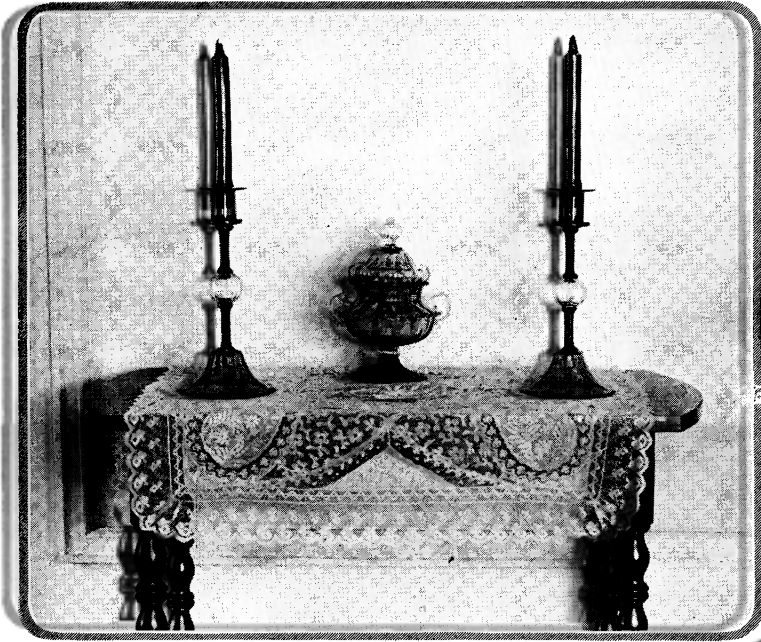


# LACE *in* INTERIOR DECORATION

*Appropriate Uses of a Material Which too Often Is Entirely Overlooked  
or Applied without Regard for Its Limitations and Possibilities*

AGNES FOSTER WRIGHT



*The delicacy and refinement of Normandy lace make it especially appropriate where the setting is dainty*

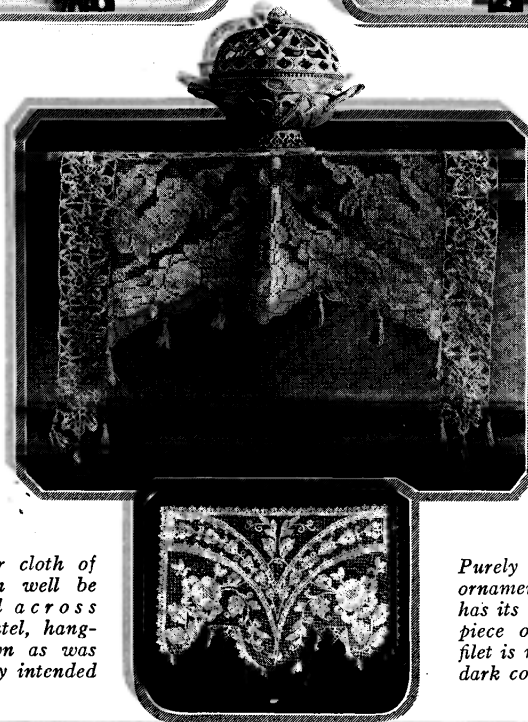


*A quite different effect in the table cover is achieved when antique lace in deep ecru is appliquéd on linen scrim*

LOVELY flowers and lovelier lace, small, unimportant details, are in reality the most important details of all to the true homemaker. It is curious how indicative of the house these accessories are. Perhaps it is because laces—real laces, with which we are alone concerned here—are usually made by women, and one gets the underlying spirit of femininity through them.

There are many possible appropriate uses of lace and lace and linen which are either overlooked by the housekeeper or badly done. One of the greatest mistakes is to put pure white (dead white, it is appropriately called) in a room. Dead white can be used only in an interior of ultra-modern coloring where pure colors without any neutralization are employed. The charming Quaker tradition of three things being irrevocably white—the table, the bed and the bride—has beautiful spirit but is not always so charming in reality. A bride, yes. That tradition at least let us cling to. And with the exception of the dining room done in an old English or Italian period, I should strongly advise white damask, but on the bed the soft tones of deep cream linen and lace, or quaint cretonne or crisp taffeta are very much more advisable.

One should soften and enrich an interior by the use of toned lace which presumably, or in reality, has grown creamy with age. Linen is not naturally white; it has a lovely soft beige tone. From the



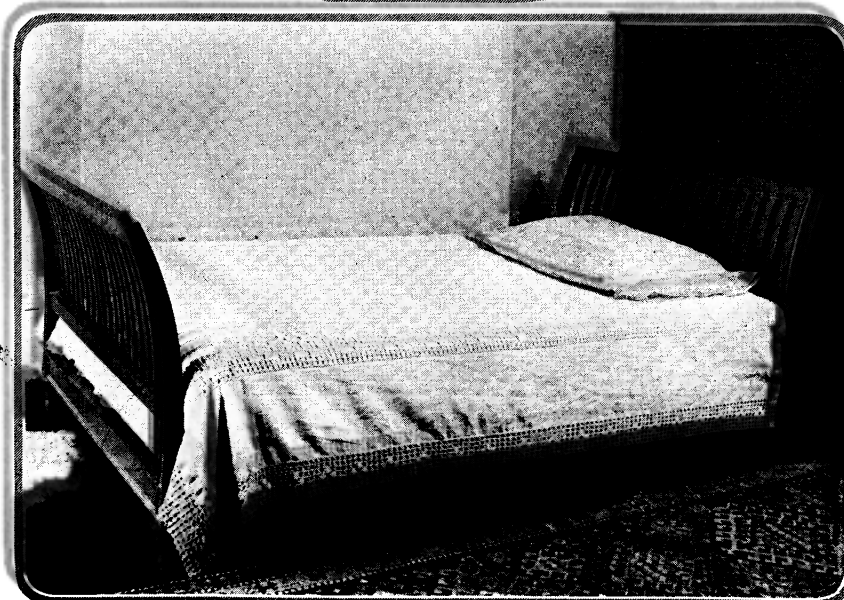
*An altar cloth of filet can well be stretched across the mantel, hanging down as was originally intended*

*Purely as a wall ornament, fine lace has its uses. This piece of Viennese filet is mounted on dark colored velvet*

almost yellowish cream of old Normandy lace to the grayish tan of antique Arabic lace, the colors blend with the tone of linen.

One point which should be observed in the use of lace as part of interior decorating is that it be real. However small the piece, let it be handmade. One can always pick up an inexpensive length at one of the counters which can be made up with some loosely woven crash and simple stitches into an attractive and original table cover. One of the loveliest covers I have seen is made from a thin, loosely-woven gauze, very dark in tone, and on this is sewn a thin coarse mesh insertion of very dark, deep beige color. On each corner is a long tassel made from linen carpet thread, and under the whole is a piece of soft bronze sateen. This as a table cover in a brown and blue-green living room is suitable and charming, as well as individual and inexpensive. The same idea can be carried out for a dining table cover. In an informal dining room or in a room where an Italian or Spanish refectory table is used one will not find white damask particularly appropriate for an oak or walnut table. If the dining table is painted, the cloth can be laid directly on the table, the color showing through, as the mesh of both linen and lace is coarse enough to permit it.

Filet, especially the larger



*An ecru lace and linen bed spread combines well with the antique lace and linen pillow cover*

mesh Italian and Spanish filet, is charming when combined with a loosely woven linen and used for a dining table cover. If possible, select an oblong piece which will do as a center table decoration and then add linen on the ends and sides, finishing off with a narrow lace edge and handsome tassels. This furnishes enough space for service dishes and silver being laid directly on the linen, and when the inevitable spotting happens, the linen, not the more valuable lace, suffers from scrubbing. Also this kind of cover is much less distracting than the usual cover of square and oblong and round inserts laid helter-skelter in the linen. One continually endeavors to make a geometric problem of it.

The sateen undercover for these cloths can be changed, of course, to suit the color of the dishes or table decorations. With a gold and white, or gold, blue and white dinner service, a soft sateen undercloth of yellow adds to the general richness, particularly if an amber colored glass compote is used as center decoration.

#### The Cover as a Whole

Not only should the linen be of a suitable color and texture for the lace, but the whole article should be appropriate to the room in which it is used. In a dainty bedroom soft Normandy lace covers are the loveliest possible. The color is rich and the lace and embroidery are delicate and refined. As a less expensive substitute, Cluny, fine filet, Torchon and fine Irish crochet may be used. Bureau and bedside table covers can be made with two filet oblongs inserted in either end of a piece of linen, and edged with narrow pointed filet. The undecorated central space will thus be left for the toilet articles. Pin-cushion

covers, made so that they may be easily slipped off and laundered, give a touch of daintiness to a bedroom. Table and bureau covers should always be washable. For that reason silk or cretonne covers are inadvisable. Just as one can smarten up one's toilette with a pair of white gloves, so can a bedroom be freshened by using well laundered linen and lace covers on the tables and dressers.

Attractive bed spreads are being made from wide insertions of very heavy coarse crochet lace and strips of heavy, coarse linen. The linen should be of similar texture to the lace, and both preferably be deep ivory or ecru.

Lace in combination with this heavy linen is effective as a library or living room table runner if made with old-fashioned macramé. It is heavy enough to suit the furniture and conventional enough to have real style. The ends could be finished with long rich tassels, at the head of which a quaint Italian "motto" bead would give a touch of color. Such small touches lift an accessory from the ordinary to the interesting and individual. Dark blue linen lace on ecru linen, with the additional touch of a few odd-patterned stitches makes an interesting and suitable cover for a dining room buffet or serving table, especially if the dining room is furnished in blue.

#### Lace for Hanging

An excellent use for a long filet scarf or an altar cloth, such as one picks up in antique shops abroad, is to stretch it across the mantel, letting it hang down, as it did originally on the altar. The pattern will be beautifully silhouetted, especially if the lace is mounted on a smoke valance.

Beautiful lace scarfs may be hung as fabrics

or tapestries are hung—purely as wall ornaments. Personally, I feel that they should have a distinct decorative *raison d'être*; that is, they should hang over a mantel as an over-mantel ornament similar to a mirror or picture, or over a table or desk. Hung on a plain wall space with no relation to their surroundings, they appear ridiculous. Moreover the lace must be of such interest or value as to justify this display. It must belong to the "objet d'art" class. If the lace itself seems thin and too light, a piece of plain velvet or damask edged with galloon will serve as background, adding color and acting as a frame for the lace. The addition of tassels to the lace will give it a sense of weight. For lace that is too fragile and old or too valuable to use as a table cover, this means of display is especially suitable.

#### Curtains and Shades

The lavish use of lace on curtains is gradually becoming a thing of the past. Undercurtains are being made of simple striped net or scrim, fineness of quality being substituted for lace trimmings. There are, of course, opportunities in some formal houses to use undercurtains of filet inserts. In this case the window is enriched by the silhouettes of the filet. For the heavy, elaborate overcurtains of lace, so greatly in vogue on the Continent, a soft rich damask or a crisp taffeta is substituted. In every case, with the possible exception of a simple trimmed dotted Swiss curtain, lace curtains should be cream or beige in tone.

In the boudoir or for center dining table candles, lace shades give much charm and have the advantage of being kept fresh by laundering. Normandy or filet lace is particularly

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*French filet forms the table cover here, complementing the Normandy lace of the lamp shade. Bright silk of a color to harmonize with the lamp itself underlies the Normandy*

## Lace in Interior Decoration

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suitable for this purpose. A very fine Irish crochet with soft tone silk underneath is attractive in a bedroom.

A final word of advice—the indiscriminate use of a number of small white lace pieces in a room tends to give it a spotty appearance. Use lace more generally in the house, but use it with thoughtful regard for its color and design. In a delicate bedroom with fine Colonial furniture, do not use crash and a coarse lace; use instead the finer varieties and the softer, smoother linens. In a living or dining room do not, use fine white linen and Valenciennes or Irish crochet that is suggestive of lingerie. As in all other phases of decoration, suitability should guide us in the use of laces, however and wherever they may be employed in our rooms.