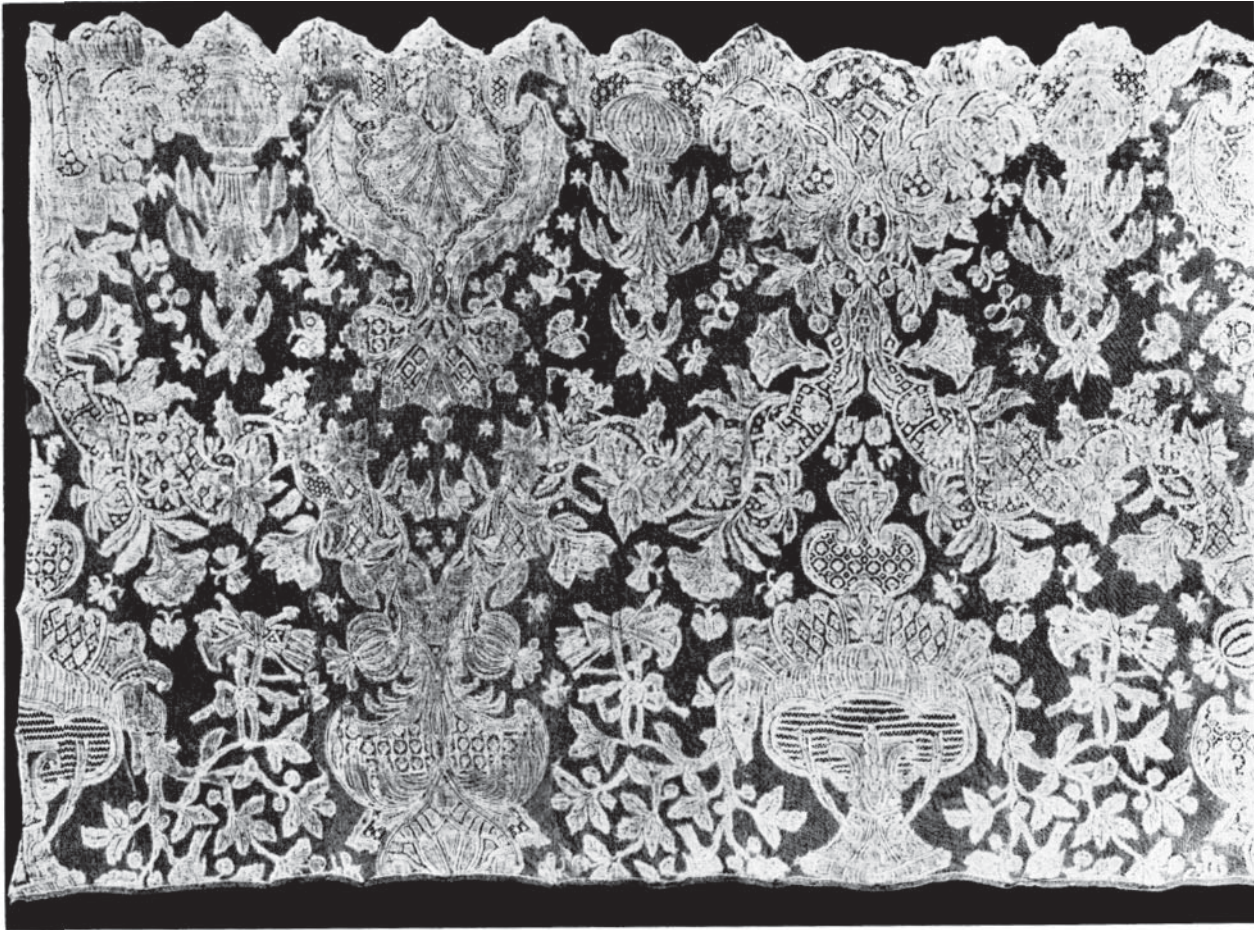
A treasured possession preserved in The Hague is the shirt worn by William the Silent when he was assassinated in 1584. The linen shirt is decorated with lace in linen thread. The shirt had been described as thick, durable, strong and serviceable, characteristic of the wearer and of the people whom he formed into the Dutch Republic.

DECORATING OF HOUSES WITH LACE A quaint custom observed in Holland was the decorating of household ornaments with lace. A traveller in France wrote in 1691: 'The warming-pans and brasses are not here muffled up in much point and cut-work after the manner of Holland.' Another Dutch custom was to tie up the door-knockers with rich Dutch point lace to announce the birth of a child.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF DUTCH LACE The Dutch excelled in the making of bobbin lace. Much of this was used to ornament the national head-dresses. The lace had a marked solidity and closeness which necessitated a close examination of the fabric in order to fully appreciate the beauty of the design. So close was the texture of the lace that it resembled early cut-work on fine linen.

The motifs favoured were those of fruit and flowers represented naturalistically. A very usual motif was a conventional oval shape believed to have evolved from a representation of a chrysanthemum. Oriental flowers were depicted in Dutch designs following on trade with the East. *Potten Kant*, the symbolical flower-pot, was another usual motif. It was often shown between two confronted birds.



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Victoria and Albert Museum

Mechlin. Bobbin lace. Part of a flounce. First half of the eighteenth century

Length: 4 feet 9 inches

Greatest depth: 24 inches



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Victoria and Albert Museum

Brussels. Pillow-made lace. Portion of an apron

First half of the eighteenth century



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Victoria and Albert Museum

Flanders. Antwerp. Bobbin lace. Three borders. Eighteenth century

'Potten Kant'. Top: length, 19 inches; width, 4 inches. Middle: length, 20 inches; width, 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

Bottom: length, 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches; width, 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches

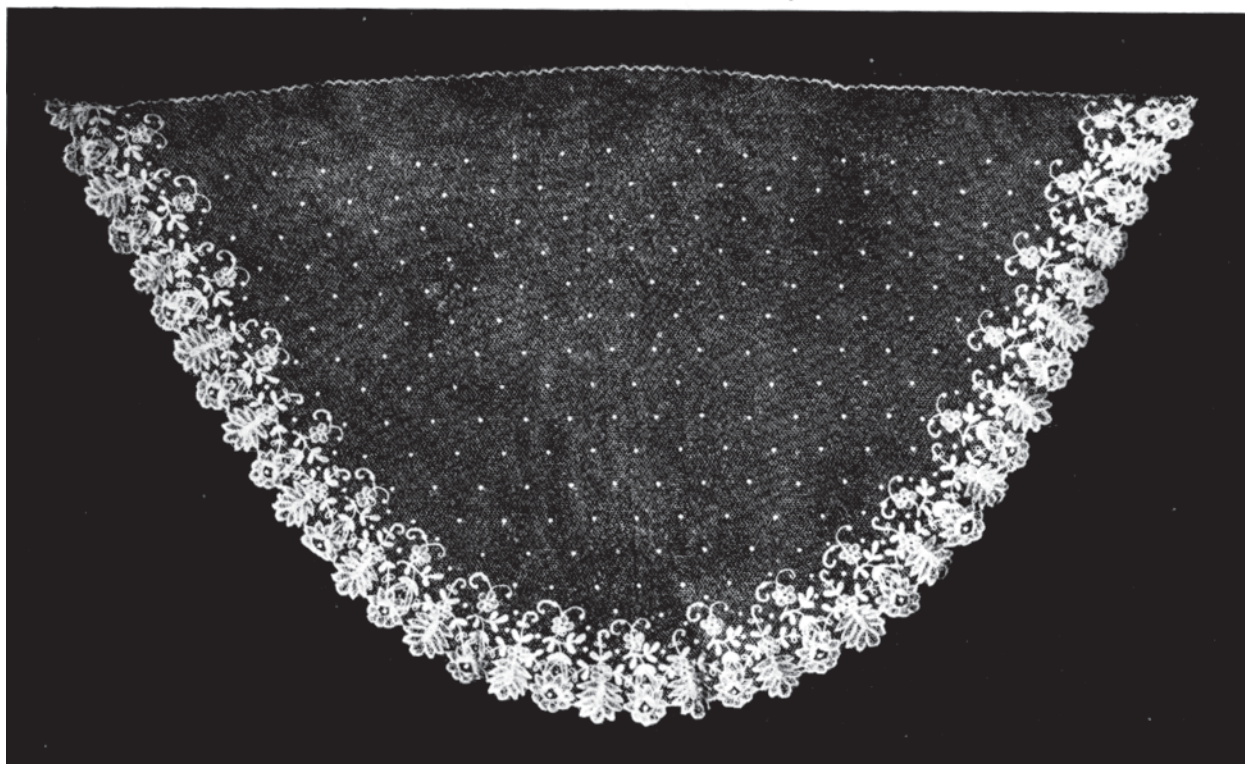


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Victoria and Albert Museum

Brussels. Point de Gaze. Fan mount. Needlepoint lace. Mid-nineteenth century

Width: 20 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches Depth: 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches

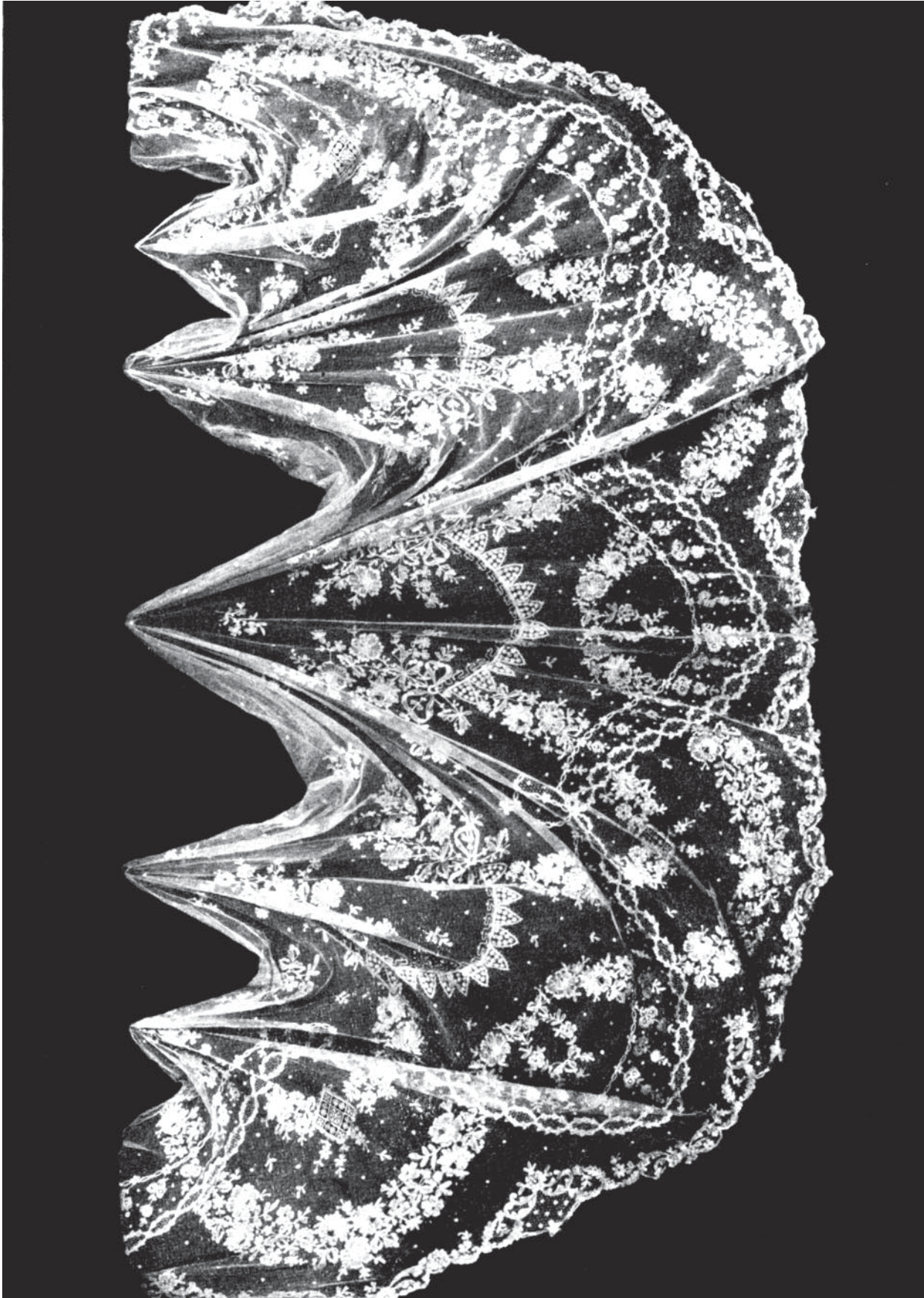


Author's Collection

Brussels. Christening veil. Early nineteenth century

Width: 22 inches Greatest depth: 18 inches

Machine-made mesh with *fond de neige* or snow ground.
Bobbin-made appliqué'd motifs inspired by Mechlin designs



Brussels. Wedding veil. Early nineteenth century

Length: 4 yards 15 inches. Greatest depth: 40 inches

Machine-made net. Bobbin-made appliqué motifs showing the rose in several forms

THE LACES OF FRANCE

FRANCE showed at an early period an active interest in the making of lace. The interest of the French court in this fine fabric gave a definite fillip to the industry within the country itself and indirectly it had repercussions on the lace industries of other European countries.

ITALIAN INFLUENCE In early Renaissance years, France was obliged to import her laces from Italy and the Low Countries. In the sixteenth century, Italian influence was strong owing to fashion's demand for *points coupés* and lace. Under the Valois and Medicis, the vogue for these was rivalled by that for embroidery and gold and silver lace. In the years of growing national consciousness, France grew averse to the practice of importing laces. As time advanced, French financiers decried the policy of buying foreign laces as it was a drain on the national revenue. France began to encourage Italian and Flemish workers to settle within her realm.

LACE CENTRE AT LE PUY A flourishing lace centre existed in France in the sixteenth century. This was at Le Puy. Lace at this period represented a transition from white embroideries to lace. It had closer affinity with embroidery and cut or drawn thread-work than with lace in the modern interpretation.

SUMPTUARY EDICTS The efforts of the lace-workers of Le Puy to establish a sound industry seemed doomed to disaster when the Seneschal of Le Puy passed sumptuary laws imposing a heavy fine on those who trimmed their clothes with lace. His economic insight was blurred by his desire to maintain social distinctions. His real purpose in issuing the edicts was to maintain the standards between high and low and he feared derogatory results if all classes were allowed to wear lace. As a result of this legislation, the lace-workers were faced with dire poverty. An edict of Louis XIII passed in 1629 allowed for 'a consumption of lace provided they were manufactured in the kingdom at a cost not exceeding three livres the ell for insertion and edging'. The Parliament of Toulouse issued through the Seneschal of Le Puy a severer edict. It forbade under payment of a heavy fine 'everybody of either sex, quality or condition from wearing any sort of lace, whether of silk or white thread with glittering passement of gold or silver, real or false'.

ST FRANÇOIS REGIS A Jesuit Father visited the lace-workers in their distress and distributed material relief and spiritual advice. He was deeply moved by the suffering around him and said: 'Have confidence; pray God to help me and lace-making shall not perish.'

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He journeyed to Toulouse and interceded with the Parliament on behalf of the Auvergnese lace-workers, and through his efforts the decree was revoked. He helped the lace-workers by enlisting the help and protection of the Spanish Jesuits who assisted them when they travelled across the Pyrenees to sell their fabrics. Prosperity and wealth returned to the lace-makers of Le Puy. They honoured the Jesuit Father as a patron saint of lace-making and the Roman Church canonized him as St François Regis.

CATHERINE DE MEDICI The Italian-born queen of Henry II of France, Catherine de Medici (1519-1589), is popularly accredited with the distinction of having laid the main foundations of the lace industry of France prior to Colbert. She took a practical interest in the lace schools and set a fashion for the use of lace. It is recorded that 'the girls and servants of her household consumed much time in making squares of *rezeuil*'. Her bed was draped with squares of *rezeuil* or *lacis*. An inventory of Catherine's possessions at her death showed that she possessed a coffer holding three hundred and eighty-one of such squares ready for mounting. In another coffer were five hundred and thirty-eight similar squares bearing designs of flowers, rosettes and nosegays.

About the year 1585, Queen Catherine persuaded with great bribes a Venetian designer named Vinciolo to settle in France. He was to make ruffs and gadrooned collars. The Queen had set a fashion for the Medici collar and she gave the Venetian the monopoly for selling ruffs and collars of this type.

VINCIOLO'S PATTERN BOOK Vinciolo collected a number of patterns suitable for ruffs. Under the patronage of a later Queen of France, Louise de Vaudemont, wife of Henry III, he published a pattern book which bore the date 1587. The title of this book was 'The singular and new designs and work for linen for use as patterns for all sorts of stitches and cut-works, lacis and others. Dedicated to the Queen. Newly invented to the profit and content of noble ladies and young ladies and other gentle spirits, *amateurs* of such art.'

He used the word *amateur* in its original sense of lover and derided the published works of his predecessors. In his preface he stated: 'Si les premiers ouvrages que vous avez vus ont engendré quelque fruit et utilité je m'assure que les miens en produiront davantage.'

For twenty years new editions of this work appeared, each one containing new designs. In his verbose style, Vinciolo declaimed in the preface: 'I have greatly desired to place before you, for works of a magnificent standard, the present designs, which I have kept back hidden and unknown until now, when I offer them with a cheerful heart to the French nation.' It may be that he deluded himself to some considerable degree on the extent of his originality. He safeguarded himself by owning that he had 'obtained from Italy certain rare and singular patterns and having originated a few to the best of my poor powers'. He was careful, however, to claim for himself full credit for his efforts. 'I think, friend and reader, that you will not ignore in any way the great and sedulous labour I must have expended in drawing and giving light to the larger quantity of most excellent patterns for needlework contained in this present book.'

OTHER PATTERN BOOKS Vinciolo's book was used in many countries, but it is just to reflect on the pattern books which appeared in France before his publication. Francisque Pelegrin published a pattern book in Paris in the reign of Francis I. Six pattern books were published at Lyons. Two were dated 1549 and 1585. One of the undated books contained an elaborate design showing St Margaret holding a cross and defying a dragon. A pattern book published in Paris contained an interesting feature in the form of a ballade of twenty-eight lines written as a song for lace-makers.

VENETIAN INFLUENCE IN FRANCE Catherine de Medici deepened Italian influence in France. Although the influence of the city was declining, Venice was still the prime centre of fashion and luxury. The raised points of Venice were still coveted as were also her laces of gold and silver thread which were used as trimmings for cloaks, mantles, hats and boots. Queen Catherine encouraged vast expenditure on dress hoping that splendour of apparel and of equipment would blind the French nation to the poverty of its political condition.

At this stage, the lace made in France was a close replica of that made in Italy. It remained for the grand age of Louis XIV to nurture, to a glorious florescence, laces that rivalled closely those made in Venice but which were characterized by a beauty which was wholly French.

SUMPTUARY LAWS REGULATING THE USE OF LACE Sumptuary edicts were passed by the French government restricting the extravagant use of lace. Ten were proclaimed during the last half of the sixteenth century, but it is apparent that they were not enforced strictly. The nobles followed the royal example and adorned themselves with vast quantities of gold lace. When further edicts were passed in the opening years of the seventeenth century, Henry IV made obeisance to austerity and wore a 'doublet of taffety without trimming or lace'. Sully may have been responsible for this trend in fashion, for he waged war incessantly on the importation of lace. 'It is necessary', he said, 'to rid ourselves of our neighbours' goods which deluge the country.' No French subject was to transact with a foreign lace merchant save under pain of corporal punishment.

THE MEDICI RUFF Under the Medicis, the ruff was a special object of fashion interest. Henry II had favoured it to conceal a scar, and the fashion continued to prevail in the reigns of his sons. At first the ruff was of a simple type but later it was gadrooned and trimmed with geometric patterns of needlepoint and cut-work. The influence of the Flemish and Dutch painters penetrated into lace designs.

The ruffs worn in the French court grew to a tremendous size and became objects of derision for the caricaturists of the time. Pierre de l'Estoille in his *Journal de Henri III*, wrote: 'Ces beaux mignons portoient . . . leurs fraizes de chemise de toute d'atour empesez et longnes d'un demi-pied, de façon qu'à voir leurs testes dessus leurs fraizes, il sembloit que ce fut le chef de Saint Jean dans un plat.' The journalist spoke truly when he said that a man's head complete with ruff resembled the head of John the Baptist on a charger. So

THE ROMANCE OF LACE

cumbersome were the ruffs that the wearers could not eat in comfort. It is recorded that Reine Margot was obliged to eat her soup with a spoon which had a handle two feet long because she wore a ruff which was a monstrosity.

THE FALLING BAND In the reign of Henry IV and his successor, Louis XIII, the pleated ruffs were replaced by wide flat collars made of Dutch linen. These corresponded to the 'falling band' of the English Stuart court. Men wore these collars trimmed with wide laces which fell down below their shoulders. Women wore these collars raised fan-fashion behind their heads. Portraits of Marie de Medici show that she adopted this fashion. Sharp indentations were now replaced by smoothly scalloped edges. Geometric motifs gave way to floral designs. Expanding tulips were popular as units in these patterns.

EXTRAVAGANT USE OF LACE The use of lace in France was now greater than ever before. It was used to trim male and female costume. Inventories refer to lace-trimmed great collars, coats, cuffs, gloves, breeches, doublets and boots. Furniture was swathed in lace. Beds had head- and foot-boards trimmed with this fabric. There were lace canopies and lace-trimmed pillars supporting them. An inventory relating to the effects of Charles de Bourbon, 1613, and that of his wife, Countess of Soissons, refers to a bed decked 'with a pavilion of linen hangings, with bands of net made up of squares, the head-board covered with similar material, the inside of the canopy, the covers for the pillars, three curtains and a head curtain, a sheet of similar linen with a band of *rezeuil*, a state coverlet, all bordered with lace'.

Windows were trimmed with lace. Not only the windows of houses were decorated in this way but those of the great coaches and carriages that travelled along the new high-roads.

PICTORIAL RECORDS OF CURRENT FASHIONS Engravings of the time record faithfully the use of lace. Quicherat, in his *Histoire de Costume en France*, declared: 'There is hardly a specimen of Abraham Bosse's work which does not display the forms of collars, frills or cuffs' worn at the time. In his picture entitled 'The Prodigal Son', he portrayed the mother welcoming home her repentant son and encouraging his faltering footsteps onward by holding out to him a collar decorated with fine needlepoint lace. His picture of Dives showed him sitting at a table adorned with lace, and that of the Foolish Virgins showed them weeping into lace-trimmed handkerchiefs. Another of his pictures showed the 'Interior of a Lace Shop in the Galerie du Palais'. When Louis XIII, with religious severity, banned the use of lace, Abraham Bosse made a series of caricatures purporting to relate to the effects of the law. One picture was entitled 'Courtier Obeying the Last Edict', and showed a dandy of the time hurling his lace-trimmed costume on to a chair and dressing himself in a severe habit. His valet stood near, ready to lock away the beautiful clothes. A companion picture was that entitled 'A Lady of Fashion Discarding her Laces', and showed a lady placing elaborate laces in a coffer.

The edicts must have been accepted with deep regret, for France was deeply enamoured at this period with *Point de Venise*. All other varieties of lace had fallen into disfavour and France in general voiced the opinion of Seguin, a devotee of Venetian point. 'If perfection can exist on earth, it has been attained by the makers of lace and this specially applies to the Venetian lace of this period.'

HENRY OF NAVARRE FOSTERS INDUSTRY IN FRANCE Henry IV realized that the use of lace had been carried to an excess. Anxious to foster home industry and craftsmanship, he established the Royal Tapestry Manufactory in 1607. In 1598 he caused to be planted in the Bois de Boulogne fifteen thousand mulberry trees in order to foster the silk industry. Sully, his austere Huguenot minister, showed himself intolerant of the King's enterprise. He said to his sovereign: 'You want iron and soldiers and not laces and silks to trick out fops.'

IGNORING OF THE 'CODE MICHAUD' Edicts continued to be proclaimed in succession against the extravagances of the nobles. When Louis XIII married Anne of Austria, Italian laces were discarded in favour of Spanish laces, and royal personages showed an ill example of the austerity which they urged on the populace. The most celebrated of the proclamations issued was that known as the *Code Michaud* which classified and exorcised details of dress. It was greeted with derision and never came into effect. Satirists and caricaturists found in these edicts fertile ground. 'Le Courtisan Réformé, suivant l'Édit de l'année 1633' showed a young nobleman dressed in a plain costume looking disconsolately at a box of prohibited laces.

Il me semble pourtant à mes yeux
Qu'avec de l'or et la dentelle
Je m'ajuste encore bien mieux.

An indication of the extravagance of the nobility in possessing lace fabrics is apparent from the fact that Cinq Mars, one of the leading nobles of the court of Louis XIII, left at his death three hundred sets of collars and cuffs trimmed with lace.

At the end of the reign of Louis XIII there existed centres of the lace-making industry as distinct from those of embroidery. The reign of Louis XIV extending over sixty-eight years witnessed the development and apogee of French needlepoint.

The regency of Anne of Austria was a period of many sumptuary edicts, for the taste for fine lace had become grotesque. Boot tops, for instance, were voluminous, and the space between leather and limbs was filled with expensive lace ruffles. Mazarin was interested in fostering the new lace industry of France. When besieging a town he was engaged in buying laces from Italy and Flanders. These were intended as patterns for Point de France.

A sumptuary edict prohibiting the use of foreign laces was passed in 1660 on the eve of the marriage of Louis XIV. Gala dresses trimmed with guipures, Genoa Points and *Points Coupés* had been bought in readiness. The edict decreed strict regulations concerning the wearing of French laces. Collars and cuffs of lace were given a year's grace and

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after that they were not to be worn at all. They were to be replaced by linen collars which might be trimmed with lace of one inch in width and of French manufacture.

The edict was received with bitterness for the French people had prepared in readiness for the royal wedding. Sganarelle, in Molière's *École des Maris*, commented on this edict:

Oh! trois et quatre fois béni soit cet édit,
Par qui des vêtements de luxe est interdit!
Les peines des maris ne seront plus si grandes,
Et les femmes auront un frein à leurs demandes.
Oh! que je sais au roi bon gré de ses décrets!
Et que, pour le repos de ces mêmes maris,
Je voudrais bien qu'on fît de la coquetterie
Comme de la guipure et de la broderie!

The ordinance of 1660 was not observed strictly. Others followed prohibiting in particular points of Venice and Genoa.

SATIRIC VERSES IN ANSWER TO SUMPTUARY EDICTS In answer to the edict of 1660 a group of fashionable ladies meeting at the Hôtel de Rambouillet wrote, in 1661, the celebrated *Révolte des Passements*. This set of satirical verses has been treasured through the centuries because of its technical interest, for every lace of established importance at that period was mentioned, together with details of its characteristics and beauty.

The various laces are represented as meeting together, united by a fear that, after the recent enactment, lace as a luxury of dress was doomed to extinction. They agree to revolt and assemble in battle dress. Each vies with the other in courageous speech but all run away when opposed. *Une grande Cravate* rallies them and calls over a muster roll of *Escadrons de Niège*, *Dentelles de Moresse*, *Dentelles de Havre*, *Points d'Espagne*, *Escrues*, etc. At the approach of artillery, all surrender and are condemned. The points are to be made into tinder for the use of the King's Mousquetaires and the laces are to be converted into paper. *Passements*, *Gueuses* and silk laces are to be made into cordage and sent to the galleys. The gold and silver laces are to be burnt alive. Through the intercession of Love, '*le petit dieu plein de finesse*' the laces are pardoned and restored to court favour. The literary worth of the verses was topical and transitory; but, to collectors of lace, they have been of incalculable worth as determining the names, dates and relative values of the laces of the seventeenth century.

When Louis XIV married the Spanish Infanta, Spanish lace, and in especial black lace, came into favour. It was worn with gowns and with doublets of gold and silver brocade. For a period the gold and silver points of Spain and Aurillac rivalled the thread needlepoint of Italy and Flanders.

Royal edicts encouraging the French to wear the coarser laces of their own country having failed, the French government was now faced with the expediency of establishing other means of consolidating within the country the vast sums dispersed annually by the wearers of lace.

COLBERT'S ACTIVE INTEREST IN THE LACE INDUSTRY OF FRANCE Colbert, Louis XIV's minister of finance, determined to develop the lace industry of France to such a degree that it could produce fabrics which could rival those produced in Italy and Flanders. He employed some of the best lace-workers of these countries and established them as teachers in French centres where a tradition of lace-making already existed. Pupils, already familiar with needle or bobbins, proved apt. Among these early centres were Sedan, Rheims, Le Quesnoy, Alençon, Aurillac, Arras and Loudun.

ALENÇON Colbert set up a lace factory at Lonray, near Alençon, and appointed as manager Madame Gilbert. Under her were thirty forewomen who had come from Venice. The work made at this centre pleased the King who declared it to be superior to the needlepoint of Venice. The fabric came to be known as *Point de France*. In 1665 the manufacture was founded on royal ordinance and the decree stated 'that there shall be established at Guesney, Arras, Rheims, Sedan, Château-Thierry, Loudun, Alençon, Aurillac, etc., manufactures of all kinds of works with thread, either with needle or upon pillow, like those made in Venice, Genoa, Ragusa, and they will be called Points de France'.

ARGENTAN AND THE CHÂTEAU DE MADRID Encouraged by the success of Lonray, Colbert set up another lace factory at Argentan, and at the Château de Madrid in the Bois de Boulogne. This latter specialized in work for the royal household, and the patterns for the fabric made here were designed by the foremost artists of the time.

THE LACE FACTORIES PROSPER These factories proved lucrative and Colbert is reputed to have said to Louis XIV: 'There will always be fools enough to purchase the manufactures of France, though France should be prohibited from purchasing those of other countries.' Louis rewarded Colbert for his efforts in fostering home industries by making him chief director of trade and manufactures in the kingdom, a position which he filled with zeal. There was a remarkable increase in the number of lace-workers and the lace industry of France flourished.

The laces now made in France had definite local characteristics. They had emerged from the collective type known as *Point de France* and were far removed from *Point de Venise* which they had at first copied. Soon the laces of France supplanted the Italian laces they had once rivalled. The price of French lace made it somewhat prohibitive but the demand for it continued to increase. Little wonder, therefore, that Colbert observed: 'Fashion is to France what the mines of Peru were to Spain.'

COLBERT'S PROTECTIVE POLICY During the infant stages of the lace industry France pursued a protective policy, ensuring the healthy growth of her enterprise. All foreign laces were forbidden. A special decree forbade 'the production, sale or use of any kind of thread point laces made with the needle, whether old or modern, except those made in the Royal manufacturies'.