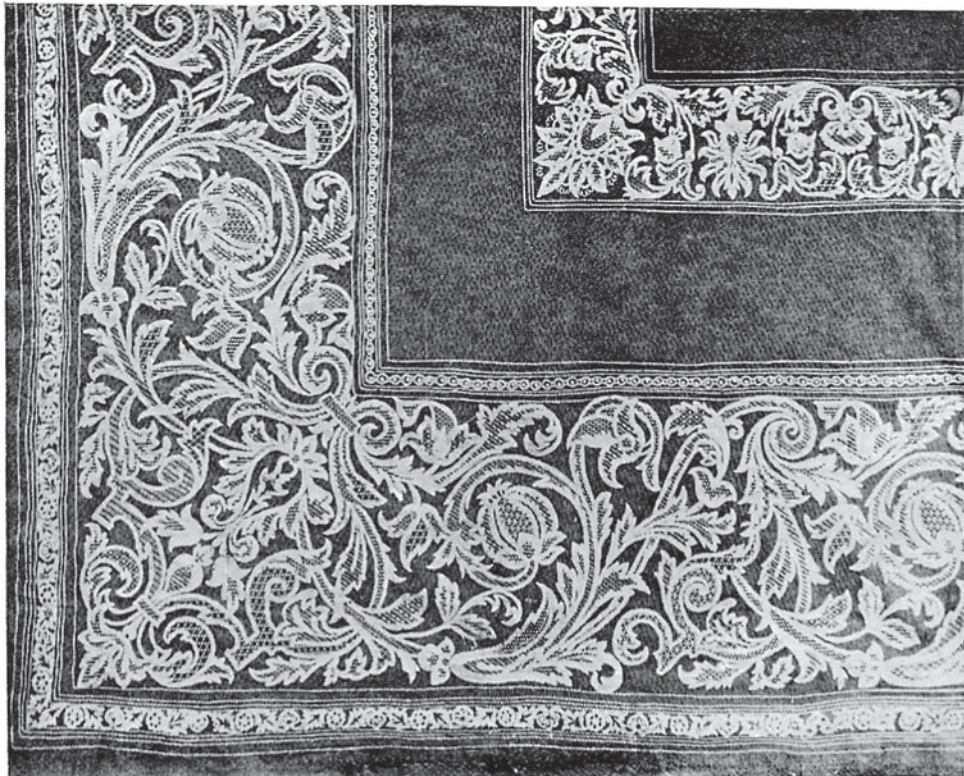


SOME RECENT IRISH LACES.

By ALAN S. COLE.

THE title "lace" has been used in respect of very various things. In the fifteenth century it was a descriptive term for narrow braids, cords, boot, stay, and sleeve laces; a century later it was used in regard to trimmings, insertions, and borders of open

nated lace. The nineteenth century has seen the development of such machinery, and the open ornamental tissue which it produces is commonly known as Nottingham and Calais lace. There are survivals of the different handcraft processes for making



CORNER OF A CURTAIN, LIMERICK LACE (EMBROIDERY ON NET).

(Made at Mrs. Vere O'Brien's School, Limerick.)

ornamental thread-work done by the needle, or on the pillow with bobbins. Similar open ornamental work was, however, in the nature of embroidery worked upon a foundation of some sort, such as fine linen, from which pieces were cut out and then filled in with little devices of needlework, or, again, as net, upon which different patterns were lightly darned. It would require a considerable amount of space to describe in detail the several sorts of needlework, and of plaited and twisted threadwork, made on cushions with bobbins, all of which have been classified under the comprehensive title of lace. At the end of the eighteenth century, machines were invented to knit a fabric or net, which, from its apparent likeness to embroideries on hand-made nets, was eventually desig-

varieties of lace which were in vogue from the sixteenth century onwards; so that now, when speaking of lace, it has become necessary to specify "hand-made lace" as distinct from "machine-made lace." The enormous quantity of the latter which has been poured forth by factories during the last forty years probably far exceeds all of the former made between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. And machine-made laces are known to a greater number of people than those acquainted with hand-made laces. Still, machine-made laces have not secured an independent position; their acceptance into popular favour depends upon effects of pattern, similar in general appearance to those of hand-made laces. Nevertheless the texture of these machine-made laces is uniform

in character, without variations of make which are important features in hand-made laces. Manufacturers of machine laces employ designers, who de-

Convents, I propose to deal briefly with a few specimens of new Irish lace-work, produced within the last three or four years. Irish lace has been chiefly used for costume, but as laces from early periods have been employed for purposes both of costume and house-linen—curtains, covers, and such-like—it was obviously possible to use Irish lace for kindred purposes. Accordingly the Committee which was formed in 1884 to promote the use of improved patterns in Irish lace-making, offered a certain number of prizes for designs which could be worked for articles of this description.

The first illustration is taken from an experiment made in Limerick lace, wrought by Mrs. Vere O'Brien's school of workers upon a large meshed net. A corner of a curtain is here given. The floriated and leafy scrolls are well indicated in close white work; the spaces in between afforded oppor-



COVER, OR FIRE-SCREEN, IN LINEN AND CROCHET.

(Made for H.M. the Queen, from a Design by Mr. Hayes, of Limerick, by workers at New Ross, Co. Wexford.)

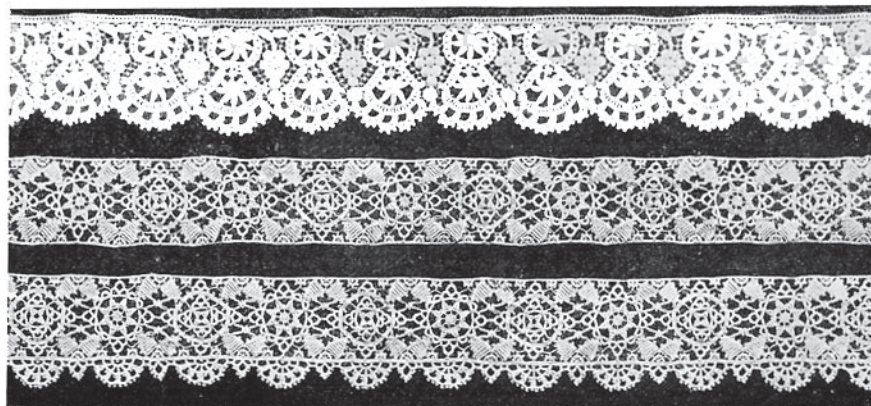
rive their inspiration for patterns very largely from hand-made laces, old and new. Hence hand-made lace as a standard for imitation is of vital importance to machine-made lace. The manufacture of lace by machinery belongs to busy towns; that of needle-point and pillow laces, and of delicate embroideries, to agricultural and fishing districts.

In a previous article (MAGAZINE OF ART, 1888, page 202) I alluded to the valuable guidance which conventual communities can give to lace-making by hand in Ireland. Many of them have formed special classes for the practice of drawing and composing ornament specially suitable for reproduction in lace and embroidery. The notable flat needle-point laces which were reproduced in the article referred to were worked at the Presentation

Convent of Youghal from designs made at the Convent of Poor Clares, Kenmare, and presented to the Pope on the occasion of his Jubilee celebration. They furnished significant testimony to the importance of practice and study in the art of making designs for lace. Without again discussing the gradual development of the drawing classes at Irish

Convents, I propose to deal briefly with a few specimens of new Irish lace-work, produced within the last three or four years. Irish lace has been chiefly used for costume, but as laces from early periods have been employed for purposes both of costume and house-linen—curtains, covers, and such-like—it was obviously possible to use Irish lace for kindred purposes. Accordingly the Committee which was formed in 1884 to promote the use of improved patterns in Irish lace-making, offered a certain number of prizes for designs which could be worked for articles of this description.

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INSERTION AND BORDER.

(Made under the direction of Mr. Holland, of Messrs. Dreyers, Cork.)

pattern, and so again take the lead. Indeed, with those hand-made laces which machinery is successful in counterfeiting, the secret of their commanding first favour is very largely one of frequent change of pattern. And frequent change of pattern is important to the lace-maker. In consequence of it her attention and skill are kept on the alert, and freshness

is thereby imparted to her work, with a quality of texture that baffles the attempts of steam-driven mechanical manufacture.

One of the causes for the decline in the Irish crochet-lace industry was that new patterns were not forthcoming for it. At one time there was considerable demand for Irish crochet. A large number of workers applied themselves to it, and got into so mechanical a habit of handiwork that they became, so far as the art was concerned, little better than automatons. So long as they supplied buyers with certain quantities of the same pattern, that was all they had to think of. But the pinch came when the prices paid to them for their labour were lowered

They were adapted by Mr. Michael Holland, of Cork, from sixteenth-century Italian needle-point lace or *reticella*. It is hardly necessary to remark that these cannot be successfully imitated by the machine.

From crochet lace I pass on to cut-linen embroidery. This is a modern version of the historic *point coupé* of France and the *punto tagliato a foliami* of sixteenth-century Italy. The illustration on this page is taken from a sofa-cover—an experimental specimen—for which Her Majesty the Queen was graciously pleased to give an order. The design gained the first prize in its class in 1885, and is by Mr. Michael Hayes. For many years excellent cut-cambrie lace-work has been made at the Bath and Shirley school



SOFA-COVER OF CUT LINEN EMBROIDERY.

(Made for H.M. the Queen, from a Design by Mr. Hayes, by the Workers at the Bath and Shirley School, Carrickmacross.)

through the market being overstocked with old types of goods, saleable only at reduced prices. Within the last three years or so efforts to counteract this condition have been put forward, especially in the direction of new forms in ornament for, and new applications of, crochet. The industry, therefore, seems to have certainly entered upon a more hopeful career.

Amongst the first experiments with new forms for crochet was one made for Her Majesty the Queen. This was the fire-screen of linen with insertions of crochet figured in the second illustration. The design for this was made by Mr. Michael Hayes, of Limerick. Although there is a want of skill in the accurate rendering of many of the forms, there is enough evidence of the capabilities of Irish crochet-workers to adapt their skill to producing new effects. Greater success is obtained in the series of borders reproduced for the third illustration. The patterns of these are of a simpler character than that of the fire-screen.

of Carrickmacross. It is of two classes—the one termed *guipure*; the other, *appliqué* lace. The *guipure* consists of cutting away the linen between the ornamental details of a pattern, and inserting in its place a number of small bars or ties worked in button-hole embroidery. These bars, as will be seen from the illustration of the sofa-cover, connect the different details of the pattern, and hold them in their respective positions. No specimen of cut-linen work on a large scale similar to the Queen's sofa-cover had been previously made at Carrickmacross. This class of work is open to all sorts of developments, and once known and appreciated, it could become as much of an industry as the Carrickmacross lace-making for flounces and dress-trimmings.

Taking suggestions from some early eighteenth-century patterns for *points d'Argentan* and *d'Alençon*, Miss Emily Anderson, of Cork, produced some effective designs wrought in the Carrickmacross *appliqué* lace. Equally successful was her design



CORNER OF CURTAINS OF NET AND LINEN APPLIQUÉ.

(Made from a Design by Miss Emily Anderson, of Cork, at the Convent of Mercy, Kinsale, for Mr. Alfred Morrison.)

for *appliqué* work curtains, which have been lately made at the Convent of Mercy, Kinsale, and illustrated herewith. The thicker white forms, the floral stems, &c., are of cambrie. They are stitched on to a net ground, and here and there fancy stitching is introduced with good effect.

The next illustration shows a portion of a needle-point lace flounce, produced at the Convent of Poor Clares, Kenmare, with a degree of art which recalls that of the palmiest days of the *point de France*. The design for this important piece was made in 1887 by Miss Julyan, of the School of Art, Dublin. The work is of a different character from that of the previous specimens. This lace is slowly built up by means of a countless number of stitches upon a dainty framework of threads sewn over the face of

a pattern drawn in outline upon paper backed with linen. On the left of the engraving of this piece of lace will be seen a portion of this delicate framework of threads stitched on to the face of its linen pattern. The compact white portions, no less than the more gauzy-looking parts, the dainty trellis devices, and the reticulations of hexagons of the finished lace, are all of needle-point stitchery. Here and there are little raised edges, also of needle-point work—difficult, however, to distinguish in the reproduction, because they cast no shadows in the full light thrown upon the face of the work. The raised needle-point lace commonly known as Venetian rose-point was especially remarkable for such reliefs, but much stronger and used more abundantly than in such pieces as the Kenmare piece. The credit for the modified employment of relief effects in lace, as attempted in the Kenmare flounce, belongs to the French of the late seventeenth century. Under the tuition of Venetian instructresses at that time, they made a new departure in lace designing, and manufactured their famous

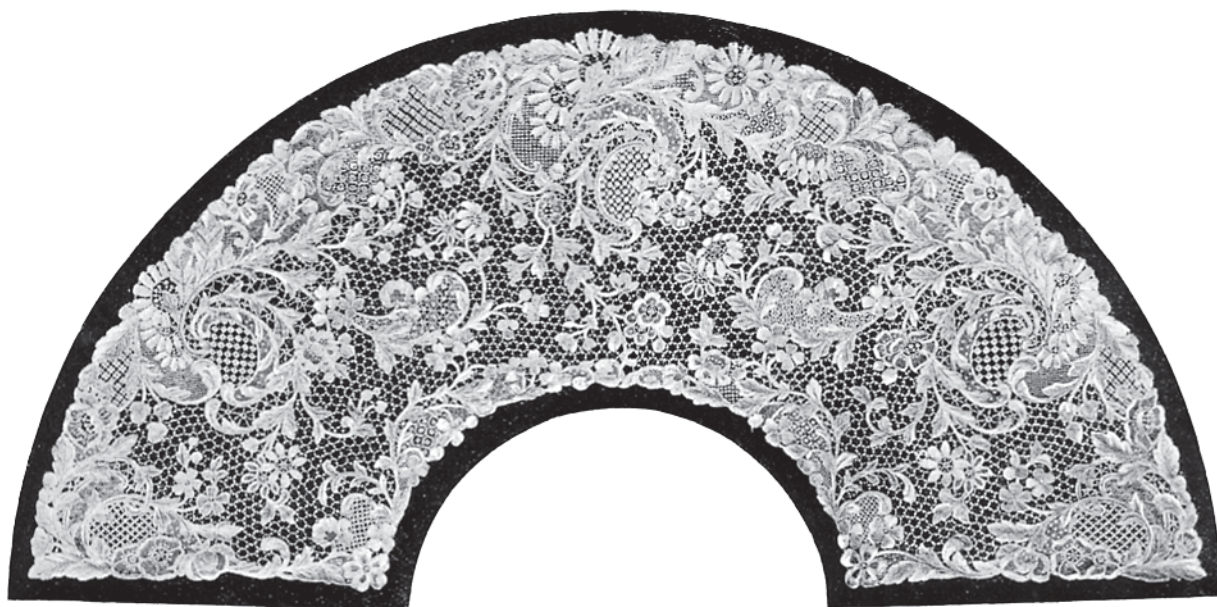


PORTION OF A NEEDLE-POINT LACE FLOUNCE.

(Designed by Miss Julyan, of the Metropolitan School of Art, Dublin, and worked in Needle-point Lace at the Convent of Poor Clares, Kenmare, Co. Kerry.)

points de France, de Sedan, d'Argentan, and d'Alençon. In the middle of the seventeenth century Venice and Flanders made flat needle-point laces, besides the rose or raised point laces. And it is apparently to such ancestors that the nineteenth century flat needle-point laces of Youghal, Kenmare, Killarney, and other Irish places owe their origin. For years Youghal has stood alone in Ireland in this particular make of lace, and in many respects she still holds her supremacy. As a specimen of some of the later work which she has produced, showing *her* progress even, an illustration of a fan cover in flat needle-point

plete patterns. Intact and good examples of the Italian relief laces are costly and not very common, and many of the fragmentary pieces now to be had have been esteemed as types for guidance; yet they are little better than wrecks of their former selves. The sequence of their flowing scrolls is frequently marred through long usage and unintelligent treatment, and strange muddles of broken scrolls and blossom motives pass current as a type of Italian design or pattern worth imitating. Such patterns imitated in Innishmacsaint lace have enjoyed a certain measure of success. The skill of the Innishmacsaint workers



FAN OF FLAT NEEDLE-POINT.

(Worked for Mr. Alfred Morrison at the Presentation Convent, Youghal, Co. Cork, from a Design by Miss Julyan.)

lace is given. The design for this was made by Miss Julyan, mistress at the Metropolitan School of Art, Dublin, and the work is rich with many conceits and beauties of needle-point lace-making.

For some years Irish lace-makers at a little village called Innishmacsaint, near Lough Erne, have made needle-point lace, taking for their models the Italian sixteenth and seventeenth-century needle-made laces—those with geometric patterns, flat in texture, and those with elaborate scroll forms interspersed with rich conventional floral devices in relief. The making of this Italo-Irish lace was started amongst the peasant women by the wife of the then rector, the Rev. W. Maclean, and is supervised to the present day by Miss Maclean. Unfortunately many of the usual specimens of Innishmacsaint lace have been made from incom-

however, deserves to be turned to something better, and it is at least satisfactory to know that more care and observation are being brought into influence so that carefully drawn and carefully composed patterns may be provided for the workers. Latterly two patterns adapted by a student (Miss Perry) of the Cork School of Art have been made with considerable success in Innishmacsaint lace. The piece shown on page 216 was made at Innishmacsaint, the design being by Miss Perry, of Cork.

Similar raised lace as well as admirable crochet is made at the opposite corner of Ireland, at the Carmelite Convent, New Ross, near Waterford. Here an art-class for the study of pattern-making has been formed, and new laces and crochets from this centre promise well for the future. The last illustration on page 216 gives part of a pocket-hand-

kerchief trimmed with New Ross raised needle-point lace and a small border, both worked from patterns designed by Mr. Murphy, of Waterford.

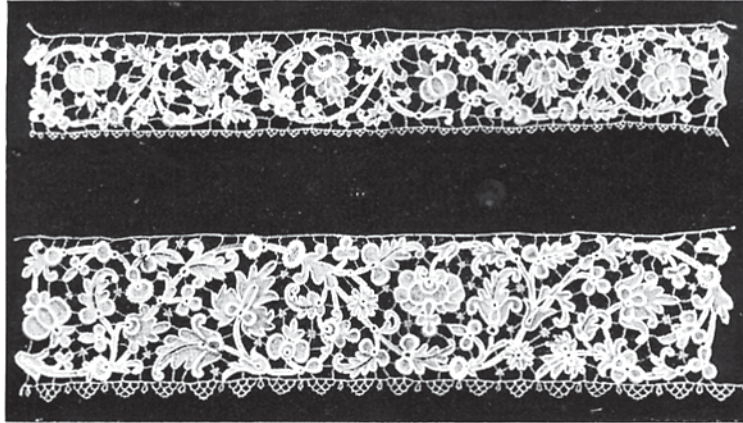
A great deal has undoubtedly to be done to promote a regular sale for such laces as have been under notice. People are usually in a hurry to possess what they can pay for, especially in respect of costume and its trimmings. They rarely consider the conditions under

which a handicraft like lace-making has to be pursued. Irish lace-making is, however, no new art. It has had to struggle for its existence, and this has been so because its artistic side has not been sufficiently cared for. It has lacked the fostering care, the taste, and intelligence which from time to time

have governed Italian, Flemish, and French lace-making. Nevertheless, as these new efforts of Irish taste and skill show, Irish lace-making possesses distinct capabilities

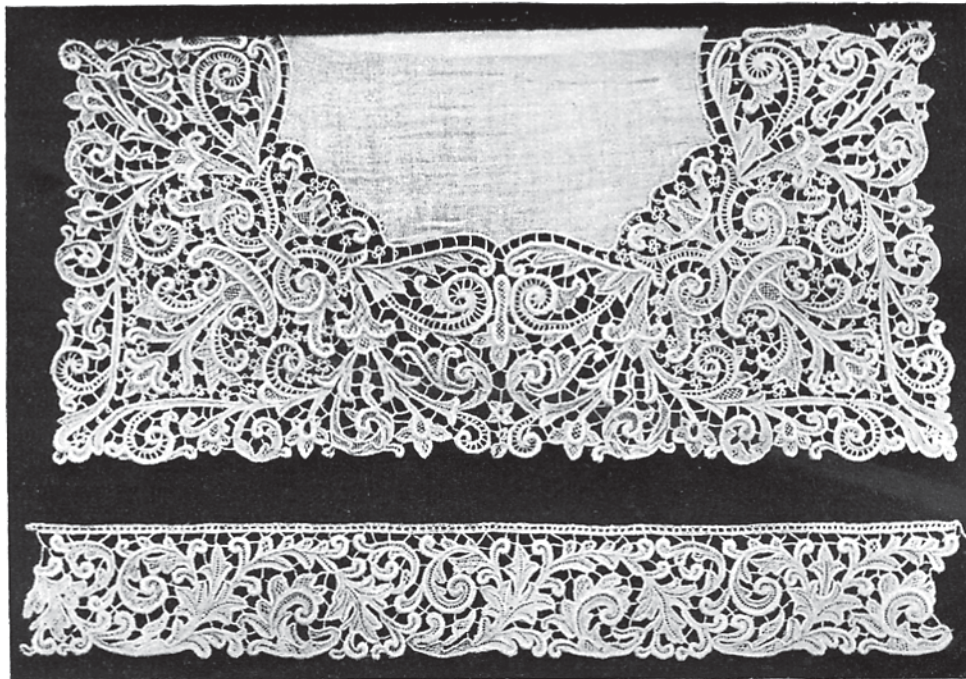
of development; and on this point no one with an appreciation for the composition of ornament, and its reproduction as a textile open-work tissue, can have any doubt. What has been done within the last few years demonstrates that with a little trouble, an inherited skill in

needlework can be diverted into a new direction to produce cunning works of art; and a cottage industry of economical importance for the benefit of a struggling agricultural community may be expected to obtain a better footing than has been the case for some years past.



PART OF A BORDER OF RAISED NEEDLE-POINT.

(Made at Innishmacsaint, from a Design by Miss Perry, of Cork.)



PARTS OF A SMALL BORDER OF, AND OF A HANDKERCHIEF TRIMMED WITH, RAISED LACE.

(Made at the Carmelite Convent, New Ross, from Designs by Mr. Murphy, of Waterford.)