



FLOUNCE OF NEEDLEPOINT LACE FRENCH, 18TH CENTURY (AT EITHER END OF THE FLOUNCE A PORTION OF SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT DESIGN HAS BEEN ADDED) VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM



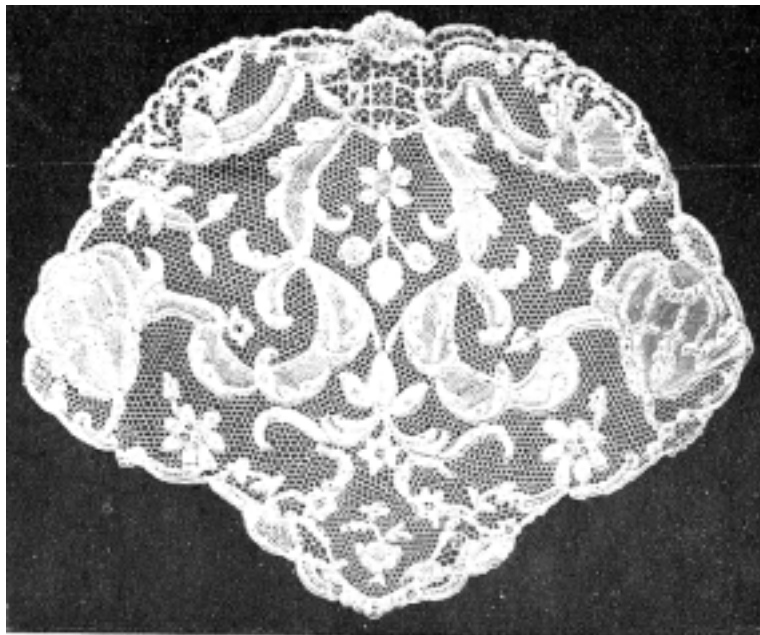
## Alençon Part I. By M. Jourdain

A VERY full and accurate account of Alençon lace has been given by Madame Despierres\* in her *Histoire du Point d'Alençon*, and the revival of interest in the national lace industry noticeable latterly in France is responsible for a new work on the subject, *Le Point de France*, of Mme. Laurence de Laprade,† which reproduces at length many interesting documents. The history of no other lace-centre has been so exhaustively treated; and anyone interested in the historical side of the

with the development of the design of Alençon, and the process of its manufacture.

Colbert's attention was directed to the immense amount of money that was sent out of the kingdom; nor must his personal inclinations and tastes be overlooked.‡

Alençon, in Normandy, was chosen as one of the seats of the new manufacture, because the lace industry was already widespread among the peasants. *Point coupé* had been made there at an



EARLY ALENÇON      LOUIS XIV. (LATE 17TH CENTURY)      GROUND OF HEXAGONAL BRIDES

subject will find all available material in these two histories. The present account is concerned only

\* *Histoire du Point d'Alençon*. Mme. G. Despierres. 1886.  
 † *Le Point de France*. Mme. Laurence de Laprade. 1904.

‡ "Dès 1650 Colbert s'initia, lui aussi, à la culture de ces beaux-arts qu'il devait un jour protéger avec tant d'efficacité. Envoyé par Mazarin à Rome, à Florence, à Gênes, à Turin, s'il échoua parfois dans les missions diplomatiques . . . du moins ne négligea-t-il aucune occasion d'accroître les richesses artistiques de celui dont il représentait et les goûts fastueux et la politique astucieuse."—*Les Manufactures Nationales*.

## The Connoisseur

early date, possibly introduced by Catherine de Medicis,\* to whom Charles IX. had given the Duchy of Alençon. About 1650, according to

*Points de Venise* were successfully imitated and introduced into Alençon by "Une femme nommée La perriere, fort habile à ces ouvrages,"† thus



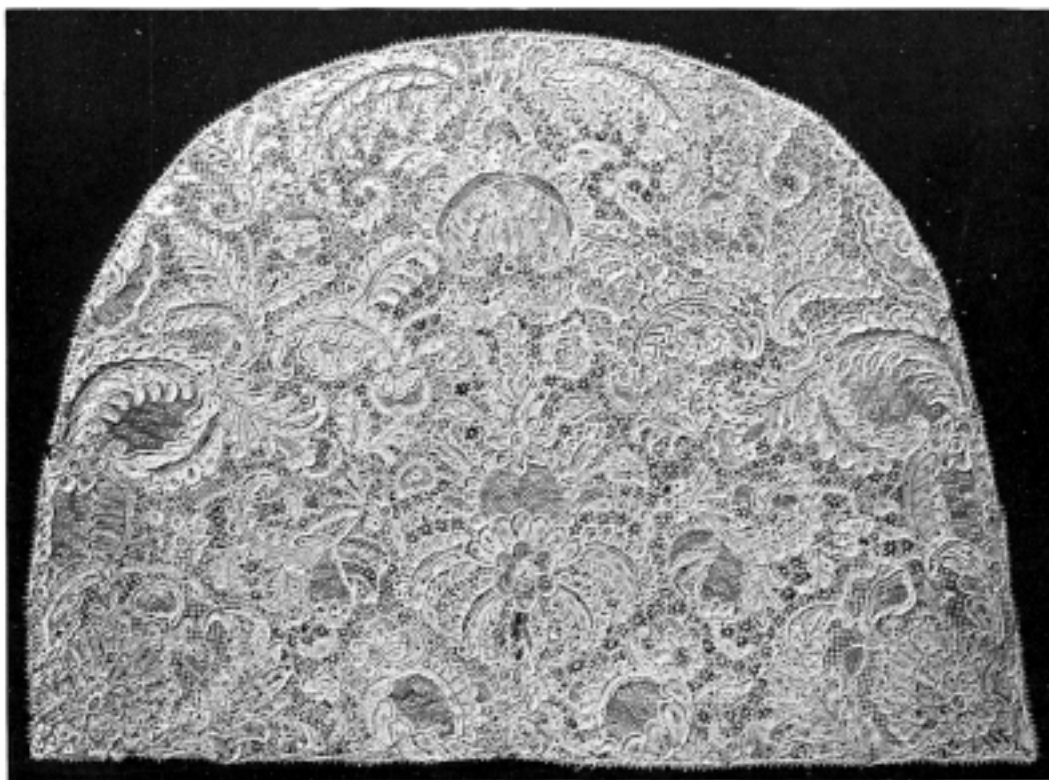
ALENÇON 18TH CENTURY

Madame Despierres, it appears from a letter of Favier-Duboulay intendant of Alençon that

causing the gradual disappearance of *point coupé*. More than eight thousand persons were employed

\* Note, page 54, Madame G. Despierres' *Histoire du Point d'Alençon*. Paris, 1886.

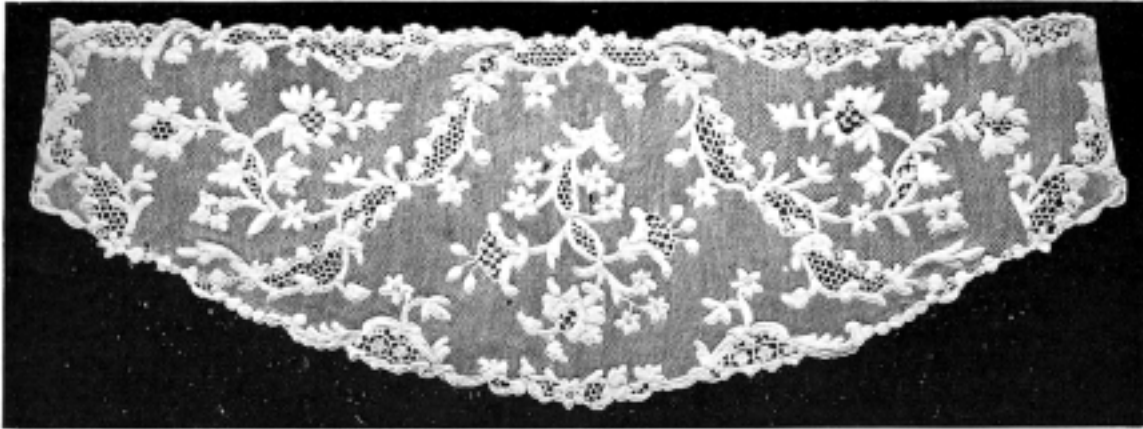
† Letter from Favier-Duboulay, Sept. 7, 1665. *Correspondence Administrative sous le règne de Louis XIV.*, vol. 3.



ALENÇON WITH FANCY GROUND

MUSÉE DES ARTS DECORATIFS, BRUSSELS

## *Alençon*

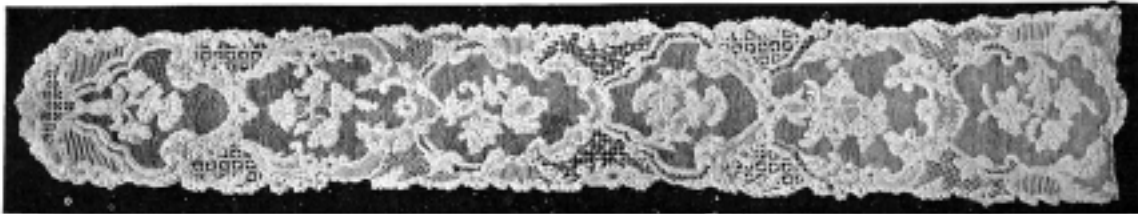


SLEEVE TRIMMING OF ALENÇON      18TH CENTURY

in lace-making in Alençon, Sées, Argentan, Falaise, and in the neighbouring parishes.

It is no doubt to this long apprenticeship in lace-making that the supremacy of Alençon among French laces is due. An ordinance of August 15th, 1665, founded the manufacture of *Points de France*, with an exclusive privilege for

other foreign countries; and on March 17th, 1668, *Itératives*—prohibitions—to wear these, as injurious to a manufacture of point which gives subsistence to a number of persons in this kingdom. In 1670, an Englishman travelling in France notices the efforts of the French Government to protect the *Points de France*.\* “They are so set (he writes)



ALENÇON      18TH CENTURY      VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

ten years; a company was formed, and the manufacture realised enormous profits until 1675, when the monopoly expired and was not renewed. The new manufactures had the advantage of high-handed protection on the part of the Government. On November 17th, 1667, appears a fresh prohibition of the selling or wearing of *passemens*, lace, and other works in thread of Venice, Genoa, and

in this country upon maintaining their own manufactures, that only two days ago there was publicly burnt by the hangman a hundred thousand crowns worth of Point de Venise, Flanders lace, and other foreign commodities that are forbid.” Later, in 1680, it is stated in *Britannia Languens* that the

\* R. Montagu to Lord Arlington. MSS. of the Duke of Buccleuch. Vol. I. *Hist. MSS. Comm.*



ALENÇON      (THE “RÉSEAU” IS OF THICK THREAD, WHICH WAS A DETERIORATED AND LATER SUBSTITUTE FOR THE SMALL HEXAGONAL “BRIDES” GROUND) LATE 18TH CENTURY

laces commonly called Points de Venise now come mostly from France, and amount to a vast sum yearly. In 1687, again, the fourth Earl of Manchester writes from Venice of the excessive dearth of the point made there, but is confident, either in Paris or England, "one may have it as cheape, and better patterns."

It is certain that the Italian style continued in vogue for the ten years of the monopoly.\* There were Venetian workwomen to the number of twenty at Alençon in October, 1665,† and in the same month a letter to Colbert is sanguine enough to hope to produce in a short time from the royal manufacture "des échantillons qui ne céderont rien au véritable Venise." In 1673 these hopes are apparently justified, and Colbert is able to write to the Comte d'Avaux, who has sent him a point collar in high relief, that the French points can bear comparison with the products of Venice.‡

The detailed chronicles of the new *Points de France* describe them as having a floral design, *brides à picots* and with "little flowers over the large, which might be styled flying flowers, being only attached in the centre,"§—the fine raised work of flying loops, upon delicate rose points. The design, again, is exactly that characteristic of Venetian scroll patterns. "The flowers,|| which are in higher relief in the centre, and lower at the edge, are united by small stalks and flowers. The manner of disposing the branches, called 'ordonnances,' is of two kinds: the one is a twisting stalk, which throws out flowers; the other is regular—a centre flower throwing out regular branches on each side."

The development of the new points was watched by Colbert, who writes, in 1682, that their principal

defect is that they are not so firm or so white as the rival points of Venice.\*

Before the expiration of the privilege, the artists who furnished designs for all works undertaken for the Court of Louis XIV., must have supplied patterns for the Royal manufacture. In the account of the King's buildings is the entry of a payment due to Bonnemer and to Bailly, the painter,† for several days' work with other painters in making designs for embroideries and points d'Espagne. These designs were jealously protected. None had permission to make the fine point of the royal pattern, except those who worked for the manufactory, and all girls must show to the authorities the patterns they intended working, "so that the King shall be satisfied, and the people gain a livelihood."‡ That brides with picots, as well as *brides claires*, were made in the Royal fabric, is mentioned in the *Mercure* of July, 1673.§

After the expiration of the privilege (1675) the "fabricants" had designs specially made for them, which became their exclusive property. In 1680, they asked, and obtained, permission to prosecute certain small manufacturers who copied their patterns,|| and in 1691 they speak of the "licence" of several manufacturers, who copy the designs of others instead of using "tout leur esprit et tout leur industrie à inventer de nouveaux dessins et des modèles plus parfaits et plus délicats."¶

\* "Comme le principal défaut vient de ce que tous les points de France ne sont pas si fermes ni si blancs que ceux de Venise."—Extract from a letter written 2 January, 1682, by Colbert to M. de Montargis, Intendant at Alençon.

† "Colbert chargea les plus grands artistes du temps, Le Brun, Bérain, Bailly, Bonnemer, de créer des modèles."—*Le Point de France*. M. Laurence de Laprade. Paris, 1904.

‡ *History of Lace*, Mrs. Palliser, p. 190.

§ "On fait . . . des dentelles d'Espagne avec des brides claires sans picots; et l'on fait aux nouveaux points de France des brides qui en sont remplies d'un nombre infini."

|| "Gabriel Gence, Charles Guitton, et Louis Marescot, marchands trafiquant des ouvrages de vèlin et point de France . . . vous remontent que depuis trois ou quatre ans ils ont été obligés de faire de nouveaux dessins . . . lesquels reviennent à grand prix aux supplyants. Cependant quantité de personnes malveillantes dérobent les dits dessins. . . Toutes lesquelles choses méritent un chastiment exemplaire, à l'encontre de ceux qui se trouvent coupables et dont il est presque impossible d'avoir révélation, si ce n'est par censures ecclésiastiques." *Archives de la Préfecture de L'orne*.

¶ *Le Point de France*. Mme. Laurence de Laprade.

\* 1665–1675.

† Letter à Colbert, tome 132, fo. 75 (*Bibliothèque Nationale*).

‡ En Janvier, 1673, M. le Comte d'Avaux ayant remplacé Mgr. de Bonzy comme ambassadeur à Venise, Colbert lui écrit: "J'ai bien reçu le collet de point rebrodé en relief, que vous m'avez envoyé, et que j'ai trouvé fort beau. Je le confronterai avec ceux qui se font dans nos manufactures, mais je dois vous dire à l'avance que l'on en fait dans la royaume d'aussi beaux."

—*Lefebvre*.

§ 1677.

|| 1678.

(To be continued.)

