

## HOW TO MAKE IRISH LACES AT HOME

### HOW TO MAKE IRISH LACES AT HOME: BY KATHARINE LORD

LACE making in Ireland has been a comparatively recent development, most of it dating from the great famine of 1846-47, when it was introduced and fostered among the women of the peasantry by ladies who were seeking in every way to relieve the distress of those grim and terrible years. Limerick and Carrickmacross laces were however developed rather earlier in the 19th century, the former at first as a purely commercial enterprise and the latter almost by chance, a lady who had brought a piece of lace from Italy having taught her servant to copy it.



FIG. 1—LIMERICK LACE IN PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTION.

All the Irish laces have been copies of those of other countries, yet in time each has acquired a distinctive character of its own. For instance, the crochet was at the beginning a copy, with the crochet hook, of the needle points of Venice and France; later it developed into the quite unique "baby Irish," which at its best has a simple charm, worthy of a place even among the more elaborate laces of Italy, France, and Flanders. The Limerick and Carrick-

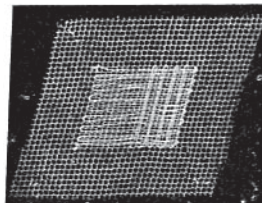


FIG. 2 A: DARNING STITCH.

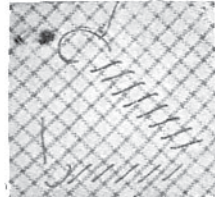


FIG. 2 B: TENT STITCH.

macross, by the originality of their designs establishing a right to Irish names, even though they had their beginning in imitation of the run laces of France and Italy. Both Limerick and Carrickmacross lace are really embroidery upon net, the machine-

made variety of net generally being used.

There are two kinds of Limerick lace, run and tambour, the pattern in the former being run in the net with a blunt needle, in the latter drawn through with a hook similar to a crochet hook. To make Limerick lace, one must have a frame—the usual large

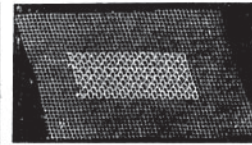
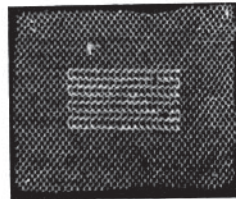


FIG. 2 BB AT LEFT.  
FIG. 3 BBB ABOVE.

square embroidery frame is the best for general use. Small pieces of lace can of course be made in a smaller frame, or even sewn to cardboard. The net, which can be bought by the yard, should have a diagonal mesh and very fine weave. The round meshed nets are occasionally used, but they are not a satisfactory body for this kind of lace. There are many different threads, and the choice of numbers will depend somewhat upon the pattern and the quality of net. Manlove's Limerick lace threads No. 120 to 250 are good for general use, as are also the D. M. C. embroidery cotton No. 80 or 100.



FIG. 2 C ABOVE: CROSS STITCH.

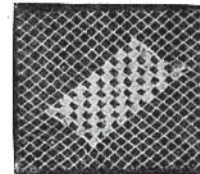


FIG. 2 D IN UPPER RIGHT-HAND CORNER: SATIN STITCH.

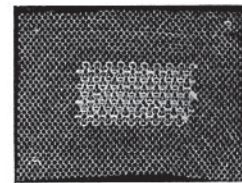


FIG. 2 E BELOW: FILLING.

There must also be a heavier thread for outlining, as Harris lace thread No. 180. Blunt pointed needles of different sizes for the finer and heavier threads and a piercer or bodkin and a pair of fine pointed scissors complete the equipment.

The choice, or making, of the design is the next step, and one of the greatest importance. The craftworker who can make her own design has, of course, a great advantage. She should however study a few good pieces of the lace before beginning, or

## HOW TO MAKE IRISH LACES AT HOME

even work a bit from some old pattern as a sampler—in order to be perfectly clear as to what is practicable. Indeed it is strongly recommended that always a small piece first be tried, that one may avoid the discouragement

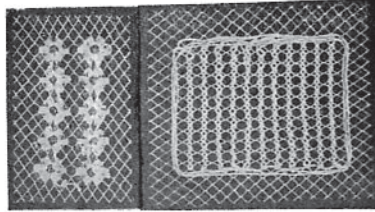


FIG. 2 F  
AT LEFT.  
FIG. 2 G  
AT RIGHT.  
FILLING  
STITCHES.

of spoiling a large piece by an unsatisfactory beginning. The worker who does not wish to make her designs can find good patterns among the laces in museums, or the illustrations in lace books. It is a regrettable fact that most of the patterns sold in the shops are poor and hackneyed in design. When the design has been obtained it should be drawn clearly in black ink on tracing cloth, then it is ready for placing under the net.

The net must now be mounted in the

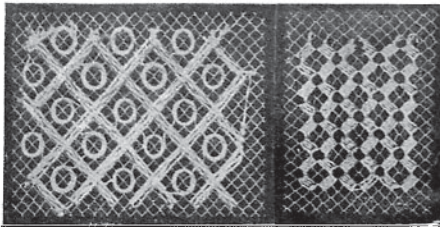


FIG. 2 I  
AT LEFT.  
FIG. 2 H  
AT  
RIGHT.  
FILLING  
STITCHES

frame—a somewhat delicate and difficult matter. First take the frame apart and sew the net carefully to the pieces of cloth which are tacked to the end pieces. Then sew pieces of tape to the other two edges of the net. Put the frame together, rolling the net carefully on one of the end bars if the piece is too large to be stretched all at once in the frame. With a needleful of stout thread, lace the tape carefully to the side bars. This

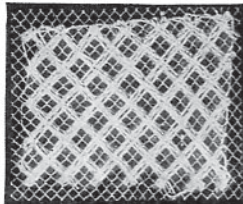


FIG. 2 J.  
THE LAST OF  
THE FILLING  
STITCHES FOR  
LIMERICK LACE.

must all be done with the greatest care that the net be evenly stretched with no sagging or strained spots. The operation is exactly the same as the mounting of a piece of linen

or satin in an embroidery frame, but the net, being more delicate, requires more careful handling. If the piece is large enough to require rolling, the side lacing must of course be removed and replaced each time that it is necessary to roll the piece. The design should next be carefully fastened with stitches or thumb tacks to the under side of the frame, where, showing through the net, it can be followed with precision.

Taking a long piece of the outlining

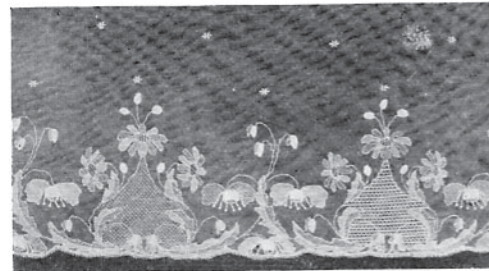


FIG. 3. LIMERICK LACE, RUN,  
WITH HEAVY TAMBOUR SPOTS.

thread (Harris 180), double it, and put the two ends together through the needle. Twist these two ends around the forefinger to make a ring, pass the needle through it and draw up to form a tiny knot just below the needle's eye. Now select a point in the design where you will have as long a stretch of outlining as possible, put the needle under a bar of the net, draw it nearly out, pass it through the loop of the thread and draw it up carefully, thus securing perfectly and almost imperceptibly the end of the thread. The entire pattern must first be outlined, as is shown in Fig. 1, which is a piece of lace in the process of making. Too much care cannot be taken to run the outlines exactly. Often the outline comes across the middle of a series of meshes, and the thread should not of course stay just there, as a slight angularity not seen in the pattern will appear in the finished lace; but practice will teach the worker just how this can be corrected. For example, a curve should generally be run well outside the line, to allow for the inevitable shifting of the thread toward the center of the curve. The lines must be constantly studied, and, especially at first, there will be many stitches to be taken out as one sees a better way of placing them.

After the entire design is outlined, or in any case the portion on which we are working, the pattern may be removed before the filling in is done. The filling is done with finer thread which is always used singly. It



## HOW TO MAKE IRISH LACES AT HOME

cannot therefore be fastened like the outline thread, but must be tied with a tiny knot to a bar of the mesh. This knot can always be concealed either by the filling or the outlining. The fastening at the end is done by making a loop, through which the needle is passed and drawn up to make a firm knot. If this is done twice and the thread cut

close, there is no danger of its coming out. The filling stitches are numerous and varied, and on their choice and arrangement depend the beauty of the lace. One

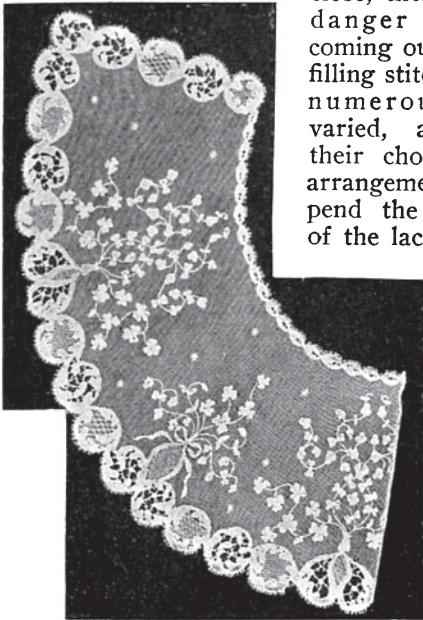
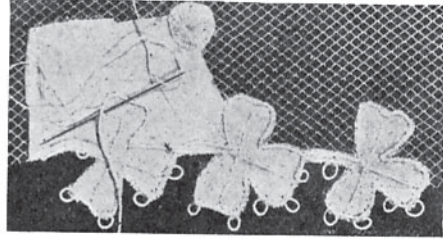


FIG. 4. CARRICKMACROSS APPLIQUÉ BERTHA.

should study carefully their values, and in order to do this it is well as one learns them to make a sampler, which can be preserved for reference. One accustomed to the consideration of values will see quickly the possibilities of the different stitches, their variation of light and dark as well as of surface and direction. Though the fillings are numerous, very charming lace can be made with two or three of the simpler ones. The darning stitch, consisting of threads run under and over the bars, and crossed in the other direction, is the same as used in filet lace, and is illustrated in Fig. 2, a.

The tent stitch explained in Fig. 2, b, Fig. 2, bb and Fig. 2, bbb is worked as follows: Fastening the thread by means of a tiny knot, at the right-hand side of a diagonal row of meshes, insert the needle two squares up and one to the left, and bring it out two bars down and one to the left. Continue the row in this fashion and then work back from left to right, one row lower down, making the rows overlap, and always

inserting the needle *above* the same bar it came out *below* in the preceding row. The tent stitch is the basis of many other fillings, and it may itself be worked diagonally or

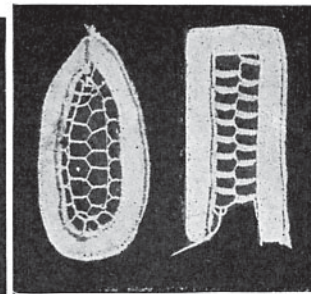
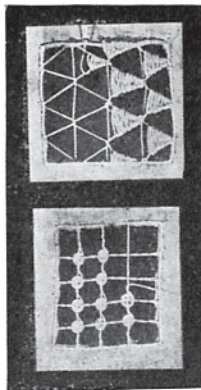
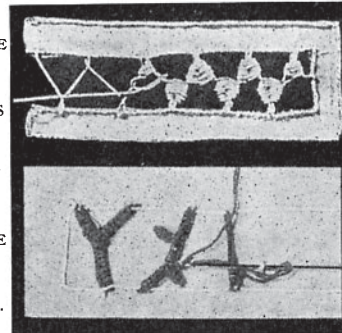


GUIPURE STITCHES FOR CARRICKMACROSS LACE.

horizontally. The cross stitch (Fig. 2, c) may also be worked in both these ways and consists of the tent stitch worked in one direction, with another row worked back upon it. The satin stitch (Fig. 2, d) worked over and over the meshes is used both alone and in combination.

Another stitch which is capable of several variations is seen in Fig. 2, e. Beginning at the upper right-hand corner of the space to

A VARIETY OF SIMPLE GUIPURE STITCHES FOR THE MODERN CARRICKMACROSS LACE. IT WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT PLAN FOR THE AMATEUR LACE WORKER TO MAKE A REFERENCE SAMPLER OF THESE STITCHES.



be filled, put the needle into a mesh, skip one to the left and bring out the needle in the

next one; put the needle down again into the mesh just below the one skipped and bring it out in the next but one to the left. Again put the needle down where you first brought

## HOW TO MAKE IRISH LACES AT HOME



FIG. 5. LIMERICK LACE COLLAR.

it out and repeat these two stitches alternately to the end of the row. Return from left to right, so placing the first stitch that the upper stitches are in line with the lower stitches of the preceding row. A more open effect may be obtained by gently enlarging every other mesh with the piercer before putting in the stitches. Other filling stitches are shown in Figs. 2, f. g. h. i. & j., which may be used singly or in combination. The finishing of edges may be done in two ways—either pearl edging may be used, No. 4, which is bought by the yard and sewn on, or the edges may be finished with buttonholing, using the very finest thread (No. 250). This gives a firm and neat edge and makes the lace seem more a whole than the added edging.

The tambour work is one of the older forms of Limerick lace. It is a coarser form and is not capable of the finer effects of the run lace, though it may be used with good effect in combination with that form, as in Fig. 3. The tambour stitch is a sort of chain stitch closely resembling the stitch of the sewing machine. It is done with a hooked needle similar to a crochet needle, and is worked with both hands. The net is stretched in the frame, as for the run lace, but of course the pattern cannot be fastened underneath, but only tacked along the upper edge, as one holds it up against the net, studies carefully a small bit, and then dropping the pattern, works it from memory. The thread is held under the net with the left hand and drawn up through the mesh with the hook held in the right hand. The lines of chain stitch form the outlines, and also placed closely side by side form solid masses.

The French and Italian run laces are made in similar fashion. The clever designer can always evolve new forms or add little individual touches that will give her lace a distinctive character of its own, while retaining the best features of the historic forms.

Carrickmacross lace, often confused with Limerick, is of two varieties—the appliqué, Fig. 4, and guipure, Fig. 5. The former consists of an appliqué of fine lawn upon net; the lawn being cut away and some of the net spaces elaborated with the same stitches used in Limerick lace. The Carrickmacross guipure is of the lawn alone with the intervening spaces, which are usually smaller, filled in with guipure bars and other needle-work stitches. The method of working the appliqué—the same for both forms—is as follows:

The pattern is drawn in black ink upon flexible paper or cloth. Tracing cloth has been found on the whole the most satisfactory. The net is then tacked to it smoothly and over that the lawn. The lines must be very black in order to show clearly through the lawn and every part of the lawn and net



FAN MOUNT, DESIGNED BY KATHARINE LORD.

must be carefully basted to the pattern that it may not shift in working. A heavy thread, Glasgow lace thread 30 or 40 or D. M. C. cotton 30, is then whipped with very fine stitches around all the outlines of the pattern. The pattern must always form a solid edge, and in whipping the cord around the edge a tiny loop is made in the cord about every quarter of an inch and securely fastened where the cord crosses. It is perhaps needless to say that all the whipping should be exceedingly fine and close, in order to produce a good piece of work, and one that will not fray out. Care must be taken to catch in the net as well as the lawn with each stitch and not by any chance to catch in the pattern. When the outlining is all done, the leaves or petals of flowers are often veined with outline stitch, and some-

times rather large spaces may be broken up with French knots or other embroidery stitches. When all is done comes perhaps the most difficult part of the work—the cutting away of the lawn. This must be done with greatest care not to cut the net. There are tiny lace scissors which come for the purpose with a nub on one point.

As with the Limerick Lace, a little preliminary practice in working will help the designer to find out what pitfalls to avoid and how to secure the best effects. The usual fault of the lace designer who is not conversant with methods of working is overelaboration. Carrickmacross appliqué for instance may be made very beautiful with a comparatively simple pattern if the spaces are well considered and the accents of elaborating stitches well placed. The guipure on the other hand must have its pattern more generally distributed and the spaces to be filled with stitches comparatively small, since large spaces filled with stitches are apt to sprawl and at best suggest the braid laces.

Limerick lace, as has been said before, depends largely for its beauty upon good distribution of values. The beauty of both of these laces depend also upon the fineness and accuracy of the workmanship, yet it is not of a fineness to unduly strain the eyes, nor does it require much practice to acquire the requisite skill. On the whole, these are laces admirably adapted to the amateur, especially to those workers who desire the satisfaction of making or adapting their own designs.