

CHATS ON
OLD LACE &
NEEDLEWORK

MRS LOWES

CHATS ON OLD LACE
AND NEEDLEWORK

BOOKS FOR COLLECTORS

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MARY SIDNEY, COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE.

MARY SIDNEY, COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE.

Born about 1555. Died 1621.

Buried at Salisbury Cathedral.

Painted probably by Marc Gheeraedts.

"Underneath this sable hearse
Lies the subject of all verse.
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother,
Death! ere thou hast slain another
Fair and learn'd and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee!"

CHATS ON OLD LACE
AND NEEDLEWORK

BY
MRS. LOWES

ILLUSTRATED

LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
ADELPHI TERRACE
MCMVIII

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P R E F A C E

THIS little book has been compiled to emphasise and accentuate the distinct awakening of English women and Needlecraft Artists to the beauty of **the ancient laces and embroideries** which we own in **the magnificent historic collections** in our great public Museums.

We are fortunate in possessing in the Victoria and Albert Museum monumental specimens of both lace and needlework. Among the sumptuous lace collection there are most perfect specimens of the art of lace-making, and priceless pieces of historic embroidery made when England was first and foremost in the world in the production of Ecclesiastical embroidery.

The lace collection particularly, without compare, is illustrative of all that is best in this delightful art, being specially rich in magnificent pieces that can never be again obtained. These have mostly been given, or left as legacies, to the Museum by collectors and enthusiasts who have made this fascinating hobby the quest of their lives. In

addition to the collection formed by the generosity of the donors, the authorities have exercised a very catholic judgment in selecting the choicest and most illustrative examples of the lace-maker's craft.

In the section devoted to embroideries, more particularly English (as it is with our own country's needlework I propose to deal), nothing more glorious in the Nation's art records can be found than the masterpieces of embroidery worked by the great ladies, the abbesses and nuns of the Mediæval period. In almost every other branch of art England has been equalled, if not excelled, by Continental craftsmen; but in this one instance, up to the Reformation, English work was sought after far and wide, and as *opus Anglicum* formed part of church furnishing and priestly vestments in every great cathedral in Italy, Spain, and France.

It cannot be too soon realised that, as with old furniture, porcelain, and silver, much of the finest embroideries of England, and a vast quantity of the ancient laces of Italy, France, and Belgium are being slowly but surely carried off to the New World. American dollars are doing much to rob not only the Old Country of the fairest flowers of her garden, but the Continent of their finest and best examples of the genius of the past. The Vanderbilts and the Astors, among others, possess immense fortunes in lace, whilst that omnivorous collector Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan gives fabulous sums for any fine old relic of embroidery. Many pieces of both classes of needlecraft have found a permanent home in the

Metropolitan Museum of New York, and are lost for ever to the English student.

It is, therefore, a pleasant duty to add my little quota of information to the study of these fascinating and exquisite branches of fine art which so specially appeal to all women by their dainty grace and delightful handicraft. I hope I may arouse some little enthusiasm in my countrywomen in the study of the past glories of both subjects, and in the possibility of once again becoming first and foremost in the latter branch.

I beg to acknowledge the pleasure and help I have received from the perusal of the late Mrs. Bury Palliser's exhaustive "History of Lace," and Lady Alford's "History of Needlework," and Dr. Rock's invaluable books on "Ecclesiastical Embroidery."

EMILY LEIGH LOWES.

HILLCREST,
BRIXTON HILL,
S.W.

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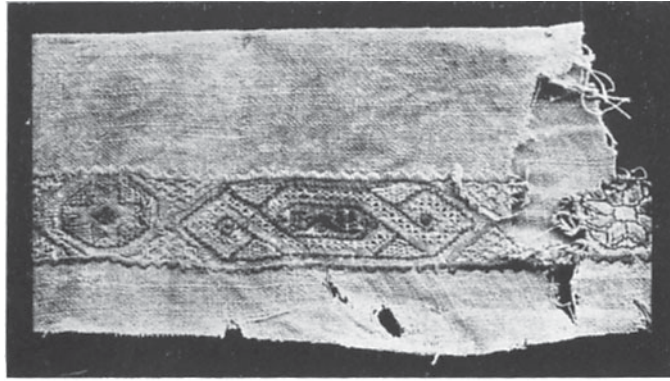
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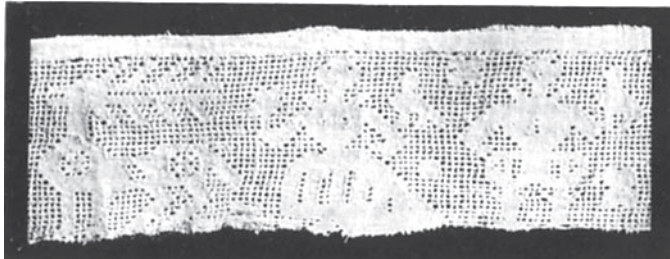
I

**A BRIEF
HISTORY
OF LACE**



EGYPTIAN CUT AND DRAWN WORK.

Found in a tomb in Thebes.



OLD ITALIAN "CUTWORKE."

(*Author's Collection.*)

CHATS ON OLD LACE



I

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LACE

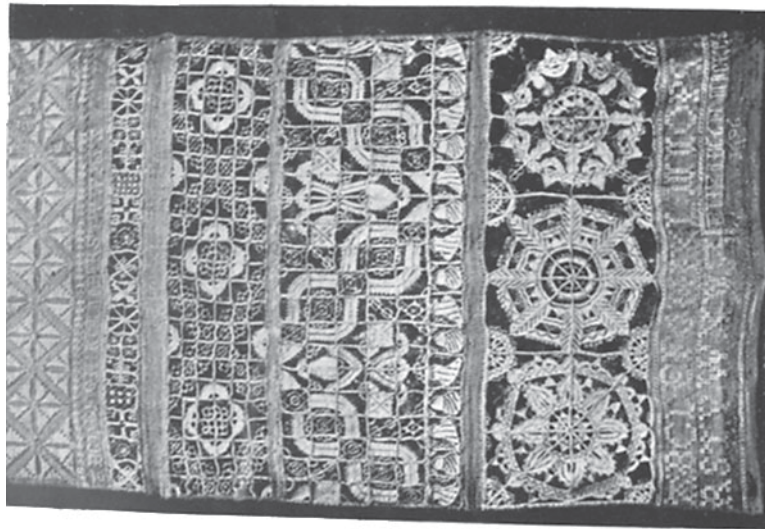
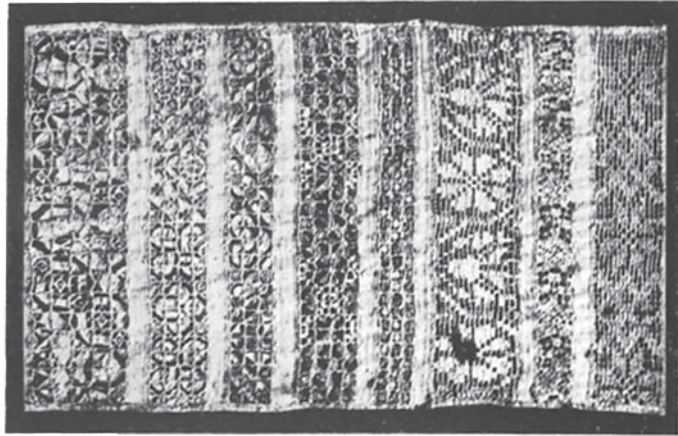
Early vestiges in Egypt—Lace found in St. Cuthbert's Tomb (685 A.D.)—Drawn Thread and Cutworks—Venetian Lace—Flanders Lace—French Laces—English Lace.

IN every other art or craft we can search the history of ages and find some vestiges or beginnings among the earlier civilisations. Possibly owing to the exquisite fragility of Lace, there is a complete absence of data earlier than that of Egypt. The astonishing perfection in art handicrafts of all descriptions which we find in China many hundreds of years before the Christian era shows no vestiges of a manufacture of lace; but, in the tombs of ancient Egypt, garments have been discovered with the edges frayed and twisted into what we may call a primitive lace, and in some of the Coptic embroideries threads have been drawn out at intervals and replaced with those of coloured wools, making an uncouth but

striking design. Netting must have been understood, as many of the mummies found at Thebes and elsewhere are discovered wearing a net to hold or bind the hair; and also, a fine network, interspersed with beads, is often discovered laid over the breast, sometimes having delightful little blue porcelain deities strung amongst their meshes.

These early vestiges, however, are in no way representative of the later exquisite fabrics which we now know and recognise as Lace. Far nearer to them, as an art, are the early gold and silver laces of simple design found amongst the tombs of Mycenæ and Etruria, and those of a later date—*i.e.*, the laces of gold used to decorate the vestments of the clergy, and the simple but sumptuous gowns of the Middle Ages. Along with the stole and maniple of St. Cuthbert, which are now at Durham Cathedral, was found a piece of detached gold lace, which must have formed a separate trimming. St. Cuthbert died in 685 A.D., and was buried at Lindisfarne, his body being afterwards transferred to Durham to save it from the desecration of the Danes who were ravaging the land. Over the body was a cloth, or sheet, which was worked in cutworks and fringes, showing that even at so early a date initial efforts at lace-making had been attempted.

As far as we can gather, the earliest endeavour at lace-making originated with the drawing of threads in linen fabrics, then dividing the existing threads into strands, and working over them, in various fanciful designs, either with a buttonhole stitch or simply a wrapping stitch. Exactly this method is used at



EARLY ENGLISH SAMPLERS, SHOWING CUT AND DRAWN WORK.

(S.K.M. Collection.)

the present day, and is known as hem-stitching and fine-drawing. A later development suggested, apparently, cutting away of some of the threads, their place being supplied with others placed angularly or in circles. Many delightful examples of the work are to be seen in our Old English samplers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and even so recently as thirty years ago specimens of this primitive and early lace-making were to be seen in the quaint "smock-frock" of the English farm labourer, a garment which, though discarded by the wearer in favour of the shoddy products of the Wakefield looms, is now deemed worthy of a place in the collector's museum.

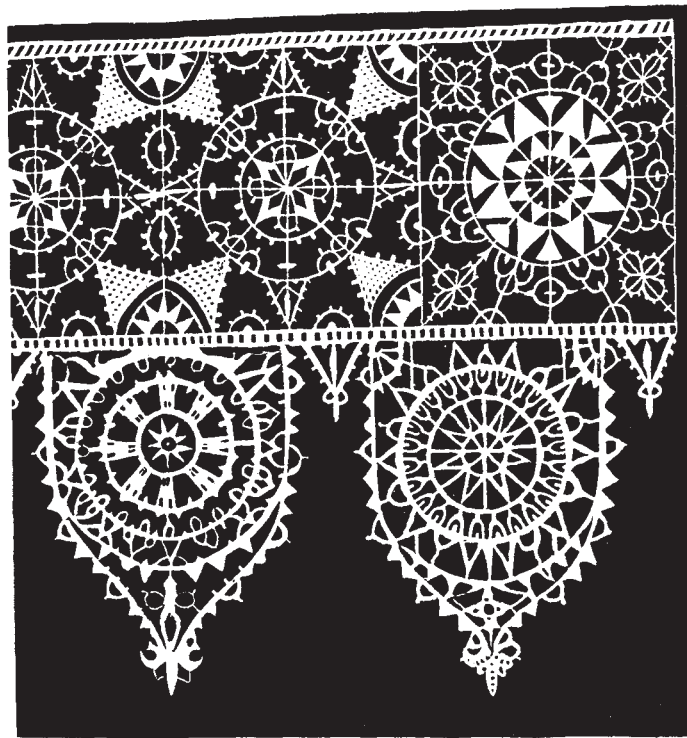
It required little effort of fancy and skill, by the simple process of evolution and survival of the fitting, to expand this plan of cutting away threads and replacing them with others to doing away *entirely* with existing and attached threads, and supplying the whole with a pattern of threads laid down on some geometric fashion on a backing of parchment, *working over* and *connecting* the patterns together, and afterwards liberating the entire work from the parchment, thereby making what was known at the time as "punto in aria," or working with the needle-point in the air, literally "*out of nothing*."

Strange as this may appear, this was the origin, in the fifteenth century, of the whole wonderful fabric which afterwards became known as "Point lace," which altered and even revolutionised dress, made life itself beautiful, and supplied the women of Europe with a livelihood gained in an easy, artistic, and

delightful manner. It also, however, led to ruinous expenditure in every country, at times requiring special edicts to restrain its extravagance, and even the revival of the old Sumptuary laws to repress it.

The earliest known lace, and by far the most popular with all classes, was "Reticella," which was the first kind evolved on the "punto in aria" principle. Until the discovery of an easy and simple way of decorating the linen ruffs and cuffs of the period these had been quite plain, as many contemporary portraits show. Afterwards the fashion of trimming garments of all descriptions with the pointed wiry edges of Venice became a mania, and led to imitation in almost every country of Europe. The convents turned out an immense quantity, thereby adding enormously to the incomes of their establishments. It is assumed that it is to the nuns of Italy we owe the succeeding elaboration of Reticella, "Needlepoint," the long, placid hours spent in the quiet convent gardens, lending themselves to the refinement and delicacy which this exquisite fabric made necessary. However this may be, it is certain that in a few years the rise and development of Needlepoint lace-making was little short of phenomenal, and every convent was busy making it and teaching their poorer lay sisters the art. Some of the wonderful Old Point of this period is absolutely finer than the naked eye can see, a powerful magnifying glass being necessary to discern how the marvellous "toile" or "gimpe" is made.

A little later, but still contemporary with the introduction of Venetian lace, a Pillow lace was being



ORIGINAL PATTERNS DESIGNED BY VINCIOLA.

Seventeenth Century.

made in Flanders, the origin of which is not as yet discovered. It is possible that the fine flax thread grown and manufactured there may, at the time of weaving, have suggested a looser and more ornamental material, but that remains a matter of conjecture. There must, however, have been an interchange of examples, as about this time Pillow-made lace appeared in Italy, and led to the making of the Milanese and Genoese varieties, and Needlepoint motifs appeared amongst the woven network of Flanders.

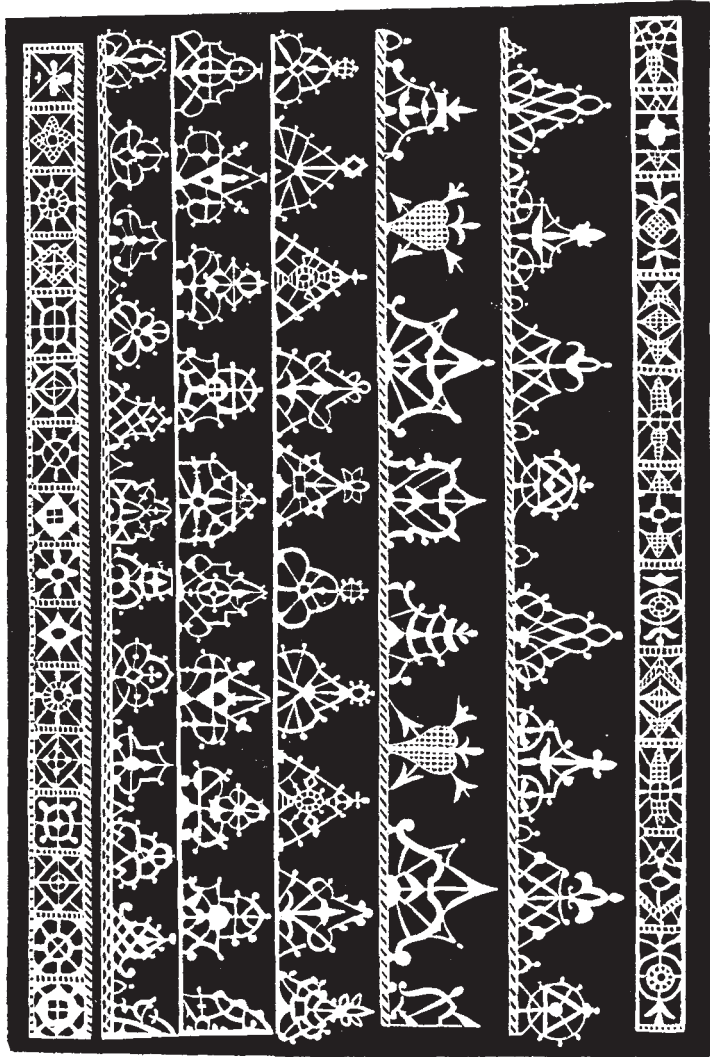
Lace, under the name of "Lacis," had been known in France from the time of Catherine de Medici, who patronised the manufacturers and used it lavishly. About 1585 she induced Federico di Vinciolo, a lace-maker and designer of Venice, to settle in France, and there the making of Venetian lace was attempted. A mere slavish imitation of the Venetian school resulted, and it was not until the age of the *Grande Monarque*, Louis XIV., that French lace rivalled that of Venice.

Colbert, the great French Minister, becoming alarmed at the enormous sums spent on Italian lace, determined to put a check to its importation; and, by forbidding its use, establishing lace schools near Alençon, and bribing Italian workers to come over as organisers and teachers, started the manufacture of lace on an extensive scale, the beautiful fabrics known as Point d'Alençon, Point d'Argentan, and Point d'Argentella being the result. It is frequently said that the last-named lace came from Genoa or Milan, but most of the present-day

authorities agree that this is one of the many fairy tales with which the passing of time has adorned the history of lace.

The persecution of the Protestants when the Huguenots fled to England, bringing with them their arts of silk-weaving and lace-making, led to the introduction of English lace. Devonshire apparently received a contingent of laceworkers quite distinct from those who settled in Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, and from the first stages showed far finer methods and designs. With the exception of "Old Honiton," England cannot boast of anything very fine, and even this is merely a meaningless meandering of woven tape-like design for the greater part. The lace of Buckinghamshire ranks, perhaps, lowest in the scale of lace products, its only merit being its extreme durability.

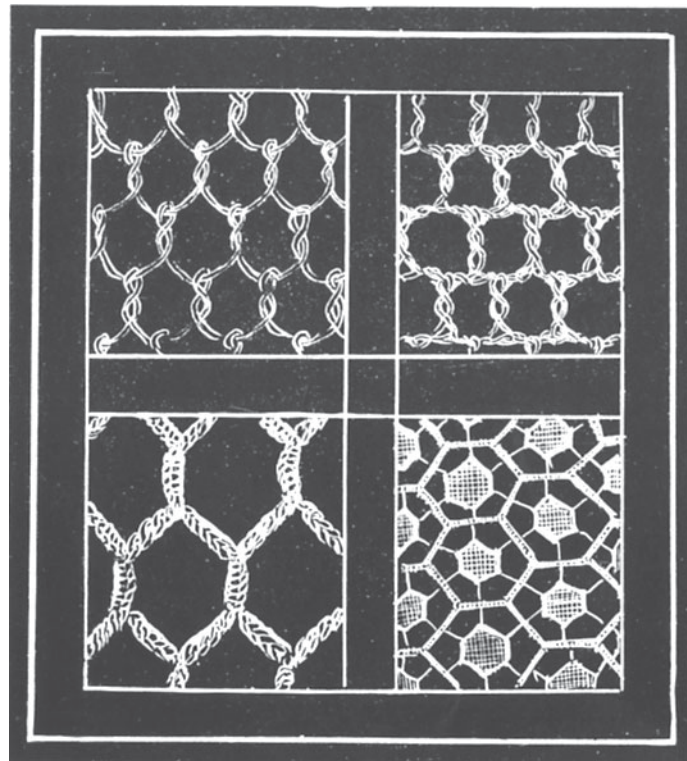
The laces of Ireland are of comparatively recent growth, and though in many instances exquisitely fine, do not as yet show much originality.



ORIGINAL PATTERNS DESIGNED BY VINCIOLOA.

II

THE ART OF
LACE-MAKING



NEEDLEPOINT RÉSEAUX.

No. 1.—Brussels.
No. 3.—Argentan.

No. 2.—Alençon.
No. 4.—Argentella.

II

THE ART OF LACE-MAKING

Needlepoint—Pillow Laces—Charts of various Réseaux—
Technical Terms.

LACE-MAKING naturally falls into two classes—the Needlepoint and Pillow varieties. In some laces, more especially of the Belgian class, there is a *mixed* lace, the “toile” or pattern, being worked with the needle, and the ground, or “réseau,” made round it on the pillow and *vice versa*.

To the first-named class we must assign the Needlepoint laces of Italy and the exquisite hand-made laces of France. To the latter order belong the early Macramé lace, called “Punto a Groppo”; the Genoese and Milanese laces of Italy; Mechlin and Brussels of Belgium; Valenciennes, Lille, and Chantilly of France; and the English laces of Honiton, Buckinghamshire, and Bedfordshire.

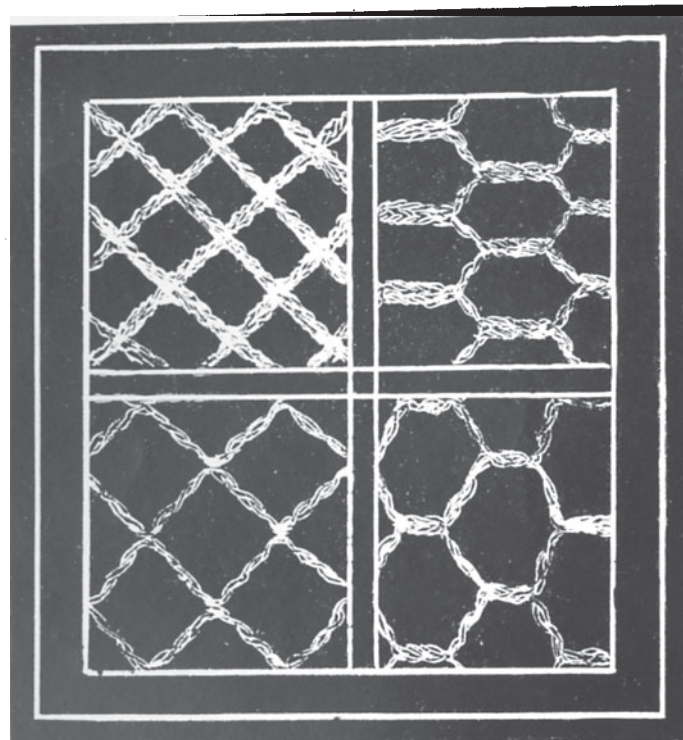
Pillow lace may be easily distinguished from Point lace, as in the former the ground, or réseau, is made of plaited threads. That of Point lace is composed of threads made by the use of the button-

hole stitch only, or, in the case of Alençon point, the mesh is worked in a special manner. The later laces, *i.e.*, those made during the last hundred years, have frequently a ground of machine lace, and thus, strictly speaking, are not lace at all, but only embroideries or appliqués. The machine-made ground can be distinguished by sense of touch alone. If we take a piece of hand-made net between the finger and thumb and slightly roll it, it will gather in a soft little roll, with the touch almost of floss silk. The machine-made net is hard, stiff, and wiry, and remains perceptibly so in this test. Also, the mesh of machine-made lace is as regular as though made with a fine machine fret-saw, that of hand-made lace being of varying sizes, and often following the pattern of the lace design.

The accompanying diagrams illustrates the various grounds, and will prove an infallible guide in distinguishing the points of difference between Point and Pillow lace.

Various special and technical terms are used in describing the method of making lace. Without burdening the reader too much, a few special terms must be explained.

Brides (literally "bridges").—These are the connections between the various parts of a lace design, both in Needle-point and Bobbin lace. In the former, they are made entirely of a strand or two of thread thrown across, and then buttonholed over, sometimes with tiny loops on the edges, and in Venetian lace often having minute stars worked upon them.



PILLOW RÉSEAUX.

No. 1.—V. Jenciennes.
No. 3.—Lille.

No. 2.—Brussels.
No. 4.—Mechlin.

Beading.—A tiny looped edge used to finish woven or Pillow-made lace.

Bobbins.—One of the essential parts of a Pillow worker's outfit. These are small, elongated bobbins made of ivory, bone, or wood, on which is wound the lace-maker's thread. Sometimes they have been made very ornamental with carving and other decorations, and frequently have "gingles," or a bunch of coloured beads attached to one end. The terms "Bobbin lace" and "Bone lace" are derived from these and are synonymous with "Pillow lace."

Cordonnet.—In most *Point* laces the design is outlined with a raised *cord* either worked over closely with buttonhole stitches, or made separately and then stitched down. The Cordonnet is one of the characteristic features of the raised Venetian points and the French laces of Alençon or Argentan.

Couronnes.—These are decorations of the Cordonnet especially noticeable in the raised Venetian laces, in which sometimes the lace is raised and worked upon no less than four separate times.

Dentelé.—Lace designed in scallop-form, chiefly used for border laces.

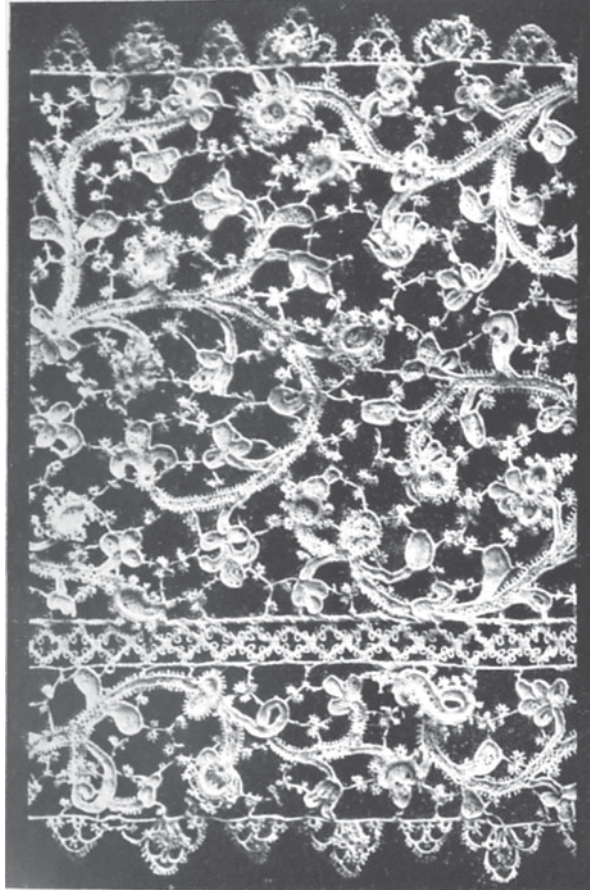
Fillings.—This word most easily explains the ordinary terms of "modes" and "à jours." The inner parts of the pattern in Needlepoint and Pillow lace are filled in with various ornamental stitches, showing an amazing variety of design. By these fillings various laces may often be distinguished, as each factory had its favourite "modes."

Grounds.—There are two varieties of grounds, one made with Brides, and the other either with Needle-

point or Pillow network. Other names for these are "Réseaux" and "Fonds." The method of making Needlepoint or woven ground often decides the date and class of the lace.

Guipure.—Literally a *tape lace*. The name however is applied to all Pillow laces having a tape-like design on them.

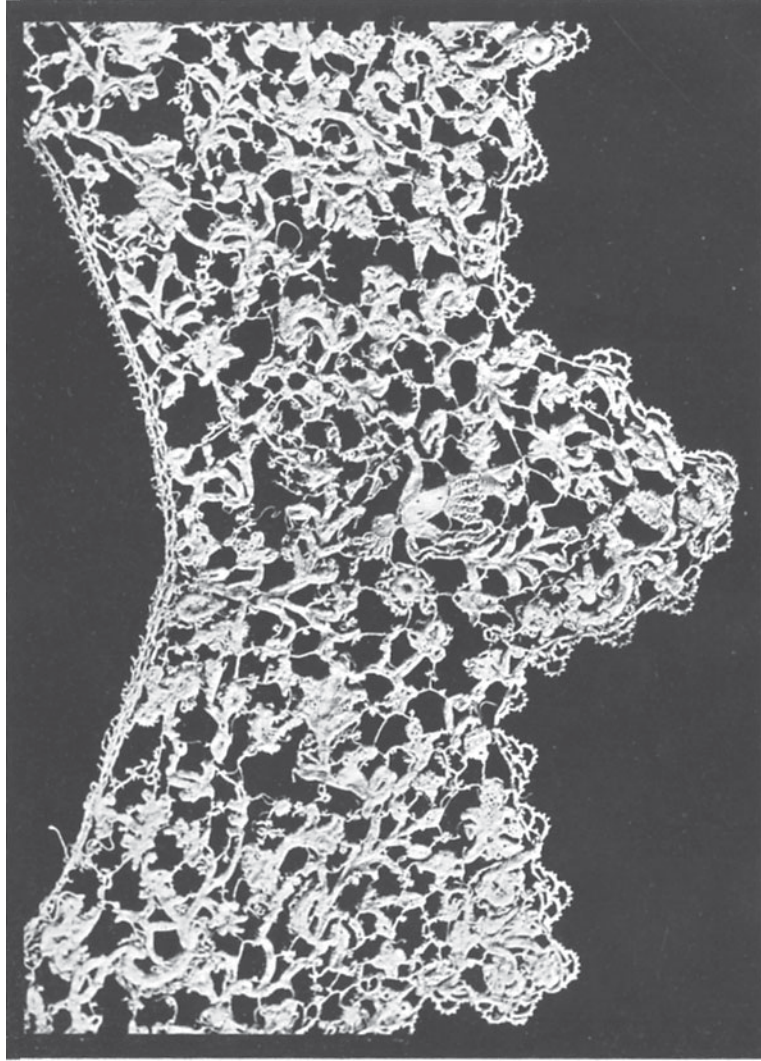
Picots.—The little loop used to ornament a plain bride or tie.



VENETIAN ROSE POINT.
(S.K.M. Collection.)

III

**THE LACES
OF ITALY**



VENETIAN ROSE POINT.
Seventeenth Century. (*Author's Collection.*)

III

THE LACES OF ITALY

The Venetian Laces

Venetian lace—"Rose Point"—"Point de Neige"—"Gros Point"—"Punto Tagliato a Foliami"—The South Kensington Collection.

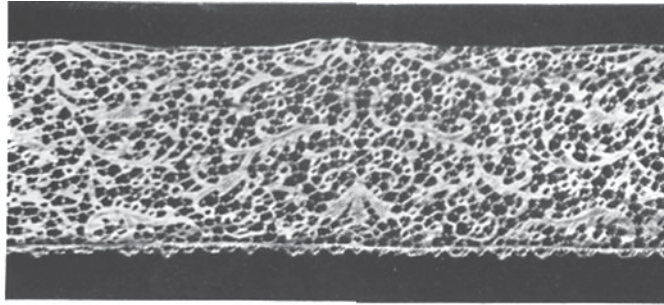
NEEDLEPOINT lace is made with needle and thread and principally in buttonhole stitches. A traced parchment pattern is procured, the outline made with a solitary thread stitched down to the parchment at frequent intervals. The thread is then worked over with fine buttonhole stitches; the modes or fillings have a fine network of threads stretched across, afterwards being buttonholed into a variety of designs. The edges are then again worked upon with loops or picots, and in "Rose Point" tiny stars or roses are worked on suitable parts of the design, sometimes the "roses" or "stars" being three in numbers, one poised upon the other. This is known as "Point de Neige" the whole surface of the lace being literally sprinkled with tiny stars

somewhat representing a fine snowfall. The design is then connected with fine "brides," these in their turn being dotted and purled with stars and loops. Most of this exquisite lace requires a powerful magnifying-glass to discern the intricacy of the work.

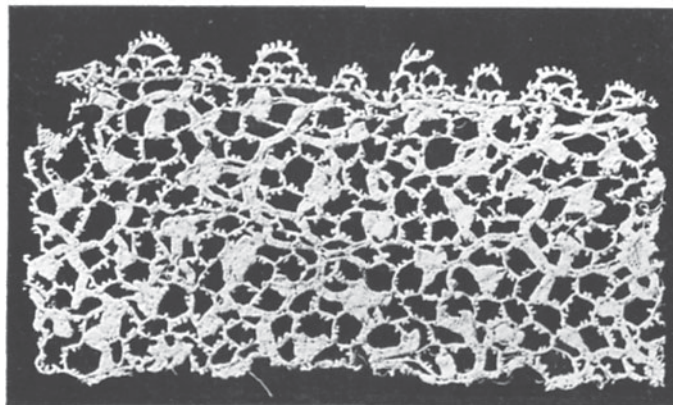
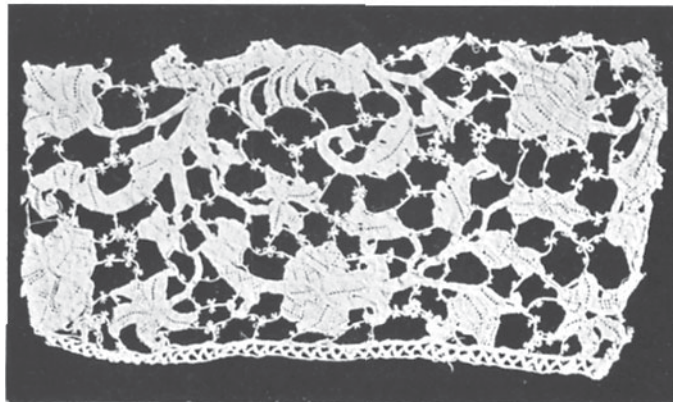
The finest lace of this variety was produced in the sixteenth century, the designs being bold, handsome, and purely Renaissance in type. That of the Louis Quatorze period shows the personal influence of his reign, frequently having tiny figures worked in the design. A collar in my possession has the Indian worshipping the sun (the King's glory was said to rival that of the sun) repeated in each scallop. This was a favourite design in the magnificent "Point de France" which was made during the long reign of Louis, under the management of Colbert.

It is absolutely certain that the laces known as Venetian Point originated in Italy. Pattern books still exist showing how the early Reticella developed into this magnificent lace. In the National Library at the South Kensington Museum, may be seen the very patterns designed by Vinciolo, Vicellio, and Isabella Parasole. These publications actually came from Venice, and being reproduced in France, Germany, Belgium, and England, quickly aroused immense enthusiasm, and lace-making spread far and wide, at first all other laces being mere imitations of the Venetian.

The chief varieties of the Venetian laces are known as Rose Point, Point de Neige, Gros Point de Venise (often erroneously attributed to Spain and called Spanish Point), and Point Plat de Venise. A much



CORALLINE POINT (VENETIAN).



POINT PLAT DE VENISE (FLAT VENETIAN).

(Author's Collection.)



MARIE DE MEDICIS WEARING THE MEDICIS COLLAR
TO DISPLAY VENETIAN LACES.

rarer variety is "Venetian point à réseau," which is the flat point worked round with a Needlepoint ground or mesh, the network following no proper order but being simply worked round the pattern and following its curves.

The chief characteristics of Venetian lace are the buttonhole Cordonnet, fine or thick according to the style of lace; the wonderful diversities of the fillings worked in buttonhole stitches; the elaborate decoration of the Cordonnet; and the starry effects of the brides or ties. In the flat Venetian Point there is no Cordonnet.

These Italian laces were admired and purchased by all the European countries, and the cities of Venice and Florence made enormous fortunes. The fashions of the day led to their extensive use, Marie de Medicis introducing the Medici collar trimmed with Venetian points specially to display them. At a little later period the collar became more falling and the heavier "Gros point" was used. Men and women alike wore lace-trimmed garments to an excessive degree, the collar and cuff trimmings being composed of wide Venetian lace and the silken scarf worn across the body being edged with narrower and finer lace.

The principal designs for the Venetian lace of all periods were scrolls of flowers conventionalised in the Renaissance taste of the time. The generic name for all laces of the finest period is "Punto tagliato a foliami." The laces of this time are now almost priceless. They are genuine works of art, worked slowly and patiently under the clear light of the Italian skies by women who were naturally artistic

and beauty loving, and who, while working the shining needle and fairy thread in and out of the intricacies of the design sang the pretty "Lace Songs" which may be heard at the Burano Lace School even now, although 200 or 300 years old. Many specimens of this exquisite lace are to be found in the South Kensington Museum, where the flounce given by Mrs. Bolckow at once explains the whole scheme of Venetian lace-making.

Such lace is not to be purchased now except at great price. The piece illustrated, see page 55, was only $1\frac{1}{8}$ yards in length, and was sold for £145 by one of our leading lacemen. Barely 5 yards of Venetian lace, only 2 inches wide and *in rags*, was sold at Debenham & Storr's in August, 1907, for £60; and even the smallest collar or a pair of cuffs runs well into £10.

Even in the days of its manufacture this lace commanded high prices. In the inventory of Queen Elizabeth's gowns we find such entries as—

"To 1 yard Double Italian Cut-worke, $\frac{1}{4}$ yd. wide.

55/4.

„ 3 yds. broad needlework lace of Italy, with purls. 50/- per yd."

James II. paid £29 for a cravat.



VERY FINE EXAMPLE OF "GROS POINT DE VENISE."

IV

THE LACES
OF GENOA
AND MILAN



LOUIS XIII. OF FRANCE, SHOWING VANDYKE LACE
COLLAR AND NARROWER LACE ON SCARF.

IV

THE LACES OF GENOA AND MILAN

Argentella wrongly called Italian—Genoese—Mixed laces—
Milanese—Macramé.

THESE are mostly Pillow laces, but fine Point laces were also manufactured in these towns. In the first-named town it is said that the lace called "Argentella" was made, but this is extremely doubtful, most authorities arguing that it was certainly a French lace made at the best period.

A very representative lace of Genoa is known as collar lace, very widely used for the falling collars of the Vandyke period. It was an exceedingly beautiful and decorative lace, and almost indestructible. Specimens of this lace can even now easily be secured at a fair price. The laces known as "Pillow Guipure" are somewhat open to question, the authorities at South Kensington Museum agreeing to differ, and labelling most of the specimens "Italian or Flemish." The finer pieces of this type of lace may safely be described as "Flemish," as the flax-thread grown and made in Flanders was much finer than that grown in the Southern Countries.

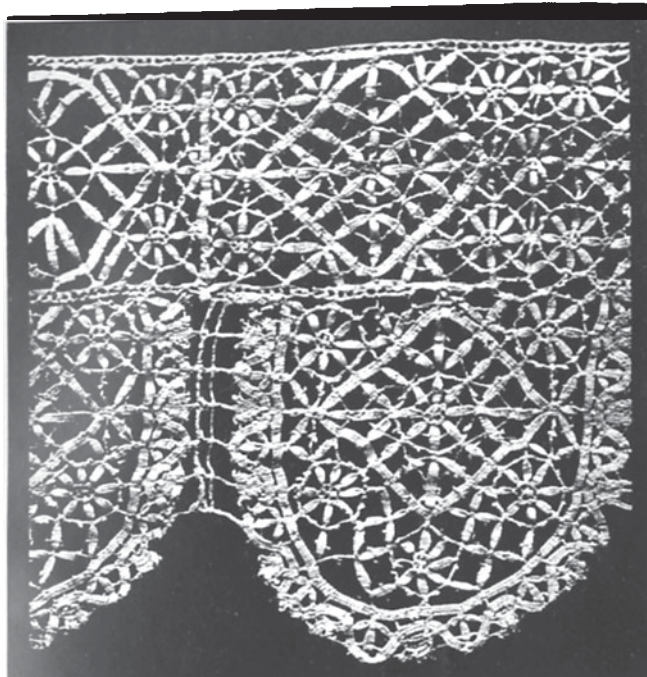
Much of the Genoa lace was worked in what we term "mixed lace," the design being woven on the pillow, and the ground and fillings worked in with the needle either in a network or by brides and picots. A much inferior kind is made with a woven braid or tape, the turns of the pattern being made in twisted or puckered braid, much after the style of the hand-made Point lace made in England some thirty years ago. This lace was known as "Mezzo Punto," though the French were discourteous enough to term it "Point de Canaille," as undoubtedly it was an imitation of the finer laces made in a loose, poor style.

The lace of Milan is unquestionably the most beautiful of the Pillow laces of Italy. While resembling the plaited lace of Genoa, there is more individuality about it. Much of this fine lace was worked for church vestments and altar cloths. Various heraldic devices are frequently introduced, surrounded with elegant scroll designs, the whole being filled up with woven *réseau*, the lines of which are by no means regular, but are made to fill in the interstices.

Yet another Italian lace is known as

Punto a Groppo, or Macramé.

No doubt this was the earliest form of woven lace, and, indeed, it may claim an origin as early as the first garments worn by mankind. In the earliest remains of antiquity a *fringe* often decorates the edges of garments, curtains, and floor-covering, and seems to be a natural and fitting finish to what would otherwise be a hard, straight line. In the

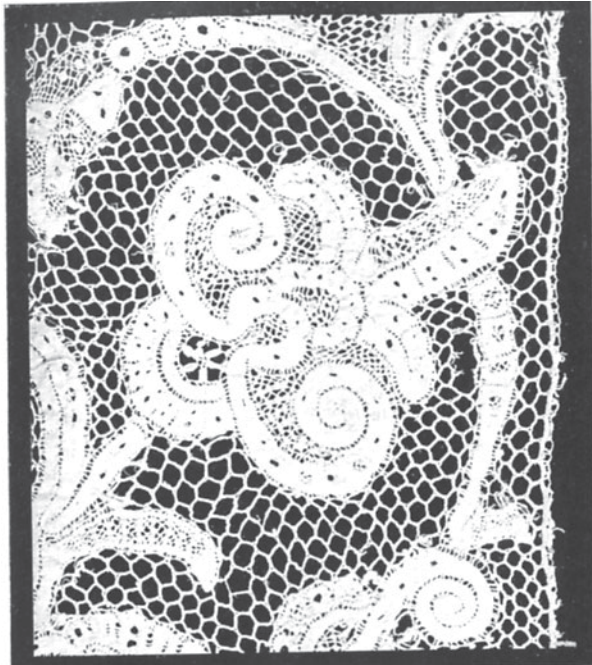


GENOESE LACE.
Sixteenth or Seventeenth Century.
(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

THE LACES OF GENOA AND MILAN 65

various Assyrian and Egyptian monuments this is noted again and again.

Some of the sixteenth-century pieces which we possess show simply an elaboration of the knotted fringe, while much of the later work is exceptionally fine. The work is so well known, owing to its revival during the last thirty years in a coarse form, that it needs little description. Its use, even at its best period, was confined to household use, for which purpose it seems particularly adapted.



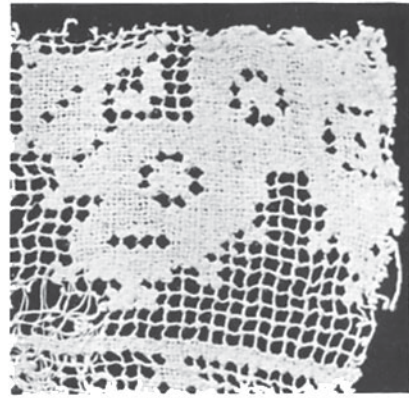
MILANESE LACE.
(Author's Collection.)

V

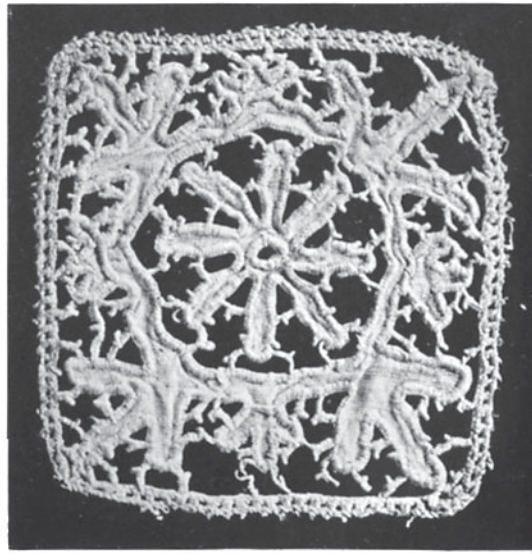
**THE LACES
OF FRANCE**



"CUT-WORKE."



LACIS.



OLD ITALIAN AND FRENCH CUT AND DRAWN WORK AND "LACIS."

(Author's Collection.)

V

THE LACES OF FRANCE

The Needlepoint Laces of France

Catherine de Medici's collection of "Lacis"—Establishment of lace-making by Colbert—"Point de France"—"Point d'Alençon"—"Point d'Argentan"—Modern reproduction of these at Burano, Italy.

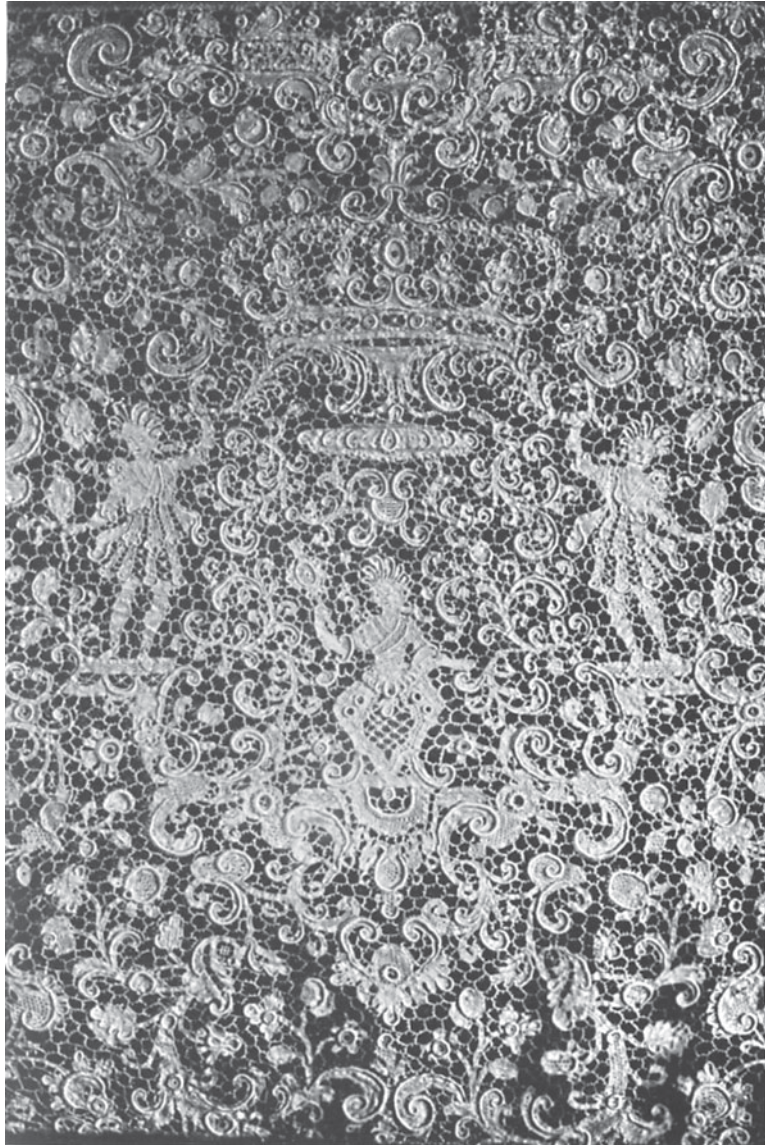
FRANCE in the sixteenth century, as always, led the van of fashion. Lace appears to have been extensively used long before its apotheosis at the Court of Louis le Grand, otherwise Louis XIV. Catherine de Medici patronised the manufacture of "*Lacis*," which was merely darned netting, more or less fine. At this time "Lacis" and "Cut-worke" were practically all that was known or used. Bed-hangings, curtains, and furniture-coverings were covered with alternate squares of lacis and cutwork. Afterwards the *Reticella* laces of Italy were imported and had an immense vogue, but it was not until the artistically glorious time of Louis XIV. that an attempt was made to encourage a manufacture of French laces.

Colbert, the astute Minister of Louis XIV., became

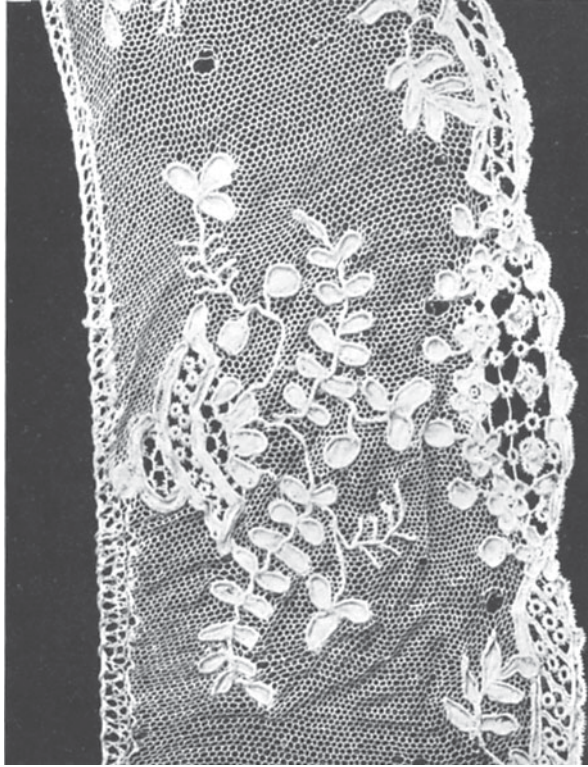
alarmed at the immense sums of money which went out of the country to purchase the laces of Venice, and, by means of bribing the best workers of the Venetian schools, he induced them to settle at L'Onray, near Alençon. In 1665 he had so far succeeded that lace rivalling that of Venice was being produced. The Venetians became alarmed in their turn (as, indeed, they had need to be) and issued an edict, ordering the lace-workers to return forthwith, or, failing this, the nearest relative would be imprisoned for life, and steps would be taken to have the truant lace-worker *killed*. If, however, he or she returned, complete forgiveness would be extended, and work found them *for life* at handsome remuneration. History does not tell us the result of this decree, but it evidently failed to destroy the lace manufacture of France.

At first the lace manufactured at Alençon received the name of "Point de France," and was absolutely indistinguishable from that of Venice. Its magnificence of design, indeed, may be said to have exceeded anything before attempted. The introduction of tiny figures was attributable to the overwhelming personality of Louis XIV., and was symbolical of his magnificent sway and far-reaching influence. In the illustration, page 55, an especially fine specimen of the lace, Madame de Montespan is seen seated under the crown, two small Indians are on either side; a tree bearing flags and trophies completes this tribute to the genius of the lace-makers and the splendour of the Court.

The name "Point de France" is given to all lace



“POINT DE FRANCE.”
(The property of Lady Kenmare.)



POINT D'ALENÇON.
(*Author's Collection.*)

made from its commencement by Colbert's direction until about 1678, when the lace-workers, perhaps forgetting the traditions of the Venetian school, developed a style of their own and the work became more distinctly French, being more delicate, finer in substance, the patterns clearer and more defined. The importation also of the finer flax thread from Flanders brought the more exquisite Pillow lace of Brussels to the notice of the French lace-workers. The French, as a nation, have always been foremost in seizing upon new ideas and adapting them to their own artistic requirements. In this instance the result was admirable, and it gave to the world, not the finest lace, as it was impossible to surpass the earliest Venetian Point laces, but certainly the next lace in order of merit, "Point d'Alençon." The chief characteristic of the lace is the fine, clear ground, the stiff Cordonnet outlining the pattern, and the exquisite patterns in the "jours" or fillings.

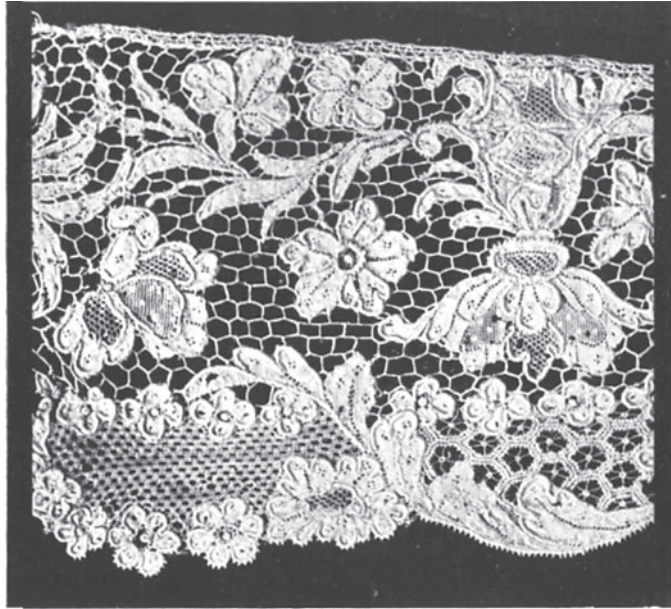
The cordonnet of Alençon is the only one which has horsehair for its foundation. A strand of hair is carefully stitched down to the edges and is button-holed over with the finest thread, and is said, although giving the lace quite a character of its own, to have been the cause of much of its destruction, as, in washing, the hair contracts and curls. It will be noticed also that the ground is worked in strips, *shortways of the lace of less than an inch in length*, afterwards being stitched together in what is known as "fine joining." So elaborate was the original Point d'Alençon that no less than eighteen workers were

engaged on one single piece. Later the number was reduced to twelve, when the patterns became less ornate.

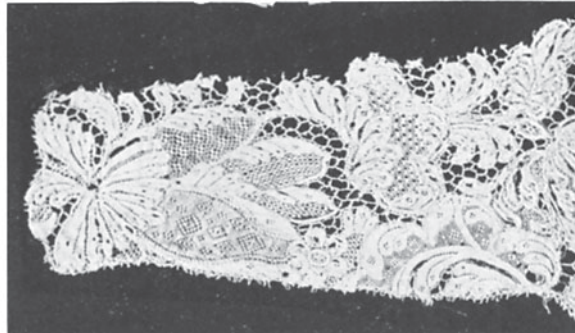
Although the factory of Alençon existed well into the early nineteenth century, the style of lace gradually deteriorated, until it is now non-existent! The lace made during the long reign of Louis XIV. is considered by far the finest and best, showing both grandeur of style and pattern and exquisite workmanship. Under Louis XV. the lace was equally well made, but the patterns followed the Rococo designs which were now introduced into all other decorative work, while in the reign of the ill-fated Louis XVI. it went completely out of fashion, Marie Antoinette affecting a much simpler style of lace. The Revolution finally caused the complete overthrow of Alençon lace, as of all fine art work in France. An attempt was made by Napoleon I. to revive it, but its glories had passed, and the hands of the workers had lost their cunning, the result being known as the worst type of lace, stiff and ugly in design and coarse of execution.

"Point d'Argentan."

This lace is practically the same as Alençon with a variation of ground, which, to the uninitiated, appears coarse. A magnifying glass, however, will speedily dispel this illusion. The ground in itself is a marvellous piece of work, each of the sides of the mesh being covered with ten buttonhole stitches. Very frequently a mixed lace of Alençon and Argentan is found, the result being very fine.



"POINT DE FRANCE."
(Author's Collection.)

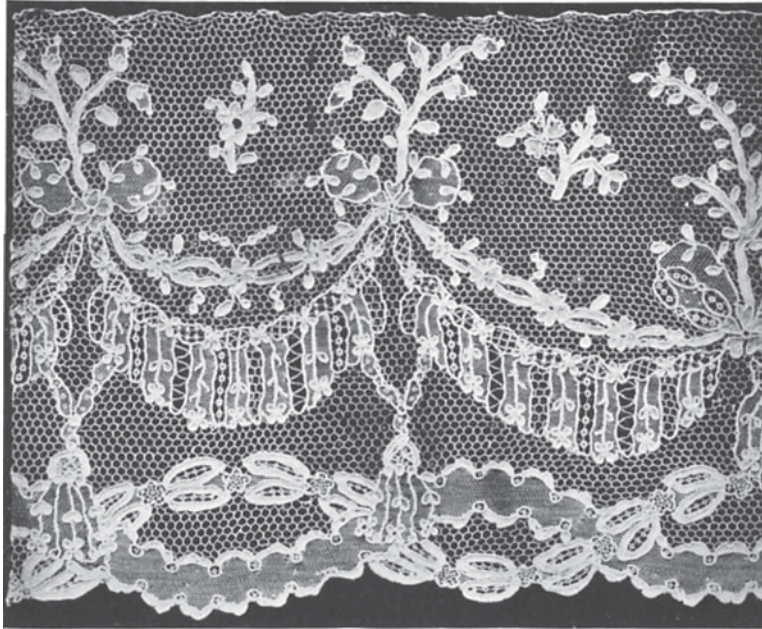


POINT D'ARGENTELLA.

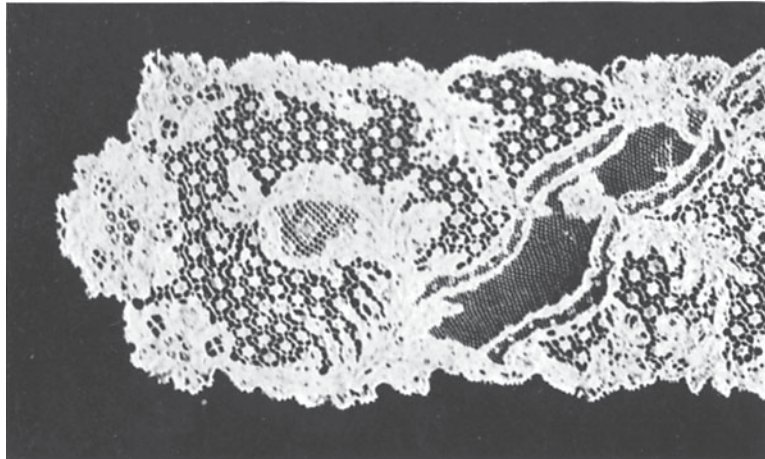
Point d'Argentella.

About this lace most authorities dispute, some stoutly advocating its claims to be French lace entirely and others averring that it was made *in imitation* of the Point d'Alençon by the Genoese. Be this as it may, the lace known as Point d'Argentella is exceptionally fine even amongst other fine laces, and is noted most specially for the fine "jours" which form an essential part of the pattern, every effort apparently being made to give extra scope for their employment. The specimen illustrated shows some of these "jours" having the characteristic mayflower, lozenge, and dotted patterns.

Much modern lace of this type is now made at Burano, Italy, where the coarse Italian lace formerly made there has been entirely superseded. It strongly imitates Alençon and Argentan lace, but is without the raised cord which is so typical of these, having the pattern outlined with flat buttonhole stitches only. By many connoisseurs this is considered the finest lace of this age, being far superior to modern Brussels. It is entirely hand-made, which cannot be, unfortunately, averred for Brussels, as the fine machine-made net, woven from the exquisitely fine thread manufactured in Flanders and Belgium, serves as the ground for all Brussels lace made at the present time, except when special orders like Royal trousseaux are in hand. The lace-makers of Burano, it may be added, imitate the finest Venetian Rose Point, Point de Gaze, Alençon, ever produced, the prices comparing very favourably with the old work, though still very costly.



POINT D'ARGENTAN WITH POINT D'ALENÇON BORDER.
(S.K.M. Collection.)



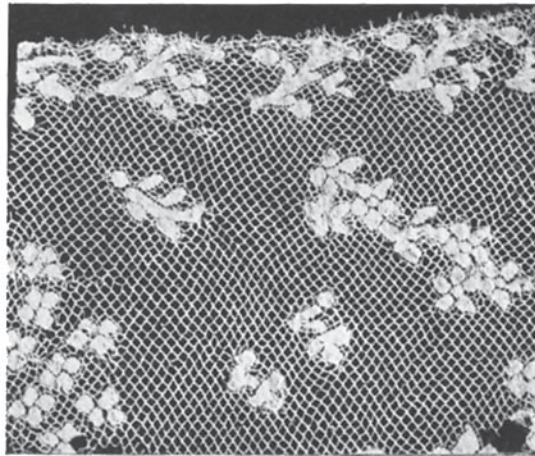
ARGENTELLA LACE, SHOWING THE "PARTRIDGE-EYE" GROUND.
(S.K.M. Collection.)

VI

THE PILLOW
LACES OF
FRANCE



EARLY VALENCIENNES.
(S.K.M. Collection.)



OLD VALENCIENNES.
(Author's Collection.)

VI

THE PILLOW LACES OF FRANCE

Valenciennes, "Vraie" and "Fausse"—Lille—Chantilly—
Blonde—Caen and Brittany.

Valenciennes.

VALENCIENNES was formerly part of Flanders, being in the province of Hainault. It became a French town in 1668 by treaty. Being a Flemish town, the lace made there was purely Pillow lace, and in fineness of thread and beauty of design it rivalled in its early stages some of the fine old Flemish laces, which are more like ornamental cambric than anything else.

There are two kinds of Valenciennes lace, known as "Vraie" and "Fausse." These names are very misleading, as they merely denote the laces made in the town itself, or in the outskirts.

Early Valenciennes can only be distinguished from Flemish laces of the same age by the difference in the *ground*. By reference to the little chart of lace stitches the distinction will easily be seen, the Valenciennes being much closer and thicker in

the plait, and having four threads on each side of its diamond-shaped mesh. Conventional scrolls and flowers were used as designs for the toile, the ground and the pattern being made at the same time.

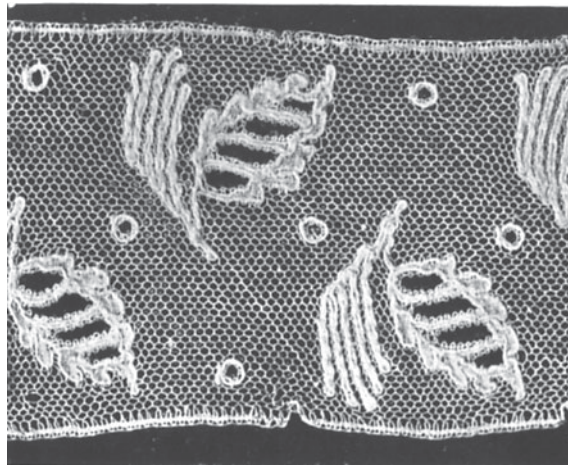
This lace is said to have been worked, like that of Brussels, in dark, damp cellars, the moist atmosphere being necessary to prevent the tiny thread breaking. The lace-workers became nearly blind, and quite useless, long before they reached thirty years of age.

So expensive was the fabric that a pair of ruffles for a gentleman's coat would sell for 4,000 livres. Madame du Barri made extravagant use of this lovely lace. In her wardrobe accounts are mentioned, in 1771, head-dress, throatlets, fichus, and ruffles, "all plissé de Vraie Valenciennes." The amount of lace used for a head-dress alone is said to have cost 2,400 livres.

The "Vraie Valenciennes" was practically indestructible, earning the nickname of the "Eternal Valenciennes" from its durability. The well-to-do bourgeoisie used to invest her savings in real lace, treasuring and wearing it on all best occasions for a lifetime.

The lace-makers of the town itself were so satisfied with their own lace that they proudly boasted that if a length commenced in the town of Valenciennes were taken and completed *by the same worker, and with the same thread*, outside their own damp atmosphere, the exact point of difference would be shown in the piece.

The earliest Valenciennes laces show a closer



“OLD LILLE.”
(*Author's Collection*)

THE PILLOW LACES OF FRANCE 93

design than that made later, which, by the way, many connoisseurs much prefer. The latter type is of clearer ground and more open design. The flowers do not follow the large scroll-like pattern of Flanders, but suggest the detached sprays and festoons of Alençon and Argentan. In both types there is no cord outlining either pattern or edge. All is flat as a piece of fine lawn.

Lille.

By no means a *favourite* lace at any time, Lille ranks next in merit as a hand-made lace. The mesh is clearer and larger than most French or Belgian laces, being made by the simple twisting of two threads on four sides. The patterns are simple, and are outlined with a loose flax thread of silky appearance. The straight edges which characterise Old Lille lace certainly did not lend elegance to it. A large manufacture in black lace was commenced, and the black silk mantles of the eighteenth century were lavishly trimmed with it. It is entirely out of favour at this day, however, only the finest white variety being sought after.

Lace is still manufactured at Lille, but the patterns of Mechlin are copied, although the tiny square dots, one of the distinguishing points of old Lille, are still used.

Chantilly.

The white laces of Chantilly much resemble Lille, having the same fine, clear ground and a thick, silky-looking thread outlining the pattern. A little lace

school was established by the Duchesse de Rohan early in the seventeenth century, and for quite a hundred years white laces were made, and became popular. Marie Antoinette used this pretty lace as well as Valenciennes extensively to trim her favourite lawn dresses and fichus when she and the ladies of her Court retired to the Petit Trianon to play at being shepherdesses.

About the middle of the eighteenth century Chantilly began to produce black silk lace of very fine quality. This is practically the only black lace for which there is any market. A Chantilly fan or a Chantilly shawl will always find purchasers. The exquisite fineness of its ground, the elegance of its floral festoons and bouquets, make it a desirable possession. With the Revolution the manufacture of real old black Chantilly ceased, and was only revived with the Empire, when, in addition to copying the old designs, the manufacture of the famous *blonde* laces was commenced.

French Blonde Lace.

At first these filmy silk laces were made in the natural colour floss silk imported from China, hence its name "Blonde." Some of the finest specimens are in this colour. Afterwards, when the art of bleaching the silk was discovered, it was made in a peculiarly silvery colour, the loosely woven silk being worked in patterns on what appears a ground of gossamer. Black Blonde was afterwards manufactured, the lace being very different to that of nineteenth-century manufacture, the mesh being large and open. This



“THE EMPRESS EUGENIE” WEARING BLONDE LACE.
(From a Baxter print.)

THE PILLOW LACES OF FRANCE 97

was a favourite lace with the Spaniards for mantillas, and much prosperity resulted to the little town of Chantilly. As with all other laces, the introduction of machinery killed the industry as an art, and the only Blonde laces now made are by machine, and are quite inartistic and inelegant. Hand-made Chantilly in black silk is still manufactured, but it has only a limited output.

Other French Laces.

Lace has been made in many smaller towns in France, but in no instance has it been of sufficient artistic merit to have made a name. Caen manufactured Blonde lace in imitation of Chantilly. In Normandy the peasant women and girls in the eighteenth century were specially diligent, and made praiseworthy imitations of Mechlin, Flemish guipure laces, and Brussels, and also introduced the working of gold and silver thread and even beads, which was much used in churches. Some really exquisite Blonde lace made in this manner was produced at Caen, fine pearls were used in the place of beads, and this lace became extremely popular in England. The Empress Eugénie was particularly fond of it, and in most of the portraits of her at the zenith of her beauty she is seen wearing decorated Blonde lace. It is said that this lace so soon soiled and spoiled in the making that only women having specially dry hands could be employed, and that during the summer months the lace was worked in the open air, and in the winter in rooms specially built over cow-houses, so that the

animals' breath might just sufficiently warm the workers in this smokeless atmosphere. Other towns engaged in lace-making were Havre, Dieppe (the latter town making a lace resembling Valenciennes), Bayeux, which carried on an extensive trade with the Southern Islands; Mexico and Spain taking an inferior and heavy Blonde lace for mantillas.

In Bretagne so dear is lace to the heart of the French peasant woman that every garment is trimmed with lace, often of her own making; and along with the provision of a little "dot" for her daughter she makes pieces of lace for her wedding dress. A curious custom is noted, that the peasant woman often wears this treasured garment only twice, once for her wedding and lastly for her funeral!

VII

**THE LACES
OF FLANDERS**



POINT D'ANGLETERRE.

Period Louis XIV.

(*Author's Collection.*)

VII

THE LACES OF FLANDERS

Early Flemish—Brussels lace—Point d'Angleterre—Cost of real Flanders flax thread—Popularity of Brussels lace—Point Gaze.

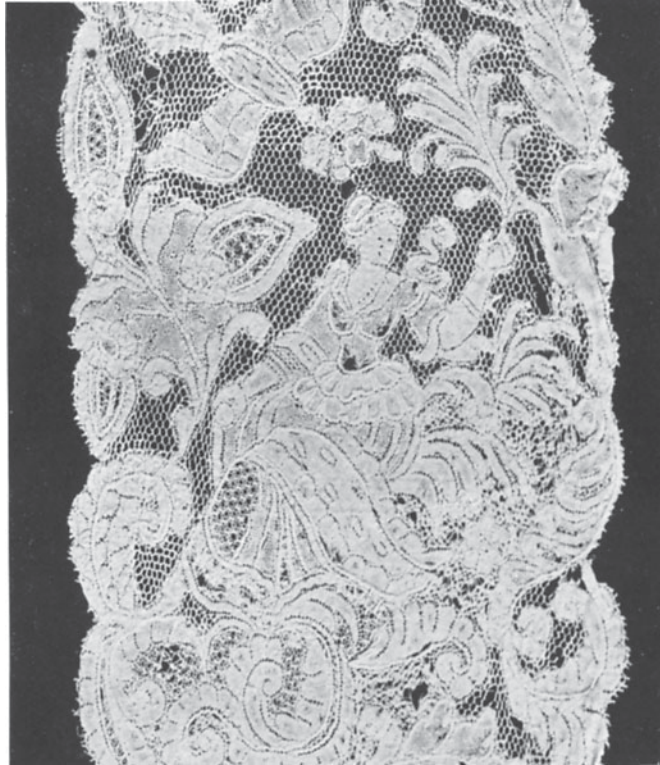
WHETHER Italy or Flanders first invented both Needlepoint and Pillow laces will ever remain a moot point. Both countries claim priority, and both appear to have equal right. Italian Needlepoint without doubt evolved itself from the old Greek or Reticella laces, that in turn being a development of "Cutworke" and drawn thread work. Flanders produces her paintings by early artists in which the portraits are adorned with lace as early as the fourteenth century. An altar-piece by Quentin Matys, dated 1495, shows a girl making Pillow lace, and later, in 1581, an old engraving shows another girl busy with her pillow and bobbins. An early Flemish poet thus rhapsodises over his countrywomen's handiworks :

"Of many arts, one surpasses all ;
The threads woven by the strange power of the hand—

Threads, which the dropping of the spider would in vain attempt to imitate,
And which Pallas herself would confess she had never known."

Whether Flanders imitated the Italian laces or not, it is unquestioned that every other lace-making country imitated *her*. Germany, Sweden, France, Russia, and England have, one after the other, adopted her method to such an extent that, following the tactics of Venice in 1698, she also issued an edict threatening punishment to all who would entice her workers away.

So alike are the early laces of Flanders that it is impossible to distinguish what is known as Flemish Point, Brussels Point, and Point d'Angleterre. The last-named lace is peculiar, inasmuch as it has a French appellation, is named "English," and yet is purely Brussels in character. Two stories gather round this lace, which accounts for its name. One is that the English Government in the time of Charles II., seeing so much money go out of the country, forbade the importation of Brussels lace. The English lace merchants, not to be done out of their immense profits, smuggled it over in large quantities, and produced it as having been made in Devonshire, and sold it under the name of English Point. Another legend is that when Colbert, in the reign of Louis XIV., determined to encourage lace-making in his own country, made prohibitive the importation of any other lace than France's own manufacture, the French Court, which had already become enamoured of Brussels lace, therefore had it smuggled into



POINT D'ANGLETERRE.
Period of Louis XIV.
(Author's Collection.)

England and thence to France, as *English laces* were at that time too insignificant to come under Colbert's ban.

Whichever tale we choose to believe is of little consequence. It is sufficient to say that fine Point d'Angleterre is simply Brussels of the best period when the glorious Renaissance was at its height. It is absolutely indistinguishable from Brussels of the same period. The specimen lappet, illustrated, shows the "figure" motif which appears in "Point de France" and the old "Venetian Point," and which at once dates its manufacture.

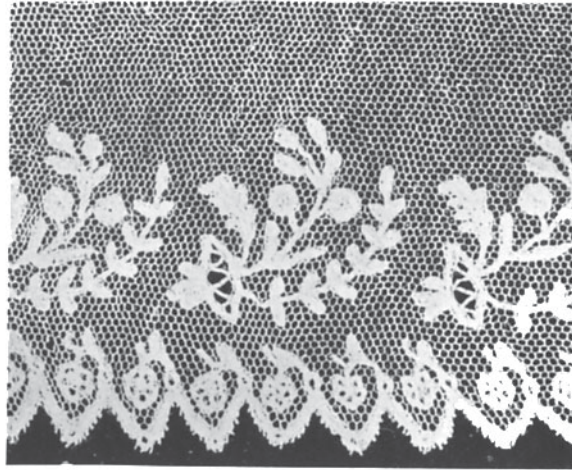
Practically the term Flanders or Flemish lace can be applied to all the laces made in Flanders and Belgium of the earliest periods. It is peculiarly fine; the specimen shown is as fine as gossamer, showing a total absence of Cordonnet, of course, and not even having the loose thread which marks the stems and leaves of Brussels and Angleterre. The flax of Flanders was at the time of the great lace industry known and imported to all the towns engaged in making it. Italy could procure nothing so fine and eminently suitable to the delicate work she made her own as this fine thread, grown in Flanders, and spun in dark, damp rooms, where only a single ray of light was allowed to enter. The thread was so fine, it is said, that it was imperceptible to the naked eye and was manipulated by touch only. The cost of this thread was £240 a pound, and one pound could be made into lace worth £720! Real Flanders lace thread even now, spun with the help of machinery, costs £70, and is nothing like so durable as the old

threads. When we consider that lace to be known as "Old Lace" must be two hundred or three hundred years old, we can understand the strength of this fairy thread, which was like a spider's web in filminess and yet durable enough to last centuries of wear, and remain as a lasting memorial of its beauty.

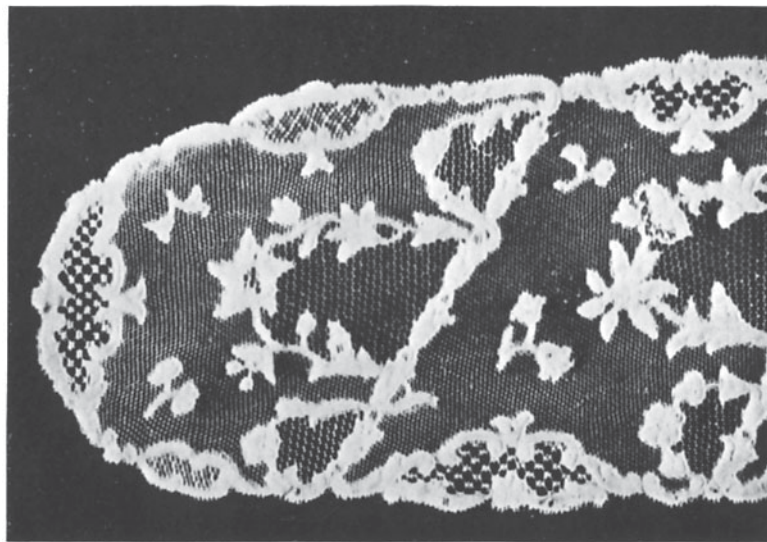
BRUSSELS

The early Flemish laces cannot be traced to any particular town, but Brussels early obtained a reputation for the production of the soft, elegant laces which are variously known as "Real old Brussels," "Point d'Angleterre," "Point d'Aiguille," and "Point de Gaze." Almost every woman, although knowing little about lace as an art, knows and easily recognises "Brussels." It has ever been the most popular lace, partly because its price has never been actually prohibitive, although always costly. Choice pieces of Old Brussels, with real ground, rank among the laces of France and Venice as pieces of price, but the later period, especially the kind known as Brussels applique, is within everybody's reach, even if only as a border for a best handkerchief.

Lace made at Brussels at all periods has one characteristic that places it at once and makes identification easy at a glance. The threads of the *toilé*—that is, the pattern—follows the *curves*, instead of, as in other Flanders laces, being straight *up* and *down* and *across*, each thread being exactly at right angles to the other; Brussels lace also has a distinctive edge to its pattern. It has no Cordonnet,



“OLD BRUSSELS” (HAND-MADE GROUND).
(Author's Collection.)



BRUSSELS LAPPET, MADE IN IMITATION OF ALENÇON AND ARGENTAN.

but a little set of looped stitches worked along the edge of the design, afterwards whipped over to keep the edge in place. This is most clearly seen in every specimen, and, in conjunction with the curved toilé, at once settles the vexed question of the origin of Point d'Angleterre.

The mesh or ground is, again, quite different to other laces. It has three varieties of ground—

1. One, mostly used in Point d'Angleterre, being of fine "brides" with four or five picots, but this ground is also seen in Venetian and French laces.

2. A hand-made ground made of looped button-hole stitches, which is the finest and most gossamer-like of all; and

3. A woven ground made on the pillow with plaited thread, very like Mechlin, but under the magnifying glass having two longer sides to its hexagonal mesh, and therefore being more open and clear.

The hand, or rather needlepoint, ground was three times more expensive than the woven, as it was stronger and more lasting. The special value of the "vrai reseau" in our own day is that it can be imperceptibly repaired, the broken stitches replaced, whereas in the woven ground the point of junction must show.

The needle-made net is so fine that one piece in my possession, though measuring $\frac{3}{4}$ yard by 8 inches can easily, in its widest part, be gathered and passed through a finger ring. At the present day this net is not made, and even the fine woven ground is not used except for Royal wedding orders or for exhibition purposes. A magnificent piece belonging

to Messrs. Haywards, of New Bond Street (which cannot be photographed, unfortunately, as it is between two sheets of glass, and might fall to pieces if taken out), was made for George IV., and not delivered, owing no doubt to the usual depleted state of that monarch's exchequer. Messrs. Haywards (whose courtesy is as boundless as their reputation) are always pleased to show this and their other splendid specimen collections to those interested in old lace.

Perhaps no lace is so diversified in style as Brussels. At first it was purely Flemish, and almost indistinguishable from it. Then the Venetian influence crept in, and elaboration of pattern and the Renaissance scrolls and flower work showed itself. At the Louis Quatorze period the introduction of the "fairy people," seen at its finest and best in Point de France, marks a time of special beauty. Afterwards the influence of Alençon was shown (though it never rivalled the exquisite lace of this factory), and from that time to the present day these designs have remained for use in its best work.

Some of the choicest specimens of old Brussels are shown in the now discarded "lappets," which when a lace head-piece and lappets were part of every gentlewoman's costume, were actually regulated by Sumptuary Laws as to length. The longer the lappets the higher the rank.

The great Napoleon, while reviving the lace-making of Alençon, specially admired fine old Brussels, and at the birth of his only son, the little "King of Rome," ordered a christening garment



BRUSSELS LAPPET.
Eighteenth Century.
(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

THE LACES OF FLANDERS 115

covered with the Napoleonic "N's," crowns and cherubs. This was sold in 1903 at Christie's for £120. At the same sale a Court train realised £140.

In the "Creevy Papers, 1768-1838," mention is made of Lord Charles Somerset complaining of not having slept all night, "not having had a minute's peace through sleeping in 'Cambrik sheets,' the Brussels lace with which the pillows were trimmed tickling his face"! This occurred at Wynyards, the seat of the Earl of Londonderry.

Queen Anne followed the extravagant fashion of wearing the costliest laces which William III. and Queen Mary carried to such an excess. In 1710 she paid £151 for 21 yards of fine Brussels edging, and two years later the account for Brussels and Mechlin laces amounted to £1,418.

In the succeeding reign the ladies of George I.'s period wore lappets and flounces, caps, tuckers, aprons, stomachers, and handkerchiefs, all made of Brussels.

In the time of George II. lace was even more worn, but English lace began to rival Brussels, not in quality, but as a substitute.

George III. and his wife, Queen Charlotte, were economists of the first order, and personal decoration was rigidly tabooed ; hence the almost total extinction of lace as an article of apparel, while in George IV.'s time dress had evolved itself into shimmery silks and lawns, lace being merely a trimming, and the enormous head-dress decorated more frequently with a band of ribbon.

An exquisite portrait of Louis Philippe's Queen, Marie Amelia, by the early Victorian painter Winterhalter (whose paintings are again by the revival of fashion coming into favour) shows this fine old *grande dame* in black velvet dress covered with three graduated flounces of Brussels lace, cap and lappets and "tucker" of the same lace, lace fan, and, sad to relate, a scarf of English machine-made net, worked with English run embroidery!

Although good Queen Adelaide had a pretty fancy for lace, she wore little of it, and it was left to Queen Victoria to revive the glory of wearing Brussels to any extent; and she, alas! was sufficiently patriotic to encourage home-made products by wearing almost exclusively Honiton, which I personally am not good Englishwoman enough to admire except at its latest stage (just the past few years), when lace-making, as almost every other art work in this country, is emerging from what, from an artistic point of view, has been one long Slough of Despond.



COMTESSE D'ARTOIS, WIFE OF ONE OF
LOUIS XIV.'S GRANDSONS, WEARING
FINE BRUSSELS LACE.

VIII

THE MODERN
BRUSSELS LACES
AND MECHLIN



"MEHLIN" LACE.

VIII

THE MODERN BRUSSELS LACES AND MECHLIN

Modern Brussels, Point Gaze—Ghent—Duchesse Point—
Mechlin (the Queen of Laces).

MAGNIFICENT laces are still made at Brussels, but almost wholly on a machine-made ground, the workers and merchants apparently finding the old hand-made ground unprofitable. The machine-made ground is cheap, and often of mixed flax and cotton instead of being of purely Flanders flax thread, as in the old days. Both quality and colour suffer from this admixture, the lace washing badly and wearing worse.

The most common lace is the Point Applique, in which the sprays, groups, and borders on the design are made separately by hand on the pillow, and are afterwards applied by tiny stitchings to the machine-made net. Some qualities are better than others. In the better class the sprays are appliqued to the net, which is then cut away and the interstices of the design filled in with hand-made modes and

brides, making a very pretty and showy lace. The best lace made in Brussels now is

Point Gaze,

in which the finest modern lace is produced. Its chief characteristics are its superb designs, repeating many of the fine Renaissance patterns, its clear ground, and its use of shading in leaves and flowers, which, while it adds much to the sumptuous effect, is possibly too naturalistic. This lace is a mixture of hand and machine lace, the ground being of the best machine net, the flowers and sprays frequently needle made, the various fillings being composed of a variety of designs, and the shading often being produced in the needle-darning as in modern Ghent and Limerick. Point de Gaze is costly, but it has the reputation of appearing "worth its money" to which few other laces of the present day can aspire.

Other lace-making towns in Belgium and Flanders are—

Ghent,

which produces a fine machine-made net, worked and embroidered in exact imitation of the earliest Limerick lace. So *real* is this imitation that a fine flounce of 4 yds. 32 in. wide was sold at a London auction-room a few months ago, as "real old Limerick," for £60!

Ghent executes vast quantities of hand-made imitations of Valenciennes, a good and durable lace, but much more expensive than the machine-made varieties which flood the shops as "real Val."



MECHLIN LAPPET.
Eighteenth Century.
(S.K.M. Collection.)
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Perhaps the only other lace worth mentioning in smaller and later varieties is that known as "Duchesse point" of "Bruges," which while being a showy, decorative, and cheap lace, is anything but satisfactory either in design, manufacture, or wear. It is largely composed of cotton, is heavy and cumbrous in design, and after washing becomes thick and clumsy. It is pillow-made, the flowers being made on the cushion and afterwards united by coarse and few brides.

Almost equal in favour with old Brussels lace was

MECHLIN,

which was aptly termed "the Queen of Laces." Old Mechlin was wondrously fine, and transparent. It is often spoken of as "Point de Malines" which, of course, is entirely wrong, as it is not Point at all—being made entirely, all at one time, or in one piece, on the pillow. Much of the lace known under the general name of Flemish Point is really Malines or Mechlin, the only difference being the fine silvery thread which runs all through the designs of real Mechlin. The earliest date of the manufacture of Mechlin is unknown, but in 1681, it is recorded, that the people of Malines busied themselves with making a white lace known as Mechlin. It became a fashionable lace in England in 1699, Queen Mary using it considerably and Queen Anne buying it largely, in one instance purchasing 83 yards of it for £247.

It has always remained a favourite lace with

English royalties, Queen Charlotte almost exclusively using it. The other day I discovered in a bric-à-brac shop about twenty yards of it, old and discoloured, it is true, which came directly from Queen Caroline, the ill-used wife of George IV. In the earlier Mechlin, although pillow-made, the introduction of the "brides with picots," and also the may-flower patterns of Brussels, helped to make it more decorative. The ground or réseau was very similar to Brussels hand-made, but the hexagonal mesh is shorter, as reference to the diagram of réseaux will show.

The exquisite "lightness" of Mechlin, so specially adapted to "quillings" and "pleatings," accounted for its popularity. It was specially suitable to the lawns and muslins of the eighteenth century, but little of this lace is left owing, no doubt, to its great favour except the ubiquitous "lappets," for which it was no doubt "the Queen of Lace."

The immediate cause of its extinction was the introduction of Blonde laces, and later its final overthrow came from its being the easiest lace to reproduce by machinery.



MARIE ANTOINETTE, QUEEN OF LOUIS XVI., SHOWING HOW MECHLIN LACE
WAS USED.

From an old fashion plate.

IX

OTHER
CONTINENTAL
LACES

IX

OTHER CONTINENTAL LACES

Spanish lace ; Gold and silver laces of Spain—German laces
—Russian laces—Maltese silk and thread laces.

OUTSIDE the great lace-making countries of Italy, France, and Flanders, little lace was ever made, and that little of less consequence.

Spanish Lace.

Much of the old lace known as "Spanish Point" is not Spanish at all, but the best of Italian Rose Point on a large scale, being the variety known as Gros Point. It was not extensively used for dress purposes, as contemporary portraits show, but Spain being such an ultra-Romanist country, vast quantities of it were imported into Spain for church use. When Spain fell on unhappy days, in 1830, and the religious houses were dissolved, this lace was eagerly bought by connoisseurs and collectors and became known as Spanish Point. It is not unlikely that the Italian lace was copied by the nuns of the Spanish convents ; indeed, at South Kensington

Museum there is a set of church altar lace which is admittedly Spanish work and is a distinct but far off imitation of Italian Point.

Spain made gold and silver laces of fine quality and gorgeous design. Blonde laces in both cream and black are almost indigenous to the soil, and a particular kind of black Blonde, embroidered with colours, specially appealed to the colour-loving people.

German Laces.

Perhaps at the present day more lace is made in Germany than at any other period. An enormous manufacture of good machine-made lace is exported yearly, the variety known as Saxony being both popular and cheap.

Germany has no national lace, the clever *haus-fraus* caring more to decorate their table and bed-linen than their persons, and using the substantial and practical embroideries of the cross-stitch patterns more than the elegant frailties of lace trimming. Laces network darned into patterns has always been popular here, as also in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway.

Russia.

The Russian laces need little more than a passing note. As in Germany, Laces and Cutworke form the only hand-made lace known, the people contenting themselves with these varieties and using coloured threads to further decorate them. Their laces may be called merely Russian embroideries. Peter the Great did much to found a lace school,



DUCHESS LACE.

Modern.

OTHER CONTINENTAL LACES 137

but only gold laces were made, of a barbaric character. Recently an attempt has been made to imitate the Venetian laces, with very fair results, but the character is very stiff and mechanical, going back to the primitive forms of Reticella rather than the elegancies of Italian Point.

The only other Continental lace requiring note is

Maltese,

a lace made entirely with bobbins and on a pillow. This lace is of ancient make, being known as early as the old Greek laces, which it strongly resembles. Its very popularity has killed its use as a fine lace, and at the present day it is copied as a cheap useful lace in France, England, Ireland, and even India. The old Maltese lace was made of the finest flax thread, afterwards a silk variety, which is well known, being made in cream. Black lace was also manufactured, and at the time of the popularity of black lace as a dress trimming it was much used. At the present day the lace is not of the old quality, cotton being frequently mixed with the flax threads. There is no demand for it, and it is about the most unsaleable lace of the day.

X

A SHORT
HISTORY OF
LACE IN
ENGLAND



QUEEN ELIZABETH: RUFF OF VENETIAN POINT.

(National Portrait Gallery.)

X

A SHORT HISTORY OF LACE IN ENGLAND

Early samplers—Lace worn by Queen Elizabeth; by the early Stuarts—Extravagant use of lace in time of Charles II.—William and Mary's lace bill.

EVEN at the risk of being considered utterly unpatriotic, I cannot give much more than faint praise to the lace-making of England up to the present date, when notable efforts are at last being made to raise the poor imitation of the Continental schools to something more in accordance with artistic conception of what a great National Art might become.

As in all countries, lace-making apparently commenced in its early English stages by drawn-thread and cutwork. In many of the charming old sixteenth-century English samplers just as exquisite cut-work, and its natural successor Reticella, or "punto in aria" is shown, as in the finest examples of the Venetian schools. Unfortunately, however, English fine lace-making came to a sudden and inexplicable end, although we know that any quantity

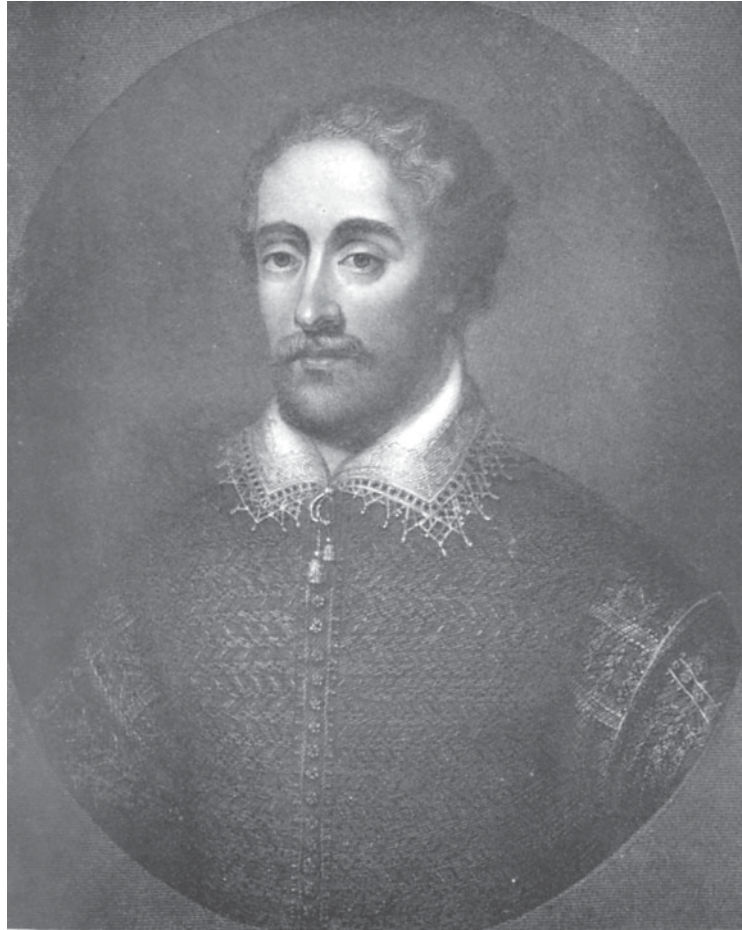
of fine Venetian, exquisite Brussels, or Flemish laces, and the wonderful Point de France were being imported into the country and lavishly used.

As early as the reign of Edward IV. lace was mentioned as being prohibited for importation amongst other items of feminine luxury, such as "ribans, fringes of silk and cotton," but it is considered that the word "laces" here means only the twisted threads that go to make up a lace or tie, commonly ending in tags or points. It must be allowed, however, that laces, or more probably "gimps" of gold and silver threads were used for trimming both lay and ecclesiastical garments, and in Henry VII.'s reign we find that importation of Venetian lace was permitted, but this is generally admitted still to refer to gold and silver lace, more probably coming from Genoa.

It was not really until the time of bluff King Hal that lace became an article of fashion, when during the life of the last of his unfortunate queens he permits "the importation of all manner of gold and silver fringes, or *otherwise*, with all new 'gentillesses' of what facyion or value, for the pleasure of our dearest wyeff the Queen."

Henry himself also began to indulge in all these little elegances of fashion, and wore his sleeves embroidered with cutwork, and handkerchiefs edged with gold and silver, treating himself liberally to "coverpanes" and "shaving-cloths" trimmed with gold lace.

Little mention of white work was made in the inventories of Henry VIII. or his Queens, but Car-



EDMUND SPENSER: COLLAR TRIMMED WITH RETICELLA.

Early period.

dinal Wolsey seems to have had more than his share of cutwork embroideries, judging from contemporary portraits.

In Queen Mary's reign white work began to be more frequently spoken of, and in 1556 it is stated that Lady Jane Seymour presented the Queen with "a smock of fair white work, Flanders making."

It was not until Queen Elizabeth's time that lace became freely mentioned; then suddenly we are introduced to an endless variety of lace and trimmings, both of gold and silver, pearl and embroideries, and various white work! In some of the old Chronicles mention was made of drawn work, cut-work, Crown lace, bone lace for ruffs, Spanish chain, parchment, hollow, and diamond lace. Many of these terms cannot be understood.

The enormous ruffs worn by Queen Elizabeth were introduced into England in the time of her sister Mary. Portraits both of Philip of Spain and Queen Mary show ruffs, but not edged with lace. Queen Elizabeth's, on the contrary, are both edged with lace and, in some instances, covered with it. On her poor old effigy at Westminster Abbey, where her waxen image is dressed in her actual garments, the only lace that appears is on the enormous ruff, three-quarters of a yard wide, covered with a fine lace of the loose network kind. The rest of her garments are trimmed with gold and silver lace and *passementerie*.

In the succeeding reign lace of a geometric design shows itself on the ruffs of the richest people.

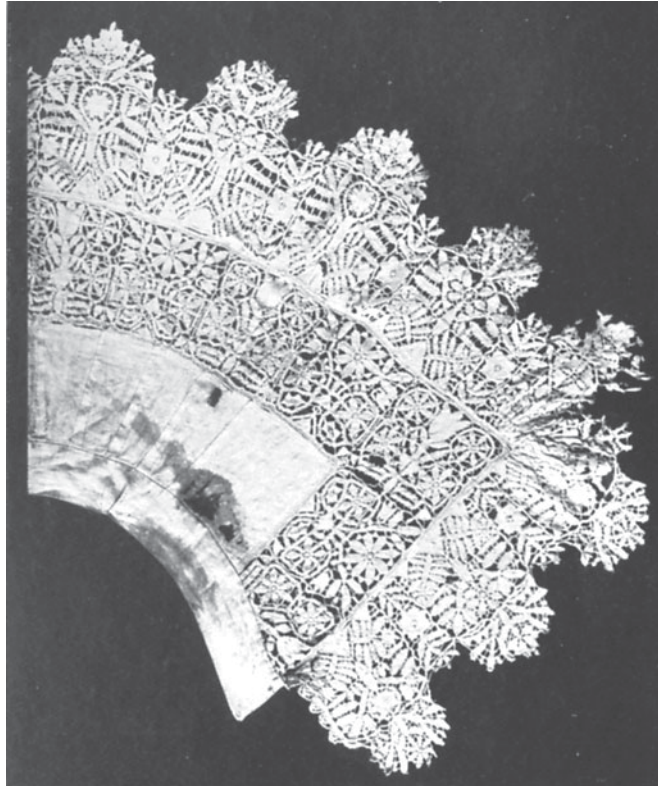
Pictures in the National Portrait Gallery show many exquisite examples of the beautiful Reticella of Venice, which must have been very costly to the purchaser, as twenty-five yards or more of this fine lace were required to edge a ruff.

It was in the reign of James I. and his consort, Anne of Denmark, that Flanders lace and the expensive Point laces of Italy first became widely popular. Then, as now, they were costly—to such an extent that many gentlemen sold an estate to buy laces for their adornment.

It was during this reign that we first learn of a lace being made in England, as Queen Anne of Denmark on her journey south purchased lace at *Winchester* and *Basing*, but history mentions not what kind of lace it was. Apparently only a simple kind of edging was used, made on a pillow.

The enormous ruffs went out of fashion with the death of James I. Charles I., in all his portraits, wears the falling collar edged with Vandyke lace. It was during this reign that Venetian lace reached its apotheosis in England. The dress of the day has never been surpassed, though it became much more elaborate and ostentatious in the time of Charles II. and William and Mary. Falling collars were specially adapted to the display of the handsome laces of Venice. The cuffs of the sleeves were likewise trimmed with the same; scarves were worn across the breast, trimmed with the narrower Reticella.

During the Commonwealth the laces of Venice suffered a temporary eclipse, and the plainer laces



SEVENTEENTH CENTURY FALLING COLLAR TRIMMED WITH FINE
RETICELLA.

(S.K.M. Collection.)

of Flanders were freely used. Cromwell himself, it is said, did not disdain the use of it. His effigy at Westminster was dressed in a fine Holland lace-trimmed shirt, with bands and cuffs of the same. This effigy, by the way, was destroyed at the Restoration.

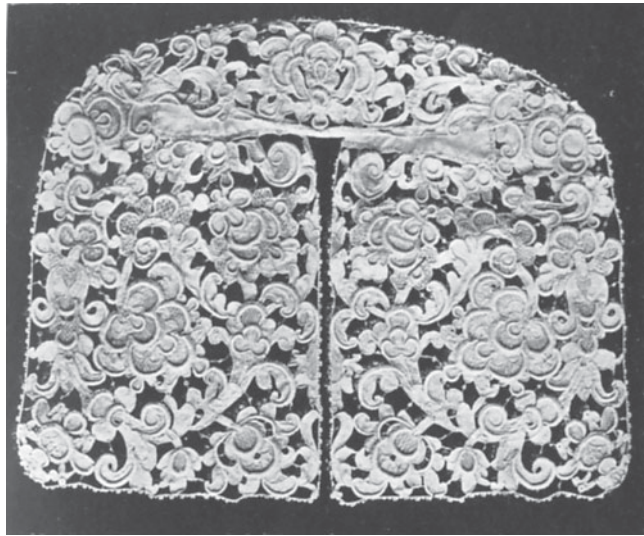
Charles II., who during his exile in France had become imbued with the extravagant taste of the French Court, gave vast orders for "Points of Venice and Flanders," on the plea of providing English lace-workers with better patterns and ideas.

The falling collar certainly went out of fashion, but lace was liberally used on other parts of the dress. Lace frills of costly Point edged the knee-breeches, lace cravats were worn and deep falling cuffs. Charles II., in the last year of his reign, spent £20 for a new cravat for his brother's birthday.

During James II.'s reign extravagance in lace purchases are still mentioned, but it surely reached its culmination in the joint reign of William and Mary, when enormous sums were spent by both King and Queen. In one year Queen Mary's lace bill amounted to £1,918. New methods of using lace were fashioned. A huge head-dress called the "Fontange," with upright standing ends of Venetian Point, double hanging ruffles falling from elbow sleeves, lace-trimmed aprons, lace tuckers, characterised the feminine dress of the day, while the "Steinkirk" cravat and falling cuffs of William III.'s day ran up accounts not much less than that of his

Queen. In 1690 his bill was £1,603, and in 1695 it amounted to £2,459!

The effigies of William and Mary in the Abbey, wear the very finest Venetian Point laces. None of the other figures wear such costly lace, nor in such profusion.



COLLAR IN GROS POINT DE VENISE.

Louis XIV. period.

(*S.K.M. Collection.*)

XI

**ENGLISH
LACES**

XI

ENGLISH LACES

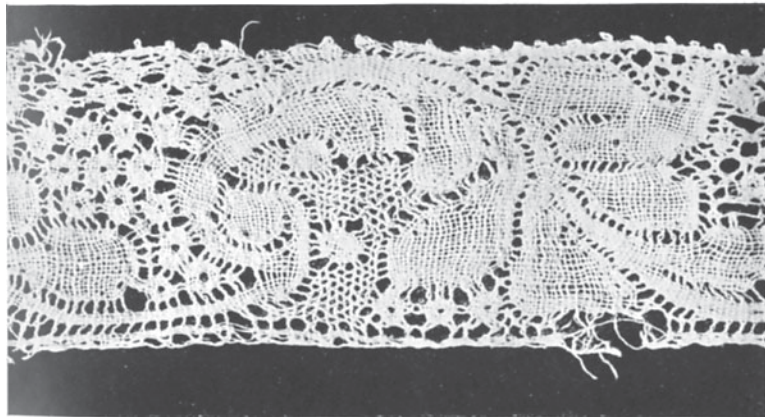
Queen Anne and Mechlin—Establishment of lace-making in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire—Buckingham lace—Wiltshire lace—Devonshire lace—Modern Honiton revival.

IT was in Queen Anne's time that the earliest really good lace manufactured in England appeared. Driven from France by the edict of Louis XIV., the refugees found a home in England, and encouraged by Queen Anne's fondness for laces other than Venetian, they made and taught the English lace-workers, among whom they settled, the art of real lace-making, which up to this time had apparently been only half understood. Numerous lace schools now sprang up, the counties of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Northampton specially becoming known. Valenciennes and Mechlin were the varieties of laces principally copied ; a very pretty lace, very reminiscent of Mechlin, being the "Baby lace," which received its name from being so much used to trim babies' caps. Although very much like Valenciennes and Mechlin, the laces were much coarser both in

thread and design than their prototypes. Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire did not long retain the art of lace-making, but Buckingham lace remained a staple manufacture, and is much esteemed even to-day, many connoisseurs considering it far better as a lace than the somewhat clumsy laces of Devonshire. The specimen shown is a piece of old Buckingham lace closely copying the réseau and sprigs of Lille which most lace-lovers consider it excels. The net of Buckinghamshire is an exact copy of the Lille mesh, being made of two threads twisted in a diamond pattern, the sprays being worked on the pillow at the same time. The patterns of the old Buckingham lace are not very varied, the best known being what is called "Spider lace," a coarse kind of open mesh being worked in the pattern. The principal town engaged in the eighteenth century was Newport Pagnel, which was cited as being most noted for making Bobbin lace. Old Brussels designs were used, and some quaint lace of early Flemish design, was made. The early English run lace, which was even so late as fifty years ago very popular, was mostly made here. Aylesbury, Buckingham, and High Wycombe also made lace, and in the last-named old town cottage lace-making may be seen to this day. Very quaint are the old lace bobbins that may be purchased in the "antique" shops of these lace-making towns. The lace-workers apparently indulged many a pretty fancy in shaping them in a diversity of ways, very few bobbins being alike. Some were made of bone, really prettily turned, with dotted



“OLD BUCKINGHAM.”
(Author's Collection.)



EARLY DEVONSHIRE LACE.
(Author's Collection.)

and pierced patterns on them. Others were silver-studded, and again others were banded in silver. The wooden ones were always decorated, if possible, each one differently from the others, so that the worker might distinguish each thread without looking at it. Nearly every bobbin was ended with a bunch of coloured beads strung on wire, and a collection of these bobbins, with their "gingles," often yields up a pretty and quaint necklace. One in my possession has a quaint bead made of "ancient Roman glass," worth at least ten shillings. One wonders how this bit of Roman magnificence had strayed into an English cottage home!

Buckinghamshire is the only one of the Midland counties which has produced *wide* lace; the adjoining counties confined themselves to edgings at most some 6 inches wide. A flounce in my collection measures 21 inches, and is of very elegant design, and of fine quality. In Wiltshire lace appears to have been made at an early date in the eighteenth century, but little lace is left to show its quality. A curious piece is said to belong to an old family in Dorset, who vouch for the lace having belonged to Queen Charlotte, the wife of George III. Like many other traditional "antiques," this is undoubtedly a fairy story, as it claims to have been made in commemoration of the defeat of the Spanish Armada, *at contemporary times*. It is exceedingly handsome, showing one of Philip's ships, very suggestively surrounded by big sea fish and apparently resting on the

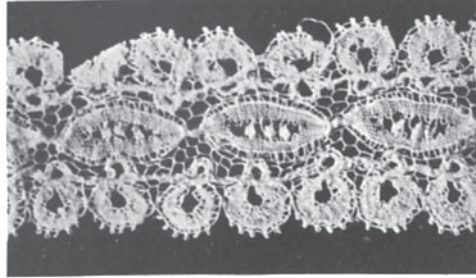
rocky bottom of the ocean. In the next panel Tilbury Fort is portrayed, and another ship, one of England's glory, proudly rules the waves. The design is undoubtedly English, and most probably it was made in commemoration of the historic event—but the lace is Point d'Argentan, and was most likely manufactured specially for Queen Charlotte.

Lyme Regis at one time rivalled Honiton, the laces of both towns being equally prized. Queen Charlotte wore a "head and lappets" made here when she first came to England, and afterwards she ordered a splendid lace dress to be made. When, however, Queen Victoria, in her wish to encourage the English makers, sent an order for her marriage lace, not sufficient workers were found to produce it.

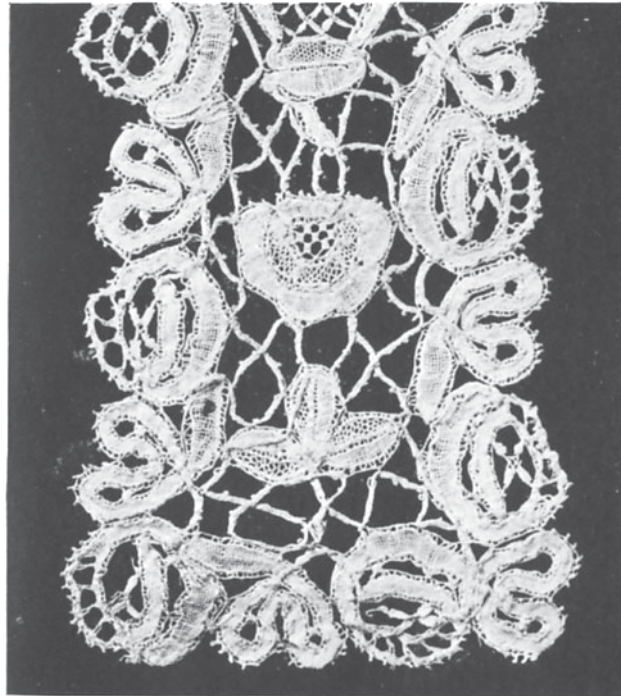
DEVONSHIRE LACE.

As early as 1614 the lace-makers of Devonshire were known. The influx of refugees from Flanders in the Midlands and southern counties undoubtedly established lace-making in both parts of the kingdom. Many of the Honiton lace-workers married these refugees, and to this day the people are of mixed descent. Quaint names of Flemish extraction appear over the shop doors.

In the early days both men, women, and children seem to have pursued the art of lace-making, boys learning and working at it until the age of sixteen, when they were either apprenticed to some trade or went to sea.



OLD HONITON (NEEDLEPOINT GROUND).



OLD HONITON.
(Author's Collection.)

Most of the old Devonshire laces bear distinct likeness to the fine Flemish lace, only the clumsiness of the design or the coarse workmanship differentiating them. It has, however, one special feature which gave it the name "Trolly lace," as, unlike the perfectly flat lace of Flanders, it has a coarse thread or "trolley" outlining its patterns, and being made of English thread, it was coarse and not very durable.

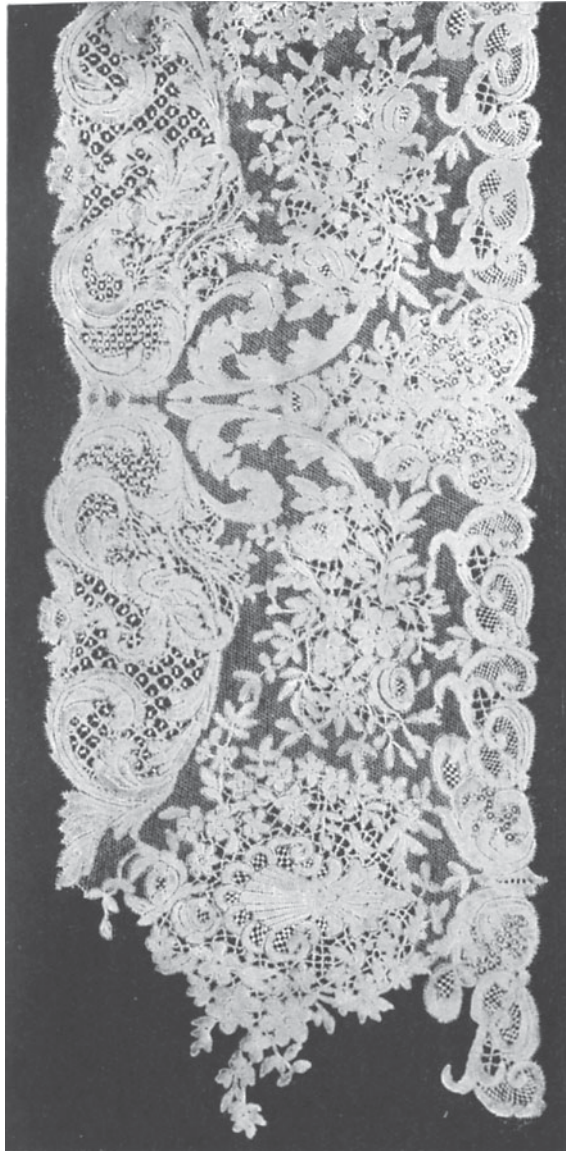
Honiton

has always easily ranked first amongst our British laces, although by many not considered equal to fine Bucks. Like the Midland lace, it has been always made with Flanders thread, and therefore has maintained its popularity because of its *wear* and its *colour*. The early Honiton workers copied "Brussels" lace, but because of their inability to produce an artistic design it has never been anything but a *poor* copy. Even when the Brussels influence was most direct the flowers and sprays were placed inartistically, while the scroll copies of the early Flemish schools can only be termed the imitative handiwork of a child.

The most prized specimens of old Honiton are those with hand-made ground, made of Flanders flax. Very little of this real ground Honiton lace is left. Queen Victoria did much to make Honiton lace *the* lace of the land; but although a regular trade has been established, and much good work accomplished, Honiton of the past will never be regarded on the same plane as the laces of Venice, France, and Brussels. Even in its best

variety it lacks the exquisite filmy touch of Brussels, the dainty grace of Alençon, and the magnificence of Point de France and Venetian Point. The Honiton laces made since the introduction of machine-made net is especially poor. Flower sprigs and sprays are made separately on the pillow, and afterwards applied to the machine-made ground. These are, as a rule, flowers and foliage treated naturalistically, and are heavy and close in design. These are often very sparingly applied over a wide expanse of net in order to make as much lace with as little trouble as possible. This is very different to the work of the old Honiton lace-worker, who made every inch of it herself—first the sprays and scrolls, then worked the ground round it, and received, it is said, from the middleman (who purchased it for the town market) as many shillings as would cover the lace offered for sale.

We are glad to say, however, that very praiseworthy efforts are being made to introduce better methods and more artistic designs in the many lace schools which are being formed in various parts of Devon. Mrs. Fowler, of Honiton, one of the oldest lace-makers in this centre, making exquisite lace, the technique leaving nothing to be desired, and also showing praiseworthy effort in shaking off the trammels of the traditional designs.



MODERN HONITON, MADE BY MRS. FOWLER.

XII

**SCOTCH
AND IRISH
LACES**

XII

SCOTCH AND IRISH LACES

Hamilton lace—Mary Queen of Scots—Modern lace-making in Ireland—Limerick lace—Carrick-ma-cross—Irish crotchet—Convent laces.

SCOTCH lace can hardly be said to exist. At one time a coarse kind of network lace called "Hamilton lace" was made, and considerable money was obtained by it, but it never had a fashion, and deservedly so. Since the introduction of machinery, however, there has been considerable trade, and a tambour lace is made for flounces, scarfs, &c. The more artistic class of work made by Scotswomen is that of embroidering fine muslin, and some really exquisite work is made by the common people in their homes.

Much mention is often made of Mary Queen of Scots and her embroideries and laces. It must be remembered that she married firstly the Dauphin of France, and while at the French Court imbibed the taste for elegant apparel and costly lace trimmings. There is no record that she ever wore lace of her own country's manufacture, and, although English writers

often quote the lace made by her fair hands, really the needlework made by Queen Mary at Fotheringay was embroidery.

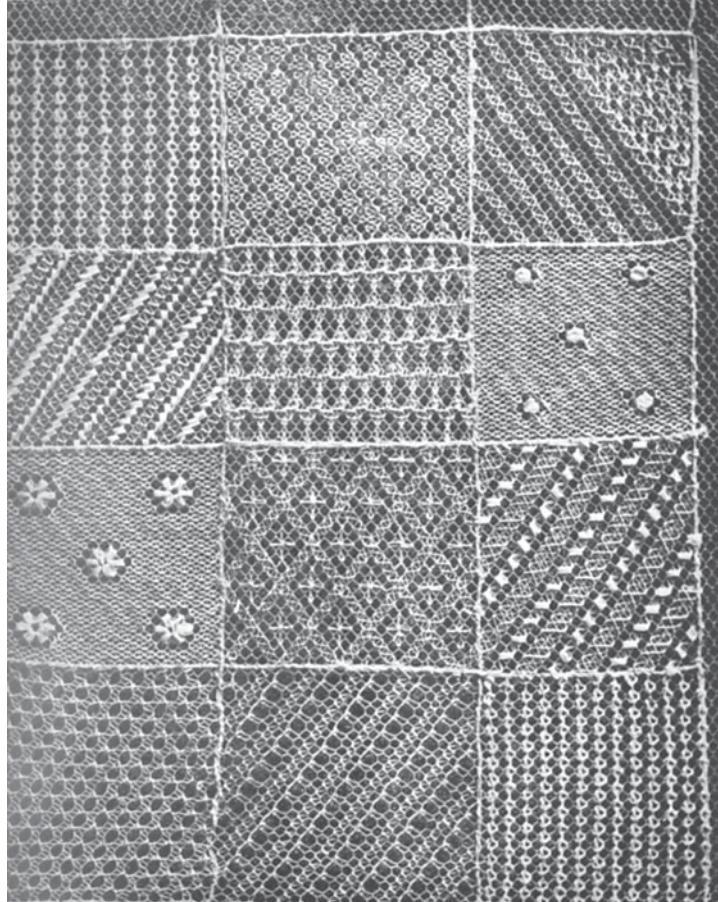
Irish Laces.

The early lace of Ireland was the usual cut and drawn work, and it was not until the earlier part of the nineteenth century that lace-making actually became a craft. In the eighteenth century many brave attempts were made to commence lace schools, and the best work was done in the convents, where really fine work was executed by the nuns, the patterns having been sent from Italy. It was not until 1829 that the manufacture of Limerick lace was first instituted. This really is not lace at all, as it is merely chain-stitch worked in patterns on machine-made net.

This pretty so-called lace was first made at Limerick by an Oxford man, who established a school there, taking with him twenty-four girls as teachers. It quickly became very popular, in the early "fifties" every woman of either high or low degree possessing herself of at least a lace collar or fichu of Limerick lace.

In 1855 more than 1,500 workers were employed, but decidedly the best lace of the manufacture belongs to the time prior to this date. The quality of the net ground has also deteriorated, or perhaps the best net has not been purchased.

Very dainty little sprays and flowers are produced in the fine chain or tambour stitch, the hearts of the flowers or the centres of the scallops being worked



LIMERICK "FILLINGS."

over in an endless variety of extra stitches, as will be seen in the illustration.

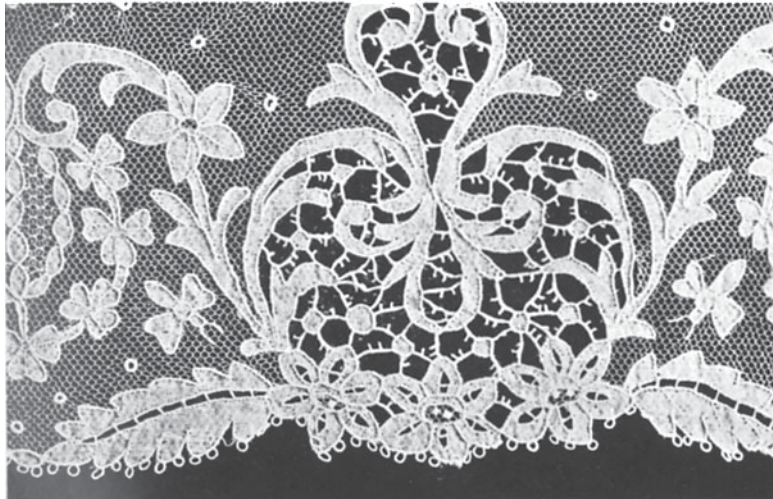
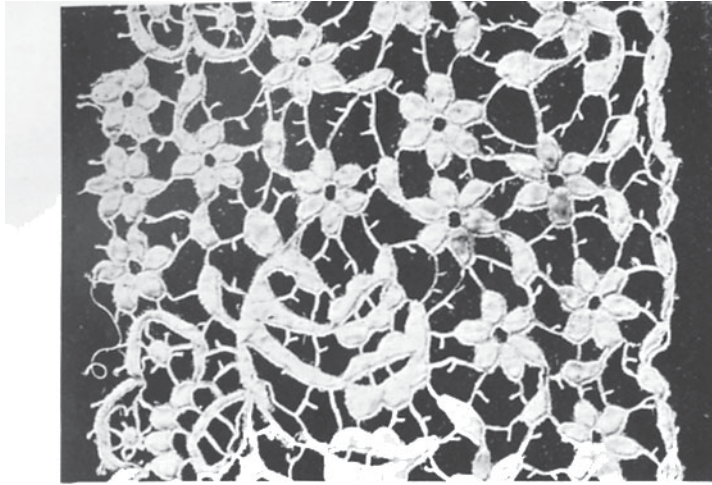
Another variety of lace is Carrick-ma-cross, which was contemporary with Limerick. This is merely embroidery again, but has more claim to the title of lace, as the tiny little flowers and scrolls are connected with brides made of buttonhole stitch ornamented with picots. This is really a very handsome lace, its only drawback being that it will not *wash*. The fine lawn of which it is made is buttonholed round and then cut away. This, in cleaning or washing, *contracts* and leaves the buttonhole edging, and in a few cleanings it is a mass of unmendable rags.

Slightly more serviceable is another variety of Carrick-ma-cross, on which the lawn is appliquéd to a machine-made net, the pattern outlined with buttonhole stitches, and the surplus lawn cut away, leaving the network as a grounding, various pretty stitchings filling up the necessary spaces.

Yet another kind of lace is made, and is really the only real lace that Ireland can claim. This is the Irish crotchet, which in its finer varieties is a close imitation of Venetian Point, but made with fine thread and with a crotchet needle. Some of the best is really worth purchasing, but it is costly, realising as much as five guineas per yard. A very delicate "Tatting" also comes from the Emerald Isle, and in comparing English and Irish laces one is inevitably struck with the reflection that there is more "artistry" in the production of Irish laces and embroidery than in England with all her advantages.

The temperamental differences of the two races are distinctly shown in this, perhaps more than any other art.

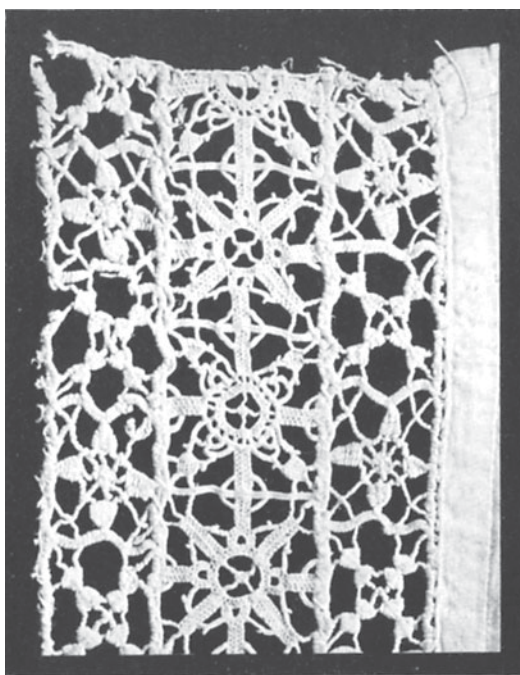
Much really notable work is now being executed in the Irish lace schools. At Youghal, co. Monaghan, an exact replica of old Venetian Point is being worked. Various fine specimens from the school occupy a place at South Kensington Museum, and the lace industry of Ireland may be said to be in a healthy condition.



CARRICK-MA-CROSS LACE.
(Author's Collection.)

XIII

**HOW TO
IDENTIFY
LACE**



THE CENTRE STRIP IS OLD "RETICELLA," WITH GENOA BORDERS.

(Author's Collection.)