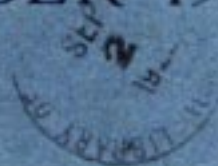


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THE · BULLETIN · OF <sup>1361</sup>/<sub>3783</sub>  
THE · NEEDLE · AND · BOBBIN  
CLUB  
VOLUME · I · NUMBER · I  
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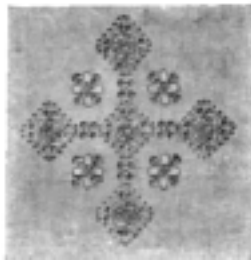
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LAND; MEMBER OF THE "THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB"

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# BULLETIN OF THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB

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VOLUME I

<sup>1</sup> DECEMBER, 1916

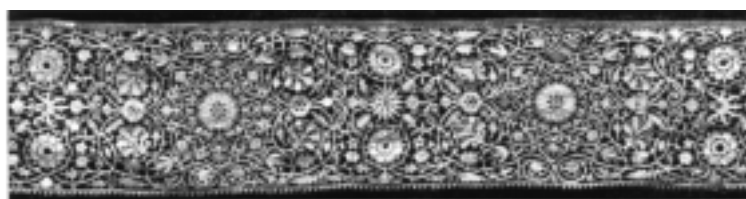
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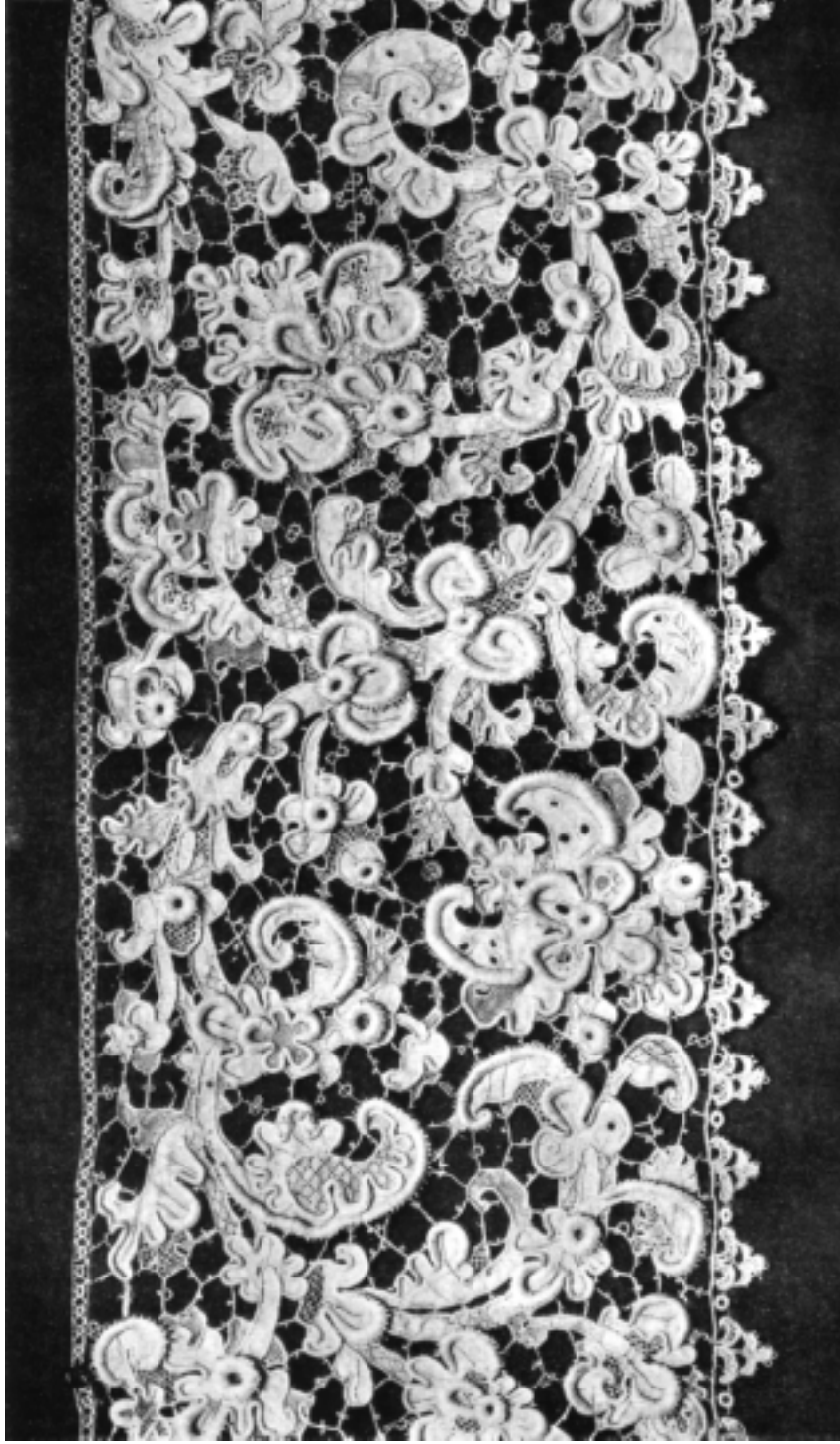
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### NOTE BY THE EDITOR

<sup>1</sup>Unfortunate business reverses on the part of the firm originally selected, necessitated a change of printer and occasioned unavoidable delay in the issue of the first number of the BULLETIN. In future the publication will appear promptly on the dates specified.

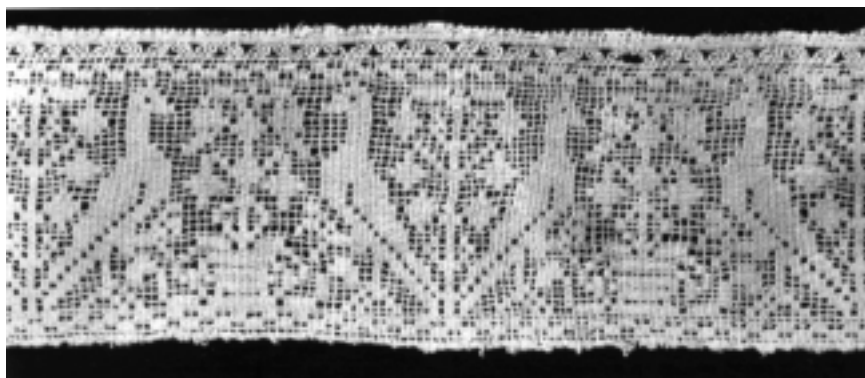


VENETIAN NEEDLEPOINT IN RELIEF

Second Half of the 17 Century

It. *Punto tagliato a jogliami.* Fr. *Gros point de Venise.* Ger. *Venetianische Reliefspitze.*

From the Collection of Mrs. George Blumenthal



BURATTO. ITALIAN, 16 CENTURY.  
This pattern appears in Paganino's Libro Primo, 1527.

## FOREWORD

**I**NTEREST in hand-made lace was in my case aroused through the stimulus of an aunt to whom the subject had always proved fascinating. With this incentive the natural outcome was a protracted sojourn in Europe where the splendid museum collections and the study of the technical side of the fabric in the various lace centres afforded further inspiration to an already vividly awakened interest.

Returning to this country I came face to face with the fact that Americans interested in this delightful subject were few and widely scattered and this discovery incited me to make an attempt to get them in touch with one another. For some time my efforts resulted merely in the fortnightly gathering of a congenial group of friends, who now for some six winters have met to ply the bobbins and discuss lace matters, and the genuine pleasure derived from these meetings encouraged me to try to interest other acquaintances in a larger scheme. At first there was no response, but in the course of time I discovered that Miss B. E. Merrill of Carnegie Institute and Chautauqua had a similar idea, though viewed from a different standpoint, which encouraged me to redouble my efforts toward the formation of a club. Gradually my endeavors began to show signs of fruition and I one day unfolded my plan to Miss Frances Morris of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, who became interested and offered to coöperate. A working plan was thereupon formulated and letters written to twenty or thirty enthusiasts, nineteen of whom at once sent encouraging replies. An initial meeting was held at

the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. February 8, 1916, when a name was chosen, officers elected and the aims of the club and its by-laws decided.

Since then two other business meetings have been held and two lectures given: one on "Coptic Tapestry, Embroidery and Thread-Work," by Dr. R. Meyer-Riefstahl, and another on "The Moro Lace-Makers," by Bishop Charles H. Brent.

As I write this the first number of the Club Bulletin, which is to appear semi-annually, in December and June, is in the press.

Our hopes for the Needle and Bobbin Club are bounded by opportunity only, for we trust that the club is capable of such growth and expansion that it can ultimately include the consideration of any other subjects that may be related and worth while

GERTUDE WHITING.

December 1, 1916.



## LACE BOBBINS

THE beauty of lace-making as an accomplishment to be desired by all “noble and virtuous women” is delicately suggested in the quaint title of Vicellio’s pattern book published in Venice in 1600, in which the author, addressing his patrons, describes the art as the “corona” of all feminine attainment!

These books, which were the outgrowth of an increasing demand for the fabric, were in all probability designed for women of the nobility, a luxury far beyond the means of the humble—

“Cottager who weaves at her own door  
Pillow and bobbins all her little store,  
Content though mean, and cheerful if not gay,  
Shuffling her threads about the livelong day:  
Just earns a scanty pittance, and at night  
Lies down secure, her heart and pocket light.”<sup>1</sup>

Elaborate patterns such as are found in the sixteenth-century lace books indicate that the industry at that date was already well established; patterns must have existed long before they were published in book form, for lace requiring the intricate manipulation of so large a number of bobbins could hardly be produced by the untrained fingers of a novice.

In Italy, where the art developed side by side with that of the needle, the earliest mention of pillow lace is recorded in a Milanese deed of gift dated 1493, which refers to “a band of work wrought with twelve bobbins to trim a sheet.”<sup>2</sup>

Ordinary Italian bobbins are of wood, as the name *fuselli* implies, although in olden times they were made of various materials: *a fusi*, of

<sup>1</sup> Cowper. <sup>2</sup> Lefebure, “Embroidery and Lace” p. 261.

wood; *a ossi*, of bone; *a piombini*, of lead. The name *piombini*, indicating as it does a leaden weight, suggests the possible development of the bobbin from weights used in the primitive loom. The elaborate glass bobbins found in Italy and Spain, which have an opening left in the larger end, originally designed it is said to carry a weight, may have some connection with the term *piombini*. Those shown in the illustration (Nos. 4 and 7) from the collection of Mrs. DeWitt Clinton Cohen came from Murano, where similar specimens are preserved in the Museo Civico, to which Museum they were presented by Signor Toso, grandfather of the present proprietor of the local glass works. They are of clear Venetian glass, decorated with lines of ruby red. One in the Moore Collection of Spanish Glass in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and another equally interesting found in Granada several years ago by a New York collector, are of dark green paste, such as is supposed to have come from Almeria.

These bobbins while highly decorative are scarcely practicable; they measure nine inches in length with the smaller end twisted in a spiral groove and the heavier end richly ornamented with scrolls or knobs in high relief. The large dimensions suggest that an occasional bobbin of this kind may have been used to hold the coarser thread which sometimes outlines the pattern in pillow laces. Pillows are usually fitted with two sets of bobbins, "passive" and "active"; the former, sometimes called "gimps" or "hangers," carry the warp threads through which the "active" bobbins carrying the weft threads are passed, and the necessity for holding these "warp" threads taut might account for the weighted bobbin which finds its prototype in the primitive loom weights as above stated. As different styles of bobbins are often used to indicate the various threads, possibly these large glass bobbins carried the warp threads; for they are certainly too heavy and cumbersome to allow of rapid handling, and it does not seem possible that any great number could be employed on an ordinary pillow.

In the lace centres of the Abruzzi, Aquila, Pescocostanzo and Gessopalena, the pillows, which are large and barrel-shaped, are fitted with slender pear-shaped bobbins, sometimes without ornament or again prettily carved. The same is true in the environs of Genoa as, for instance, in the little town of Pontorfino, where a flourishing lace industry is carried on.

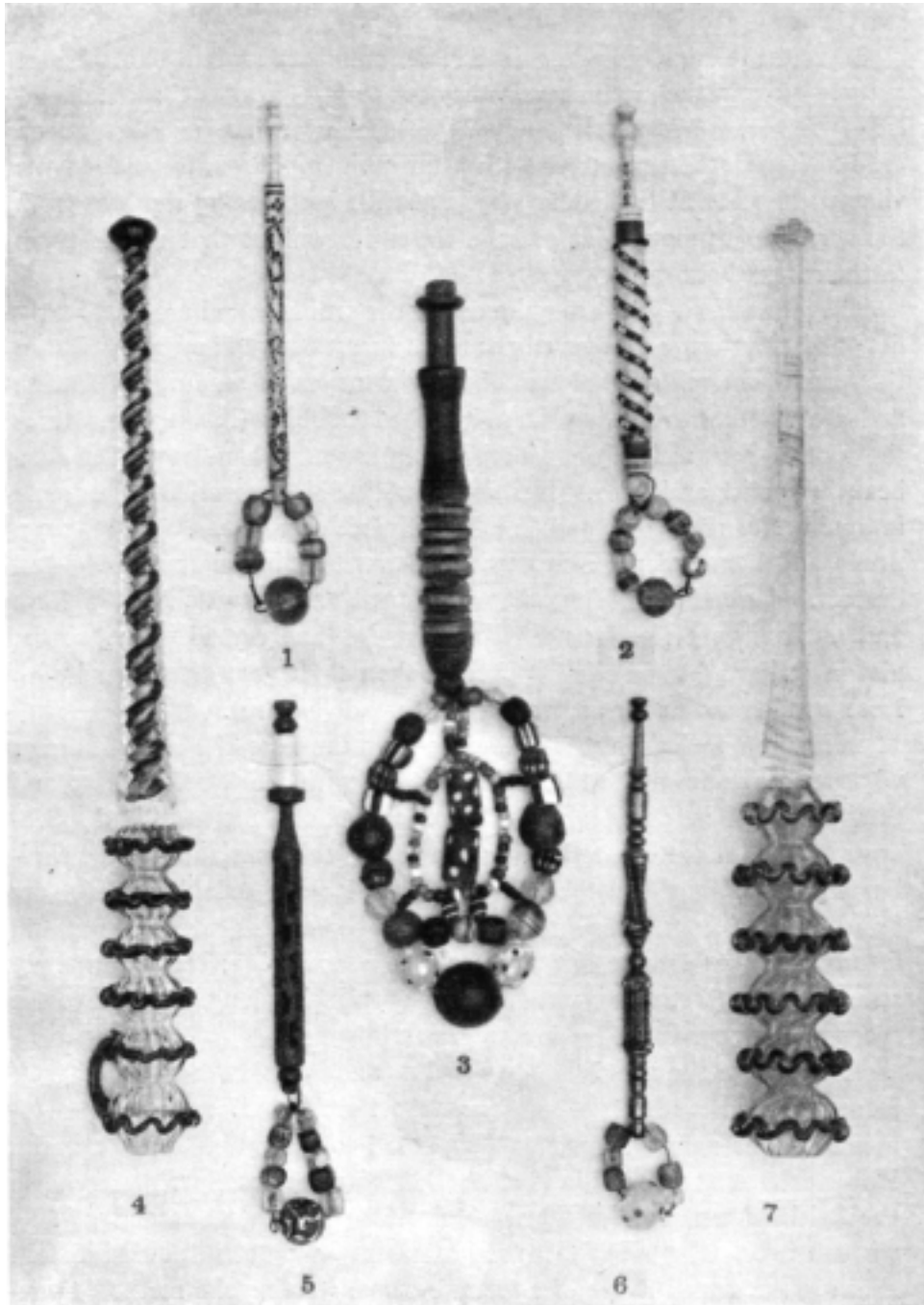


PLATE I

1, 2, 5, 6 English (Midlands). Lent by Miss Gertrude Whiting. 1, 2,; bone In the Metropolitan Museum of Art. 3 English (Buckinghamshire), walnut. 4, 7 Italian. Glass bobbins from Murano. Lent by Mrs. De Witt Clinton Cohen. 5, walnut; 6, brass.

Beyond the Alps, however, in Savoie, one finds an entirely different outfit. Here in the picturesque valley of the Isère nestles the little hamlet of Tignes, where nearly every home shelters a lace maker; and on bright afternoons they gather with their curious pillows, to work in the village square or at their door steps until the lengthening shadows from the surrounding mountains presage the early twilight that recalls them to their household tasks.

The pillows in Tignes are quite out of the ordinary and are apparently designed simply for narrow edgings and insertions. They are made in the form of a large ring, almost of the dimensions of an automobile tire, and are fitted with curious large-knobbed bobbins (No. 17) cut from the root of boxwood, a wood which from constant handling takes on a beautiful polish and color. In shape these bobbins resemble those found in Spain (No. 18), which are usually of Spanish walnut. Walnut, pear, prune and boxwood are also used for Swiss bobbins in the Neufchâtel district, where the bobbins are pear-shaped and very delicate in form and outline, with slender necks for carrying fine thread. In Austria, also in Italy and some other countries, the bobbins are often fitted with loose wooden covers for protecting the thread (No. 10).

Pillow lace in Russia is said to date from the time of Peter the Great who, returning from the Netherlands, took with him lace patterns and established the industry in some of the villages of the central and southern districts, a statement that is more or less substantiated by the similarity between Flemish bobbin laces and the laces of Balakhna, which are quite different from other Russian laces. The bobbins, which are devoid of ornament, reflect the simplicity of the peasant life; they are merely straight, smooth sticks of wood, six or seven inches long, adapted to the coarser fabric produced by peasant work.

Evidence of the use of bobbins in England dates back to the days of Henry VI and Edward IV, although the term "lace" as used in documents of this period is generally supposed to indicate a cord or braid. However that may be, in one of the Harleian manuscripts preserved in the British Museum, directions are given for making "Bascon lace . . . without bobbins."<sup>1</sup> The manuscript opens with a beautiful illumination showing the seated figure of a woman demonstrating the method there-

<sup>1</sup>For this interesting note the author is indebted to Miss Amy Kohlsaar.

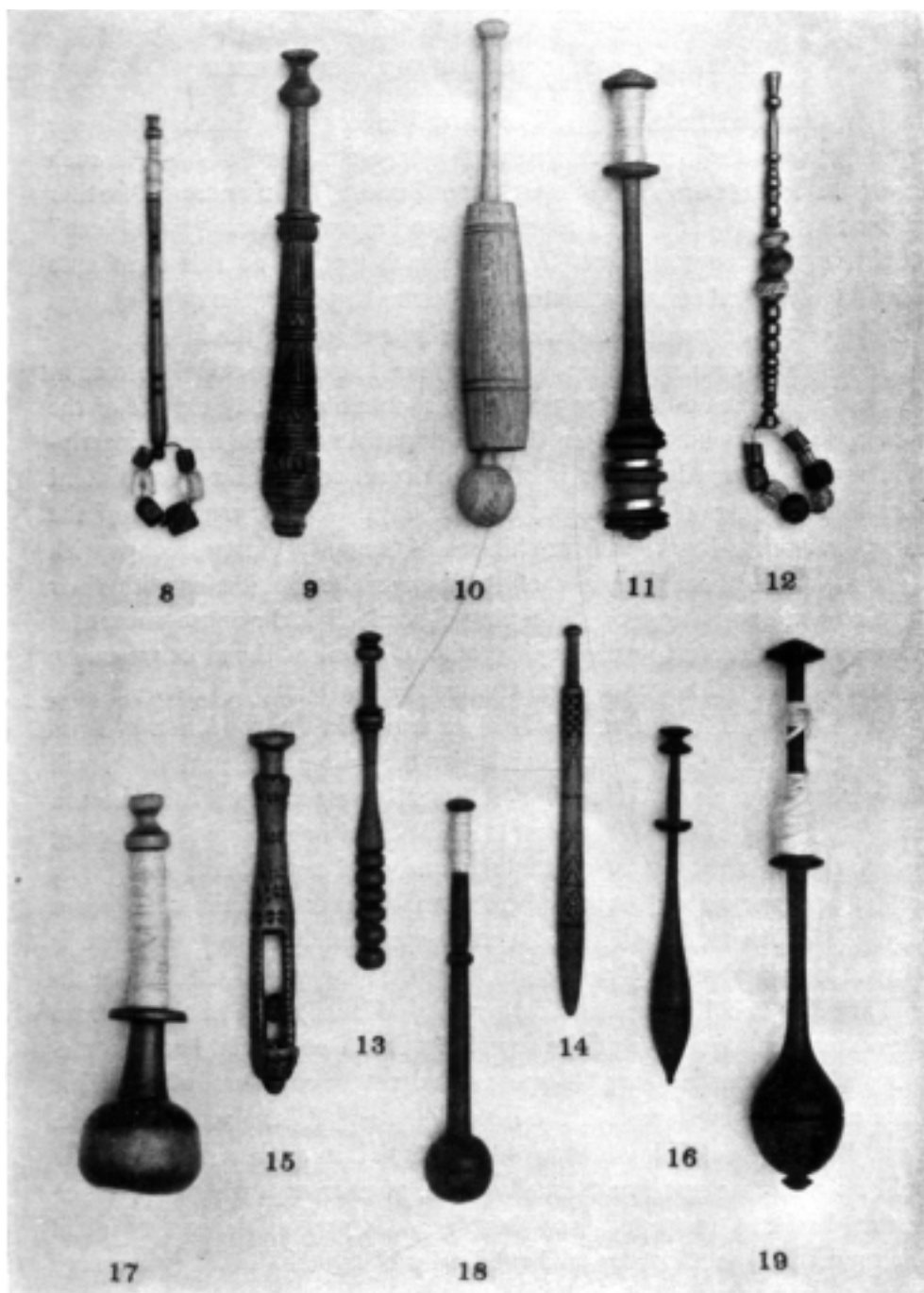


PLATE II

- |  |                                     |   |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| 8 English (Midlands), bone; 12, id. bronze.    | 13 Swiss, pearwood; 16, id. walnut. | 8, 17 Lent by Mrs. De Witt Clinton Cohen.       |
| 9 French (Bayeux), carved boxwood.             | 14 English (Devonshire).            | 10 to 16, 18, 19 Lent by Miss Gertrude Whiting. |
| 10 Modern Austrian (Viennese) "barrel" bobbin. | 15 Boxwood "window" bobbin.         | 9 In the Metropolitan Museum of Art.            |
| 11 French, "médional" weighted bobbin.         | 17 French (Tignes), boxwood root.   |   |
|  | 18 Spanish, walnut.                 |   |
|  | 19 Belgian, walnut.                 |   |

inafter described, holding a ball of thread in her right hand, which she apparently twists in and out among the fingers of her left hand in such a way as to produce an indented lace or braid. The manuscript further states that a "thynne lace" requires three fingers, while a "round lace" might require four or more. By some such method as this the Copts may have worked certain varieties of their nets, possibly employing pegs instead of the fingers in interlacing the single thread of the fabric.

In no other country do lace bobbins reveal such a personal note as in England; nowhere do they appear to be so much a part of the life of the worker as here, where so often the tender pathos of some simple inscription marks a tragedy or, as is often the case, some delicate sentiment records a romance of earlier and happier days. One is reminded of the samplers worked by the patient children of the early Victorian days with their melancholy couplets, and of the memorial embroideries with their tombstones supporting the drooping figures of lachrymose mourners posed within the shadow of weeping willows! One of the most gruesome of these memorial bobbins bears the inscription "Joseph Castle, Hung, 1860."<sup>2</sup> This is from Huntingdonshire and is in the collection of Miss Herbert Oxford. Others, however, suggest a lighter vein, such as "I will forever love the giver," or again, "A token of respect from Alice Lesson to J. B., July 4, 1844." These motto bobbins of bone have the lettering in spiral bands that start at the end and read toward the top. The letters are pricked or burnt in and then colored; sometimes they are "pegged" with metal. The grooved or spool end, where the thread is wound, is only about half an inch in length, as the thread used for Buckinghamshire and Bedford lace is very fine. Usually these bobbins from the eastern counties have jingles or weights on the end, a few beads, sometimes of the "mottled soap" type or of colored or cut glass, while others have coins; but in Devon, in the little villages along the southern coast, Beer, Branscombe, Sidmouth, centres of the Honiton lace industry, the bobbins are quite small and usually made of pear or apple wood, which in time becomes finely polished; they are often prettily painted or inlaid with red and black, but are without jingles of any kind. They measure about three or four inches in length (No. 14).

Another variety of English bobbin (No. 3) found in the vicinity of

<sup>2</sup>Head, "Some Notes on Lace Bobbins." "The Reliquary," 1900, p. 172.



Oxford is of turned wood decorated with loose pewter rings or inlay, with bead jingles at the end. These bobbins also have the short threadspool at the top. Perhaps the most artistic bobbins from this part of England are of the so-called "church window" model, such as are shown in Nos. 5, 15. These have delicately carved pavilions, usually composed of four slender uprights, which enclose revolving balls or other devices.



LACE-MAKER AT TIGNES, FRANCE

When one realizes that much of the English bobbin lace is more or less directly an outgrowth of the Flemish fabric, it seems strange that there is not more similarity in the shape of the bobbins used, for while the English bobbins are straight, slender sticks, like a lead pencil, nearly everywhere on the continent the form is either pear-shaped or bulbous. In Bayeux, for instance, we again find the Flemish form only slightly larger and heavier; a beautiful group of these carved boxwood bobbins is preserved in the collection at the Metropolitan Museum, presented

by Miss Sturges of New York; in this collection will be found also many interesting English bobbins of various types presented by Mrs. James Boorman Johnstone, and as well a number of curious old lace pins with beaded tops, which in Venice were sometimes decorated with ornamental heads in the form of minute birds in Venetian glass.

While until within a few years it has been possible to pick up occasional bobbins in antique shops or, in rare instances, to persuade a lace worker to part with one, the increased interest in the art and the demand for decorative bobbins make it no longer an easy task to locate these treasures. The day is not far distant when they will no longer be in the market and the ambitious lace maker will needs be content with such modern implements for her pillow as may be available in the city shop.

F. M.

#### A MEMORY OF BRUGES

**A**MONG the picturesque features of the quaint city of Bruges, none has greater fascination for those who love the click of the bobbins than the Beguinage. Here for years on the borders of the famous Minnewater or, as the French call it, the "Lac d'Amour," the aged "dentellières" of Bruges have lived in happy seclusion, comfortably housed in the little brick dwellings that form part of the enclosure where the conscientious sisters of the Hospice have long ministered to their welfare.

All who have had the privilege of visiting this spot will doubtless recall the happy face of the "Doyenne" of the Beguinage, the oldest lace-maker in Bruges. Bright and alert, no taller than a child of ten, her years—more than fourscore and ten—rested lightly upon her quaint person as she moved quietly about her household tasks, tended her flowers, or sat at the casement of her homely little kitchen, her pet bird hanging near, her pillow always beside her. Her gentle features showed no fear of the future and there was naught to disturb the serenity of her placid life as she neared its borderland.

But one day, two years ago, all was changed; there was a clatter of horsemen in the street beyond; troops surged over the Pont du Beguinage;

the wooded park, that sacred precinct, became an encampment! The fragile form tottered to the doorway—her heart ceased to beat. They found her prostrate; she had passed beyond the threshold into the quiet of the Great Beyond.



THE "DOYENNE" OF THE BEGUINAGE AT BRUGES

## CLUB LECTURES

**T**HE first of the lectures given under the auspices of The Needle and Bobbin Club was held in the auditorium of the Metropolitan Museum of Art on the afternoon of April 12th, when R. Meyer-Riefstahl, Ph.D., an eminent authority on textile fabrics, addressed the members of the club on Coptic tapestry, embroideries and network, weaves that mark the earliest authentic data in the history of lace.

The lecturer treated his subject under three heads: the first dealt briefly with the history of the more important explorations in the Nile Valley; the second with the people and the life of the native Egyptians in the early Christian era, and the third with the fabrics produced in this age, dealing principally with the different varieties of net or lacework. The technique of Coptic network is a subject still under consideration by many students and one which will be treated at greater length in a later number of the Bulletin.

The second lecture before the club members and their friends was delivered on November 8th by the Right Reverend Charles H. Brent, Protestant Episcopal Bishop of the Philippine Islands, who chose for his subject The Moro Lace Makers.

The Moros are the native population of the Southern Philippines, that is, the Island of Mindanao and other islands of the Sulu Archipelago; many of them still adhering to their native traditions are of the Mohammedan faith, but they are, nevertheless, a worthy and industrious people, and since the American occupation of the islands, have been encouraged to build self-sustaining communities tending to develop habits of stability, thus improving their industrial capacity. The women are dextrous weavers and produce fabrics of exquisite texture both of hemp and silk, although their color schemes are not always pleasing to other than native taste.

Referring to the industrial possibilities of these people, the broadening out of work along these lines, Bishop Brent said:

“We have been able to see just what the possibilities for work are in the girls by that done in our Northern mission among the Igorrotes in the public schools, and especially in our exchange and embroidery schools in the city of Manila. In our schools we do not do so much lace work as embroidery, but the embroidery is of a very high class. The lace that is being made in the Moro country is indicative of the ability of the girls, who achieve very great skill. We have now good Filipino teachers, but we lack good patterns. If we had a first-class designer in the schools of Zamboanga and Sulu, we could produce lace good enough for any market in the world. While some of the designs do not appeal to Western taste, the lace produced proves that the workers have what is most necessary in lace-making—patience and accuracy. They are very steady and thoroughgoing workers, and when they have once qualified as lace makers, they can undertake a job with confidence, and one can feel sure that they will turn out good work.

“We are all aware that in order to achieve self-respect a person must find scope for his creative gifts, as every human being has some form, however low it may be, of productive power. All the work we are attempting among the Moro people is to appeal to this latent capacity, and we are trying to train them along the line of their native genius or bent. We have discovered that they are fond of weaving; so we can help them and emancipate them from their crude implements and give them a hand loom which the Igorrotes and other tribes are already using to great advantage.”

The laces exhibited at the close of the lecture emphasized the point made by Bishop Brent regarding the ability of these people to master the technique of lace making; the lace shown was of the Cluny type, of excellent workmanship when one considers that the art is as yet but an infant industry among these people.

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As we go to press news is received of the sudden death of Mme. van Schelle, who addressed the club on the afternoon of January 22d. Mme. van Schelle's health was undermined at the time of the sinking of the *Arabic*, and having overtaxed her strength in Belgian Relief work, she succumbed to pneumonia on February 10th. Extracts from her paper on the Papenvoort Lace Industry will appear in the June Bulletin.

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## CLUB NOTES

**P**RIVATE COLLECTIONS. Through the generosity of Mrs. George Blumenthal the club is able to publish the first of a series of reproductions illustrating notable pieces in private collections, of which there are many among the club members. Plates of this kind are of especial interest not only to connoisseurs, but as well to members living at a distance from the large cities, where it is impossible to study the fabric from books which often are not available in smaller libraries, and where there are no museum collections at hand. Members who are interested in this feature of the Bulletin and who are willing to offer pieces for reproduction should communicate with the Editor, Mr. Richard Greenleaf, Lawrence, Long Island.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.** The bibliography of lace publications included in this number of the Bulletin, originally compiled by Miss Gertrude Whiting, and published at her expense, has been enlarged by the addition of all books in the city libraries bearing on the subject; that is, the New York Public Library, Library of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Library of the Hispanic Museum, the Avery Library, and the Library at Cooper Institute, thus enabling residents in any part of the city to use the Library nearest at hand. The books in each library are indicated by asterisks or letters. A bibliography on tapestry is in preparation and lace books in the libraries of other cities are being listed for publication.

**A CLUB LIBRARY.** Through the interest of Miss Anna B. Shaw the nucleus of a club library has been formed, which though it at present consists of but a few volumes is a step in the right direction. When enough books have been acquired, they will be lent to members for long enough periods to allow ample time for study. A registration fee will be charged in advance to cover transportation, and the balance refunded provided the book be returned in good condition.



Members interested in furthering this line of endeavor by donating books should communicate with Mrs. Addison S. Pratt, 235 West 75th St., New York City, who has been appointed Librarian.

LACE PATTERNS. Miss Shaw has also lent a number of lace models to be copied and sold by the club and has defrayed the expense of having pieces from her collection arranged as working patterns. It is hoped that Miss Shaw's generous cooperation will serve as a stimulus to other members of the club to follow her example. Good designs for needle, bobbin, and knotted lace would be most acceptable. The price of the patterns will vary according to size, ranging from ten cents to one dollar, exclusive of postage.

It is planned to publish with each number of the Bulletin a cloth-backed pricking or working pattern for lace or embroidery.

OUTLOOK. Should The Needle and Bobbin Club members care to back a worthy industry, the door is now open, through the New York City Charities Department, to engage a lace teacher who would instruct the untaught, unoccupied little ones of this city's homes and hospitals: children with defective spines, strapped for life to "plaster-boards"; young girls with weak joints or without feet; cardiac children confined to bed, too unlettered to read, existing year in and year out under the demoralizing influence of absolute idleness. These children are eager for something to do. Lace-work teaches cleanliness, patience, perseverance, order, dexterity, and a love of the refined. It can easily be made by children, and the sale of their work, which has already been assured, would cover the cost of materials and incidentals, even though the sickly, nervous child's products may not always be perfect enough for the market. The classes would be supervised by The New York City Visiting Committee's director, and a suitable lace teacher has been found. All that is now lacking is \$900.00 a year for an instructor's salary.

EXHIBITION OF SAMPLERS AND QUILTS. A delightful exhibition of several hundred samplers and quilted bedspreads from private collections was opened at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, December 6th. It continued during the month. The treasures of many private collectors were

assembled and the result proved a charming and representative group, in which the patient dexterity of the children of by-gone generations was a marked feature. While the larger number were of English or American origin, Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, and Mexico were well represented by many exceedingly interesting examples. The quilts, which were hung in the corridor, made a brilliant showing with their bold patterns in vivid greens and reds. The exhibit was well patronized, and many interested in this branch of needlecraft availed themselves of the opportunity thus offered to study a large collection.

MRS. JOHN W. ALEXANDER has very kindly offered the Arden Studios, 599 Fifth Avenue, for a Club exhibit of Valenciennes lace to be held from March 28 to April 4 inclusive.

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE will be pleased to receive suggestions that may in any way add to the interest of the Club.

# BULLETIN OF THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB

PUBLISHED SEMI-ANNUALLY BY THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB

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MEMBERSHIP fee in The Needle and Bobbin Club includes a subscription to the Bulletin. The Club's fiscal year closes January 31st. All members joining prior to December 30th shall pay dues for the current year. Those joining after December 30th and before January 31st shall pay dues for the ensuing year only, and be entitled to membership privileges for the remaining weeks of the current year. A limited number of Copies of the Bulletin may be had at seventy-five cents each by applying to the Editor, Richard Greenleaf, Lawrence, Long Island, to whom all communications should be addressed.

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## THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB

ORGANIZED FEBRUARY 8TH, 1916

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THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB  
BY-LAWS

NAME

This organization shall be known as The Needle and Bobbin Club.

OBJECT

Its objects shall be: to encourage and maintain interest in hand-made fabrics; to promote these industries in the United States; to afford opportunities to meet and discuss lace or allied subjects; to be notified of sales, exhibits, and lectures; if possible, to visit private collections or see pictures of distant collections, and perhaps to publish a brochure or monograph.

MEMBERSHIP

It shall have two or more classes of members: first, Active Members (those whose interest in hand-made fabrics is one of pleasure purely); second, Associate Members (those who receive remuneration in connection with such fabrics). Associate Members cannot vote, but may become Active Members. Dealers in the trade shall not be eligible. Candidates for Active and Associate membership must be proposed and then seconded by two members in good standing or by two letters of credence from recognized sources. The name of any candidate receiving two black marks in the election shall be withdrawn.

DUES

The annual dues for Active Members shall be \$5; for Associate Members, \$1.

MEETINGS

General meetings shall be held twice annually, at which times the election of members shall take place. Special meetings may be called.

OFFICERS

There shall be a President, who shall perform the usual duties of such an office; and perhaps a Vice-President to assist the President and pre-

side in case of his or her absence; a Recording Secretary, who shall keep an exact record of all meetings; a Corresponding Secretary, who shall notify all members one week or more in advance of lace sales, lectures, and exhibits in New York City, and also at least one week in advance of all meetings to be held by the Club; and a Treasurer, who shall receive, disburse and account for all Club money, sending receipts for dues, and notifying members of amounts they may owe. Officers shall be elected annually at the Spring Meeting.

#### COMMITTEES

The officers of the Club shall constitute an Executive Committee, authorized to transact all necessary business that may arise between meetings, and to call and arrange for said meetings.

The President shall annually appoint a Membership Committee to receive, examine, investigate, and present applications for membership, attending to the details in connection with the election of members. She shall also appoint such other committees as may be necessary.

#### QUORUM

A majority of those attending shall constitute a quorum, provided there are not less than ten present.

#### AMENDMENTS

These by-laws may be changed by a majority vote of those present, provided at least one-third of all the Active Members are in attendance.





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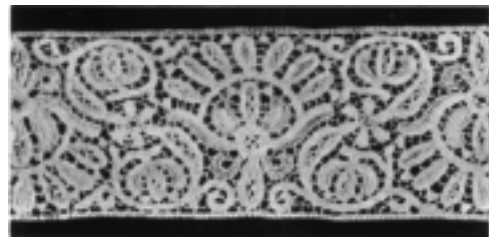
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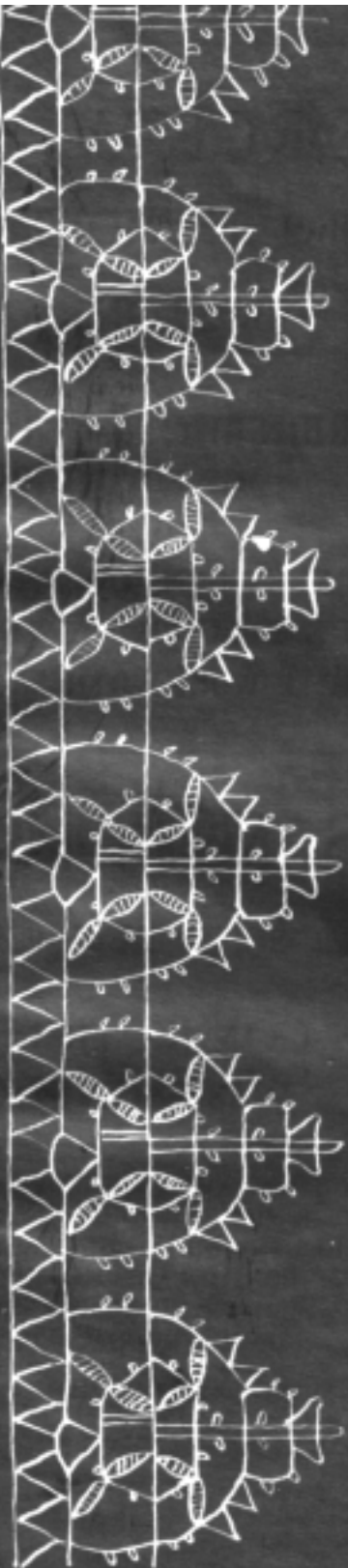
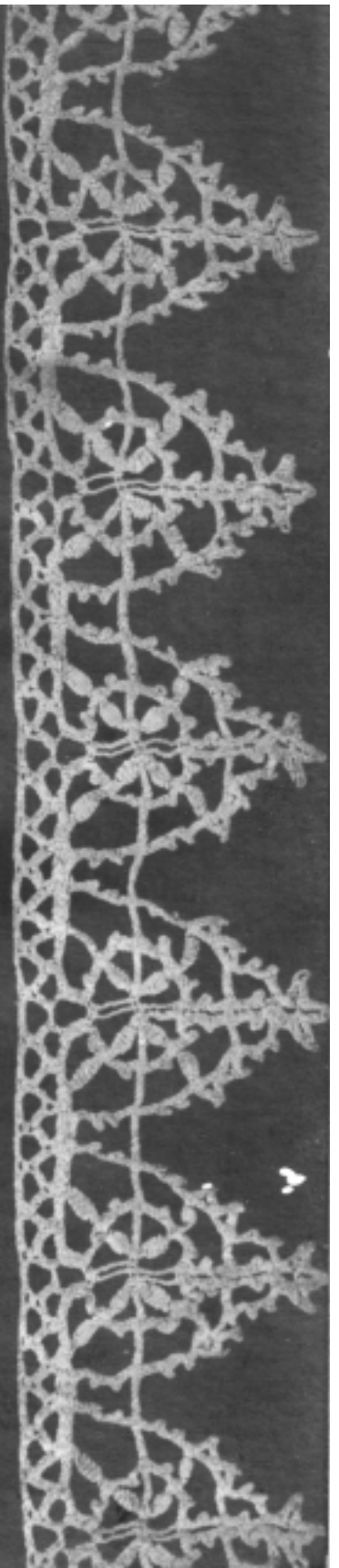
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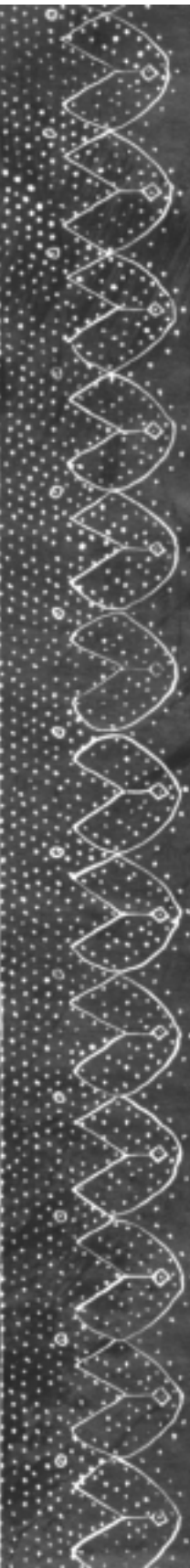
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