



Old World Laces

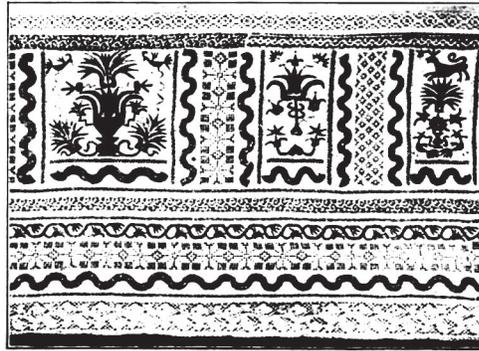
ALTHOUGH lace is referred to in the older books of the Bible, from the second chapter of Exodus to Isaiah, it is first definitely spoken of in 1445 n.e. Some of the oldest lace extant is made of threads of gold, and was worn by the Dames in the Iron Age. Gold, silver, and flax threads were employed in early patterns of lace, and in Italy and Spain the peasants used aloe fibre to a great extent.

Augustus Caesar and Alexander the Great loved lace as much as did their royal European successors, and offered great inducements to the women of their countries to excel in the art of making it. Phrygian women became such experts in the work that all fine needle-work became known as Phrygian. Gradually lace-making became an art to which priests and nuns devoted themselves, so that for several centuries the pillows upon

which lace was made were known as "nuns' pillows," and the lace as "nuns' work." Although lace did not become known by its present name until the first "cut-work" and "drawn-work" were given the title "laci" in France, yet it was much used for centuries before that. Saint Dunstan became famous for the beauty of his lace designs, and in the year 1246 Pope Innocent IV. was so delighted with Anglo-Saxon lace that he ordered a quantity of it for his own use. Anglo-Saxon kings never forgot to include the highly prized "nuns' work" in their votive offerings.

The "Spanish stitch" was introduced into English work in 1501 by Catherine of Aragon upon her marriage with Prince Arthur; and into France by Katharine Parr.

The drawn-work and open embroidery of the year 1200 progressed so in favor that there was a considerable demand for it in the six-



ITALIAN ALTAR DRAPERY—SIXTEENTH CENTURY.



BED-COVER MADE BY ROYAL HANDS.

teenth century, and thus lace derived its mediæval origin.

Opus filatorium, lace of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, is now known under the titles of "filé brodé" and "guipure d'art."

In 1585 Catherine de' Medici introduced the beautiful Medici collar, and exerted her powerful influence to foster the art of making lace. The greatest artists of the period of the Renaissance lent their talents to originating designs for lace, and the work of this period has never had its equal in richness and beauty.

In 1613 lace bed-curtains and draperies came into general use in French royal circles. These had a net ground, with the pattern darned in or appliqué upon it, and *pointe coupé* was a favorite border.

Royal families have been the greatest patrons of lace, and many queens became celebrated for the beauty of their work.

Queen Margharita of Italy has lately received many exquisite patterns, the making of which had become almost a lost art; while under encouragement of Queen Victoria several counties in England are given over to the manufacture of Honiton lace, veils of which have adorned royal brides, beginning with the Princess of Wales. Famous old patterns of Irish point have also been reclaimed in Ireland by the Countess of Cadogan.

In 1661 the lace trade was exclusively controlled by peddlers, but when Colbert established the Pointe de France in 1665 there was a general development of the manufacture of

lace in Europe. The most celebrated commercial laces of this time were the points of Venice, Brussels, and Spain, and the Lille thread laces of Antwerp, Lille, and Arras. Of these and the French varieties there was a considerable export trade. With the exception of Brussels, all the exquisite Flanders lace was known as Mechlin.

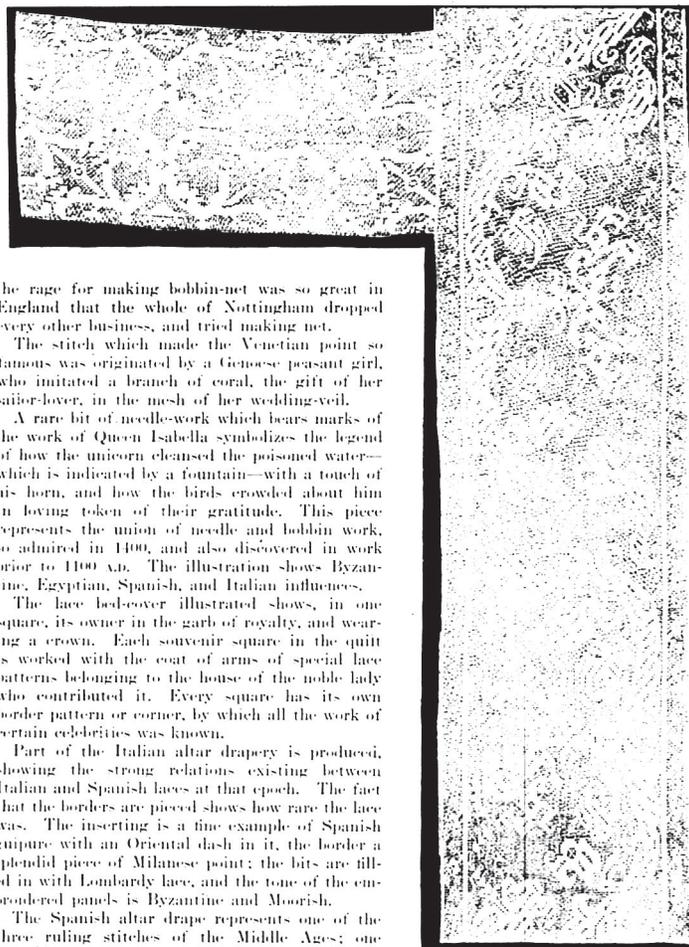
Although Italy claims to have originated point-lace, it is said to be of Byzantine origin; and of all points, the Venetian was the most beautiful, and a bit of it is almost priceless, now that it is almost a relic of the past.

The lace trade grew to such proportions in Europe in the seventeenth century that in 1667 Spain established a protective tariff for lace. Later this trade was almost wholly ruined by the enactment of the Sumptuary law of 1749—which affected all papal dominions—and by the driving out of the Moors. Makers of Flanders lace invariably became blind ere they reached thirty years of age, nevertheless Flemish lace was exported in such quantities that England passed a law excluding it, which importers promptly evaded by smuggling it in and selling it as point d'Angleterre—a name which has clung to it ever since. From Lille came a celebrated "Brussels net," and a fine thread used by other lace-manufacturing towns.

Net was first made by machinery in 1768. In 1809 bobbin-net was produced, to which the Jacquard system was applied in 1837. In 1823



ITALIAN WALL DRAPERIES—SIXTEENTH CENTURY.



the rage for making bobbin-net was so great in England that the whole of Nottingham dropped every other business, and tried making net.

The stitch which made the Venetian point so famous was originated by a Genoese peasant girl, who imitated a branch of coral, the gift of her sailor-lover, in the mesh of her wedding-veil.

A rare bit of needle-work which bears marks of the work of Queen Isabella symbolizes the legend of how the unicorn quenched the poisoned water—which is indicated by a fountain—with a touch of his horn, and how the birds crowded about him in loving token of their gratitude. This piece represents the union of needle and bobbin work, so admired in 1400, and also discovered in work prior to 1100 A.D. The illustration shows Byzantine, Egyptian, Spanish, and Italian influences.

The lace bed-cover illustrated shows, in one square, its owner in the garb of royalty, and wearing a crown. Each souvenir square in the quilt is worked with the coat of arms of special lace patterns belonging to the house of the noble lady who contributed it. Every square has its own border pattern or corner, by which all the work of certain celebrities was known.

Part of the Italian altar drapery is produced, showing the strong relations existing between Italian and Spanish laces at that epoch. The fact that the borders are pieced shows how rare the lace was. The inserting is a fine example of Spanish guipure with an Oriental dash in it, the border a splendid piece of Milanese point; the bits are filled in with Lombardy lace, and the tone of the embroidered panels is Byzantine and Moorish.

The Spanish altar drape represents one of the three ruling stitches of the Middle Ages; one which existed many centuries before; this is the famous Punto Tagliato, one of the richest products of the needle—in the massive style—ever invented. The cruciform candelabra in the border show the sacred purpose of the work; and the

ALTAR DRAPERY DESIGNED BY A MOORISH ARTIST.

The inserting Spanish guipure, and the border Milanese point. The whole showing the relation between Italian and Spanish lace of the period.