



THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON. Needlepoint Lace, English, XVII Century.

THE LACE &  
EMBROIDERY  
COLLECTOR

A GUIDE TO COLLECTORS OF  
OLD LACE AND EMBROIDERY

BY MRS. HEAD

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## PREFACE

**T**HIS volume is intended primarily for the collector of Old Lace and Embroidery whose means are small. The examples illustrated and described have been selected with special regard to the limitations imposed on him by his modestly filled purse, and, with certain exceptions, they are such pieces as he may reasonably hope to obtain. Among these exceptions are the famous Syon cope, one of the treasures of the Victoria and Albert Museum, the two exceptionally early embroidered bookbindings from the collection in the British Museum, and a few other varieties, the inclusion of which is considered necessary for educational purposes, for it is certainly desirable that even the unaspiring collector should know something of the history and development of his subject. Should he desire to pursue the path of knowledge further, such exhaustive works as Mrs. Bury Palliser's "History of Lace," and Lady Marian Alford's "Needlework as Art," will tell him practically all that is known of lace and embroidery from the earliest times.

The terms used in reference to lace are those which have come to be most generally adopted, without regard to their nationality. Their meaning is fully explained in the Glossary at the end of the book.

My thanks are due to Mr. W. B. Redfern, and the editors of *The Connoisseur* and *The Queen* for their permission to reproduce certain photographs of which they own the copyrights, and to the Directors of the British and Victoria and Albert Museums, for allowing the use of photographs of examples in the National collections. I am indebted also to Miss Elwood and Messrs. Walpole Bros., of Bath, for the loan of pieces of lace for illustrative purposes. The list of Ecclesiastic Embroideries still existing in the provinces is chiefly based on that in Dr. Cox's admirable book, "English Church Furniture."

R. E. H.

BATH, 1921.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF LACE

**I**T is a pleasant fact that it is not necessary to be a millionaire to indulge in the hobby of collecting old lace. The rich collector, certainly, can aim higher than the poor one; the latter cannot afford to despise all but the absolutely perfect thing; not for him are the albs and altar-frontals of Venetian rose-point, the flounces of Alençon lace of the best period, or the "heads" of finest point d'Angleterre, yet although it is no doubt delightful to be able to buy the best and scarcest of everything, regardless of cost, the humbler collector, with his lean purse, may enjoy the pleasures of the chase more keenly and feel a greater satisfaction when it has resulted in a capture.

The collector of small means will, if he be wise, make up his mind from the outset to get together examples of as many types of old hand-made laces as possible. He will have to content himself probably with very insignificant specimens of the great laces, but as long as they are thoroughly characteristic of their kind, and in fairly sound condition, this limitation need not trouble him seriously. The most unpromising coverts in the way of rag-shops in obscure

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back streets will sometimes yield surprising spoil ; a baby's ragged cap may be trimmed with a bit of filmy Flemish lace ; a lamp-mat lined with crude blue sateen and edged with cotton fringe may prove to be a scrap of Venetian flat-point, and a discarded dingy "toilet-cover" a piece of cut-work. These were actual happenings, some time ago it must be confessed, yet even in these days when every dealer in odds and ends has developed the profiteering instinct considerably, there are still bargains waiting for the collector who has patience as well as zeal.

How old is lace? This is one of the inevitable questions of the beginner ; to which the answer may well be another query : What is lace? In the "Oxford Dictionary" there are two definitions : (1) "A string or cord serving to draw together opposite edges (chiefly of articles of clothing) by being passed in and out of eyelet holes (or over hooks, studs, etc.) and pulled tight. (2) A slender, open-work fabric of linen, cotton, silk, wool or metal threads usually ornamented with inwrought or applied pattern." It will be seen that two widely different things have the same name, and this has resulted in an endless series of errors and misapprehensions, many writers having taken the "laces" mentioned in old inventories and household accounts as invariably meaning the "slender open-work fabric," instead of what is often more likely "strings or cords." Something that in a measure answers to the second definition given in the dictionary is undoubtedly of very great antiquity. In the Egyptian Museum of the Louvre is a network fringed at the end which has points in common with the laces of the fifteenth century ; in the Cluny Museum is a piece of coarse net from a Coptic tomb, which appears to have been made with bobbins ; in the British Museum

are mummy-cloths with drawn thread-work which might have been—but was not—the direct ancestor of that made in Venice in the days of Titian, while the Victoria and Albert Museum possesses a most interesting piece of plaited thread-work taken from a mummy case at Ehnasya (Herakleopolis Magna) during the excavations of 1903-4. In Mr. Thomas Wright's book, the "Romance of the Lace Pillow," a detailed description is given of the way in which this was executed, Miss M. Maidment having discovered the method and made a skilful reproduction. This Egyptian work, however, was plaited in a frame, and although certainly "a slender, open-work fabric" is not lace, although near akin to certain classes of it. The arts of drawn thread-work and netting practised by the ancient Egyptians were lost completely for hundreds of years, to be re-invented only in the fifteenth century, and then not in the East but in Italy.

Hand-made lace is divided into two great classes: that worked with the needle over a pattern drawn on parchment, and that woven by means of bobbins on a pillow, the pattern in this case being pricked on parchment and the threads twisted round pins stuck in the perforations. There are a few so-called laces, certainly, which cannot be placed in either class, such as those worked with needle or tambour-hook on net, or in which the pattern is cut out of muslin and applied to net, but as these are comparatively modern and of small importance, they may be ignored here. The starting-point of both types of lace was indisputably drawn work, but with a difference. Needle-made lace developed from a kind of work on linen carried out by drawing a certain number of threads from the *body* of the material, those remaining

in the section so treated being tied together in groups with a continuous thread so as to form a simple pattern, while the forerunner of bobbin-lace is to be found in the ornamental trimming formed by knotting, plaiting or twisting together threads frayed out from the *edge* of a garment or a piece of stuff.

Possibly earlier than either needle-point or bobbin-lace, certainly contemporary with the drawn-work stage of the former, was the darned netting best known under its French name of *lakis*, a far less cumbrous title than the Italian equivalent of *punto ricamato a maglia quadra*. The meshed ground of *lakis* was netted in the way familiar to modern workers, starting from a single stitch, increasing a stitch on each side until the net was full width, and reducing in the same proportion to one stitch again. On this ground, which was firm and strong, were darned patterns, ranging from the simplest geometrical ones to those of almost fantastic elaboration, and of widely varying subjects. *Lakis* was largely used for ecclesiastical purposes, hence many designs are religious in subject; others depict incidents in classical mythology, or are strange medleys of basilisks, dragons, unicorns, winged lions and other fabulous beasts. The work was usually done in squares, which were afterwards joined as required. Included in the inventory of Catharine de Medici's household goods were 381 squares of *lakis*, unmounted, and 538 in another chest; for this unamiable and crafty royal lady had an inordinate fondness for this darned net, and kept her waiting-women constantly employed in making it for the adornment of her bedchamber. Although *lakis* was certainly made in Italy during the first quarter of the sixteenth century, the two earliest pattern-books in which mention of it is found are of German origin.

The first, by Jorg Castel, of Schickau, was published in 1525, and the second, by P. Quinty or Quentell, of Cologne, in 1527, that of the Venetian, Antonio Tagliente, not making its appearance until 1530. The panel of laces illustrated in Plate 2 is Italian, and of the late sixteenth century. It is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, where among other specimens there is an altar-frontal described as German, fifteenth century, and another stated to be Spanish, so that it is evident that the art of making laces was widely known and practised. It has been suggested that the looped stitch of laces was the germ of needle-point lace, of the buttonhole-stitch employed in the drawn- and cut-work, and in the punto in aria that followed, but it is more than doubtful whether this is so.

The name *reticella* first appears in the Sforza inventory of 1493 (to this further reference will be made), but it is not found in pattern-books until nearly a hundred years later, when in the "*Corone della nobile et virtuose donne*," published in Venice in 1592, Vecellio gives instructions for making *punto à reticello*. Exactly what *reticella* was is not clear; the name has been applied by modern writers to drawn-work, cut-work, and so-called Greek lace so indiscriminately as to give rise to confusion, hence it is considered best to avoid its use entirely in this book. As it has been already stated, drawn-work was indubitably the first stage of needle-point lace. The foundation material used by Italian workers was a loosely woven linen from which it was not difficult to pull out threads. When the necessary number had been drawn away, those remaining were closely whipped over, and the firm, stiff bars thus formed connected by buttonhole-stitches so as to produce a simple, geometrical pattern some

variety being effected by the occasional introduction of a darning or in-and-out stitch taken over and under two or four threads. This work was the punto tirato of Venice. Probably contemporary with it, although some authorities on the subject consider it to be rather later, was cut-work or punto tagliato. This was carried out by cutting away portions of the linen and filling up the holes with geometrical patterns similar to and worked in the same manner as those of drawn-work. In a variant, which strictly speaking is neither cut- nor drawn-work, the threads were not removed but drawn apart from each other and whipped over very tightly so as to produce a ground of small square meshes. The pattern was generally left in the linen, and this was sometimes outlined with a whipped-over cordonnet.

Many pattern-books for drawn- and cut-work were published in Venice during the sixteenth century. First came that of Antonio Tagliente, already mentioned, followed by those of Nicolo d'Aristotile, 1532; Matthio Pagani, 1548; an anonymous volume entitled "Le Pompe," in 1557, and many others, an exhaustive list of which and of pattern-books published in countries other than Italy will be found in Mrs. Bury Palliser's "History of Lace." "Le Pompe," by the way, is the earliest collection of patterns in which mention is made of punto in aria, the next stage in the evolution of needle-point lace.

In course of time punto tirato became more elaborate of pattern and less dependent on the foundation of linen, of which an ever-increasing number of threads was removed, until in the final phase the ground material was reduced to a very narrow strip, into which the first row of looped (buttonhole) stitches only was worked, the rest being entirely self-supporting.

Thus punto tirato had become punto in aria—the name “stitch in the air” explains itself. Next, the linen vanished altogether, and for it was substituted a foundation of parchment, on which the pattern, still retaining its stiff geometrical style, was drawn. Along the principal lines of these threads were tacked with couching stitches, and these provided the necessary support for the pattern which, at this date, was worked entirely in buttonhole-stitch, the darning stitches being no longer used. From this beginning grew the Venetian point laces which were speedily to become famous throughout the world for their beauty.

From Venice, drawn- and cut-work travelled to other countries, including England (where, as will be shown in another chapter, they took root and flourished), and in some instances their further development into true lace pursued the same course as in Italy. This was notably the case in France, where the stage of the conversion of the connecting bars or brides into the meshed ground or *réseau* was reached almost as early as in Italy. This point will be dealt with in the chapter on French laces.

In connection with the invention of bobbin-lace, there is a fanciful story which is no doubt familiar to many readers. According to this, a Venetian fisher-girl, while thinking dreamily of her absent sailor lover, half-unconsciously twisted the weighted strings that fringed her net into a pattern roughly resembling a branch of coral that had been a gift from her sweetheart. This pretty little tale is, unfortunately, entirely apocryphal, for bobbin-lace had a much less sentimental origin in the knotted lace of which the *macramé* of modern times is a revival. The early knotted lace—*punto a groppo* was its Italian name—of the sixteenth century was made of threads or thin cords cut

into short lengths. In the next phase the threads were left long and wound on small pieces of lead, for which reason the first Italian bobbin-lace was called *merletti a piombini*. These leaden bobbins, however, were soon replaced by those of wood or bone, the use of the latter accounting for the name bone-lace which was used habitually in England to indicate lace made with bobbins. With the bobbins came into existence the padded board, which was the forerunner of the lace-pillow, the pricked pattern and the pins round which the threads were now twisted or plaited instead of being knotted. Pins of brass wire were to be had in the sixteenth century, but they were far too costly to be in common use, and the first makers of bobbin-lace were forced to resort to pins of wood or bone. It is said that fish-bones were used for the purpose by Devonshire workers at a later date, and it is not impossible that they were also so employed in Venice.

At the outset there was a very close resemblance between the patterns of needle-point and bobbin-laces; in their earliest forms they were both sharply vandyked edgings with a geometrical design in each point, but the bobbin-made laces were lighter in weight—no small consideration in the days of ruffs—and cheaper, and so they speedily rivalled the older needle-points in popularity.

Genoa and Milan became the chief centres for the making of bobbin-lace. Thence the art found its way to Flanders, and that so quickly that it is not surprising that the Flemings laid claim—and still lay claim—to its invention. The honour, however, undoubtedly belongs to Italy, yet the fact remains that it is practically impossible for the most skilful expert to distinguish between the bobbin-laces of the

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two countries in their earlier and coarser stages. It was certainly the Flemish workers who continued to improve and develop bobbin-lace until it reached its zenith in the eighteenth century, some years after needle-point lace had begun to show signs of decadence.

## CHAPTER II

### ITALY (I)—NEEDLE-POINT LACE

**I**N the opening chapter the gradual development of drawn, and cut-work into point-lace has been outlined in brief up to the time when, the last vestige of the linen foundation having vanished, threads were laid over a pattern drawn on parchment to support the initial rows of the "stitches in the air."

Before this stage had been reached, however, drawn- and cut-work had arrived at such a degree of perfection that they were, both separately and in combination, as beautiful and, after finer thread had come to be employed towards the end of the sixteenth century, nearly as delicate in texture as the true lace which followed them. The earlier patterns of drawn- and cut-work were invariably purely geometrical, but later curving lines were introduced, which developed gradually into scroll designs. These did not altogether replace the older Gothic patterns, but were worked contemporaneously with them. As well as the button-hole and darning stitches, a variant of the former, a double-looped stitch, was employed, and there were occasionally introduced in the solid portions of the pattern a knot-stitch which is called punto avorio, or ivory-stitch, by Mrs. Hungerford Pollen in "Seven Centuries of Lace." A very large quantity of drawn- and cut-work was undoubtedly produced in Venice,

a city already far famed for its magnificent brocades and embroideries, but it is doubtful whether in the sixteenth century there existed any organised industry, most of the beautiful work being made by ladies in their own homes, and in the convents. Possibly the workers designed their own patterns ; at any rate, in 1594 Donna Isabella Catanea Parasole published in Venice a pattern-book for " punti in aria " and " punti-a-piombini " (bobbin-lace) under the title of " Specchio delle Virtuose Donne "—the Mirror of Virtuous Women—with many drawings. It was the custom that the marriage-coffer of a noble Venetian lady should contain, besides the ordinary household linen, a specially elaborate set of cut-work valances, coverlets and hangings, in the design of which the arms and badges of the bride's family were wrought. This sumptuous linen was intended for display on occasions of great festivity, such as the Carnival, hence drawn- or cut-work with an armorial pattern has been sometimes called, rather foolishly it seems, " Carnival lace." Besides the vast amount of drawn- and cut-work that were used by the Venetians themselves for the adornment not only of their houses, but of their clothes, in spite of sumptuary laws, much was exported to France and England, where it was in high favour, for the ruff, which, coming into fashion about 1540, was steadily increasing in size and popularity. The French queen, Catharine de Medici, not content with the importation of cut-work from Italy, had brought to Paris a clever Venetian ruff-designer and maker named Frederic Vinciolo. He published in 1587, at the sign of the Golden Star in Paris, a book of patterns, under a terribly lengthy title, of which the first portion is as follows : " Les Singuliers et Nouveaux portraicts et ouvrages des Lingerie. Servans de patrons à faire

toutes sortes de poinctes couppés, lakis, et autres." There were many editions of Vinciolo's book, which became one of the most famous of its kind, the majority being published in France, although an edition was brought out in Turin, and a translation appeared in London in 1591, entitled "New and Singular Patternes and Workes of Linnen."

Venice had many royal customers for her beautiful drawn- and cut-work. The preposterous cart-wheel ruffs, worn by Queen Margot, which were so large round as to necessitate the use of a special soup spoon, with a handle two feet long, were of Italian cut-work, stiffened with brass wire, and the spreading, open ruffs invented by Marie de Medicis, Henri Quatre's second wife, were made of drawn-work in its final stage, when the linen foundation had dwindled to a few threads. In the Wardrobe Accounts of Queen Elizabeth, from 1584 onwards, there are many entries of payments such as this: "For one yard of double Italian cut-work a quarter of a yard wide, 55 shillings and four pence," while prior to the date named cut-work appears over and over again in the long lists of gifts made by obsequious and favour-carrying courtiers to Great Gloriana, who was a true daughter of the horse-leech so far as presents of fine clothes and jewels were concerned. How splendidly decorative cut-work could be, is shown in many of the portraits of the time, as, for instance, in that by Gheeraedts of Mary, Countess of Pembroke—

"Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother,"

in the National Portrait Gallery, and in that of Lady Elizabeth Paulet, attributed to Daniel Mytens the younger, in the Ashmolean, at Oxford. The cut-work illustrated in Plate 3 is of the early seventeenth

century, and therefore rather later than the period being dealt with, but it is typically Italian. The edging is bobbin-lace.

The name punto in aria is used in the majority of the old pattern-books to cover all the Venetian needle-point laces. Indeed, the name seems to have been applied to some earlier forms of lace than those of which there is a definite record, for "in 1476 the Venetian Senate decreed that no punto in aria, executed either in flax with a needle, or in gold or silver thread, should be used on curtains or bed-linen in the city or provinces" ("History of Lace," Mrs. Bury Palliser). But however this may be, there is no room for doubt about the process of evolution of the famous point-laces of Venice. The first laces to be made purely "in the air" were narrow, deeply dentated edgings, each vandyke complete in itself, and only connected with its fellows by what lace-workers call a "footing," and the uninitiated a "heading," of little more than a few threads cased with buttonhole-stitches. The pattern of this early lace is usually found to be geometrical and very simple, but in a few interesting and rare specimens a queer little human figure, more or less grotesque, or some archaic bird or beast is introduced. Buttonhole-stitch was solely used at this period; brides were limited in number, and as yet there were no fanciful fillings or *à jours*.

By degrees this dentated lace grew more important; the vandykes became blunter and less completely detached from each other, the footing broadened and was elaborated to a slight extent, while brides were more freely introduced. The patterns continued to show the influence of the geometrical cut-work, but they, like those of the latter in its last phase, were occasionally of a more flowing character, and this

tendency steadily increased. A little further advance along the lines indicated brought into existence the Venetian point largely imported into England during the reigns of James I and Charles I, and often vaguely described as "collar-lace" in contemporary documents (see Plate 4).

The next step in the history of Venetian lace leads to the raised points. These are usually divided into two kinds, gros point and rose-point, but by some authorities they are classed together under the latter name on the grounds that the two laces belong to the same period and vary only in detail. But it will probably obviate some confusion if the more generally accepted classification be adopted here.

Although so nearly contemporary there is a great gulf between the so-called collar-lace and the raised points de Venise, the difference, indeed, is a remarkable instance of rapid departure from a slowly and consistently developed type. In even the oldest specimens of the raised points, the patterns are elaborate and rather florid; the solid portions are outlined with a cordonnet, and fanciful fillings are inserted in the spaces. In course of time the cordonnet grew thicker and thicker, until it became the leading characteristic of gros point and one which distinguishes it from all other laces. This outlining is formed of a sheaf, or bundle, of threads, so closely covered with buttonhole-stitch that it is exceedingly stiff and would have a heavy and clumsy appearance were it not for the rows of delicate picots—tiny loops worked in buttonhole-stitch—which fringe its outer edge. All the spaces in the pattern are filled with minute, exquisitely worked "pinhole" diaper and chevron patterns, the whole being so firm and solid that it resembles carved ivory when seen from a little distance. A

detail of an altar-frontal of gros point de Venise, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, is reproduced in Plate 5, and in it all the distinctive features of the lace can be seen. It will be noticed that the various sections of the pattern are arranged to touch each other wherever possible, so that but few brides are required. Really good specimens of gros point, the Italian name for which, by the way, was *punto tagliato a foliami*, are scarce and costly, so that the collector of small means is rarely able to secure one unless he is exceptionally fortunate. He should take care to avoid pieces made up of odd bits of worn-out gros point joined together with modern brides. The large, well-marked solid patterns of this particular type of lace lend themselves well to this kind of patchwork, examples of which are often seen in dealers' shops priced far above their actual value. This, naturally, is small, for any coherent design is of course entirely absent, and in many cases not only are the brides modern, but the old worn-out fillings have been replaced by coarse new ones. An interesting seventeenth-century imitation, if it may be called such, of gros point de Venise is illustrated in Mrs. Hungerford Pollen's "Seven Centuries of Lace." In this the pattern, which is exactly in the style of gros point, is cut out of linen, edged with a heavy cordonnet, and connected by brides with knots on them. There are needle-point à joins, and the general resemblance to the real lace is extraordinarily close.

Rose-point, a flounce of which is illustrated in Plate 6, has the characteristics of gros point, but in a form modified in some respects and elaborated in others. The patterns are less bold and not so sharply defined; the cordonnet is much less thick and heavy, but is edged not merely with one row of picots, but with

two, or even three, while the brides, far more numerous than in gros point, are also picotées. Furthermore, they are studded with tiny needle-point roses, from which it is said the lace obtained the name by which it is best known. It is also called point de neige by reason of its delicate, filmy appearance—as light as a snowflake, in fact. Rose-point was in great demand in England throughout the greater part of the seventeenth century and the first decade or so of the eighteenth, for every man of fashion, whether he could afford it or not, used it lavishly for his falling-collars, his canons or breeches frills, and the ruffles that lined the wide tops of his high leather boots. For the wide ends of the cravats worn at the end of the seventeenth century, gros point seems to have been more in favour than the lighter lace. There are several good specimens of gros point cravats to be seen in the National Portrait Gallery, that worn by Thomas, Earl of Ossory, as painted by Lely, is shown very clearly.

Of the same period, or, possibly, a little later than the raised points, was Venetian flat-point. The patterns of this lace are generally scrolling; the toilé is close and solid, and the fillings are few and not elaborate. The brides, however, are numerous, and are often picotées. A variety of point plat de Venise has come to be known in recent times as coralline point, its name being derived from a fancied resemblance to a branch of coral. As a matter of fact, its characteristic pattern is a mere confusion of meandering lines connected by myriads of brides picotées, in most instances arranged to form hexagons. Coralline point is, perhaps, the least attractive and interesting member of the groups of Venetian needle-point laces, the example illustrated in Plate 7 being unusually graceful in design.

Up to the eighteenth century only point laces with brides were made in Venice, but after the successful production in France of laces with meshed grounds, the Venetian workers, who were an organised body by this time, thought it advisable to follow the fashion, hence the evolution of point de Venise à réseau. The mesh of the Italian lace is very similar to that of Alençon, but is rounder; its patterns are rococo in style and often overcrowded and too florid. A row of tiny meshes outlines the *toilé*, and if there is a *cordonnnet* it is merely a flat thread placed inside this open bordering. The fillings or *à jours* of grounded point vary from the little pinhole diapers of the *points-à brides* to the most open and fanciful of *à jours*. Point de Venise à réseau, the texture of which is very fine, continued to be made throughout the greater part of the eighteenth century, but after 1750 it deteriorated in quality. It was never produced in any considerable quantity, and good examples of it are now scarce. The fine lappet illustrated in Plate 8 is a characteristic example.

With the fall of the Venetian Republic during the Napoleonic era, and the general *débâcle* that followed, came the end of the great lace industry of Venice. There was, however, a survival of it in a very small way, in the island of Burano, where a coarse and insignificant needle-lace continued to be made until well into the nineteenth century. This lace, which is distinguished by its cloudy, irregular *réseau*, has stiff, commonplace patterns, with a slight *cordonnnet*. At the modern lace-school, which was founded at Burano by the Queen of Italy about 1872, a variety of laces is made, including reproductions of the best French and Flemish types, as well as of the old Venetian points.

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Before turning to the consideration of the bobbin-laces of Italy, something should be said on the vexed question of "Greek" lace. Concerning this, experts of equal authority hold different opinions, but the name has come to be applied to the drawn- and cut-work, often combined with either geometrical needle-points or early bobbin-lace, which was brought from the Ionian Isles during the period of their occupation by the British. It was apparently the custom of the inhabitants to trim the shrouds and wrappings of their dead with this "lace," and quantities of it were obtained from the catacombs—a gruesome idea—and sold to the foreigners when the thrifty and unsentimental natives discovered they were ready and generous buyers. "Greek" lace, however, is quite indistinguishable from that known definitely to be of Italian origin, and as at the date of its production the Ionian Isles belonged to the Venetian Republic, it seems more than merely probable that the lace was imported, there being constant trading communication between Venice and Corfu. It is not impossible that it may, to some extent, have become naturalised in the islands, but there is no evidence of the existence of any considerable lace industry here, while the amount brought away by the English alone was very large.

### CHAPTER III

#### ITALY (II)—BOBBIN-LACES

SOME kind of lace made of gold and silver thread with bobbins appears to have been produced in Venice, Milan, Genoa and elsewhere in Italy as early as the end of the fifteenth century, as it is mentioned in accounts and inventories of this period, but it is doubtful whether it was anything beyond a gimp or braid of twisted or plaited threads, akin to the "gold lace" of modern uniforms. There is undoubtedly the often-quoted inventory, the 'instrument of partition' between two Milanese ladies, the sisters Angela and Ippolita Sforza Visconti, dated 1493, in which reference is made to household linen ornamented with cut-work and knotted lace worked "with the needle, bobbins, bones and other different ways." In her "History of Lace" Mrs. Palliser quotes this as given by the Cavaliere Antonio Merli in his pamphlet on Italian laces, "Origine ed uso delle trine a filo de refe," privately printed in 1864, but the importance of the evidence of the Sforza inventory is discounted by the fact that technical terms frequently change their meanings in course of time, so that what was the Italian word for lace-bobbin in 1590 might have been applied to something entirely different a hundred years earlier. With the exception of this rather unreliable piece of documentary evidence there is practically nothing to

show that bobbin-lace was made in Italy prior to the end of the sixteenth century.

The oldest Italian bobbin-lace actually known closely resembled that made with the needle in the same early stage of development. Both were narrow vandyked edgings with a geometrical pattern like the tracery in a Gothic window in each point, but in the bobbin-lace the threads were, of course, twisted or plaited, while there were very few solid portions and the whole effect was lighter and more wiry. This form of bobbin-lace was made at first in Venice as largely as in other Italian cities, but, before long, the headquarters of the industry became established at Genoa and Milan, Venice continuing to remain pre-eminent for needle-point laces.

*Genoa.*

This city was famous for its gold and silver laces during the latter half of the sixteenth century, if not earlier. These were made chiefly for export, as there were strictly enforced sumptuary laws in Genoa at that time, and the wearing of such laces was forbidden within the walls of the city, although thread-lace was not prohibited. The oldest local form of the latter is that which has been always called, although, of course, quite erroneously, Genoese point, or in French, point de Gènes frisé. This is a vandyked plaited lace, with a very simple pattern, almost entirely formed of little flat ovals known as wheat-grains or wheat-ears, either placed at intervals along lines, curving or straight, of four-thread plait, or arranged in geometrical devices; the wheat-grains being fastened together by stitches passed, by means of a small hook, through pinholes in the ends of the ovals. This rather poor and attenuated lace continued to be made during the

first two or three decades of the seventeenth century, but by 1630 or thereabouts it was superseded by a different type. In this there were no wheat-grains; the thin connecting plait was replaced by a flat tape with short brides of twisted thread supporting the pattern, and although the vandykes were retained they were broader and blunter. This lace, which was heavier than point frisé, shared the name of collar-lace with its Venetian needle-point contemporary.

Following the collar-lace came the Genoese tape-lace (Plate 9). This is frequently called Genoese guipure, but the term has been so much abused by its indiscriminate application to widely varying classes of lace, both old and modern, that it seems best to avoid its use entirely here. In Genoese tape-lace a convoluted, rather straggling and indeterminate pattern was worked in a flat tape on the pillow, the windings of the design being very closely and carefully followed so as to avoid the least suspicion of puckering at the turns. This completed, brides, sometimes plaited, sometimes twisted, were worked in, and the spaces in the pattern filled with simple à jours. This lace was greatly in favour for church purposes; it was made in large quantities, and as it is very strong there is a good deal of it still surviving, a considerable proportion, however, being coarse and unattractive. Lace of exactly the same kind was produced in Flanders contemporaneously, and some of the specimens in the Victoria and Albert are officially catalogued as “? Italian or Flemish,” a fact which should prove comforting to the collector who finds it difficult to identify his examples.

A variety of Genoese tape-lace is known as mezzo-

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punto in Italian, point de canaille in French, and in English simply as mixed lace. In this the tape is made on the pillow, but the brides, or the coarse réseau which sometimes takes their place, is worked with the needle. When the tape has been properly made so as to fit the pattern, as in the lace just described, this mezzo-punto is handsome, but it will be found too often that the tape has been woven in a straight piece and then tacked on the lines of the pattern, a labour-saving but exceedingly clumsy method of proceeding, which results in there being ugly folds and puckers at every curve. Much of this mixed lace was produced at Naples as well as at Genoa.

### *Milan.*

In spite of the Sforza inventory, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, which appears to connect bobbin-lace with Milan as early as 1493, there is nothing definitely known of the lace industry in this city until 1606. In that year Milan lace is an item in the wardrobe accounts of James I of England and his Queen, Anne of Denmark. From this time on it must have been fashionably worn in this country, for in 1616 King James issued an edict prohibiting all his subjects "from using Gold or Silver, either fine or counterfeit, all Embroideries and all lace of Millan and of Millan fashion." The lace banned may have been some variety of the vandyked collar-lace which was made probably in Milan as elsewhere in Italy, or perhaps it was a beautiful but very scarce Milanese lace, of which there is a fine piece in the Victoria and Albert Museum. This has very boldly drawn scroll patterns, the toilé is closely worked, and there are neither brides nor réseau, the

different sections of the designs being arranged to meet each other as in the case of Venetian gros point.

The lace best known to the collector under the name of Milanese is the only Italian one with a meshed ground, if the Genoese mezzo-punto which has sometimes a réseau be excepted. Milanese grounded lace has a superficial resemblance to mezzo-punto, but is finer, more elaborate in pattern and work and entirely bobbin-made (see Plate 10). The réseau is believed to have been first introduced about the middle of the seventeenth century, and in its early stage the mesh varied, but it eventually settled down into a lozenge-shaped one with four plaited sides, not unlike the mesh of Valenciennes bobbin-lace. But there is this important difference, whereas the tape-pattern of Milanese lace is made on the pillow first and the réseau worked round it on completion, in the French lace pattern and ground are made at the same time. The meshes of the Milanese ground are worked at all angles to suit the curves of the pattern, and if the wrong side is examined, the threads of the réseau will be seen crossing the tape. The designs of old Milanese lace at its best period are sometimes exceedingly complicated. Coats-of-arms and family badges, human figures, lions, eagles, double-headed and otherwise, stags and birds are introduced, the various items being occasionally grouped so as to form a tolerably clearly defined and intelligible whole, but oftener mixed up in what seems a wild and meaningless confusion. Flowers and conventional ornaments in variety are employed to fill up odd corners until the thing is reminiscent of a seventeenth-century stump-work picture with its fantastic medley of kings, queens, mermaids, basilisks,

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lions, tigers, unicorns, caterpillars and gigantic strawberries.

Milanese tape-lace touched its highest point about 1700, but its production continued until the third quarter of the eighteenth century, and for some time later at Cantu, near Lake Como, where indeed a lace industry has been carried on until recently, the fabric made, however, having little or no resemblance to the old Milanese type.

The chief laces of Italy have been now described, but the collector must remember that lace was made in almost all parts of the country during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and that, naturally, varieties of the leading types came to be evolved locally. Although lacis and cut- and drawn-work were made generally throughout Italy, needle-point lace does not seem to have been worked in the provinces, the peasant laces being bobbin-made, and, as a rule, simple of pattern and thick and heavy of texture. They were used mainly for trimming household linen as they were very strong and durable, and their production continued into the nineteenth century. Mid-Victorian travellers in Italy were able to obtain almost any quantity of these peasant laces for a very moderate "consideration," but now the thick, stoutly-made laces of the old class are scarce, although those of a flimsier and less attractive kind are still made in some towns and villages.

Maltese bobbin-lace may be fittingly noticed in this chapter, as, in its best-known form, it is based on point de Gènes frisé. An earlier variety of Maltese lace had patterns consisting of thin wavy lines, but in 1833 Lady Hamilton Chichester, desirous of improving the art in the island, imported some lace-

workers from Genoa. They introduced the wheat-grain motif of point frisé, and this has been ever since conspicuous in all the patterns, Maltese crosses made of four of the little ovals joined together being especially characteristic.

## CHAPTER IV

### FRANCE (1)—NEEDLE-POINT LACES

**I**T has been stated in an earlier chapter how drawn-work, cut-work, and punto in aria were brought into France from Italy. Once known, they speedily became fashionable in high quarters, and for many years France, or rather Paris, was Venice's best customer for these dainty and costly products of the needle. It is true that they were copied successfully very soon after their introduction, but, as is so often the case, the imported article was far more prized than that of home origin, even although the two might be exactly equal in quality. It was not the first time, by any means, that Italy had influenced the fashions of France, for vast quantities of silks, brocades, velvets, and gold and silver embroideries had been constantly imported from Venice, Genoa and Milan for years prior to the days of the Bourbon and the Medicis. Catharine de Medici, by the way, was commonly believed to have hired a Florentine poisoner as well as a Venetian ruff-maker, and to have found the art of the former extremely useful in the working out of her subtle political schemes. Skilled Italian craftsmen had been brought to France by Louis XI as early as the middle of the fifteenth century to practise and teach their respective trades, among which poisoning may well have been included,

judging by the reputation of this most Christian king.

In the reign of Henri III the craze for gorgeous and costly clothes had reached an amazing—almost an insane—height; the courtiers of the effeminate king, his “mignons” and “popelirots,” wore not only jewelled necklaces and ear-rings, but the stiffest of stiff corsets to produce the fashionable wasp-waists. The King himself was the most fantastically bedizened of all his court; such soul as he had was absorbed in the niceties of his attire, and to ensure the perfection of the flutings of his vast lace-edged, stiffly-starched ruff, he used the “poking-sticks of steel” with his own royal hands, much to the scandal of his subjects. The ruffs of this period were bordered with the wiry, dentated lace with the geometrical Gothic pattern, of which twenty-five yards were required for the purpose, according to contemporary wardrobe accounts, but by the time the reign of Henri IV had come to its abrupt end, the ruff had been superseded by the graceful falling collar. For this the immediate successor of the early punto in aria, the Venetian needle-point with the broader, blunter vandykes was used. The well-known engravings of Abraham Bosse, especially that of the Lace Shop in the Galerie du Palais, convey a very clear idea of the wide lace collars, deep cuffs, huge shoe-roses—also of lace—and other frills and furbelows worn by gentlemen of fashion during the reign of Louis XIII. His predecessor on the throne had become concerned at the enormous amount of money spent on lace and embroidery by the French aristocracy, and had promulgated sundry and divers edicts which aimed at checking this reckless expenditure on imported luxuries. Louis XIII issued yet more edicts far more drastic than those of Henri IV, but their

increased severity did not impress the modish world in the least and only provoked innumerable skits and squibs and caricatures which greatly amused an entirely unalarmed public which continued to buy its high-priced Venetian points as usual. Some of Abraham Bosse's best-known engravings deal with the possible result of the sumptuary laws. One shows a lady of fashion discarding her fine laces, and with a very ill grace donning a collar of plain linen, while in another is seen a wrathful and disgusted gentleman throwing his beruffled suit to his servant in preparation for dressing himself in a sad suit minus so much as an inch-wide frill. The edicts, however, were not, probably could not be, enforced, and things went on very much as they did before the laws were made. The prodigal expenditure was still unchecked when the young King Louis XIV came to the throne and the Queen Regent, Anne of Austria, herself a most extravagant lace-buyer, with truly royal inconsistency, issued yet more edicts. One of these, passed on the eve of the King's marriage in 1661, gave occasion for the celebrated satire in verse, "La Revolte des Passemens," supposed to have been the joint production of a coterie of leaders of fashion whose meeting-place was the Hôtel Rambouillet. In parenthesis, it may be explained that *passemen* or *passement* was the old French word for lace, although by the middle of the seventeenth century *dentelle* was superseding it, and at the present time *passement* is used to indicate the parchment pattern on which the lace is made.

Mrs. Palliser, in her "History of Lace," has given a résumé of "La Revolte des Passemens" which cannot be improved upon, hence it is ventured to quote it in full here, as the skit is of special interest to the collector by reason of the list of laces it contains :

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“ In consequence of a sumptuary edict against luxury in apparel, Mesdames les Broderies :

“ ‘ Les Pointtes, Dentelles, Passemens  
Qui, par une vaine despense,  
Ruinoient aujourd’hui la France ’

meet and concert measures for their common safety. Point de Gènes with Point de Raguse first address the company, next Point de Venise, who seems to look on Raguse with a jealous eye, exclaims :

“ ‘ Encore pour vous, Pointte de Raguse,  
Il est bon, crainte d’attentat,  
D’en vouloir perger un estat.  
Les gens aussi fins que vous estes  
Ne sont bons que, comme vous faites  
Pour miner tous les estats  
Et vous Aurillac ou Venise  
Si nous plions notre valise ? ’

“ The other laces speak in their turn most despondently, until a ‘ vielle broderie d’or ’ consoling them talks of the vanity of this world, ‘ Who knows it better than I who have dwelt in king’s houses ? ’ One ‘ grande Dentelle d’Angleterre ’ now proposes that they should all retire to a convent. To this the Dentelles de Flandres object ; they would sooner be sewn at once to the bottom of a petticoat.

“ Mesdames les Broderies resign themselves to become ‘ ameublement ’ ; the more devout of the party to appear as ‘ devants d’autel ’ ; those who feel too young to renounce the world and its vanities will seek refuge in the masquerade shops. Dentelle noire d’Angleterre lets herself out cheap to a fowler as a net to catch woodcock, for which she feels ‘ assez propre ’ in her present predicament. The Points all resolve to retire to their own countries, save Aurillac, who fears she may be turned into a strainer ‘ pour

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passer les fromages d'Auvergne ' ; a smell insupportable by one who had revelled in civet and orange-flower. All were starting :

“ ‘ Chacun, dissimulant sa rage  
Doucement plioit son bagage  
Resolu d'obéir au sort ’

when—

“ ‘ Une pauvre malhereuse  
Qu'on appelle, dit-on La Gueuse ’

arrives in a great rage from a village in the environs of Paris. She is not of high birth but has her feelings all the same. She will never submit. She has no refuge, not even a place in a hospital. Let them follow her advice and 'elle engageoit sa chainette' she will replace them all in their former position. Next morning the Points reassemble, une 'Grande Cravate Fanfaron' exclaims :

“ ‘ Il nous faut venger cet affront,  
Revoltons-nous, noble assemblée. ’

“ A council of war ensues :

“ ‘ La dessus, le Point d'Alençon  
Ayant bien appris sa leçon  
Fit une fort belle harangue. ’

“ Flanders now boasts how she has made two campaigns under monsieur, as a cravat ; another had learnt the art of war under Turenne ; a third was torn at the siege of Dunkirk.

“ ‘ Racontant des combats qu'ils ne virent jamais, ’

one and all had figured at some siege or battle.

“ ‘ Qu'avons-nous à redouter ? ’

cries Dentelle d'Angleterre. Not so, thinks Point de Gènes 'qui avoit le corps un peu gros.'

They all swear—

“ ‘ Foy de Passemen,  
Foy de Pointcs et de Broderie  
De Guipure et d'Orfeverie,  
De Gueuse de toute façon,'

to declare open war and to banish the Parliament. The Laces all assemble at the fair of St. Germain, there to be reviewed by General Luxe. The muster-roll is called over by Colonel Sotte Depense; Dentelles de Moresse; Escadrons de Neige, Dentelles de Havre, Escrues, Soies Noires, Points d'Espagne, etc., march forth in warlike array to conquer or to die. At the first approach of the artillery they all take to their heels and are condemned by a council of war, the Points to be made into tinder for the use of the King's Mousquetaires, the Laces to be converted into paper, the Dentelles Escrues, Gueuses, Passemens and silk laces to be made into cordage and sent to the galleys, and the gold and silver laces, the original authors of the sedition, to be 'burnt alive.' Finally through the intercession of Love:

“ ‘ Le petit dieu plein de finesse,'

they are pardoned and restored to Court favour.”

The names of the laces that figure in the “*Revolte des Passemens*” are in many instances something of a puzzle. Gueuse was a coarse bobbin-lace familiarly known as “*beggar's lace*” by reason of its poor quality and low price. The name guipure, derived from the French verb *guiper*, to roll, was applied at the time of the satire to a kind of gimp or ornamental trimming made of thin strips of parch-

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ment round which silk or metal threads were so closely rolled as to encase it entirely. What point de Raguse was is not known with certainty, but it may have been some variety of cut-work. Aurillac, in Auvergne, was a noted centre for gold and silver guipure made of thin strips of metal wound round a silk core. In Colbert's time the laces made at Aurillac came into the points de France group, of which more will be said later, but the industry died out completely at the end of the eighteenth century.

Sumptuary laws proved hopelessly ineffectual in checking the import of costly lace; they resulted in causing a great deal of smuggling and the destruction by the common executive of some valuable lace, as much as a hundred thousand crowns' worth of point de Venise and Flanders lace being burnt in 1670. Realising the failure of the policy of prohibitive edicts, Colbert, the King's wily minister, changed the plan of campaign and adopted the more rational one of fighting the foreigner with his own weapons. To this end he decided to encourage and improve lace-making in France in every possible way. In pursuance of this very sensible idea Colbert communicated with Monseigneur de Bonzy, Bishop of Beziers, who was then the French Ambassador to the Venetian Republic, and on his advice and with his aid some twenty or thirty skilled lace-workers were sent from Venice to France and settled as teachers of their art at Alençon, a town already famed for its cut-work, and where Colbert's daughter-in-law had a château. A monopoly or "exclusive privilege" for ten years was granted in August, 1665, to a guild or company, and an office and shop were opened in Paris at the Hôtel de Beaufort for the sale of the laces produced. The company

established groups of workers at Sedan, Arras, Le Quesnoy and other towns besides Alençon, and all the laces made in these places and under the control of the company were known *collectively* as points de France. This was their official name and one which has been a stumbling-block to many persons who have failed to realise that there is no *single* variety of lace specially entitled to the name of point de France.

*Alençon.*

The laces first made in Alençon and its neighbourhood under the new regime were exact copies of the Italian types and practically indistinguishable from the Venetian points, although, according to contemporary criticisms, the French laces were thought to be rather less firm in texture and not so purely white as the imported ones. Flat-point was more extensively made in the Alençon district than the raised kinds. The monopoly was not renewed after its expiration in 1675, and from this time an alteration began to take place in the style of the lace. According to Voltaire, Flemish workers were now introduced as teachers, but whether this were so or not, the influence of the bobbin-laces of Flanders became steadily more and more marked. The patterns grew lighter, finer thread was employed, and the brides were placed at closer intervals until a meshed ground, at first large and open, and then small, replaced them. Thus, about 1717, the famous point d'Alençon was evolved, the patterns at first retaining much of the character of the heavy Italian points, but growing gradually lighter and more delicate until by the middle of the century the last trace of Venetian influence had vanished and the designs, dainty and graceful in the

extremes were purely French. The most noticeable features in point d'Alençon, besides the beauty of the patterns, are the firmness of the texture and the elaboration of the à jours. The strength and solidity of the lace is chiefly due to the stiffness of the *cordonné*, which is made of a thread, or, as some say, a horse-hair closely worked over with buttonhole-stitch. The example of point d'Alençon shown in Plate 11, Fig. *a*, dates from the early part of the reign of Louis XVI and is entirely characteristic of the period.

The process of making point d'Alençon was complicated and tedious. The parchment on which the pattern was pricked was tacked down on folded linen, and the outlines of the design traced with double threads laid on the parchment and held in place by couching stitches. Next, the *réseau* was put in, the distinctive Alençon mesh being hexagonal and made of double-twisted threads (see Plate 23, Fig. 3). The method of working this ground was as follows: first a thread was stretched across the space between two sections of the outlined pattern; then a row of open buttonhole-stitches forming loops was worked along this thread, the needle being put twice through each loop instead of once as in ordinary buttonholing. On reaching the end of the line the thread was taken back to the starting-point, the needle being passed twice through each loop on the way, but without the button-holehitch. The thread was then pulled tight so as to produce the twisted line at the base of each row of loops. The processes were repeated until the meshed ground was complete, when the solid portions of the pattern were worked in close buttonhole-stitch and the intricate à jours put in. Finally, the stitches attaching the parchment to the linen were

cut, the lace removed, and the short pieces—about ten inches long—in which it was always made, skilfully joined together by a special worker, the seams being practically invisible.

The patterns of point d'Alençon began to show signs of deterioration during the reign of Louis XVI. The tendency towards replacing the beautiful curving designs of the early period with more or less naturalistic flowers which had begun to show itself some years before, increased to a rather unfortunate degree and the patterns lost something of their dignity and grace. The fillings were gradually simplified until they became poor and mean-looking and the whole style of the lace altered for the worse. The Revolution caused its temporary disappearance, but it was revived during the First Empire, although in a debased form. Point d'Alençon in the early nineteenth century had sometimes a deeply scalloped or vandyked edge, sometimes a straight one; the patterns were stiff, pseudo-classical and very uninteresting, while the ground was often "semé de larmes," that is to say, powdered with tiny oval spots, or dotted with leaflets. The texture of this comparatively modern lace is thin and flimsy, contrasted with that of the older point d'Alençon which, together with its sister lace, point d'Argentan, was considered more suitable, by reason of its solidity, for winter than summer wear; they were "dentelles d'hiver" in the eyes of fashionable Frenchwomen.

With the fall of Napoleon point d'Alençon went out of favour and its production almost ceased, but attempts have been made several times during the last hundred years to resuscitate it, and with a certain limited degree of success by the Empress Eugénie. Lace with some of the characteristics of the later

eighteenth-century type is still—or was until recently—made at Alençon.

*Argentan.*

The needle-point lace produced at Argentan under Colbert's scheme was at first of the Venetian type as at Alençon, twenty-five miles away, and at the other centres of the Government-fostered industry. The development of the meshed ground was almost simultaneous at Argentan and Alençon, but there is a marked difference between the réseaux, as may be seen by comparing the enlargements of the meshes reproduced in Plate 23, Figs. 1 and 3. The Argentan mesh is large and hexagonal, and each of the six sides is worked over in buttonhole-stitch, but in some examples, although the large mesh is employed for the main ground, the smaller Alençon réseau is introduced along the edge of the lace. This combination has a very charming effect. At a later period some of the Argentan workers adopted a twisted mesh which could be executed much more quickly than the buttonhole-stitched one, but this departure does not seem to have been general. The patterns of point d'Argentan had a considerable resemblance to those of point d'Alençon, but were bolder and heavier, as befitted their background of large, stiff meshes (see Plate IIB). Point d'Argentan was at the height of its vogue in the early years of the reign of Louis XV, when it was supplied to the French Court in very large quantities from several flourishing establishments, one of which employed as many as 600 hands. It vanished with the Revolution and was not revived until a comparatively recent date, since when reproductions have been made with some measure of success in France and at Burano. But they are not to be com-

pared with the old point d'Argentan, a lace now as scarce as it is charming.

*Argentella.*

One more lace belonging to the points de France group must not be forgotten. This is *Argentella*; a variant of point d'Alençon, which has a large mesh with a six-sided dot in the centre. This dotted réseau is known as *fond de neige*, and *œil de perdrix*, also as *réseau rosacé*. Some authorities do not consider *Argentilla* differs sufficiently from point d'Alençon to justify its classification as a distinct lace, and are of opinion that it should be called point d'Alençon à réseau rosacé. Mrs. Palliser's notion that it was of Genoese origin is now generally regarded as erroneous.

There were many other point de France centres established under Colbert's ordinance, Sedan, Rheims, Château Thierry, Loudun, Aurillac, Arras, and le Quesnoy among them, but of their products there is very little known. In the seventeenth century Sedan was celebrated for its cut-work, (it had a royal customer in the person of Charles I, in whose wardrobe accounts there are entries of heavy payments for "Sedan cut-work") and according to M. Lefébure ("Embroidery and Lace") it developed into needle-point, first of the Venetian type with brides, and then with a réseau, but other authorities, notably M. Séguin, do not agree with him. Le Quesnoy was the birthplace of Valenciennes bobbin-lace, and at Arras much gold and silver lace was made, but considerable obscurity veils the identity of the fabrics produced at the other centres of the Government-supported industry.

## CHAPTER V

### FRANCE (II)—BOBBIN-LACE

**C**OLBERT'S scheme for the encouragement of the French lace industry included within its scope bobbin- as well as needle-point lace, but as regards the former his well-conceived scheme was less immediately successful, and it was not until the end of the seventeenth century that it began to be seriously developed in France.

#### *Point de Paris.*

The earliest French lace to be made on the pillow is believed to have been point de Paris—all French laces, whether bobbin- or needle-made were given the generic name of point—which was at first produced in the Faubourg S. Antoine. In "Embroidery and Lace," M. Lefébure states that Comte d'Harcourt settled an old nurse of his, one Madame Dumont of Brussels, in this Faubourg, and obtained from the king a licence permitting her to employ bobbin-lace makers at her establishment there. Madame Dumont and her four daughters had at one time nearly 200 local workers in their employment, and for several years they carried on a flourishing industry. So prosperous was it that Madame Dumont was tempted, unfortunately as it turned out, to transfer it to the more spacious quarters of the Hôtel de Chaumont in

the Rue S. Denis. The move proved a mistake ; the manufactory ceased to be profitable, and before long Madame Dumont retired from its management. Mr. Lefébure does not give the date of the beginning of Madame Dumont's venture, but according to other writers on the history of lace-making in France, point de Paris were produced as early as 1635 in the environs, the workers being chiefly Huguenots. But a good many collectors are of opinion that point de Paris is a Mrs. Harris among laces, and never really existed ! There is some evidence, however, that there was actually a bobbin-lace made in the Île de France towards the end of the seventeenth century under the name of point de Paris, and that it was narrow and of poor quality, with crude, insignificant patterns on the six-pointed star réseau or fond chant, which is also known as Paris ground by reason of its connection with the lace in question. All trace of point de Paris disappeared early in the eighteenth century, and although a type of coarse lace is often sold by dealers under this name, it is doubtful whether there is in existence a single piece with an indisputable pedigree.

*Valenciennes.*

The finest of all French bobbin-laces, the world-famed Valenciennes, was first made at the town which gave it its name, towards the end of the reign of Louis XIV. It originated apparently at Le Quesnoy, a town which was one of the lace centres under Colbert's ordinance of 1665, but where a lace manufacture of some kind had been established prior to this date by a colony of Antwerp workers under the leadership of a Mlle. Badar. There is no definite record of the transfer of the lace industry to Valenciennes ; the

date can be only inferred from the fact that nothing is heard of Le Quesnoy as a lace-producing centre after the death of Louis XIV, while just about the same time Valenciennes comes to the front with lace markedly Flemish in pattern and texture. The most noteworthy characteristics of early Valenciennes lace, a specimen of which is illustrated in Plate 12, Fig. A, are the flowing scrolls and graceful, although purely conventional, flower motives of the design, and the mixed réseaux, two, or even three, being introduced into a single example of lace, and these so closely intermingled with the pattern as to produce a rather confused, although far from unpleasing result. Of these various réseaux, by far the most effective is the fond de neige, œil de perdrix or snowflake ground, similar to that of Argentella lace, but, of course, worked with bobbins instead of with the needle, in which each of the irregular, spidery meshes has a dot within it. Shortly after the accession of Louis XV to the throne in 1715, the lace-workers within the town of Valenciennes adopted a new and regular réseau with a lozenge-shaped mesh formed of four threads plaited throughout, the threads being reduced to three at a later period. The inventors of this clear, open but rather uninteresting ground called the new style of lace (see Plate 12, Fig. B), vraie Valenciennes, dubbing the older kind, with the mixed and fanciful réseaux, which continued to be made in the districts round the town, fausse Valenciennes. This strange and scarcely justifiable distinction has led, not unnaturally, to some confusion. Both types of lace, vraie and fausse, so called, were made on the pillow in one piece, that is to say, pattern and ground were worked at the same time with the same threads. The toilé is exceptionally close and even in old Valenciennes, and there is no

cordonnet. The extraordinary fineness of the Flemish thread used was mainly, if not entirely, the cause of the beauty of the texture of the lace, but it has been asserted that the peculiar conditions under which vraie Valenciennes was made, namely in damp cellars so dark that the unhappy workers usually went blind before they were thirty, had something to do with it. But this may be regarded as a piece of fiction, probably originating with the town-workers, who also asserted that it was impossible for lace of the best quality to be produced without the walls even if made by the same worker, with the same thread and on the same pillow! Innumerable pins and a great number of small, light wooden bobbins were necessary in making both varieties of Valenciennes, and the lace was worked in sections about eight inches in length, which were joined on completion. Altogether, the process was a very slow one, and this, combined with the costliness of the fine Flemish flax-thread, made Valenciennes lace an exceedingly expensive luxury. It took ten months, working fifteen hours a day, to complete enough lace, three inches wide, for a pair of ruffles which would sell for 4,000 livres. The Valenciennes trimming of one of Madame du Barry's pillow-cases cost 500 francs, and her lappets of the same lace, over 1,000 francs. Yet, strange as it may seem, Valenciennes never ranked among the most aristocratic laces and it was seldom worn in full-dress.

About the middle of the long reign of Louis XV a change occurred in the patterns of fausse Valenciennes, and the scrolls and conventional flowers and leaves were partly superseded by designs of natural flowers—tulips, carnations and roses—beautiful enough in themselves, but neither as graceful nor as appropriate as their predecessors. But, although the patterns

may have lost a little of their charm, the quality of the fabric was at its very best about 1740-50, and only slightly less good from that time up to 1780. It shared the fate of the majority of French laces at the Revolution, and, less fortunate than some of its fellows, it was never successfully revived, although as late as 1840, a few, very aged workers were found able to make a head-dress of vraie Valenciennes as a wedding-gift from the city to the Duchesse de Nemours.

The only place in France where modern Valenciennes, the lace with the lozange réseau framing simple patterns that is so familiar to everyone, is made, is the frontier town of Bailleul, but it has been largely produced since the beginning of the nineteenth century in Belgium, principally in those districts round Ghent and Ypres which were so cruelly laid waste during the Great War.

*Lille.*

There is not much interest attached to the bobbin-lace of Lille, for it is commonplace and undistinguished. Yet at one time, the late eighteenth century, it was wonderfully popular in England, and such quantities of it were imported that specimens are easily acquired by the collector. The ground of Lille lace is the hexagonal mesh of which an enlargement is shown in Plate 24, Fig. 1, a réseau known as fond clair, or fond simple, four sides of which are formed of two twisted threads; the threads of the remaining two sides being only crossed, not twisted. The edge of Lille lace is invariably almost straight, never markedly waved or scalloped, and the formal patterns are outlined with the thick, flat, shiny thread which English lace-workers call gimp or trolly thread, as the lappet

shown in Plate 13, Fig. b, exemplifies. The réseau is often powdered with little square dots known as points d'esprit. Lille lace survived the Revolution, but by the year 1800 its most distinctive features had disappeared, and the patterns of the lace then being made were more or less in the style of the later Mechlin laces.

*Arras.*

Arras was early distinguished for its gold lace, one English name for which, orris- or orrice-lace, is said to be a corruption of the name of the town. An item in the accounts for the expenses of the Coronation of George I is 354 yards of Arras lace, which proves that it continued to be made into the eighteenth century. Under Colbert's scheme it is probable that thread-lace of the Flemish type was produced in Arras, but the kind that is best known under this name is strong, rather coarse and much like Lille, except that the straight edge almost invariably characteristic of the latter lace is replaced by a definitely scalloped one. Arras lace continued to be popular during the Empire, and its manufacture was carried on, although on a steadily dwindling scale, until about forty years ago.

*Chantilly.*

The silk lace to which this town has given its name was first produced in the early years of the eighteenth century, but long before this a school of lace-making had been started in Chantilly by the Duchesse de Longueville. What kind of lace was then made is doubtful, but it is most likely that it was something in the way of Gueuse or point de Paris; at any rate

it is certain that the manufacture of silk bobbin-lace was a later introduction. Chantilly lace has the six-pointed star ground, the fond chant as it came to be called, of the old point de Paris, but often combined with it is the fond simple or fond clair of Lille. This latter réseau is, as a rule, worked into the spaces of the pattern along the edge of the lace. There is a cordonnet made of a thick, untwisted very shiny silk thread. Chantilly was greatly esteemed by French ladies of rank and fashion and is mentioned over and over again in Royal accounts and inventories. Naturally it fell with its patrons, but its manufacture was revived under the First Empire ; it again became the mode and remained in favour for many years. Made of black silk it was particularly popular between 1830 and 1840, but by that time the great proportion of lace made in the Chantilly style came from Caen, Bayeux and Le Puy.

*Blonde*

is another silk lace produced in the three towns mentioned above, and the districts round them. It was first made about 1745, when unbleached China silk was used for it (hence its name), but pure white and black silks replaced that of a creamy tint before long, although the old name was still adhered to. Blonde has some points in common with Chantilly lace, but is easily distinguishable from the last named by its Lille réseau of untwisted silk, finer than that used for the toilé. At first the patterns of Blonde were very light in style, but during the Napoleonic era they underwent a change and became bold and rather heavy. This departure was in all probability the result of the increasing export of black Blonde to Spain, where it was in demand for

mantillas. The later designs are markedly Spanish in style.

*Dieppe.*

There was a considerable lace industry at Dieppe during the eighteenth century, and several distinct varieties were produced, the best known being point de Dieppe, which had some resemblance to vraie Valenciennes, but was simpler, required fewer bobbins, and was made in a long strip which was wound round the pillow as the work progressed; dentelle à la Vierge, much used for the wonderful caps of the Norman peasant women, and Ave Maria lace. The distinctive features of dentelle à la Vierge are its small stiff patterns outlined with a flat thread and its réseau known as "cinq trous" (see Plate 24, Fig. 6). Ave Maria lace is very narrow, has a plaited Valenciennes ground, a straight edge and very insignificant patterns. It continued to be made up to the middle of the nineteenth century.

*Bayeux.*

The earliest laces made at Bayeux were of a very light description and included mignonette, a narrow lace with a clear ground, much in request for caps and head-dresses, and point de Marli, a lace with a fine ground, generally powdered with square dots, and a straight edge finished with loops. Sometimes the net was additionally ornamented with sprigs worked with the needle. These laces were much in fashion between 1765 and 1785 and were produced in great quantities not only in Bayeux but in other towns in the neighbourhood. Late in the eighteenth century Blonde was the chief lace made, and soon after the whole industry almost died, but recovered itself in 1827,

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when heavy silk laces began to be made for the Spanish market. In comparatively recent times, thread-laces in the style of Mechlin have been the principal manufacture of Bayeux together with a heavy needle-point lace with brides, called point Colbert in honour of the famous minister.

### *Le Puy.*

Le Puy-en-Vélay has been for over two centuries the centre of the great lace-making district of the Auvergne. According to M. Lefébure "a light and open guipure" was produced very early in the history of bobbin-lace, but in the seventeenth century the staple manufacture seems to have been a rather coarse and inartistic thread-lace, which was employed to trim household linen. Although the industry was carried on on a large scale throughout a big district it does not appear to have been uniformly prosperous, as there is evidence to show that in the first years of the eighteenth century there were many bitter complaints of bad trade and applications for the remission by the Government of export duty, from the lace-makers, who also asked for grants in aid of the unemployed workers. About 1760 the manufacture of Blonde lace was introduced with the result of a prompt improvement in trade, and from this time onwards the lace industry in Vélay was a flourishing one; a variety of laces—silk, wool and thread, black, white, and coloured—have been produced in the district. Cluny lace, which was recently very popular in England, originated in Le Puy. The name is purely fanciful, having been suggested by that of the well-known museum in Paris.

As in Italy, the art of lace-making was widespread in France, and as an inevitable consequence there are

many laces which although bearing some resemblance to one or other of the distinct and well-known fabrics, differ in detail. These "odd" laces must always present a troublesome problem to the collector, although, fortunately for him perhaps, they were never largely exported.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LOW COUNTRIES—BELGIUM, FLANDERS, HOLLAND

**I**N an earlier chapter allusion has been made to the rival claims of Italy and Flanders to the invention of the art of bobbin-lace making. Italy's case has been stated already; Flanders bases hers chiefly on the existence of the altar-piece in the Church of S. Gomar at Lierre, attributed to Quentin Matsys (1460-1529), in which is represented a girl making lace on a pillow which she holds on her knees. This is said to have been painted in 1495, and on the face of it the picture seems to provide a strong piece of evidence in support of the Flemish claim. But many possessing an expert knowledge of the Old Masters consider the attribution entirely wrong, and assign the work to Jean Matsys, son of Quentin, who painted considerably later than 1495, but very much in the style of his father. Then there is an engraving by Martin de Vos forming one of a series representing the "Seven Ages of Life," published between 1580 and 1585, in which a young woman is depicted working with bobbins on a pillow. Unfortunately for the Flemish case, however, she is not making true lace, but something in the way of wide gimp or braid, and here we get another instance of the ever-recurring confusion between "lace—a braid," and "lace—a slender open-work fabric." It might also be said, if anything more

were necessary, that Martin de Vos worked for many years in Italy and that all his engravings show signs of the influence of his sojourn in that country. Further evidence against the Flemish claim to priority of invention is to be found in the facts that lace does not appear in Flemish portraits until the extreme end of the sixteenth century, and that no pattern-books for lace were published in Flanders before the seventeenth century.

It is indisputable that, reversing the order of development as it occurred in Italy, lace made with bobbins on the pillow preceded needle-point in the Netherlands. Cut-work was produced in Flanders as early as the time of Queen Elizabeth, who was a regular buyer of it. According to her Great Wardrobe Accounts it was less expensive than that imported from Italy, a yard of "double Flanders cut-work" costing but £1 3s. 4d., against £2 15s. 4d. for the same quantity of "double Italian cut-work," which seems to have been held in higher esteem. From the cut-work, Flemish workers seem to have passed directly to a bobbin-lace in which a flat tape formed an indeterminate floral pattern arranged in broad scallops, brides being placed only where absolutely essential for support. From this point onwards the development of Flemish lace followed the same lines as that of Italy; the scallops disappeared, the tape pattern assumed a bold and flowing Renaissance style and the general resemblance to the Italian bobbin-lace became so close that, as has been said already, it is practically impossible to distinguish between the two, although there are some collectors who consider that the Flemish fabric is to be identified by its finer thread and looser toilé. A scarce variety of Flanders lace made in the first years of the eighteenth century is known as point de

Flandres à brides picotées. In this the segments of a rather confused design are worked separately, and joined on the pillow by bobbin-made brides with many picots. The à jours are simply the "cinq trous" réseau worked loosely.

*Brussels.*

Tape-lace with brides was made in Brussels before 1650, but shortly after this date a meshed ground was adopted, which was worked round the pattern after its completion. One of the special characteristics by which old Brussels bobbin-lace may be quickly and surely identified is this réseau which has two of its six sides made of four threads plaited four times, and the other four of two threads twisted once as shown in Plate 24, Fig 5. Another distinctive feature is the line of open stitches—a row of tiny holes—which outlines the pattern and takes the place of a cordonnet, while a third is the frequent use of two toilés, one as close and even as cambric, the other open and resembling the six-pointed star ground or fondchant on a small scale. (See Plate 23, Fig 6.) Brussels bobbin-lace seems to have been made with these peculiarities almost from the date of the first employment of the meshed ground.

The thread used for the old Brussels laces, and, indeed, for all those made in the Netherlands, was of the finest possible quality. The flax grown in Brabant was always used for it, and according to tradition it was spun in dark, damp cellars—as vrai Valenciennes lace was said to have been made—the moist air of which, combined with the absence of light, rendered the texture soft yet strong. But it is much more reasonable to suppose that the super-excellent quality of the Brussels thread was due rather to the flax itself combined with the

skill of the spinners than to any special conditions, unwholesome or otherwise, under which it was produced.

The most beautiful of all the laces of Brussels is point d'Angleterre which, in spite of its name, is neither point nor English. It must be admitted, however, that there are two opinions as to the nationality of the lace, and that each has its zealous supporters, although those who would claim it for England are in the minority. The majority assert that its misleading name was given to it by the lace-dealers and their allies, the smugglers of the end of the seventeenth century, under the following circumstances. In 1662 the English Parliament passed a law, similar to one already existing in France, forbidding the import of Flemish lace of all kinds. The lace-dealers had no mind to allow their exceedingly profitable business—for lace was much worn at the time—to be ruined by any mere Act of Parliament, so they bought the Brussels lace as usual, had it brought over by the "free-traders," and put on the market in England as of English manufacture, or re-smuggled to France as point d'Angleterre. The latter name came in course of time to be that by which the lace was generally known, although, rather curiously, it is the one now applied in France to *all* Brussels laces indiscriminately. The case for the Brussels origin of point d'Angleterre is supported by a memorandum from the Venetian Ambassador to England stating that Venetian point is no longer in fashion, but "that called English point (punto d'Inghilterra) which you know is not made here but in Flanders, and only bears the name of English lace to distinguish it from the others."

Those who claim this bobbin-lace as a native of England aver that it was made in Devonshire under

the instruction of Flemish refugees who, flying from the persecutions in the Netherlands, landed on the East Coast of England, and made their way to the south-west. A very fine bobbin-lace was undoubtedly produced in Devon at the end of the seventeenth century and a little later, and this had features in common with point d'Angleterre, but judging from the specimens that have survived to the present time, the patterns were much inferior to those of point d'Angleterre. At any rate, for the purposes of this book, point d'Angleterre will be regarded as a Brussels lace of unblemished pedigree and dealt with accordingly. The designs are in some degree not unlike those of fausse Valenciennes when naturalistic flowers were beginning to be introduced in combination with the Renaissance scrolls, but the resemblance is confined to the patterns; the method of working is entirely different and point d'Angleterre has certain distinguishing points which render it easy to identify. One of these distinctive marks is the raised rib of plaited threads which outlines the leaves and their veinings, and in some portions of the pattern is substituted for the row of open stitches with which the greater part of the toilé is edged, as in the later Brussels laces. The details of the pattern are made separately on the pillow, and the réseau put in by hooking threads into the edge of the toilé and working the meshes round the pattern. Sometimes when the space to be filled with the ground is very small, the threads are carried across the back of the toilé, but this is the exception rather than the rule. Often two different réseaux are seen side by side in point d'Angleterre, the typical Brussels ground as shown in Plate 24, Fig. 5, and the fond de neige of fausse Valenciennes, but in many examples the former is alone employed.

In a very lovely and scarce variety, point d'Angleterre à brides, one or both of the réseaux are introduced in conjunction with brides picotées. In this lace the à jours are occasionally made with the needle.

Point d'Angleterre lappets were extremely fashionable for both English and French Court wear, and very effective are their graceful sweeping patterns which are carried right up to the edge and form a series of irregular curves from end to end of the lappet (see Plate 14). That enormous sums were spent on point d'Angleterre by the ladies of the Court of Louis XV is proved by the accounts and inventories from which Mrs. Palliser gives such interesting extracts in her "History of Lace." Madame du Barry paid 7,000 livres on a set composed of two lappets, a border and cap-crown, cuffs of six tiers (frills), an ell and a half of ribbon made specially and half an ell for a jabot, all the lace being superfine point d'Angleterre. The same lady spent 2,342 livres on a peignoir, 8,823 livres on a "toilette d'Angleterre complet," and many smaller sums on other items of dress. And not only on wearing apparel was this costly lace used in those days of reckless extravagance and luxury; the Duchesse de Bourbon and the Duchesse de Guynes had couvre-pieds bordered with point d'Angleterre; Madame du Barry trimmed her pin-cushions as well as her caps with it, and it was actually used, and not infrequently by the smart ladies of the day, to border their bed-hangings. It was from the first a lace beloved of Royalty, and as late as 1800 the Empress Josephine wore a gown "trimmed with magnificent point d'Angleterre" at the wedding of Mademoiselle Permon to the Duc d'Abrantes. The actual manufacture of the lace, however, had ceased long before that date.

Brussels patterns of small sprigs or sprays worked

on the pillow began to be applied to a net ground, also bobbin-made towards the end of the eighteenth century, this type of lace being called *point plat appliqué*. The ground was worked in narrow strips which, when finished, were joined together with an almost invisible stitch called *point de raccroc* in French, and *fine-drawing* in English. This bobbin-made net ground was expensive to produce, and it is therefore not surprising although regrettable that it was abandoned for machine-woven net directly that was available, which was in the second decade of the nineteenth century. The piece of Brussels lace illustrated in Plate 15A has the hand-made or "*vrai*" *réseau*.

A modern Brussels bobbin-lace with brides has been popular of late years under the name of *Duchesse*. It resembles Honiton tape-lace, but as a rule its patterns are superior to those of the Devonshire lace.

In Brussels the only needle-point lace of the Netherlands originated, and this was not made until 1720, by which date the bobbin-laces of Belgium and Flanders had been long famous. Early Brussels needle-point, now scarce, is not altogether unlike Alençon, but the *toilé* is less close, the *cordonnnet* is not so firm, and the ground is formed of a simple looped mesh. At first the lace was worked entirely with the needle, but later in the eighteenth century a bobbin-made *réseau* was fitted round the needle-point pattern, although a limited quantity of lace continued to be made in the older and more expensive way. The manufacture of a piece of Brussels needle-point was never the work of a single pair of hands. According to Mrs. Palliser at least five persons were employed in its production, viz. : the *drocheleuse* for the *réseau* ; the *dentellière* for the footing ; the *pointeuse* for the pattern ; the *fonneuse* for the *à jours*, and the *attach-*

euse for joining the sections of lace. Two more workers are included in Mrs. Palliser's list, the *plateuse* who made the plat sprigs, and the *appliqueuse* who sewed the sprigs on the ground, but these would not be required in the making of true *point à l'aiguille*. When machine-net was invented the needle-point patterns—generally rather small and meagre ones of flowers and foliage—were applied to it, as in the case of the bobbin-made sprigs, and outlines with a rather heavier *cordonnet* than heretofore. Brussels *appliqué* with needle-point sprigs, as well as that in which the pattern is bobbin-made, is still produced to a limited extent, but it has been almost entirely superseded in late years by the lace called *point à l'aiguille gaze* or *point de gaze*, which first came into fashion in the 'sixties of last century, and has retained its popularity ever since. *Point de gaze* is an attractive lace, pretty in detail and effective as a whole, although it is wanting in firmness of texture and lacks something of the wear-resisting qualities of the older Brussels laces.

*Binche.*

There is a tradition that bobbin-lace making was brought to Binche in the fifteenth century by women who came from Ghent in the train of Mary of Burgundy, the daughter of Charles the Bold, but this does not seem to have any foundation in fact, and nothing is actually known of a lace industry at Binche before the end of the seventeenth century. Binche lace strongly resembles *fausse Valenciennes* in its earliest phase, both as to texture and style of pattern: the *réseau* varies, but *fond de neige* and a very light spiderly mesh are often introduced, and there is either no *cordonnet* at all or merely a single fine thread as a outlining to the pattern. The oldest existing and most

distinctly characteristic Binche lace is so fine and close in texture that its pattern is scarcely visible; seen at a little distance it has almost the appearance of a strip of cambric, and it must be carefully examined before the beauty of the fabric and the grace of the design can be fully realised. The moderately fine type of Binche bobbin-lace, such as is the subject of Plate 16, Fig. A, is much more effective and nearly as exquisite in quality. Binche was very fashionable in select Parisian circles during the middle years of the eighteenth century. A pair of cuffs of dentelle de Binche and two fichus trimmed with it are noted in the inventory of the Duchesse de Modène, the daughter of the Regent, in 1761, while in that of Mlle. Charollais, three years earlier, mention is made of a couvre-pieds of the same lace. Some of the later Binche laces show a deterioration in the patterns which show a tendency to become confused and indefinite; they are also coarser in texture. The production of true dentelle de Binche ceased altogether at the end of the eighteenth century, but in comparatively recent times point plat sprigs in the style of Brussels lace have been made in the town and district and sent to Paris where they are applied to machine-woven net.

*Mechlin.*

The oldest Mechlin lace that can be clearly distinguished from others of Flemish origin may be assigned to about 1720. Prior to that date the name was applied commercially both in France and England to almost all kinds of Flemish laces quite indiscriminately. True Mechlin lace was made in one piece—toilé and réseau at the same time—on the pillow, and its distinctive mesh is hexagonal and formed of two threads

twisted once on four sides, and four threads plaited three times on two sides (see Plate 24, Fig. 4). But before this mesh was finally adopted, various other grounds were tried experimentally, the pretty *fond de neige* being one of those frequently met with, sometimes alone, sometimes combined with other *réseaux*. A flat silky thread outlines every portion of the patterns which in the older laces are Renaissance in style, and have noticeably delicate and varied *à jours*. A specimen of early Mechlin is shown in Plate 13, Fig. A. Widely different are the patterns of the later eighteenth-century Mechlin laces. In these floral ornaments, generally tiny roses or small sprays of unidentifiable blossoms, are placed in a row close to the slightly scalloped or straight edge, the wide expanse of hexagonal mesh being relieved by a powdering of spots, *quatrefoils* or miniature leaflets. The flowers bordering this type of lace being set as closely together as possible, and repeated without the slightest variation (see Plate 15, Fig. B), produce an exceedingly monotonous effect, but the laces of this period—1770 to 1790—are fully equal in quality of texture to the earlier ones. Mechlin lace of the last half of the eighteenth century was an ideal trimming by reason of its softness for the picturesque fichus, the big mob caps and voluminous cravats of the period. It was imported very largely into England, and had the doubtful honour of being the favourite lace of Queen Charlotte, whose taste in matters concerning dress was not, as a rule, unimpeachable. Mechlin continued to be made during the First Empire (Napoleon himself is said to have had a particular fancy for it), but its patterns became poor and trivial, the texture deteriorated and with the fall of the Empire its manufacture came to an end.

*Antwerp.*

Lace was made at Antwerp early in the seventeenth century, but of what class is uncertain. Savary in his "Dictionnaire Universel de Commerce" states that a tape-lace with brides was exported from Antwerp to the Spanish-Indies, but this trade must have ceased at an early date, for the solitary lace with which the name of the city can be definitely connected is the well-known bobbin-made potten-kant or pot-lace, which can be traced back to the middle of the seventeenth century. A portrait in the Plantin Museum at Antwerp, of Madame Goos, which was painted between 1665 and 1670, shows that lady wearing this lace with its curious pattern of two-handled pots with flowers or foliage. This design is said to have originated in a representation of the Virgin Mary and the Annunciation Lily which became gradually altered and debased until only the pot or jar—often scarcely recognisable as such—and something in the way of a flower or leaf form, remain. (See Plate 17, Fig. A.) But this is merely a legend; there is no lace in existence which substantiates the story in the smallest degree, nor any definite record of there ever having been one. Potten-kant is made on the pillow in one piece, and the ground is usually of the six-pointed star mesh, although occasionally other grounds, generally of an open, rather coarse type, replace the fond chant. The pattern is outlined with a thick, flat, shiny thread, the toilé is thin and loose, and in some of the better and finer lace the spaces in the pattern are filled with à jours which resemble the snowflake ground of fausse Valenciennes worked on a coarser scale. Even in its finest quality, however, potten-kant was a stout and reliable rather than a dainty lace. It was made extensively in the Béguin ages, and was much used

for trimming the large caps worn by the women of Antwerp and its vicinity to whom, no doubt, its strength and durability appealed.

On the same plate, 17C, is shown a specimen of a rather coarse type of peasant lace, which is usually vaguely designated as "Flemish." It will be noted that it is of the *fausse Valenciennes* style, and has the "cinq trous" ground.

#### *Holland.*

It seems rather unaccountable that Holland, a country immediately adjoining Flanders, should have lagged so far behind her neighbour in establishing a lace industry. Not until the middle of the seventeenth century is there any trustworthy record of lace having been made in Holland, although there is a piece of scalloped lace in the Victoria and Albert Museum which is catalogued as "Dutch point" of the sixteenth or seventeenth century, but this attribution must be regarded with some doubt. In 1667 or 1668 bobbin-lace certainly began to be made to some extent in Holland, and from this date the Dutch, who had hitherto worn but little lace, developed a great liking for it, and it is conspicuously in evidence in contemporary portraits. From the first, Dutch lace had a well-marked character of its own; it was no slavish copy of that of any other country, but was remarkable not only for the unusual solidity of its texture, but for the originality of its patterns, simple though they were. The most typical of the early Dutch laces has a peculiarly distinctive design made up of individual scroll forms arranged closely together so as to form an almost solid oval of irregular outline, a series of such ovals being worked along the lace and connected by a pillow-made ground mesh, often of the

"cinq-trous" mesh as in the example shown. Lace of this particular pattern is the one which, above all others, dealers know as "Dutch" lace (see Plate 17, Fig. B). The design varies occasionally, but its salient features remain unaltered, and as the lace is not beautiful by any means, it is difficult to account for its long-continued popularity. Probably, however, its wear-resisting qualities and the severe simplicity of its style were specially attractive to the thrifty, sober-minded Dutch people. Some years after bobbin-lace was first made in Holland, the country was invaded by Huguenot refugees; many of these settled at Amsterdam, and there established a lace-industry, the lace there produced being of the *fausse Valenciennes* type, for which the fine Haarlem flax thread was particularly suitable. A certain quantity of these fine laces were exported to England and Germany until the passing of the prohibition laws, but the trade was never carried on on a large scale as the Dutch required most of the lace for their own use, and the Amsterdam lace manufactory does not seem to have had a long life.

During the eighteenth century drawn-thread work on a muslin or cambric foundation was produced in Holland to some extent. It resembled the Danish Tönder lace (see Chapter VII), but was not so elaborate in pattern or so delicate in texture.

## CHAPTER VII

### GERMANY AND NORTHERN EUROPE

#### *Germany.*

**T**HE immediate forerunners of true needle-point lace, *lakis*, drawn-work and cut-work, were practised and brought to great perfection in Germany at an early date. In the exhaustive list of pattern-books given in Mrs. Palliser's "History of Lace," many German ones are included, but the majority do not appear to contain any patterns other than those for embroidery, pure and simple. The first German one in which anything akin to lace is definitely mentioned, is the "New Model Buch" of G. Strauben, published at St. Gall in 1593. This is really a reprint of the third book of a famous collection of patterns by Vicellio, of Venice, and contains a number of fine designs for cut-work (*ausgeschitnen Arbeit*). This book is in the library of the Victoria and Albert Museum. An earlier volume, however, which is printed in German, but published at Zurich, is that of Froschower, which has a cut on the title-page representing women working at lace-pillows. There are patterns for bobbin-lace included in this book, the age of which may be arrived at, in spite of the lack of a printed date, from a statement by the author that the art of lace-making was introduced into Germany from Italy in 1536, twenty-five years prior to the date

at which he was writing, which makes it obvious that his work must have been published about 1561. In this same year, according to an apparently well-founded story, the art of bobbin-lace-making was brought into the Saxon Hartz Mountains by one Barbara Etterlein, of Nüremburg. She had learnt it from Brabant refugees in the town, and when, on her marriage to a miner called Uttmann, of Annaberg, she settled in the latter place, she taught the work to the women and girls there, and eventually succeeded in establishing a regular industry. From Annaberg, it is said, bobbin lace-making spread over Germany, but it must be pointed out that this does not accord with Froschower's statement quoted above, that bobbin-lace was introduced from Italy into Germany in 1536. What Barbara Uttmann, in all probability, actually did, was to introduce lace-making in the Flemish style into this particular district and to establish it on a business footing. This she seems to have done successfully, for a very large number of persons were at one time employed in lace-making in the Erzgebirge. No doubt the fabric produced under the Uttmann tuition was what is now known as Nüremberg lace, which resembles that of Antwerp, and is much used for peasant's caps. The making of bobbin-lace in the Erzgebirge continued up to recent years, a variety of kinds being produced, including bobbin-laces made of white, unbleached and coloured threads, a black silk lace in the style of Chantilly, and some simple needle-points; but few of them are at all remarkable for quality of texture or beauty of design.

In travel-books and memoirs of the eighteenth century mention is not infrequently made of "Dresden lace." This was not true lace, but very fine drawn-

work on muslin. It was greatly admired in England during the middle years of the century, and both the Anti-Gallican Society and the Edinburgh Society offered prizes for the best imitations of "Dresden point." This so-called lace was very fashionable for ruffles, caps, and the aprons then worn by ladies at all times, save when full-dress was essential. Readers will recall the famous incident at the Bath Pump Room, when Beau Nash stripped the Duchess of Queensbury of the apron she was wearing contrary to the autocrat's regulations, and "threw it at one of the hinder benches among the ladies' women," remarking that "none but Abigails wore white aprons." Mrs. Palliser quotes this story from Goldsmith's *Life of Richard Nash*, with the additional statement that "the apron was of costliest point and cost 200 guineas," but this is not in the original text.

The laces made in Saxony during the eighteenth century were mainly of the torchon type, but there was also produced a coarse, strong tape-lace, called sometimes "eternelle."

When the Edict of Nantes was revoked in 1685, the Huguenots flying from France were welcomed in some, but not in all, the German cities. The Elector of Brandenburg, Frederick William, was among those who received the refugees hospitably and encouraged them to settle in Berlin. Their number included many skilled lace-workers, and the Elector was sufficiently shrewd to perceive the advantages that might accrue to the city through the new-comers. His foresight brought about its due reward, for within a few years there were no less than 400 lace factories flourishing in Berlin. The Elector of Brandenburg's example was followed by the Landgraf of Hesse, who encouraged and granted privileges to the French

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Protestants who established lace factories in various towns in the principality. It is understood that the laces made at all these Franco-German centres were of the Alençon type, but no definite trace of them remains, and German lace has long ceased to be of any special interest or importance.

### *Denmark.*

Lace-making has never been practised in Denmark on anything approaching a large scale, but at Schleswig some kind of a regular industry appears to have been established in the seventeenth century when laces of the Flemish type were made. At least so the story goes, but the lace on the shirts of Christian IV, preserved in the Museum at Rosenberg Castle, which is officially described as "Schleswig-lace," has nothing definitely in common with any distinctive kind of Flemish lace, having very broad, shallow scallops, and a confused vermicular pattern.

In 1647 lace-makers were brought from Westphalia to Tønder, in Schleswig, in order to improve the quality of the Danish fabric; again, in 1712, Brabant workers were imported for the same purpose, and under these teachers, bobbin-lace, in the style of Mechlin, seems to have been made. The industry was carried on until the early years of the nineteenth century, after which period it gradually dwindled away, although in 1840 there were still traces of it in existence. The later laces produced in Schleswig were mainly of the Lille type.

The "lace" for which Denmark is justly celebrated is the beautiful muslin-work which was produced during the greater part of the seventeenth century, and the whole of the eighteenth, chiefly at Tønder, but in other parts of the country as well. Similar "lace"

has been made in Saxony and Holland, and in recent times in the Philippines and South America, but that of Denmark is far finer and more intricate than any other. Its patterns are usually Renaissance in style, with graceful scrolls and bold conventional flowers arranged in a continuous waving design, and outlined with chain-stitching. The ground is a close *réseau*, formed by drawing out threads each way of the muslin and whipping over those remaining, and the spaces in the pattern are filled in partly with tiny diapers worked in satin-stitch, partly with the most delicate and elaborate of *à jours*. Sometimes the most important part of the design is left in the plain muslin, but as a rule it is filled in with darning-stitch or satin-stitch worked in a series of rows. The edge has broad scallops, which are cut into lesser scallops, and these are finished with very closely worked button-hole stitch. A characteristic piece of Tönderwork, as this "lace" is generally called, is given in Plate 16, Fig. *b*.

*Sweden.*

Very little is known of the history of lace-making in Sweden. Gold lace of some kind, probably a loosely woven gimp or braid, was made as early as the sixteenth century, and inventories—those mines of information for collectors—show that at about the same time cut-work began to be extensively used for trimming household linen. Indeed, this art has never ceased to be practised, and the writer possesses some long strips of linen (it is not clear what purpose they were meant to serve) ornamented with bands of drawn and cut-work, in old patterns, which are embroidered with early nineteenth-century dates in the neatest of cross-stitch figures. The strips are

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finished at one end with a deep, plaited fringe formed of threads frayed out of the linen. Work of this kind is still done in Sweden, but there is not much, if any, regular trade in it.

A coarse, loosely made bobbin-lace of the torchon type has been produced at Wadstena up to a recent date, and in Dalecarlia there is still made a strong lace with simple, formal patterns, which have not altered at all for the last couple of hundred years. This lace is locally much in request for cap trimmings.

### *Russia.*

The first lace factory in Russia was founded at Novgorod by Peter the Great on his return from Europe at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Silk bobbin-lace was made there, but its manufacture lasted but a short time, and no really fine lace has since been produced in Russia.

During the last two centuries, however, a variety of coarse bobbin-laces have been made by the peasants, especially in Eastern Russia, and although very loose in texture and of simple pattern they have often a charm of their own. One of the most distinctive of the laces has broad vandykes or scallops, and a vermiculated pattern formed of tape worked on the pillow, the spaces, which are few, being filled with a coarse, irregular réseau. In the Vologda district torchon lace is made, and both this and the tape-lace just described often have red or blue threads running through the pattern. All such laces are extensively used in Russia for trimming house-linen, although they seem somewhat too coarse and loosely made to be exactly ideal for the purpose.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

#### *Spain.*

**S**PAIN has never had any serious claim to a place among the chief lace-producing countries so far as thread-lace is concerned, but, from the beginning of the seventeenth century, it has had some celebrity for its gold and silver lace, that point d'Espagne so fashionable in France during the later years of the reign of Louis XIII and the earlier ones of that of his successor. Not that all the gold and silver lace known by this name was of Spanish origin ; much was imported from Italy, and some was made in France itself, but the commercial name for all was the same—point d'Espagne. Spain was her own best customer for these metallic laces, as a matter of fact ; they strongly appealed to the Spanish taste for the gorgeous, and were used in profusion for trimming not only clothes, furniture, coaches, beds and banners, but actually for the ornamentation of their sheets and their coffins !

It is said that bobbin-lace-making was learnt by the Spaniards from the Flemings during the occupation of the Netherlands by the former. This is rather open to doubt, but the gold and silver laces are bobbin-made. They are very loosely worked, and their patterns are much more straggling and confused than

those of the Italian laces of the same period, but they are handsome, and are sometimes rendered still more showy by the addition of embroidery in silks of brilliant colours. Such super-ornamented laces, however, are scarce. In 1623, so extravagant were his subjects in the matter of dress, that Philip III thought it advisable to follow the example of some of his royal contemporaries, and to issue edicts prohibiting the use of gold and silver lace, in the vain hope of checking his subjects' reckless expenditure on finery. Men were to wear only plain rabatos or falling collars without lace or cut-work; for women equally severe ruffs and cuffs were ordained, even the very minor luxury of starch being proscribed. The ban was temporarily suspended during the visit of Prince Charles of England and the Duke of Buckingham, when the "Spanish match" was in contemplation. Indeed, the Queen of Spain herself, hearing the Prince was short of clothes by reason of some lost luggage, sent him "for his convenience" as much richly laced linen as filled ten trunks.

Gold and silver lace continued to be made in Spain, chiefly at Barcelona, Valencia and Seville, up to the end of the eighteenth century, and at the last-named town until still later.

Another lace to which the name of Spanish point is applied, is one which is indistinguishable from the raised needle-points of Venice. It is certain that much Italian lace was imported into Spain for ecclesiastical purposes, and that, during the invasion of the country by Napoleon's troops, a considerable quantity came into their possession, and was sent to France as "Spanish lace." Again, at the dissolution of the monasteries in 1830, more of this church lace fell into secular hands, and finally came into the market as

“Spanish point.” No doubt the imported Italian laces were copied to some small extent in the convents, and there are specimens in existence which differ sufficiently—mainly in the pattern—from those whose Venetian origin is certain, to render it probable that they were actually made in Spain. But these are exceptional; the bulk of the raised “Spanish point,” so called, is undoubtedly Italian. The genuine Spanish product, inspired by the Venetian gros point, has an incoherent and crowded design, in which queer caterpillar-like objects, in high relief, are conspicuous, but although it is not to be compared with its Italian prototype for beauty, it is as interesting as it is rare.

Thread bobbin-laces were imported into Spain, chiefly from Flanders, although some came from France. An attempt was made to reduce these imports in 1667 by increasing the duty from 25 reales per lb. to 250 reales, with the inevitable result of an immediate development of a brisk and profitable smuggling trade, the lace being got into the country in many ingenious ways, much of it being landed at Cadiz in bales as mosquito-netting! In the eighteenth century thread-laces were made at Barcelona and elsewhere. They had uninteresting meagre patterns, a straight edge, and a peculiar réseau known as Spanish mesh, which is four-sided and has a sort of dot with a pin-hole in it at each crossing-point. Silk laces were also made in the same style, but the heavy, bold-patterned “Spanish” laces of black and white silk, so much used for mantillas, were mostly imported from Chantilly and Bayeux, until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when their manufacture was commenced in Catalonia and in other parts of Spain. At that period a Spanish lady usually wore a dress of bright-coloured satin, thick and rich of texture, the full skirt of which was

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trimmed with two deep flounces of black silk lace. Her mantilla was ordinarily of black silk, but when she attended a bull-fight, during the Easter celebrations and on other festive occasions, it was of white lace. According to Ford's "Handbook to Spain," a Spanish woman's mantilla is specially protected by law, and may not be seized for debt.

The fine-meshed ground of the Spanish-made silk laces is less durable than that of the laces of the same style produced in France specially for the Spanish market.

### *Portugal.*

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, and probably earlier, needle-point lace was made in Portugal, but to an inconsiderable extent and mainly by private workers, and in the convents, there being no organised industry. What were chiefly produced seem to have been copies of Venetian points, flat and raised, but in Mrs. Hungerford Pollen's "Seven Centuries of Lace" a curious silk needle-lace is illustrated as "probably Portuguese." The pattern of this lace is a stiff one of formal sprigs and queer archaic birds; it has a well-marked cordonnet formed of a thick thread covered with buttonhole-stitch and a ground of hexagonal but rather irregular meshes.

The drastic sumptuary laws enacted in Portugal in 1749 seem to have temporarily extinguished lace-making, such as it was, throughout the country, but after the great earthquake of six years later, the Marquis de Pombal was permitted to start a bobbin-lace manufactory to give employment to those who had suffered through the disaster. Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, in his "Memoirs," mentions a visit to this establishment where the laces made were, in all

probability, thread-laces of simple pattern which, together with silk laces in the style of French blonde, and an imitation of them in darning on machine-made net, are produced in various parts of Portugal up to this day.

At one time Lisbon laces were made largely for the South American market, quantities being regularly exported from Cadiz, but now the principal lace-producing district is north of Lisbon, at Peniche, in Estremadura, where the majority of the women work at the pillow from a very early age.

During the early part of the nineteenth century the Portuguese nuns made lace of thread—so called—spun from the fibre of the aloe. Such lace is light and open and pretty enough in its way. But the aloe-thread, although tough and wiry, has one great drawback—the lace made from it cannot be washed satisfactorily. Aloe-fibre lace is still, or was until quite recently, made in the Philippine Islands.

## CHAPTER IX

### ENGLAND AND IRELAND

*England : Needle-point.*

**D**URING the last half of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth, drawn-and-cut-work—usually classed together under the latter name—were as much in favour in England as in Italy, France, and other Continental countries. It was used for the adornment of all kinds of wearing apparel, from the shirts and smocks of the laity to the surplices of the clergy, and it was applied lavishly to household linen. In “Point and Pillow Lace,” by A.M.S., an interesting description is given of some Elizabethan bed-linen at Shottery in Warwickshire, which belongs to descendants of the family of Hathaway, of which Shakespeare’s wife was a member. The narrow breadths of linen that form the sheet are joined with a band of cut-work (seaming-lace) about an inch and a half wide ; the bolster-case has a similar but broader one. These pieces are presumably of English make, but it is certain that nine-tenths of the immense quantity of cut-work referred to in the wardrobe accounts, inventories, and lists of gifts to the reigning sovereign, was imported, as was the greater part of the “bone-lace, purles, and passaments” which are named over and over again in these old documents. Purles, by the way, was the name

originally used for an edging of needle-point loops (syn. picots), but it seems to have come to be applied to needle-laces generally, whence, possibly, the Scottish term for lace purlin, or pearlin, is derived.

Mary I made an attempt to curb her subjects' over-large expenditure on foreign laces by the time-honoured method of passing sumptuary laws. These prohibited the wearing of "ruffles made or wrought out of England, commonly called cut-work," by anyone under the degree of a baron, while "wreath-lace or passement lace of gold or silver, partlets or linen trimmed with purles of gold or silver, or white workes alias cut-workes, made beyond the sea," were strictly forbidden to any lady whose rank was below that of a knight's wife. Edicts of this kind continued to be issued periodically throughout the reigns of Queen Mary and her three successors on the English throne, but as in France, those who made the laws did not practise what they preached. Charles II, for example, who in 1661 issued a proclamation reaffirming the edict of his father prohibiting the import of "purles, cut-workes and bone-laces," himself bought, in that very same year, fourteen yards of Flanders lace at eighteen shillings a yard. Moreover, he granted to one John Eaton, a licence to import such quantities of lace "made beyond the seas as may be for the wear of the Queen, our dear Mother the Queen, our dear brother James, Duke of York," and other members of the Royal family. Naturally, the king's faithful subjects failed to see why they should not follow the example of their king, and trim their garments with the laces of Italy and Flanders, with or without leave, and they did so, with the kindly aid of the smugglers and their—

“ Five-and-twenty ponies  
 Trotting through the dark—  
 Brandy for the Parson,  
 'Baccy for the Clerk,  
 Laces for a lady, letters for a spy——”

Cut-work nearly, if not quite, equal to that of Continental origin was certainly made in England, but there were apparently very few professional workers, and the industry was carried on on too small a scale to be able to compete with the foreign import. There are, fortunately, still in existence samplers of cut-work patterns which show the high standard which the art had attained in England during the first half of the seventeenth century. The earliest sampler with cut-work patterns in the Victoria and Albert Museum bears the date 1643; that of the specimen illustrated in Plate 18 is 1648. The latter, which is in the writer's collection, has two fine geometrical patterns at the base in which the greater part of the linen ground has been cut away, only sufficient threads being left to support the first stitches of the separate sections of the pattern. In the design immediately above these two bands a rather larger number of threads have been allowed to remain; the hearts which are the conspicuous features of the pattern are worked in buttonhole-stitch with an edging of tiny picots, but the small crosses which fill the square spaces are executed in darning-stitch. Only a few threads, that is to say, about every other one of warp and weft, have been drawn out; those left are worked over with close buttonhole-stitch so as to form a square-meshed, heavy ground, similar to that often met with in Italian drawn-work of a rather earlier period. The pattern of acorns, worked by filling up certain meshes with little cross-stitches, is, however, characteristically

English. The date and two sets of initials, F.M. and W.S., are formed with needle-point braid or tape on a simple ground of buttonholed mesh.

A very curious and interesting seventeenth-century development of English needle-point, is exemplified in the lace picture in Plate 1. The foundation of one of these scarce and—to the collector—exceedingly desirable pieces, was made by stretching threads on linen so as to enclose a rectangular space, in which the design was built up, as it were, from the starting-points provided by the stretched threads with the usual looped stitches of needle-point lace. The subject of Plate 1 is the Judgment of Solomon, and the little panel, which only measures 7 inches by 5 inches is remarkable for the amount of raised and detached work in it. The canopy and curtains of the king's throne, the principal portions of the costumes (which are contemporary), the flowers and foliage, the dead child at Solomon's feet, and the dog emerging from a house in the top right-hand corner, are all raised from the body of the lace. The eyes of the persons represented are indicated by little black beads under needle-point eyelids, and seed-pearls are freely introduced on the costumes and hangings. The lace is very solid and firm of texture, and at a little distance the effect is almost that of an ivory carving.

A few collars of dentated needle-point lace, with patterns English in type, survive to show that such lace was actually made in this country, but not much seems to have been produced, and further than this the development of needle-point did not go in England, for hollie- or holy-point, although later in date, is simpler in every way than the vandyked collar-lace. It is true that some writers on the subject hold the opinion that the hollie-point used to trim baby's shirts

and caps in the eighteenth century is the same lace as that mentioned in inventories of two hundred years previously, but any proof of identity seems lacking. At any rate, the existing examples of hollie-point are all of the eighteenth century, and are, almost without exception, found on little shirts and caps as mentioned above, some of the most elaborate work being on christening sets. The caps, of very fine linen or cambric, have a round of hollie-point with some simple device such as a star or heart forming the centre of the crown, and frequently a strip of the same lace is inserted down the back. The earliest caps, however, have usually only the round in the crown. Strips of point, sometimes bearing dates, initials and even mottoes, are worked on the shoulders of the tiny shirts, and as a rule both caps and shirts are edged with fine, narrow lace of the *fausse Valenciennes* type. Plate 19 reproduces an interesting hollie-point sampler, from which a clear idea of what the lace is like may be obtained. The ground is yellowish linen, and the patterns of hollie-point, together with some pretty ones of cut-work, are worked into the spaces formed by cutting away round and square pieces of the linen. The patterns are chiefly for cap-crowns, and do not include the one most characteristic of hollie-point, which is used almost invariably for the insertions down the backs of the caps and on the shoulders of the christening shirts—that is, the tall lily in a pot. The sampler has the name of its worker, Ursula Slade, and the date 1728 worked in the right-hand square of the middle row of patterns.

The stitch employed in hollie-point is a buttonhole-stitch with a twist in it, the first row of loops being taken over a thread stretched from side to side of the pattern. The lace is always worked from left to

right, the thread being taken back to the starting-point on the completion of a row, and enclosed, as it were, in the next line of looped stitches. The pattern is produced by missing stitches so as to leave tiny holes in the close toilé. Caps and shirts ornamented with this delicate needle-point were evidently very generally in use during the first half of the eighteenth century, and probably later. As they are not at all scarce, few collectors find it difficult to obtain one or two good specimens.

## BOBBIN-LACE

*Devonshire.*

It is said that bobbin-lace-making was introduced into Devonshire by Flemish refugees from the persecutions of Alva in the Netherlands in 1568, but in sober truth nothing definite is known of the industry in this district until well into the seventeenth century. Lace was certainly first made at Honiton, and according to Mrs. Palliser, the earliest mention of this is by Thomas Westcote in his "View of Devonshire." He, writing about 1620, says that at Honiton "is made abundance of bone-lace, a pretty toye now greatly in request, and therefore the town may say with merry Martial :

"In praise for toyes such as this  
Honiton second to none is."

Early Honiton bobbin-lace was the finest ever made in England, and as has been said in the chapter on the laces of the Netherlands, has much in common with point d'Angleterre, the patterns of the English lace, however, are less well-defined and are characterised by curious worm-like convolutions of the toilé, which are never present in the Brussels designs (see Plate 20).

An interesting passage in Celia Fiennes's "Through England on a Side-saddle" records that at Honiton "they made the bone-lace in imitation of the Antwerp and Flanders lace, and, indeed, I think it as fine, only it will not wash so well, which must be ye fault of the thread." This was in the reign of William and Mary when Honiton lace was at its very best, but the quality of the thread has always been one of the weak points of English lace. No first-class flax thread has ever been spun in this country, and although that imported from Flanders into Devonshire was extremely costly, its price ranging from £70 to £90 per pound in the eighteenth century, it seems to have been inferior to that actually used for Flemish laces of the highest grade.

The fine Honiton laces of the Brussels type disappeared in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, and from that date up to about 1800 the history of the industry is a blank. Then Honiton appliqué was introduced. The oldest examples of this lace have patterns of tolerably graceful naturalistic sprays of flowers, worked on the pillow and applied to a net ground, at first bobbin-made, but afterwards machine-woven; but very shortly after this imitation ground was adopted a marked deterioration in the patterns set in. Never superlatively good, they became debased to an extraordinary degree as time went on, until they were nothing more than a confusion of meaningless and indescribable blobs, known to their workers by such appropriate names as frying-pans, bullocks' hearts, turkey-tails, and the like, interspersed with objects resembling caterpillars at frequent intervals. In 1845 or thereabouts the turkey-tails, frying-pans and the rest of the strange devices began to be made of a bobbin-made tape with

brides, sometimes picotées, connecting the sections of the pattern in lieu of the net foundation. These brides were generally made on the pillow, but occasionally were worked in with the needle. The best examples of this class of Honiton lace have certain portions, such as the petals of flowers, in relief and partly detached from the ground, a peculiarity which also distinguishes some of the earlier specimens of the Duchesse tape-lace of Brussels, which indeed resembles that of Honiton in other respects. Some improvement took place in the Devonshire lace towards the end of the nineteenth century; the designs were better drawn and the stitching finer and less slackly worked, but the thread used was poor, hence the texture of the lace has remained unsatisfactory. Still some nice lace has been produced of late years, and it is to be hoped that the efforts made to revive the industry may meet with increasing success.

Trolly-lace, although made in Devonshire, had nothing in common with the Honiton products. It was a coarse lace made with heavy bobbins, and its simple patterns were outlined with a heavy thread. The ground was the six-pointed star *réseau*, or *fond chant*, and the lace was worked round and round the pillow. The name was probably derived from the Flemish *trolle kant*; it had a certain amount of popularity in the eighteenth century, but its production, which was chiefly in the district round Exmouth, has long ceased in Devonshire, although a lace not dissimilar is still made in the Midlands.

*Bucks, Beds, and Northants.*

When bobbin-lace was actually first made in the English midland counties is a moot point. There is

a tradition that it was introduced by Queen Katherine of Aragon about 1531, at which date she was living in strict retirement at Ampthill, in Bedfordshire, pending the result of her appeal to the Pope with regard to her divorce by Henry VIII, but there is really nothing to confirm this rather wild story. Certainly there is a lace still made in the district which is known as Queen Katherine's lace, and a ground commonly employed is called kat-stitch, after, it is said, its inventor, the Queen herself. The pattern of Queen Katherine's lace, however, has nothing whatever of the sixteenth century in its style, and kat-stitch is the familiar Paris ground or *fond chant*. If Katherine of Aragon introduced any kind of work into the district, it was probably the black silk embroidery on white linen which she undoubtedly brought with her from Spain. Black-work is described in the *Embroidery* section of this volume, and a portion of a hood so embroidered is illustrated in Plate 27. The hood, which is of the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth or the beginning of that of James I, is edged with a narrow bobbin-lace made of black silk and white thread. This is indubitably contemporary with the hood and possibly of English origin.

Another theory as to the introduction of bobbin-lace-making into the Midlands, is that it came with the Flemish refugees of 1563-8, some of whom are believed to have come from Mechlin, and settling in various villages in the three counties—Bucks, Beds, and Northants—to have taught their special art to the women and girls therein. After the Massacre of St. Bartholomew in 1572, the Flemings are said to have been joined by French refugees, mainly from the Lille district, who, in their turn, introduced the characteristic lace of their native place. There was

a third influx of immigrants following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, the majority of these coming from Burgundy and Normandy, and the lace-workers among them naturally gravitated to the towns and villages where those of their own country and their own trade had already found shelter. No doubt the later settlers exercised a very great influence on the English lace industry even if they were not actually responsible for its beginning, but it must be admitted that the early history of lace-making in the Midlands is vague and hazy in the extreme.

An interesting account is given in Mr. Thomas Wright's "Romance of the Lace Pillow," of the efforts made by the proprietors of lace factories in the three counties to prevent the reduction of the duty on imported lace. A petition to Parliament was drawn up in 1815, which after stating the objections to the proposed legislation, supplicated that the House "would not suffer to pass into law a Bill which must endanger the security of this interesting and staple industry which has given employment for the period of one hundred and fifty years to above 150,000 persons." This statement seems to put the commencement of the lace industry at about 1665, but it is possible, indeed probable, that there was something of the sort in existence, although perhaps only on a very small scale, some time prior to this date. It is most likely that the first bobbin-laces made were of the Lille type, but Mrs. Palliser states that she received some laces distinctively Flemish in style from a Mrs. Bell, of Newport Pagnell, who could trace their history back to 1780 when they were bequeathed to Mrs. Bell's father by a relative who had been in the lace trade. The author of the "History of Lace" seems

to have regarded this as some proof that the earliest Bucks lace was of the Mechlin type, but a good many years lie between 1665 and 1780, and, moreover, nothing is more probable than that English workers of the eighteenth century should copy specimens of Flemish or of any other kind of fashionable foreign lace. In fact, copies of Mechlin lace were actually produced with some success in North Bucks as late as the first years of the nineteenth century.

The oldest lace definitely known to have been made in the Midlands is that mis-named—for it is a bobbin-lace—Bucks point (see Plate 20, Fig. *b*). This has a Lille ground, often powdered with square dots, an edge nearly, but not quite, as straight as that characterising the French lace, and patterns which although not entirely without traces of Flemish influence, have their spaces filled with *à jours* in the style of Lille. The pattern is outlined with the wide, flat, silky-looking thread known as *gimp* by Midlands lace-workers. In 1752 the Anti-Gallican Society, which had been founded two years previously, awarded its first prize to a Newport Pagnell worker for fine bobbin-lace, and in 1761 the lace-makers of Bucks presented the young king, George III, with a pair of ruffles, probably of Bucks point. The manufacture of this lace was not confined to Buckinghamshire, but was produced in the adjacent counties as well. Indeed, there was no lace the making of which could be truthfully said to be confined to Bucks, Beds, or Northants, although each county had its special variant or variants. The majority show the influence of Lille in a more or less marked degree, but the *réseaux* differ considerably, both the *fond chant* and the Mechlin ground being employed as well as the *fond clair* of Lille, more than one style of mesh often appearing in

the same piece of lace. Baby-lace, much used for trimming infants' clothes a hundred years ago, was produced in immense quantities in the Midlands. It was a narrow, rather insignificant, but neat and delicate lace with the very simplest of patterns, often nothing more than a sprinkling of dots on a Lille ground and a tiny edging (see Plate 20, Fig. *a*). For the frills of babies' caps it was particularly in favour, and little shaped crowns to match were made to go with it. It continued to be produced until about 1860.

A small quantity of Midlands lace of various kinds, the description of some of which reads oddly enough, was shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Elizabeth Frewen, of Marlow, Bucks, sent collars, cuffs and lappets "made by hand on the pillow, in which an admixture of silk with the thread greatly improves the appearance of the lace." G. Hurst, of High Street, Bedford, showed "Pillow-lace with glass introduced into the figures"! From Thomas Lester, also of Bedford, came "an improved lace fall-piece to avoid joining at the corners," and S. Vincent, of Turvey, near Olney, exhibited names and addresses in lace letters. Soon after the year of the Great Exhibition Maltese lace began to be made in Buckinghamshire, and has continued to be produced, although only to a limited extent, ever since. The patterns of Bucks Maltese differs in some degree from its prototype. The cross formed of four little ovals or wheat-grains, which is almost invariably introduced in the Maltese patterns, is rarely found in the English-made lace, and the ovals when used otherwise, as they frequently are, are generally square, not pointed, at the ends. The edge of the Bucks lace is less sharply scalloped, and occasional signs of the influence of the old Bucks "point" is noticeable in the patterns.

Blonde in both black and white silk was made in the Midlands from 1860 to 1870; the heavy French lace called Cluny has been also copied successfully, and between 1875 and 1885 the fashion for the woollen lace known as Yak lace brought temporary prosperity to the workers of the three counties, while torchon lace of various qualities has been largely produced during the last quarter of a century.

*Suffolk.*

In Suffolk bobbin-laces of simple patterns, mainly reminiscent of those of Lille, were made. They had much in common with the laces of Bucks, Beds and Northants, but their réseaux were of a more open type and the quality generally inferior. A coarse lace of coloured worsted, made with very large wooden bobbins, was also produced in this country.

*Essex.*

Very little bobbin-lace appears to have been made in Essex, but at Coggeshall tambour-lace was first worked, as a result, it is said, of the instructions of a French émigré who settled there sometime in the early years of the nineteenth century. The ground of tambour-lace was machine-net on which the pattern was worked in chain-stitch by means of a tambour-hook, a little implement like a very fine crochet-hook with a short handle, the net being tightly stretched on a frame. Coggeshall lace was represented in the Great Exhibition of 1851 by a "dress with two flounces, a fall, a berthé, and a lappet in imitation of Brussels point in tambour-work," which were displayed by Jonas Rolph. Tambour-lace is still made at Coggeshall.

*Wilts.*

Bobbin-laces of the Midlands type, but simpler and coarser, were made at Malmesbury, Downton and elsewhere, but only at Downton is the industry still carried on.

*Hants.*

The only Hampshire lace manufacture of which any trace remains is that of the Isle of Wight. In the past, bobbin-lace of some kind was made in the island, but never to a great extent, and what is known under the name of Isle of Wight lace has a machine-net ground on which the pattern is outlined in running-stitch and filled in with simple à jours. The industry was encouraged by Queen Victoria, who was an admirer of the lace, but even twenty years ago there were but few workers left.

## IRELAND

Both needle-point and bobbin-laces were made in Ireland before the middle of the eighteenth century, but never, apparently, on a commercial scale. The Dublin Society, a patriotic association, the avowed object of which was the encouragement of Irish arts and industries, as early as 1743 offered prizes for the best bone-lace and needle-point made in the city, and that year the chief prize of £10 was awarded to one Robert Baker for his ruffles of needle-point in imitation of Brussels lace. Lady Arabella Denny, working in connection with the Dublin Society, did good service in introducing lace-making into the Dublin work-houses, especially among the children there, in recognition of which the freedom of the City of Dublin was conferred on her in 1765. Prizes for lace of home

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manufacture continued to be given by the Dublin Society, with apparently satisfactory results, up to about 1786, and as thread imported from Hamburg was employed, the lace produced should have been of good quality and durable. Yet it has disappeared as completely as if it had never existed.

### *Carrick-ma-cross.*

There is no record of any lace, either needle-point or bobbin, having been made in Ireland between 1780 or 1790 and 1820, in which year Carrick-ma-cross appliqué, which it is customary to include among laces, was first produced. In this, the pattern is cut out of very fine cambric, applied to net and worked up with needle-point fillings. A rather later variety of this lace is Carrick-ma-cross "guipure," in which the cambric pattern has no net ground, but is held together with needle-point brides. These laces are often very pretty when new, but as the edge of the cambric pattern is merely whipped lightly over, not buttonhole-stitched, they do not stand washing with impunity. Both the appliqué and the "guipure" are still made, chiefly in the southern districts of the county Monaghan.

### *Limerick.*

About 1829 tambour-lace began to be made in Limerick. It was introduced from England, but whether from Manchester, where the same style of work was already being made by machinery as well as by hand, or from Coggeshall, in Essex, the original home of the industry, is a question on which opinions differ. The process of working the lace is as follows: the machine-woven net is stretched on a tambour-frame, which consists of two wooden hoops covered

with strips of some soft stuff such as flannel and differing slightly in diameter. The net is spread smoothly on the smaller hoop and the larger one slipped over it, so that the net is tightly strained between the two. The pattern is sometimes sketched on the net, but as it is, as a rule, fairly simple, most workers find the drawing placed in front of them a sufficient guide. Needle-point *à jours* are introduced in some specimens, as in the one shown in Plate 21, but often the entire work is executed with the tambour-hook. Flax thread, cotton and an untwisted shiny silk are all employed for the work. Unfortunately tambour-lace can be accurately copied by machinery, and that such imitations were to be had quite early in the nineteenth century, is proved by a passage in a letter of Miss Edgeworth's, dated 1810: "I have had," she writes, "a most agreeable letter from my darling old Mrs. Clifford; she sent me a curiosity—a worked muslin cap that cost 6*d.*, done in tambour-stitch by a steam-engine."

Run-lace was produced at Limerick a little later than that worked with the tambour-hook. The pattern is outlined with close running-stitches and filled in, partly with the same stitches, partly with *à jours*. Both kinds of lace vary greatly in quality; some specimens—and there are too many of these—have stiff, attenuated patterns worked in coarse cotton, *à jours* being entirely absent, while others have graceful, fairly elaborate yet uncrowded designs executed with fine flax thread, the *à jours* in these better-class examples being often very delicate and pretty.

Laces similar to those identified with Limerick were made eventually in many parts of England as well as on the Continent, by both trade and private workers. They are practically indistinguishable, except

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that those in the pattern of which the shamrock appears may be safely concluded to be of Irish origin.

*Youghal.*

The handsomest and most modern Irish lace is Youghal point. This had its origin in a piece of Italian needle-point, which finding its way in 1846 to the Presentation Convent at Youghal, Co. Cork, was there carefully studied and eventually copied by the Mother Superior, who passed on the knowledge she had thus gained to the pupils of the convent school. In course of time, reproductions of Venetian rose and flat-points were made at Youghal, Kenmare, New Ross, and elsewhere, but of late years Irish crochet has been the staple industry of the districts where these five laces were produced, and the output of the latter is now very small indeed.

## CHAPTER X

### LACE BOBBINS

**T**HE very earliest bobbins used in the making of pillow lace were the small pieces of lead already mentioned in the chapter on the development of lace, but these were soon replaced by wooden sticks, probably roughly cut with a knife at first, but later turned in a lathe after the fashion of the very plain and practical bobbins which are in use in Italy up to the present day. But when pillow-lace was first introduced into England, it is said that the bones of sheep's-trotters served as bobbins, and that it was from them that the name bone-lace arose, and not from the custom of using fish-bones in lieu of pins, by reason of the scarcity and high price of the latter. Be this as it may, the first bobbins actually and indisputably known to be employed making lace in England, whether in the South-west or the Midlands, were of wood. Those of Buckinghamshire and the adjoining counties were small, somewhat of the Flemish type and quite without any sign of the exuberant decoration which, a little later, was to render the bobbins of the English Midlands unique among those of all countries. These light-weight bobbins were used in making Bucks "point," and it was not until coarser laces began to supersede the latter that the wood and bone bobbins with their wonderful variety of ornament

in the way of staining, carving, turning and inlaying, and their gay bunches of "spangles" were evolved. It is a very curious fact, indeed, that England, which has never occupied a place in the first line of lace-making countries, should have the most elaborate and distinctive bobbins in the world, beside which the plain, often almost clumsy, bobbins, as much alike as peas in a pod, of the Continental lace districts seem extremely uninteresting. The latter are simply the implements of a trade, and have none of the individuality of the English bobbins which are often records, not only of events in their owners' lives, but of all kinds of public ones, from coronations to executions, and Royal weddings to elections.

The small, plain, Bucks point bobbin was followed in chronological order by the longer bobbin, also of wood, with the bunch of beads at the lower end. These, which are generally called "jingles" by the uninitiated, although their correct but less obvious name is "spangles," are said to have been added for the sake of their weight, but it is probable that they were intended as much for ornament as for any practical purpose. Jingles, or gingles, as the word is usually spelt by the lace-workers, is the name applied to the loose pewter rings on those bobbins which carry the heavy gimp or trolly-thread that outlines the lace pattern. Many different kinds of wood, from pear and apple to oak, are used for these bobbins and their decoration varies in a surprising manner, it being, indeed, almost impossible to find two Midlands bobbins, whether of wood or bone, even in a collection of several thousands, which are precisely alike. Mr. Wright in the interesting and exhaustive chapter on bobbins in "The Romance of the Lace Pillow" gives a list of the local names by which wooden bobbins are

distinguished according to their special type of ornament. *Bitted* bobbins are of dark wood inlaid with slips of light-coloured wood; *tigers* have rings of pewter let into them; *leopards* are dotted with tiny pegs of the same metal, and *butterflies* are adorned with wing-shaped bits of it. Inscriptions are not very often found on wooden bobbins, and when they exist they are usually short. The letters are formed of a series of little holes burnt in with a red-hot wire and filled with red or blue pigment. A few wooden bobbins are decorated with minute coloured beads strung on brass wire and wreathed round the bobbin in which a shallow, spiral groove has been cut to receive them, but these are exceptional, and it is on the bone bobbin, introduced a little later than that of wood, that so much skill and pains has been lavished. Some of these are carved in a single or double spiral twist or with wide, encircling bands alternating with incised and stained patterns; others are inlaid with pieces of bone dyed brown or green and a very large number are ornamented with brass wire let into grooves and often strung with beads. Besides these, there are bobbins piqué with brass, pewter or copper, and—especially attractive to collectors—those familiarly known as church-window bobbins which have “Gothic” apertures within which are little bone balls or miniature bobbins. These slip up and down but cannot be removed; a device in ornament which is frequently seen in Chinese ivory carvings.

Among the most interesting of all the many varieties of bobbins peculiar to the lace-making districts of the Midlands, are the inscribed ones. Of these, the commonest bear merely the Christian name or the initials of its owner or her sweetheart, burnt in along the shank of the bobbin; the most ambitiously orna-

mented have mottoes, proverbs, lovers' soft nothings, or inscriptions referring to topics of the time whose meaning is often lost, and between these two extremes of simplicity and elaboration are many gradations. Here is a list of examples :

For Mary (Jane, Kate or whatever the girl's name may have been).

Lovely Susan (or other name).

Let no false lover win my Heart.

Do you love me? Yes.

Love, buy the Ring.

If I love the boys that is nothing to nobody.

Marry me quick and love me for ever.

To me, my dear, you may come near.

My love is at a distance but always in my mind.

As may be inferred, most of the bobbins with affectionate inscriptions were the gifts of lovers, and in many cases the work of their hands.

The commemorative class of bobbins have such legends as "Osborn for Ever" (John Osborn was returned as M.P. for Bedfordshire in 1806 and again in 1818); "Queen Caroline" and "Waterloo." The executions of local murderers are recorded on bobbins; "Joseph Castle, hanged 1860" is the inscription on the ones made in considerable numbers at the time of the event, and in connection with this Mr. Wright relates that the friends of Castle's wife, who was the victim, were so rejoiced that righteous retribution had overtaken her murderer, that they gave a ball at Luton on the night of his execution and presented each guest with an inscribed bobbin as a memento of the occasion!

The lettering on the bobbins is usually burnt in with a red-hot skewer or piece of wire, pigment being rubbed into the holes, but sometimes it is traced with

little pegs of pewter or brass. Capital letters are always used and the two colours—red and blue—generally alternate.

The spangles attached to the end of the bobbin consist of nine beads (at least that is the orthodox number, but the rule is not very strictly observed), strung on a loop of thin brass wire. There should be two large, ornamental beads at the top; three smaller and comparatively plain ones on either side, and an extra big and gorgeous one at the bottom. The most important beads are often handsome old Venetian glass ones, but beads of cornelian, amber, coral and gold and silver lustre-ware are sometimes introduced, and not at all infrequently the bottom bead is replaced by something entirely different. A quaint old-fashioned button—according to tradition it should be from the sweetheart's Sunday waistcoat—a silver coin, sometimes an old one such as an Elizabethan sixpence or shilling; a lace-dealer's token; or an old pinchbeck seal; such things as these may be found among the spangles of a Bedfordshire bobbin. Besides wood and bone, other materials, including glass, brass and pewter, have been used for bobbins in the Midlands, but eccentricities of this sort can only be regarded as freaks, which in some instances, it is to be feared, have been specially made for the collecting market!

The difference between the lace-bobbins of the Midlands and those of Devonshire, is so great that it is hard to believe that they belong to the same country. Those used in Honiton lace-making are invariably made of wood, chiefly that of the olive or the spindle-tree, are very light in weight, slightly pointed at one end and have a satin-smooth surface. They have no spangles, and although a good many are decorated,

the practice is not so general as in Bucks, Beds, and Northants, and when there is any ornamentation it has no resemblance to that of the bobbins of the Midlands. The Devonshire method is to incise patterns, generally rings of checker-work, stars, chevrons, and little conventional leaves, in the wood and to fill the lines, which are very shallow, with black or red pigment. Initials and dates are occasionally added, and in the Beer district the bobbins are sometimes distinguished by more ambitious designs in which ships, anchors, and even mermaids, are included.

At Downton, near Salisbury, bobbins of the Devonshire type, but shorter and thicker, are employed. They are frequently decorated with very crude patterns, incised and coloured, or with a brown mottling produced by staining with aqua-fortis. Honiton bobbins mottled in this way are met with now and then.

Although the whole range of foreign bobbins can show nothing so interesting or so varied as those of England, some have their attractive points. The oldest of the bobbins used on the long, cylindrical pillows of Peniche in Portugal, are of ivory—not bone, be it noted—often delightfully mellowed by time and long usage, or the dark, curiously-grained Brazil-wood, and form most desirable items in a collection. These old Peniche bobbins vary considerably in shape but the majority have a slightly flattened or elongated knob at the end. The bobbins used for modern Peniche lace are of white wood, and are finished with a large round ball. Spanish bobbins, both old and modern, resemble the later Portuguese, but are of darker wood.

Very slender, delicate bobbins were, and are still,

employed for the laces of Brussels. They are made of dark, polished wood and are prettily turned, the details varying considerably, but the result being always well-balanced and graceful. The majority of Flemish bobbins are small and light in weight, but are plainer and less dainty than those of Brussels.

Bobbins of various types are used in the Auvergne, ranging from big, fat ones with very long thick necks, and flattened knobs at the ends, to little bone ones with shields or "noquettes" of horn whose purpose is to keep the thread clean. This shield is also adopted in Normandy, but the Norman bobbin, which is of white wood, is straight and without a neck, and the shield is a cylinder of thin brown wood. This particular kind of bobbin carries a great quantity of thread.

Valenciennes bobbins are wooden, small, light, and as severely plain as the majority of Continental bobbins, but they are ornamental compared with the straight sticks, roughly trimmed with a knife, with which the coarse Torchon laces of the Russian province of Vologda are made. On the other hand, for the small quantity of pillow-lace produced in Denmark, there are used very smart wood bobbins with prettily turned shanks and ball ends surrounded by grooves into which rings of gay-coloured beads are fitted.

In Plate 22 are illustrated examples of some of the English and foreign bobbins described in this chapter. No. 1 is Flemish (?); 2 Devon, dated 1781, red and black pattern; 3 Auvergne, bone with horn guard; 4 Devon, red and black patterns; 5 Portugal, ivory; 6 Midlands, inscribed "If I love the boys that is nothing to nobody"; 7 Portugal, dark brown wood; 8 Midlands, dark wood inlaid holly; 9 Malta; 10 Midlands, bone inlaid tin; 11 Malta; 12

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Midlands, dark wood inlaid tin ; 13 Denmark, with coloured beads ; 14 Midlands, bone wound with brass wire ; 15 Brussels, dark wood ; 16 Wiltshire, light wood with dark acid stains ; 17 Valenciennes, dark wood.

## CHAPTER XI

### LACE IN RELATION TO COSTUME

**T**HE manner in which lace has been applied to the adornment of the dress of both men and women, has already received a certain amount of notice in the preceding chapters, but it is proposed to deal with the subject, always an interesting one, rather more in detail here, and to carry the record of fashion in lace-wearing down to a later date.

Something has been said, in the second chapter, of the lavish use of cut-work and early needle-point lace for the ruffs which were worn, in various styles, from the middle of the sixteenth century to the end of the reign of James I. The vast fluted ruff of the time of Elizabeth, which made its wearer's head look as if served up on a charger, took no less than twenty-five yards of lace to edge its many plaits, and according to that energetic railer, Philip Stubbes, whose "Anatomie of Abuses" was published in 1583, such ruffs which he regarded as inventions of "the devill in the fulnesse of his malice," were "clogged with gold, silver or silk lace of stately price, wrought all over with needle-worke; speckeled and sparkeled here and there with the sunne, moone and starres, and many other antiques rare to behold. Some are wrought with open-work down to the middle of the ruff and further, some with close-worke, some with purled lace, so closed and other

gew-gawes so fastened as the ruff is the least part of itself." The ruff seems to have aroused a most extraordinary degree of ire in the breasts of the puritanical writers and preachers of the time. John King, Bishop of London from 1611 to 1621, was particularly venomous in his attacks on it: "Fashion has brought in deep ruffs and shallow ruffs," he said in one of his sermons, "thick ruffs and thin ruffs and double ruffs. . . . When the Judge of Quick and Dead shall appear He will not know those who have so defaced the fashion He hath created"! And yet there were then, and have been since, many far more objectionable fashions than that of the ruff. [The Medicis, or open ruff, which stood out behind the head like a large, open fan, and tapered to the front of the low-cut bodice, was far more becoming to the average woman than its predecessor the "cart-wheel," which men continued to wear,] and must have been far more comfortable, especially in hot weather, to which a circular ruff of ample proportions, well-stiffened with—to quote the fiery Stubbes again—"that devill's liquor, sterche," just introduced, does not seem exactly suited. These widespreading ruffs were made chiefly of geometrical needlepoint, and they were held up by supportasses or underproppers, made of wire wound round with gold or silver thread, or silk.

[To the ruff succeeded the col rabato, the lace-edged falling-collar which was adopted by both sexes. In the case of men, the collar, which was trimmed with the broad-scalloped "collar-lace" described earlier in this book, was sewn on the very full shirt of fine holland which came into vogue in the reign of Charles I. Turned back cuffs corresponding with the collar were often attached to the wristbands of the voluminous sleeves of the shirts. The falling-collar continued in

### LACE IN RELATION TO COSTUME    III

fashion, with some variations of shape and size, until the arrival of the periwig with the Restoration, when it was superseded by the cravat which was to have such a long reign, the straight lace berthe at the same time replacing the collar in the case of ladies. The earliest cravats were of fine linen or cambric with ends of heavy Venetian lace sewn plainly to the ends without any gathering. The lace was extremely expensive, the cravat so trimmed, which the Duke of York, afterwards James II, wore on his wedding day, costing £36 10s. In 1692 the formal cravat was abandoned in favour of the Steinkirk which derived its name from the battle in which William of Orange was defeated by the French under the Maréchal de Luxembourg. On this famous occasion the French were surprised, and the officers of the crack cavalry regiments, the pick of the nobles of France, dressing in haste at the sound of the alarm, did not wait to tie their cravats properly, and rode to victory with them half loose and their ends flying in the wind. After this the carelessly twisted "Steinkirk" became the rage for both men and women's wear, and so far as the former were concerned, the fashion lasted until well into the eighteenth century. Steinkirks were made of gauze or muslin with frills of a fine, soft lace such as Mechlin at the ends, one of which was drawn through a slit like an elongated buttonhole at the left side of the coat.

A dainty accessory to the dress of a lady, which made its first appearance in 1671, and has come into fashion over and over again since, was the lace pelerine. This is said by different authorities to derive its name from (1) pélerin, a pilgrim; (2) pelured, meaning be-furred; (3) palatine, because it was evolved by the young Princess Palatine who, when she came to

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Paris to be married in 1671, was so shocked at the low-cut bodices of her new French gowns made à la mode, that she had little pointed capes of lace made to hide their deficiencies.

Ladies' under-garments were profusely trimmed with lace in the seventeenth century, especially after the passing of the Commonwealth. It will be remembered how Mr. Pepys, walking in Whitehall Gardens on May 21st, 1662, saw hanging in the Priory Garden "the finest smockes and linnen petticoats of my Lady Castlemaine's laced with rich lace at the bottom, that ever I saw, and it did me good to look at them." Besides underlinen, handkerchiefs, whisks—a whisk was a neckerchief, Mrs. Pepys bought "a noble one"—caps and coifs, aprons and pinders were extensively ornamented with lace, generally Flemish. Pinders were the lace streamers attached to the head-dress, which later came to be known as lappets, these, in the reign of Charles II, being usually pinned up into loops, whence their name is believed to have arisen. According to Fairholt, however, a bib-apron was also called a pinner.

In 1680 the fontange came into fashion. The story goes that the Duchesse de Fontange, Madame de Montespan's successor in the affections of Louis XIV, was one day hunting with the King and a party of courtiers, when her hat blew away. To keep her hair in order she tied a ribbon, a garter or a handkerchief (the various versions of the tale do not agree on this point) round her head so that the ends stood up in front. The effect of this improvised headgear was said to be charming, and a few days after the date of the hunting-party, every woman with any pretence to be considered fashionable had a head-dress à la Fontange. At first this was entirely of ribbon and comparatively simple, but in the course of the ten years

it was in vogue it gradually developed into an erection half-a-yard high composed of silk, tiffany, ribbon, buckram and fluted lace—the commode in fact of the reigns of William and Mary, and Queen Anne. In the portrait by Nicolas de Largillière (National Portrait Gallery) of the Old Pretender and his sister, the little princess's round, childish face is surmounted by a tall commode of point d'Alençon, matching her petticoat and ruffles. To the commode were often attached the pinnars of an earlier date, and these under their new name of lappets remained in vogue long after the disfiguring tower had been replaced by a most reasonable style of head-dress. By the "heads" of lace, so frequently referred to in eighteenth century letters and memoirs, a set—probably two pairs—of lappets seem to have been meant. It seems to have been the strange custom in the eighteenth century to deck the dead for burial in their finest lace; the actress, Ann Oldfield, for instance, who died in 1730, was placed in her coffin wearing "a fine Brussels lace head, a Holland shift with a tucker of double ruffles and a pair of new kid gloves." And in 1763 a young lady was buried in her wedding clothes, which included a "fine point lappet head" (Mrs. Palliser's "History of Lace").

Lappets continued to be worn, looped up in ordinary full dress, and flowing in Court dress, practically throughout the whole of the eighteenth century, and as everybody knows in the latter costume they have survived up to the present day. A plate in Heideloff's "Gallery of Fashion" for 1798 shows a lady wearing the enormous court hoop which was orthodox until George IV came to the throne and played the part of dress-reformer—a fact which may be placed to his credit. A flounce of Valenciennes lace trims the

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aforesaid lady's satin petticoat ; lappets of the same fall from the immensely high head-dress of ostrich feathers ; lace edges the pocket-holes and the top of the low bodice, and the sleeves are finished with ruffles, although these latter are of modest proportions compared to those in fashion some years previously when the wide, drooping frills called engageantes were the mode. It is said, by the way, that these voluminous ruffles were convenient aids to the passing of surreptitious letters, whether billets doux or the secret missives of Jacobite plotters. In the *Lady's Magazine* for 1770 there is a print of " Lady in Full Dress," who is wearing these in their most exaggerated form with triple tiers of ruffles hanging very low. Her hooped skirt is trimmed with a festooned flounce of lace, and the front of the long-waisted pointed bodice is crossed with rows of narrow lace frills.

The dress apron (as distinguished from that intended for practical use) was more or less in fashion from the sixteenth century down to the reign of Queen Victoria, its last appearance being in the form of the " tennis " and " four o'clock tea " aprons of 1875-1880. Undoubtedly the most beautiful of all aprons were those long and wide ones that entirely covered the front of the skirt, and were made entirely of bands of cut-work and dentated, geometrical patterned lace. It was this class of apron, no doubt, that Stephen Gossons had in his mind's eye when in his " Pleasant Quippes for New Fangled Up-start Gentlewomen," published in 1596, he penned the lines.—

" These Aprons white of finest thread  
So choicely tied, so dearly bought,  
So finely fringed, so nicely spread,  
So quaintlie cut, so richly wrought ;  
Were they in work to save their cotes  
They need not cost so many grotes."

At the end of the seventeenth century aprons made entirely of lace, often point d'Alençon, or of very fine muslin bordered with deep lace frills, came into fashion, and continued to be worn throughout the first decade or so of the eighteenth century. They were followed by short aprons of embroidered silk or satin which were trimmed with gold or silver bobbin-lace or with fringe, but never with thread lace.

Towards the end of the century lace aprons re-appeared, but they were before long discarded in favour by those of soft white muslin ornamented with drawn-thread work and white satin-stitch embroidery. About this time, indeed, lace went generally out of favour in England, while in France it practically disappeared at the time of the Revolution. The interesting series of fashion-plates, "Costumes Parisiens," published in Paris during the Directory and the Consulate gives proof of this, for during the first years of the period covered, lace is seen to be almost entirely confined to the narrow edgings of close-fitting caps, the clinging, scant gowns being practically without any trimming. In the Year 6 of the Republican Calendar, however, veils "à l'Iphigénie," with wide lace at the hem, and capes bordered with lace frills, made their appearance; twelve months later, the lace frills of the cap became so absurdly deep as nearly to conceal the face of the wearer, and by the Year 10, the citoyennes, abandoning their Republican severity of costume were wearing tunics, fichus and long aprons all trimmed with deep lace, of what kind, alas! is not definitely recorded, but as far as it is possible to judge from the plates it was a light fabric in the style of Lille or late Mechlin.

In England, from 1809 to about 1812 the top of

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the very low-cut bodice then fashionable was finished with either a falling frill of rather wide lace, or with a narrower lace tucker, stiffly starched and standing up like a Medicis ruff in miniature. The scanty skirts of the gowns, generally made of muslin or the thinnest cambric, were trimmed with narrow flounces round the hem, or arranged as robings down the front, and the quaint bonnets and hats of the period had a good deal of lace on them. A year or two later the bonnets, which had lost their picturesque quaintness and become merely eccentric, had their vast brims veiled with lace which fell over the edge, and reached to the tip of the wearer's nose. In 1815 the pelerine re-appeared in the form of a pretty little pointed cape made of net or muslin entirely covered with frills of narrow Brussels or Mechlin lace.

Lace was again out of fashion between 1820 and 1830. Gowns were trimmed with ruches of ribbons, and sausage-like rouleaux of gauze and other thin stuffs, and the scarves and capes of the day were of the same kind of material with frills of the stuff itself. For the large falling collars, as well as for the pelerines, which were again in vogue, embroidered muslin was generally used. But about 1830-1831 the tide turned in favour of lace again. Evening gowns had deep, fully gathered flounces of lace, festooned or straight round the skirt, and the bodice was trimmed with a tucker as well as a berthe. Long lace lappets or streamers floated, not only from the amazing "morning" caps of the period, but from the monstrous "dress hats" which were worn at dinner-parties and the opera. The pelerine was re-incarnated under the name of mantelet-pelerine; in this form it had double capes with points on the shoulders that reached half-way to the elbows, and long ends in front. It

was made of embroidered muslin or tambour-lace as a general rule. For dress-trimmings at this date, Chantilly and blonde laces were extremely popular, but Brussels appliqué in both black and white was also fashionable. The large veils tied round the crown of the bonnet with a running-string came into vogue in the 'Thirties; they were usually of Brussels or Honiton appliqué, or of the run or tamboured net known as Limerick lace. Many of these veils are still in existence, and a considerable proportion of them have very gracefully drawn patterns.

A fashion plate of a lady in the Court dress of 1831 depicts her in a bodice and train of crimson brocade opening over a petticoat entirely covered with two very wide lace flounces. The bodice has a deep, shaped berthe and narrow sleeve ruffles of lace, and a long lace veil falling from the orthodox ostrich feathers replaces the lappets formerly an indispensable feature in Court dress. It is probable that the option of wearing either veil or lappets at a Drawing Room was first allowed about this time.

With the Eighteen-Forties came the immensely deep lace flounce that entirely covered the skirt save for three or four inches at the top; broad berthés, often draped, and last, but not least, the lace shawl which was to have a life of some twenty-odd years. Some of these shawls, which were made triangular in shape as well as square, were of Maltese bobbin-lace, or Brussels appliqué, while those of cheaper quality were of machine-made lace in the style of Brussels, or imitation "Spanish" lace in silk, thread, or cotton, black or white.

In conclusion it may be noted that the lace fan is quite a modern invention, there being no record of it

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prior to the Victorian period, and that the large square wedding-veil with its accompanying wreath of orange-blossoms, was not worn by brides in England until the nineteenth century.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE IDENTIFICATION OF LACE

**T**HE first lesson which the budding collector must master is how to distinguish between needle point lace and that made with bobbins on a pillow. This, however, is not a very difficult task, for the difference between the two types of lace is clearly defined and can be easily and quickly recognised if it is borne in mind that :—

(a) In needle-point lace the stitches are all *looped* in the manner of an ordinary buttonhole-stitch, and are worked with a single thread.

(b) In bobbin-made lace the stitches are never looped, but are formed by *twisting* or *plaiting* two, three, or more threads together.

The illustrations of stitches, enlarged to ten times their actual size in Plates 23 and 24 will make this fundamental difference clearer than any written description, no matter how lengthy and detailed, although in the case of exceptionally fine lace, a close examination may be necessary before a certain conclusion can be arrived at. The distinction between the two methods of working is perhaps most plainly discernible in the brides, or connecting bars, but if the toilé or solid part of the pattern is carefully scrutinised, it will be seen that in needle-point lace it is composed of rows of buttonhole or looped stitches, while

the *toilé* of bobbin-lace is woven, as it were, the threads passing over and under each other. Mixed laces, i.e. those in which a bobbin-made pattern is connected by needle-point brides, or grounded with a needle-point *réseau*, are apt to puzzle the beginner, but a very small amount of experience will enable him to recognise them, and, after all, their class is not a large one.

It is seldom difficult to detect machine-made lace. Buttonhole stitch is never found in it, and although it has been possible since the 'Eighties of last century to produce a plaited stitch by machinery, the process is complicated and consequently expensive, hence in the bulk of machine laces the threads are only twisted or woven together. The *toilé* is often slightly ridged or ribbed, and always very even; the repeats of the pattern are generally more meticulously regular than in hand-made lace; the edge is frequently lacking in finish and firmness, and the texture is either too soft or too stiff and generally too light in weight in comparison with the "real" fabric. It must be remembered, however, that there are a few laces to which the foregoing rules do not apply in their entirety. Most important among these are the heavy silk laces of the Chantilly-Spanish type in which the bold and handsome floral patterns, although woven by machinery, are outlined with a run thread put in by hand. Such laces have a very deceptive appearance if of good quality, as is often the case, and even collectors of some experience have been known to hesitate over them.

Machine-made laces rarely boast of any definitely characteristic style, and it is scarcely too much to say that there has never been any serious attempt to copy accurately by mechanical power the great eighteenth

century laces. The late Valenciennes laces with their extremely simple patterns and lozengé réseau, are successfully and largely made by machinery, and some really pretty laces with patterns in the style of late Brussels appliqué have been produced, but point d'Alençon, point d'Argentan, the Venetian needle-points and the fine Flemish bobbin-laces have remained unimitated probably because they are inimitable.

To identify modern hand-made copies of old laces is not always an easy matter if they are carefully executed as, for instance, is the case with the beautiful reproductions made by the workers at Burano. But, fortunately or unfortunately, according to the point of view, much, indeed most, modern hand-made lace may be recognised by the inferior thread used, this being usually a mixture of cotton and flax, or in some cases of cotton alone, and by the paucity of stitches in the work, defects which are responsible for a disagreeable flimsiness of texture and a tendency to shrink when washed. Apropos of thread it may be said here that the idea, which has found its way into print more than once, of hand-spun thread being joined every twenty or twenty-five inches is not only erroneous but absurd. Those who hold this theory give as their reason that a woman spinning with a distaff could not reach further than the distance named, therefore the incessant breaking and rejoining of the thread was unavoidable. There is, however, nothing to prevent a distaff-spun thread being of any length; besides, the spinning-wheel superseded the distaff very early in the history of lace. Therefore, the suggestion which has been made in all seriousness by some writers, that if when a piece of lace is unpicked the thread has not got a join every two feet, it is modern, may be regarded as an absolute fallacy.

Although the illustrations of réseaux and toilés are sufficiently clear to speak for themselves, it may be an additional help to the collector if they are briefly described here. In Plate 23 are shown the following :—

Fig. 1. The réseau of Point d'Argentan. The sides of the hexagonal mesh are completely covered with buttonhole-stitch.

Fig. 2. The "vrai" réseau of Brussels needle-point; a simple looped stitch.

Fig. 3. The réseau of Point d'Alençon. The hexagonal mesh is of double-twisted threads, the looped stitches having a horizontal thread twisted through them before the next row of loops is begun. This makes the réseau appear to run into lines.

Fig. 4. The ground of Hollie-point. This curious lace is made of looped stitches. The method of working is described in the chapter dealing with English laces.

Fig. 5. The toilé of Point d'Alençon (which is similar to that of other needle-point laces) with the distinctive stiff cordonnet covered with buttonhole-stitch.

Fig. 6. The close toilé of ordinary bobbin-lace, and the open toilé more definitely characteristic of Brussels lace, but also introduced in other kinds.

The enlargements in Plate 24 are of bobbin-made réseaux only.

Fig. 1. The réseau of Lille lace, also known as fond simple and fond clair. The hexagonal mesh is formed of two threads only. These are twisted once on four sides out of the six, and simply crossed on the remaining two.

Fig. 2. The réseau of "vraie" Valenciennes. Each

of the four sides of the lozenge-shaped mesh is of four threads plaited.

- Fig. 3. The réseau known as fond chant ; Paris ground and wire ground.
- Fig. 4. The réseau of Mechlin lace. Four of the six sides of the mesh are made of two threads twisted twice ; the two other sides are formed of four threads plaited three times (compare Fig. 5).
- Fig. 5. The réseau of Brussels bobbin-lace. Two sides of the hexagonal mesh are made of four threads plaited four times, and the remainder of two threads twisted twice (compare Fig. 4).
- Fig. 6. The réseau known as " cinq trous " which is sometimes found in Flemish lace. It derives its name from the five small holes which appear at the crossing point of the threads forming the mesh.

A carefully arranged lace-album is a possession of considerable value to a collector as a reference book. It should contain pieces which, no matter how small, are purely characteristic of their kind. They should be sewn to the cardboard leaves of the album with very fine cotton, not, according to a too prevalent and most barbaric custom, stuck down with paste or gum. The name of each lace should be written beneath it on the album leaf, or better still, type-written on a small adhesive label.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ON COLLECTING EMBROIDERIES

**T**HE collector of modest means has in these days but a poor chance of obtaining embroideries of earlier date than the second decade of the seventeenth century. If he is born under a lucky star, he may pick up perhaps an odd bit of pre-Reformation Church-work, or a bit of Elizabethan secular embroidery ; but speaking generally, he may count himself fortunate if he can acquire, at anything approaching a moderate cost and within a reasonable time, a tolerably representative collection of needlework produced in England between the accession of Charles I and the end of the eighteenth century. As a matter of fact, the collector who cannot afford to spend an unlimited amount of money on his hobby is well advised if he specialises from the outset. Let him make up his mind to get together as many good examples as he can of say, samplers, needlework pictures, embroidered book-bindings, or needlework applied to costume, and to this end devote his money and energy. A thoroughly complete and carefully made little collection of even such trifles as bags and purses, or pin-cushions and needle books, can be easily of more value and interest than a heterogeneous mass of inferior examples of the needlework of many countries and periods, not thoroughly repre-

sentative of any one, and without historical sequence. Unfortunately, it requires considerable strength of mind to resist the temptation of the red herring across the track, and to abjure that which is "such a wonderful bargain, although not really in my line you know!"

The beginner who lives in or near London has the great advantage of being able to study the great collection of embroideries in the Victoria and Albert Museum; while the sales at the famous auction-rooms are something of an education in themselves. The country collector is handicapped, and must get his knowledge as best he can from more experienced friends with similar tastes, and from books, helped perhaps by occasional visits to the nearest antique shop. But even so, if he has the instinct for the right thing, lacking which no collector can hope to be successful, he will soon find his feet, although he will no doubt have to pay more or less for his experience.

It is perhaps permissible for the collector in the first stage of his career to make discreet purchases of defective bits of embroidery for educational purposes, provided they are cheap, but as a rule poor and imperfect examples should be avoided. Pieces that are ragged, badly stained, mildewed or moth-eaten are really dear at any price, and to buy them is unwise, unless they are of such exceptional age and rarity that the collector cannot expect to obtain better specimens of their kind. A piece that has been very extensively restored is perhaps an even less satisfactory speculation than one that is torn and dirty, as although its appearance may be better, embroidery that has been reapplied to new material, or has had the ragged old ground adroitly concealed with laid-stitch, or the rubbed-away parts of the work put in afresh with artificially faded silks, is not the original thing by any means, and

its value is proportionately decreased. How far renovations are justifiable is a moot point, but it is certain that any mending necessary to prevent a piece dropping into fragments is admissible, although there is much to be said against actual restorations. In any case, cleaning and repairing, except of the simplest kind, are best carried out by skilled professional hands. Of the first process, the amateur should attempt nothing beyond a little careful dusting with a very soft brush, or better still with one of the little pairs of bellows that our great-grandmothers used to blow the dust from the multitudinous bows of their Sunday bonnets, or cautious sponging with ammonia in the case of bead-work, or with benzine in that of wool or silk embroidery. The splits often found in silk or satin grounds may be closed by means of strips of very thin silk pasted at the back, and the securing of loose stitches, or even a small darn, is not beyond the powers of any ordinary plain needlewoman. But if serious repairs are essential and the embroidery is worth spending money on, it should be sent to a specialist in such work.

How may embroidery be dated with certainty? This is a question frequently asked by the budding collector, and it is one not at all easy to answer. There are, of course, points as regards style of patterns, materials and stitches which help to indicate the age of examples, and these will be noted seriatim in the chapters dealing with needlework of different periods, but they cannot be regarded as absolutely safe guides to the date of a piece. The embroidery of the past was executed almost entirely by private workers in their own homes which were often in the heart of the country where new fashions did not penetrate quickly, and so the old designs continued to be worked

on the same kind of home-spun, hand-woven stuff, year after year, generation after generation; the older needlewomen passing on to their descendants the designs and stitches they had been taught in their youth. So that while modish ladies in Town were working patterns in the Chinese taste with crewels, their country cousins might still be toiling over the elaborations of stump-embroidery. In fact, all styles and classes of needlework overlapped more or less.

In connection with the age of embroidery, the collector will be wise if he puts little or no faith in the wonderful histories so often supplied with specimens by their vendors. He should certainly pay nothing extra for them, unless the statements are very well supported by written evidence. This apron may be the identical one that Beau Nash pulled off Prior's "Kitty ever fair" in the Pump Room at Bath; that collar may have been worked by Jane Austen and mentioned in a letter to her sister Cassandra; those dainty garters with their embroidered mottoes may have belonged to the famous eighteenth century beauty Lady X——; but where are the proofs? Usually there is not a vestige of one. Myths grow up round family relics in the most unaccountable way; one generation gets confused with another; the granddaughter forgets, or partly forgets, what her grandmother told her when she was a child; the surmise of yesterday becomes the certainty of to-day; a guess is transmuted into a solid fact, and so it comes about that the most honest and truthful people frequently give amazingly incorrect and misleading histories of their own possessions. It is true that more than a few collectors have a weakness for buying pieces of needlework with tales attached to them, but a flair for the right thing, backed with common sense and a

little experience, is a more reliable guide to the authenticity or otherwise of a piece of old stitchery than the longest and most circumstantial tale, unsupported by documentary evidence, ever told by the would-be seller.

In the case of picture embroideries the costumes of the figures are a great help towards the assignment of the right date. The work may be later, but obviously cannot be earlier, than that indicated by the costume. In bindings the date of the book bound is something to go upon, although not very much, as the binding is often far later than that of the volume itself.

The embroidery collector has very little to fear from forgeries. One or two classes of late seventeenth and eighteenth century embroideries have been reproduced of late years, but deliberate fakes are seldom met with. Dates, however, are sometimes added, or genuine ones altered so as to increase the apparent age of the piece; the former fraud is usually fairly easy of detection as the figures are rarely of the correct type for the period, but the alteration of a figure or two is more likely to escape notice, especially if the work is carried out with a bit of old silk unpicked from some obscure corner. Dated pieces, therefore, should be always very closely scrutinised.

A catalogue should be begun simultaneously with the collection. Every purchase should be entered in a rough log-book with its description, the source whence it was obtained and the price paid for it. Later, when the collection has grown sufficiently large, a carefully detailed catalogue should be made and illustrated if possible with photographs of at least the principal pieces. From the permanent catalogue the record of prices may be omitted, if the owner feels it would be to him less painful reading without them.

## CHAPTER XIV

### NEEDLEWORK PRIOR TO THE TENTH CENTURY

“The art of sewing is exceeding old  
As in the Sacred Text it is enroll'd  
Our parents first in Paradise began.”

JOHN TAYLOR.

**T**O begin at the very beginning, so far as is known, of the history of embroidery is to go back to a period too remote to be of interest to the collector pure and simple, that is to say, the collector as distinguished from the archæologist; yet it seems desirable that some slight outline should be given here of the early stages of the development of what is one of the oldest of arts.

The practice of ornamenting woven fabrics with the aid of needle and thread was evolved or invented in various parts of the world, probably at the outset to mark rank, or distinction, religious or social. The Greeks, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians have all left records in stone or pottery or metal, in bas-relief and vase and bowl, of the embroideries with which their wearing apparel, their tents and hangings and horse-trappings were adorned; but of these actual things not a vestige remains save with one or two notable exceptions. Many pieces of embroidered fabrics have been found in the tombs of Upper Egypt, only fragments it is true, yet sufficiently preserved