

**A** NOTE ON LACE BOBBINS  
BY MRS. HEAD

COLLECTING lace bobbins is a hobby which has, at any rate, the merit of being a tolerably un-hackneyed one. Possibly to the uninitiated this may seem its sole claim to interest, but a glance at the array of examples shown here—and they form but a very small part of the collection whence they are taken—will surely dispel this idea, and prove the bobbin's title to rank as an "object" to be sought

after for its own sake. The variety in the shape, size, and general style of the bobbins used in the different countries, and the provinces and districts of these countries, where pillow-lace is made, is amazing, and to get together a complete collection of every type, both antique and modern, would be a formidable task.

Conspicuous among bobbins of all nationalities are those which were used by the lace-makers of the Midland and Home Counties in the palmy days of the British lace industry, chiefly by reason of their



NO. I.—ENGLISH LACE BOBBINS MADE OF BONE



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elaborate ornamentation and their curious bead attachments known as "jingles" or "spangles." All those illustrated in No. i. are of bone, and exemplify almost every customary style of decoration. Some are adorned with inlays of pewter or stained bone, others are ringed with brass wire, *piqué* with tiny dots of the same metal, or carved; the most interesting and scarcest of the latter class being what are sometimes called "church window" bobbins, which have moveable balls, or miniature bobbins, carved within pierced openings, in the manner made familiar by Chinese ivory carvers. A very large number of these old bobbins bear inscriptions—names, "posies," or legends commemorative of some event in national or local history—either burnt in with a red-hot knitting-needle, or incised and the cut lines coloured with red, blue, or black pigment.

A series of wooden bobbins from the same English counties are reproduced in the top row in No. ii. All are "jingled," and their decorations are in most instances similar to those of the bone ones. The second and the last in the row, however, are noticeable for their rather unusual ornamentation of fine beads, strung so as to form a pattern, on thin brass wire, which is wound closely round the bobbin.

The old beads on the jingles are of an infinite variety—English, Venetian, and even Egyptian, and many are really beautiful, and far superior to anything of the sort obtainable at present. In addition to the orthodox beads, all kinds of queer souvenirs and mementos are found on the wire loops of the older bobbins, coins, pinchbeck seals, tradesmen's tokens, shells, quaint old buttons, and even paste ear-drops, among them. It seems as if these loaded jingles must surely interfere

considerably with the manipulation of the thread, and so it is not surprising that they are confined to a comparatively small section of the lace-making districts of the world.

The bobbins used in Devonshire, of which four



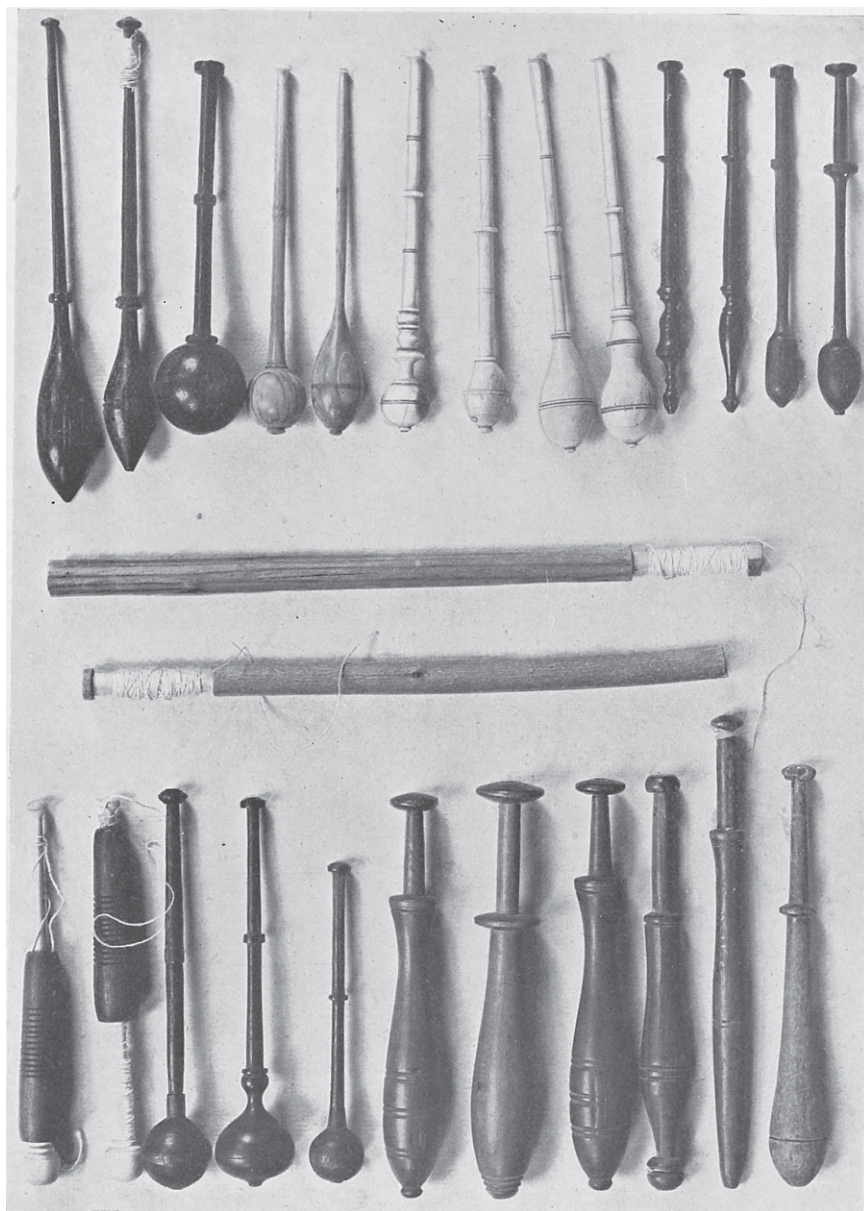
NO. II.—ENGLISH LACE BOBBINS MADE OF WOOD

specimens are shown at the left hand of the lower row in No. ii., are always made of wood, and are perfectly plain and smooth in outline, and very light of weight. The custom of ornamenting bobbins does not appear ever to have been general in the West of England, and when any decoration is found, it is confined to simple incised patterns, coloured red, blue or black, or a curious tortoiseshell-like mottling produced by some

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brown stain. Old decorated Devonshire bobbins, it may be added, are exceedingly difficult to obtain, and it is to be feared that only one of the four illustrated here can lay claim to even a modest degree of

purchased at Yarmouth, together with a number of gigantic bobbins used in by-gone years to make a coarse worsted lace or open-work braid, intended chiefly for upholstery trimming.



NO. III.—FOREIGN LACE BOBBINS

antiquity. The five bobbins placed next the quartette from Devon, were obtained in Oxfordshire; one is encircled with moveable pewter rings, and another with similar wooden ones—a decidedly exceptional style of ornament. The last three bobbins in the lower row are of wood, like the rest, and were

The whole of the bobbins depicted in No. iii. are of foreign origin. The first nine in the top row come from Peniche, Portugal; three are of dark, curiously grained wood; the rest of ivory (not bone), beautifully finished and richly mellowed by many years of use, for these bobbins are undoubtedly very old. Next to the Portuguese specimens, are four pretty little bobbins from Brussels, and then, placed transversely between the ranks of upright bobbins, are two barbaric-looking examples, nothing more than sticks, roughly trimmed with a knife, from Vologda, Russia, where such uncouth implements are used in making the coarse Torchon lace, which is sold at the country fairs at prices that seem ridiculously small to us, even when its poor quality is taken into consideration.

The pair of bobbins at the extreme left of the lower row are from Normandy. They have the moveable sheaths to protect the cotton, which, although never adopted by English lace-makers, are not uncommon abroad. The sheaths of the Norman bobbins are of wood, but in some places—in the Auvergne district, for instance—they are of horn. A trio of Spanish bobbins, somewhat similar to the wooden Portuguese, come next to the Norman pair, followed by three of the clumsy wooden bobbins used for Italian lace, and the same number from Malta complete the row.