

Fan presented to H.R.H. the Duchess of York on her Marriage, by Lord Crewe. Youghal.

IRISH LACE.

THERE be disputes in the culinary-cum-literary world as to whether the celebrated cook, Mrs. Glasse, meant chaff or sober earnest when she began a certain recipe with "First Catch your Hare." Anyway, the alternative rendering as to "casing" or "skinning" can't be applied to lace, and, having caught some exceptionally good game in my lace hunting-grounds, I will proceed to dilate upon it—con amore!—the said "good hunting," as Kipling hath it, having been—where I

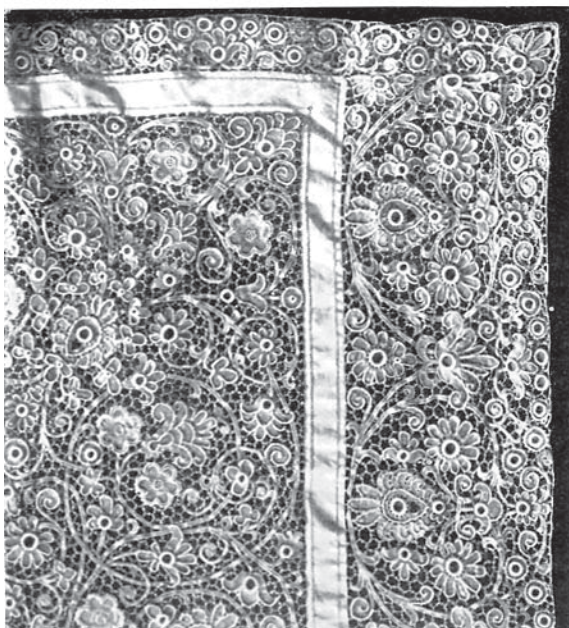
always would it were for choice—on British ground. "Shall English Churchmen wear a Mechlin lace?" asked a Poet generations ago. To-day I answer "No!" being ready with abundant proof that he can find products equally suited to his purpose nearer home.

"The English will never give a price for anything they understand—strange and far-fetched things they only like." Now, though I am scarcely prepared to follow the suggestion made by Steele in his next sentence, and take to the distillation of dock leaves in lieu of tea, I am prepared to go far in favour of things British, specially when it is a question of lace. And if there be, as some would have us think, symposia in the higher or other regions, where comparisons, odorous and otherwise, are made 'twixt things "as they was," and "as they is," even on such mundane trifles as Arts and Crafts, I feel that I have before me matter enough to make these old and unpatriotic writers shiver in their saintly shoes.

But alack! in spite of our vaunted growth there is still much of the spirit of these ancient days.

Proverbs and quotations have me at their mercy, and "give a dog a bad name and hang him" is one which has been true too long of the way we regard anything but foreign productions. Much harm has been done by incessant writing of our art as if it were already dead. "'Tis true, and pity 'tis," that these lamentations fall for the most part from the pens of ladies whose time might be better spent in fostering our native industries.

There are, however, evidences that we may one day say *Nous avons changé tout cela*, and (here is a paraphrase rather than a proverb by way of variety), "'Tis not for the worse but all for the better." To-day British Art ranks high. The recent report of the Brussels Exhibition shows that our nation came off "first best" in almost every section devoted to art, and all handicrafts



*Crotchet Counterpane. Clones.
From Mrs. Morrison's Collection.*

show us at least in the position of "looking up." Mindful that it has ever been my custom in these pages to treat of lace, not as it was, but as it is and shall be, I will leave the stories of its birth in Ireland, fostered by philanthropists whose names are, like the stories "familiar in our ears," as the still older tales of its origin in Italy—familiar, that is, to those of us who love lace; those who don't won't read this.

There is a comparison which at the outset I am bound to make 'twixt the laces of the Queen of Italy's School at Burano, which it has been my privilege to see this year straight from the hands of the workers, and those of Ireland, that most hopeful foster-child of Italy. When a solemn Royal Commission states that Irish fingers are possessed of singular dexterity, one does not hesitate to put forward one's own conviction that, since there is a certain similarity in their light-hearted natures with the denizens of the sunny south, it is possible that this may be a trait which hunts in couples with deft-fingeredness.

At any rate, so it seemeth me, and I can truly say that Point d'Irlande, taking this to be not the crotchet which is not needle point at all, but the copy of Italian Rose Point, runs its foreign ancestry very closely indeed in the race for fame. Not with the smallest twinge of jealousy do I make this comparison; there is even now room in the world for us all, and critics must remember how many centuries the senior is the Italian Art, and treat the comparative

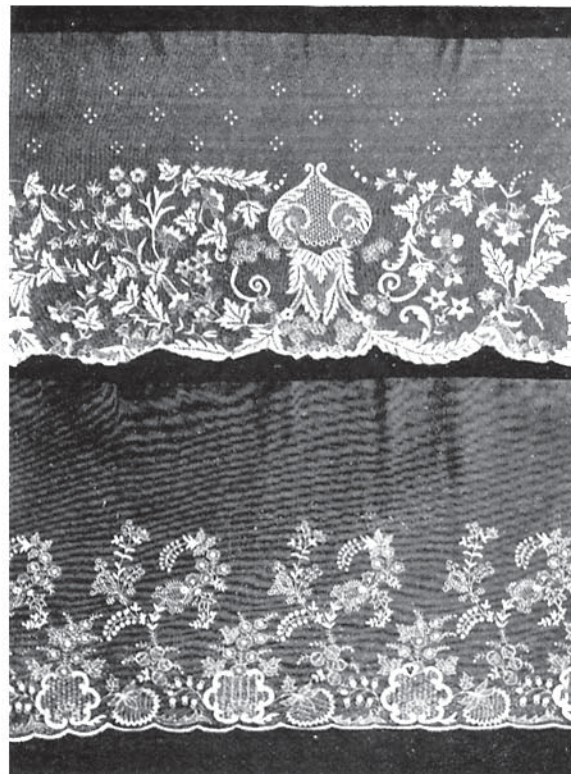


*Apron. 17th Century Design. Youghal.
From Mrs. Morrison's Collection.*

in the Lace world such sympathy, but to which "unskill" the closing or rather the winking of the Artful eye is of doubtful morality. Made in extremely coarse threads, as in the days of our great-grandmothers, it might find a mission as an adjunct to embroideries of the stiffer sort but—and with that one leaves it, the but being very big!

To the Crotchet these same sentiments belong, and though I am in many ways a very Rehoboam in listening to aught that is new, here I would adopt the wisdom of Solomon, and swear by the old days which produced passable samples of the softer sort.

A notable exception must be made in the case of the crotchet for which Clones is responsible. The counterpane, one of the specimens kindly lent me from Mrs. Morrison's collection to "adorn my tale," carries one back centuries by the truth and honesty of its work. Visitors to the Victorian show who glanced at lace cannot fail to have admired this. There appeared also a pillow cover; but here, although one admires

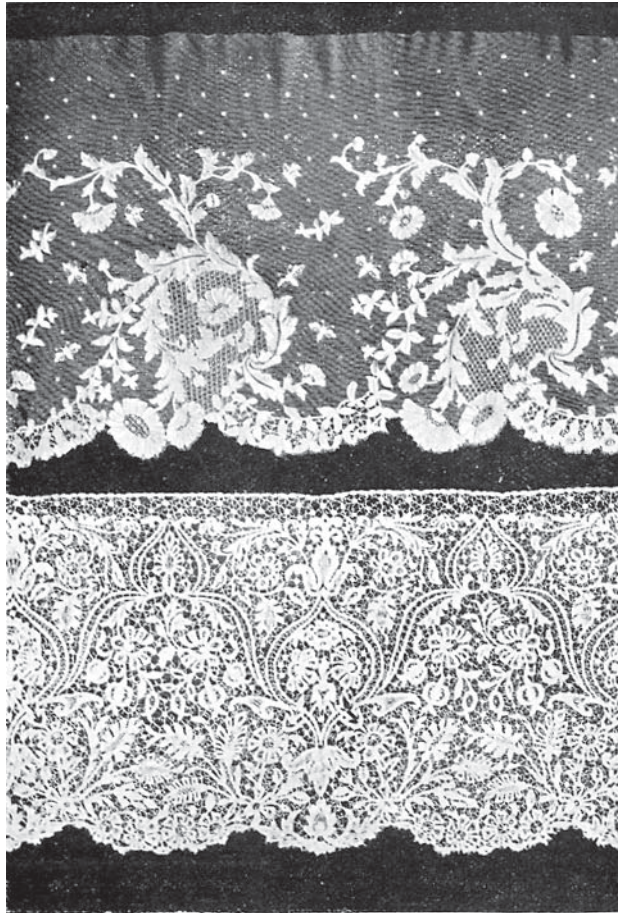


*Limerick. A.—Lady Londonderry's Flounce.
B.—Dowager Lady Shrewsbury's Flounce.
A, 13 in. wide. B, 14 in. wide.*

the talent, one doubts the taste of its application, and one's fancy is forcibly carried to a recent drawing in *Fliegende Blätter*, where the countenance of Herr Schmidt appears impressed with the embroidery made in Germany by his so famous Hausfrau for the embellishment of her pillows.

Words almost fail me to tell of the fame of Youghal, one of whose *chefs d'œuvre* I show in a fan-cover given by Lord Crewe to H.R.H. the Duchess of York on her marriage, and lent me for reproduction by the Irish Association, who supplied it. With the di'mond-traced shamrock and its poplin box it is a dainty souvenir of the Emerald Isle. For the lace, the pine has for once beaten the ubiquitous pomegranate altogether out of the field. The design is excellent, arranged with a view to its central flower, and does not weary the eye in fruitless searching for its pendants, in which the modes or fillings are worthy of the days of the best Point d'Argentan. In the *embarras de richesse* of Mrs. Morrison's treasures the work of selection is extremely difficult, but the seventeenth-century design of the exquisite apron shown won the day with me, albeit a wide and lovely flounce most beautifully shaded stitch-wise ran it very close. It was of this flounce that the proud confession was made to me by the worker, "And it's meself, mem, who invented that very stitch ye see there."

The two Limerick laces are, the one, a flounce made for the Marchioness of Londonderry, the other a copy of an old pattern of the Dowager Lady Shrewsbury's. To this last I personally give my allegiance, possibly from an infatuation for all things ancient, partly because the pattern, although the "repeat" is rapid, is not fatiguing. Moreover, it is

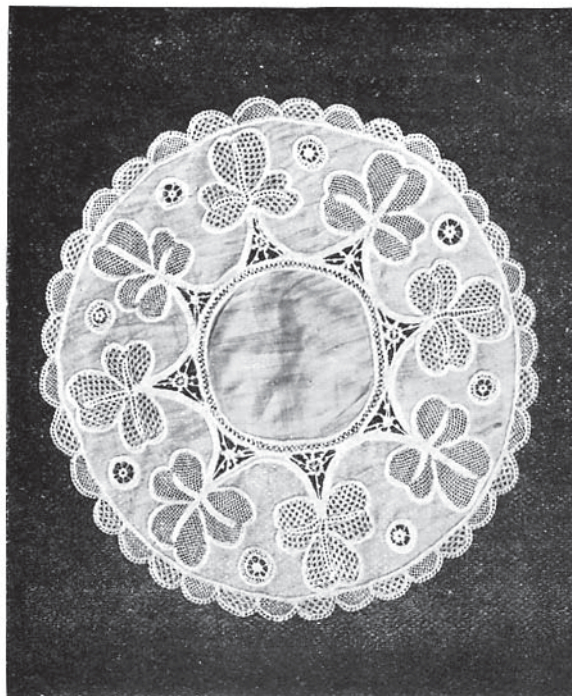


Carrickmacross. A.—Appliqué 14½ in. wide.
B.—Guipure 12 in. wide.

symmetry of the older handiwork. Limerick has, like Carrickmacross, its two specialities—the tambour and the needle run; this last having formerly been a favourite of amateurs, as easy of execution. I cannot leave Limerick without a mention of the lady to whom it owes so much—Mrs. Vere O'Brien, whose efforts have been, and still are, unceasing in this industry.

Carrickmacross gives us two distinct efforts of the needle, these being similar in that they are dependent on muslin or lawn, dissimilar in that the first is the material applied to a reseau or ground-work of net, the other forming its ground-guipure-wise by means of brides. These—and here I must "be cruel to be kind"—could never be extolled for qualities of wear and tear.

In photography they come out marvellously well, the consistency of the cut muslin giving



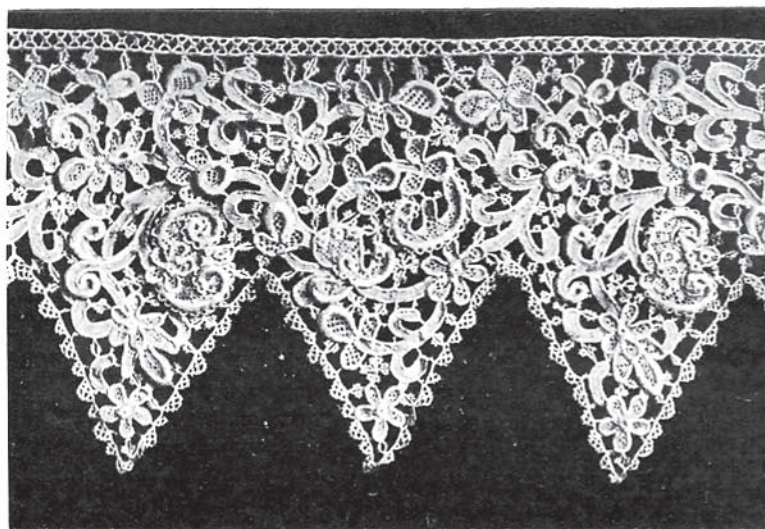
Knitting Embroidery, Youghal.

effect with little labour, but alack! when it comes to the handling, one feels that the exquisite bell-flower bordering of the appliqué is doomed to be short-lived, while the row of pomegranates cut *à merveille* in the guipure turns up in one's fingers (like one's temper on a windy day), at all four corners at once! The stitches which compose the edges of the pattern require attention, and 'deed, then it's the advice of the great Duke with regard to attention to detail, which would be the saving of both these laces if they look for lasting fame.

A great novelist has said of late, that true art (literary) consists not in an exact copy so much as in an adaptation from real life. Now, in lace matters I take the exact contrary to be the case. An adaptation in flimsy material such as is this guipure, of the solidity of the sort shown in the Rose Point, can't be satisfactory. Careful copying in our own as in other arts teaches dexterity which sticks to fingers longing, as all art-full fingers do, for unfettered flights of fancy; but adaptation—no, my soul shrinks from it as unsuccessful.

Quand il s'agit (there's no English equivalent) of muslin and lace, I turn with joy to the Keatinge embroidery, made at Youghal, it being but fair to call it so, since the making of these dainty d'oyleys, caps, and kerchiefs is largely due to the inventive faculty of the capable manageress of the Irish Industries at Motcomb Street. Resurrection rather than invention would I say, since, turning over one's great-grandmother's hoards, one sighs for the return of the days which produced such effective combinations of cambric and lace stitches, and rejoices in their reappearance in this year of Jubilee. Hitherto inheritance has been the only way to come by them;

1897.



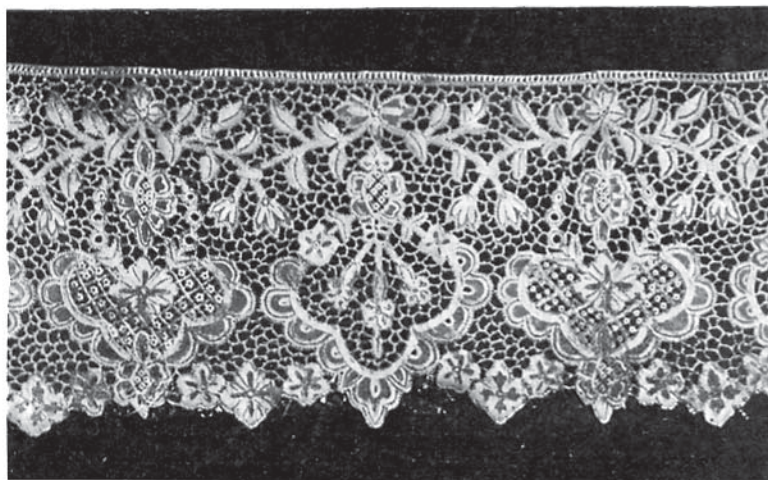
Rose Point, properly called *Point d'Irlande*.

New Ross. 6 in. wide.



Rose Point. *Innishmacsaint*.

(*Miss MacLean's*.)



Flat Point. New Ross. 6 in. wide.

trade answering in its omniscience "No demand," and antiquarian dealers casting away such treasures even as hotel maidens do my invaluable MSS., as being, in their estimation, rubbish.

Of the Rose Point, that special feather in the cap of Ireland, I show two specimens. *Dentellé* is the word which jumps to one's pen on looking at the first of these. An important word in the science of Lace,

as showing the origin of its name when it was *de rigueur* that it should be a toothed if not a toothsome luxury. The *Cordonnets* are careful, and carry one back to the recurring coils on old French silver of the date possibly of this design. Here, as in its fellow, one notes the frequent introduction of the Shamrock—its trefoil leaves asserting themselves on their native soil just as the coral treasures of a Venetian Lagoon do in Italian work. The straight-edged Rose Point has been sent me by Miss MacLean herself, whose name and labours are so well known in *Innishmacsaint*, that "land of the sorrel plain" which supplies yet another tri-point leaf as artist's model, and whence this lace so often takes its name. *Point d'Irlande* is by far the more reasonable appellation, and even the workers themselves are beginning to feel this, on account of the confusion caused by confining to crotchet that which by rights belongs to the needle only.

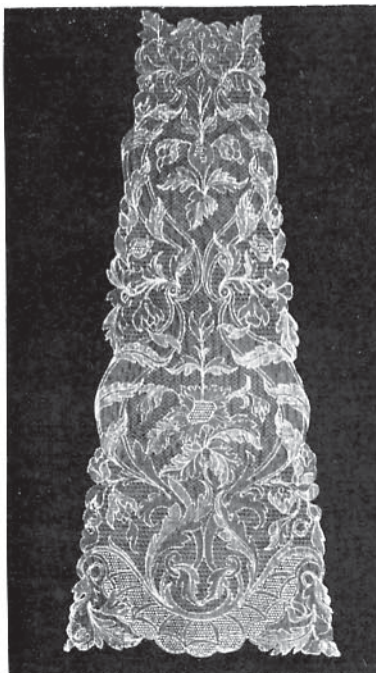
There is a pretty bit of lore connected with the making of this lace, no iron being used when it is complete, but the conk-shell—that wherein we, as children, listen for the waves of the sea—being burnisher and flattener combined; glazed paper laid beneath the lace, and careful rubbing with the shell, accomplishing all that is needful. Verily is this an industry to be commended,

which finds its tools ready-made among its household treasures.

New Ross, the producers of the specimen of flat point, as well as of the "Dentellé" Rose Point, are known to be a coming school of lacemakers; indeed they may be said to have already arrived. The brides in this lace are well picotées; and though the design savours slightly of the prunes and prisms of primness, and runs in the upper portion rather too realistically towards fuchsia form to be entirely good, still it is said to be an old one, and to some of us this covers a multitude of sins.

The panel shown hails from Kinsale, also a centre for crotchet laces. It is needle point in silk, of the nature of the lace called blonde, and is a first-rate example of the needle-painting of the lace-maker, who, though she work but in monotonous, has at her finger-tips a marvellous power of giving by her varied stitches the effect of light and shade; this being specially noticeable in the acanthus-like scroll which, starting from the bold plateau of the base, outlines the whole pattern. Græco-Irish lace lately introduced by Mrs. Montgomery Stewart is making for itself a local habitation and a name at Strabane, County Tyrone, whence come my two examples. It is the veritable punto (*i.e.* point) in Aria of old Italian fame, and it savours of the grace of congruity that the table-cloth corner shown should be that of one recently presented by the Irish Industries to Queen Margherita, whose love of our tongue and our talents is so well known. It was to lace of this Reticella type that Miss Kean many years ago turned the attention of her workers at Cappoquin, where it is still made, though not largely.

One word of commendation I must give to the thread used in Ireland; and "while there's thread (good!) there's hope." I have lately been much interested in having a specimen of English lace sent me made in flax. It is most exquisitely fine, finer than any foreign thread



Panel for Lady's Dress. Kinsale.

The Irish folk have gone far towards the attainment of this end, but their colouring, like that of the Italians, savours too much of the coffee-cup or—dare I mention it—of Maypole Soap! I would throw out this suggestion, that an effort should be made by those who pin their faith to literally the "native worth" of the dyes taken from our hedgerow flowers, that they should secure for us the lovely and coveted colour.

But even in the happiest hunting grounds the day must

end. Alas! no wassail bowl awaits us here—have we not been rather "by gazing fed"?—and this return to matters culinary reminds me consolingly that the "end of a feast is better than the beginning of a fray." Here would I therefore end, having told, Athenian-like, two (possibly) new things; feeling sure that these notions, though they may fall upon untried, will not find



Græco-Irish. A.—Border $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide.
B.—Table-Cloth Corner.

unfruitful ground. "On revient toujours à ses premiers amours," and late though our return to our love for Home Industries has been, "'tis better late than never."

EFFIE BRUCE CLARKE.