



Venetian Needlepoint Part I. By M. Jourdain

ACCORDING to Molmenti,* lace-making was always at Venice a private enterprise, unlike the great State protected industries, such as the glass manufactures at Murano. A great quantity of cut-work was made in the houses of the nobility for their own use, and in the convents. Viena Vendramin Nani, to whom Vecellio dedicated his book † in 1591, was accustomed to make lace, and to employ the young women of her household in this "virtuous exercise."

* La Vie Privée à Venise. Molmenti.

† The Corona delle nobili et virtuose donne (1592). The dedication (dated Jan. 20, 1591) is "Alla Clarissima et Illustrissima Signora Vendramina Nani," and mentions the delight she takes in these works and "in farne essercitar le donne di casa sua, ricetta delle piu virtuose giovani che hoggidi vivono in questa città."

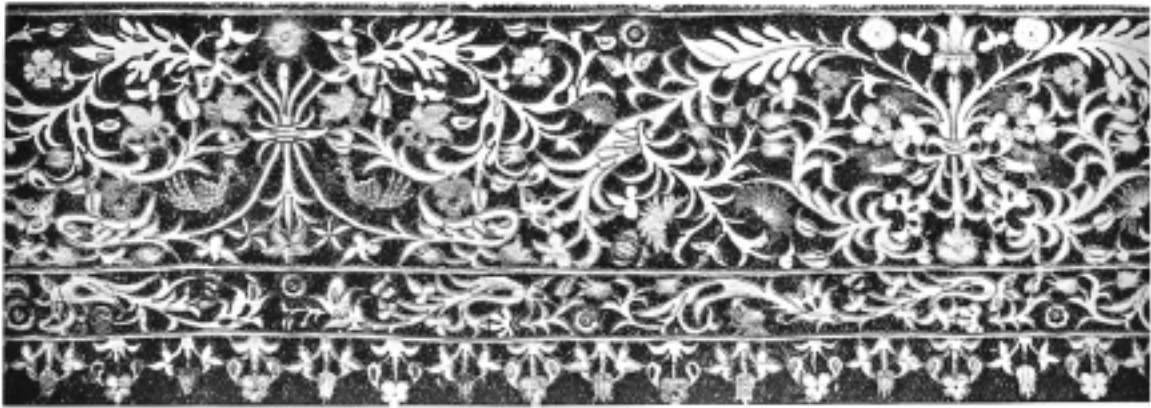
Cutwork, as in France and England, was originally "greatly accepted of by ladies and gentlemen," and "consequently of the common people." The art spread downwards, ‡ and in the time of Daru "occupait la population de la capitale"—the daughters of the fishermen in the islands and the convents, as Peuchet writes.§ Geometrical-patterned lace continued to be made for ornamenting linen for household purposes until the

‡ Morosini Grimani, wife of the Doge Marino Grimani, set up at her own expense a workshop, in which were employed 130 workwomen under the direction of a *mistra* (maestra), Cattarina Gardin, who worked exclusively for the Dogressa.

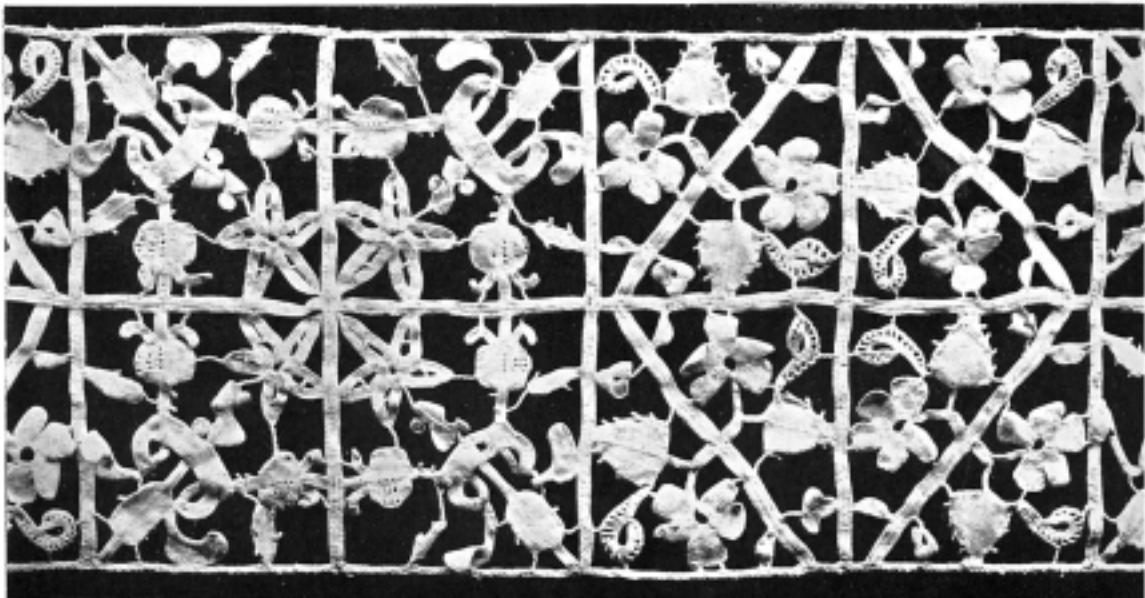
§ "Un grand nombre de jeunes filles de pêcheurs et d'autres dans la ville même et dans les monastères, sont occupées de ce travail" (Peuchet).



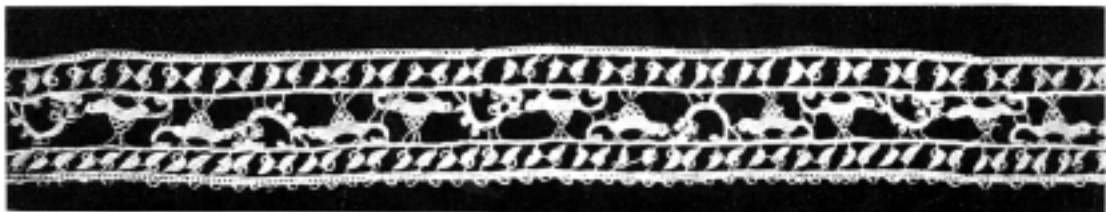
DESIGN FOR PUNTO IN ARIA FROM PATTERN-BOOK OF ELISABETTA CATANEA PARASOLE



BORDER OF CUT LINEN EMBROIDERED WITH SILVER AND SILVER-GILT THREAD AND COLOURED SILKS
VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM



INSERTION OF VENETIAN NEEDLEPOINT LACE, LATE 16TH OR EARLY 17TH CENTURY
IN THE POSSESSION OF MRS. J. H. MIDDLETON



NARROW INSERTION OF NEEDLEPOINT LACE

Venetian Needlepoint

eighteenth century,* but in the last years of the sixteenth curved forms were introduced, and a new type of lace developed. In the early seventeenth century floral and human forms were often treated. The specimens with figures and animals are curious rather than beautiful, as may be seen from the illustrations of the narrow insertion consisting of a series of scorpions and snails, and the "sachet" representing Salome in early seventeenth century costume bringing the head of John the Baptist to Herod.† This piece, which is very possibly

pod, or a many-lobed flower, and with the interlacing ribbon-like scrolls shows the influence of Oriental art. The solid part of the pattern is, in many cases, outlined by a slightly raised rib or edge, which also models portions of the ornament. The edge is also enriched by short picots, and the design is frequently united by short brides—either ornamented or varied by a single picot.

It is probable that in design either type of lace was influenced by cut linen lightly embroidered



SACHET COVERED WITH NEEDLEPOINT

IN THE POSSESSION OF SIR HUBERT JERNINGHAM

of English workmanship, is ornamented with seed pearls, and should be compared with the similar borders of Italian work representing the story of Judith and Holofernes. Lace of scroll designs in flat needlepoint, recalling by their lightness very fine metal work or the arabesques of Persian ornament, is very interesting and well designed. The flower in this type is a rosette, a curved

with coloured silks and silver gilt and silver thread of the seventeenth century, of which a specimen is illustrated.

There is no distinguishing name for this rare and beautiful type of lace. It is, strictly speaking, *later punto in aria*, but the needlepoint laces which were produced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were virtually all comprised under the general name of *punto in aria*, for in 1616, 1633, and 1634, the *Proveditori alle Pompe* forbade the wearing of "*punto in aere da Venezia*," under penalty of a fine of two hundred ducats for each offence.

The term is an unfortunate one, as it was also

* A piece of Point lace border in white and brown thread, lent by Mrs. C. Martin to the Victoria and Albert Museum, though of the eighteenth century, resembles the designs of the late sixteenth.

† This interesting piece was exhibited at Somerset House in 1858 by the Rev. Alfred Deck, of Sandhurst, and is now in the possession of Sir Hubert Jerningham.

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applied to a stitch in embroidery,* “the high raised stitch,” and continued to be applied to every kind of Venetian needlepoint lace: Rose point, Coraline point, are all, in truth, “punto in aria.” Marini quotes from a document of the seventeenth century, in which punti in aria

Rose point differs from punto in aria in three important details: in the highly conventional character of its design, its relief, and the elaboration of its brides. The design of the heavier rose points is almost invariably a foliated scroll, with an ornamental flower based upon the pomegranate,



ITALIAN EMBROIDERY (APPLIQUÉ), SHOWING THE TYPE OF DESIGN BY WHICH ROSE POINT WAS INFLUENCED
VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

appears to have been an alternative name for Burano lace,† and Peuchet states that Venetian laces were known by that name.‡

* *Punto in aria* in Florio and Torriano's Dictionary (London, 1654) is defined as “the high raised stitch” (hence the name).

† “Elles portent le nom de *point* ou *punti in aria*” (1799). Peuchet.

‡ It is curious that in Florio's Dictionary the special terms used for lace have quite other significations. *Pizzo* is “a peake or tip of anything,” *Merli* are “little turrets, spires, pinnacles or battlements upon wals,” *Merletti*, “the severall wards of a

but much conventionalised. A natural pomegranate § appears in many specimens of late punto

locke,” *Trine* is a term for “cuts, iags, snips or such cuttings or pinching, pinkt works in garments.” “*Punto in aria*” does not appear in Florio.

Florio—*A Worlde of Wordes*. 1598.

§ In the latter part of the fifteenth century the pomegranate pattern made its appearance in textile fabrics. It was introduced by Raphael in his decorations in the Vatican, generally, however, *greatly modified* in form from the natural type fifteenth century Italian ornament. Sidney Vacher, 1886.

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in aria, but the fruit, as it appears in rose point, is hardly recognisable. This conventional treatment of natural forms is a prominent feature of Italian design, as compared with the more naturalistic art of France, Flanders, and England.

Figures and natural objects are very rarely introduced even in ecclesiastical lace. In one curious "pale" or square of rose point in the Victoria and Albert Museum, two angels are displayed holding up a chalice, above which is the sacred monogram I.H.S. set in rays of glory.* In a specimen belonging to the Falier family, the Doge's horn and double F. are represented, and in a unique collar mythological subjects are either outlined by pin-holes or distinguished from the background by a closer stitch upon the flat *toile* in irregular-shaped compartments. In a triangular piece in the possession of Mr. Sidney Vacher, stags and other conventionalised animals are introduced. Such specimens, however, are no doubt experimental in design, and are rarely met with.

The second point in which rose point differs from punto in aria is in its relief. In rose point, besides the raised edge which it has in common with some specimens of flat Venetian,† higher relief is given by laying down a pad of coarse threads, varying according to the amount of relief it was desired to obtain, and covering this layer of thread by close button-hole stitches.‡

This thick sheaf of threads takes naturally an unbroken curve, and to this may be attributed the

almost invariably rounded and lobed forms of the flower. This pad is often ornamented with a close fringe of picots, or by an ornament of free loops—tier upon tier, ornamented with picots, which can be studied in the enlarged illustration.



LINEN COLLAR WITH BORDER AND BROAD ENDS OF ROSE POINT
VENETIAN, 17TH CENTURY VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

* In a square of rose point for covering the paten, the design displays two angels holding up a chalice, above which is the sacred monogram I.H.S. set in rays of glory. Venetian seventeenth century 556—75 Victoria and Albert Museum.

† In some specimens of rose point, however, the pattern is not strengthened on the edge by outer cordonnets of button-hole stitched work.

‡ "On ne mettait pas seulement un fil mais trois, cinq, huit ou dix fils suivant l'épaisseur du relief que l'on voulait obtenir; puis sur ce bourrage, se faisaient des points bouclés très serrés, de façon que la boucle fut presque sous les fils formant le relief."
—*Histoire du Point d'Aleçon*. Mme. Despierres.

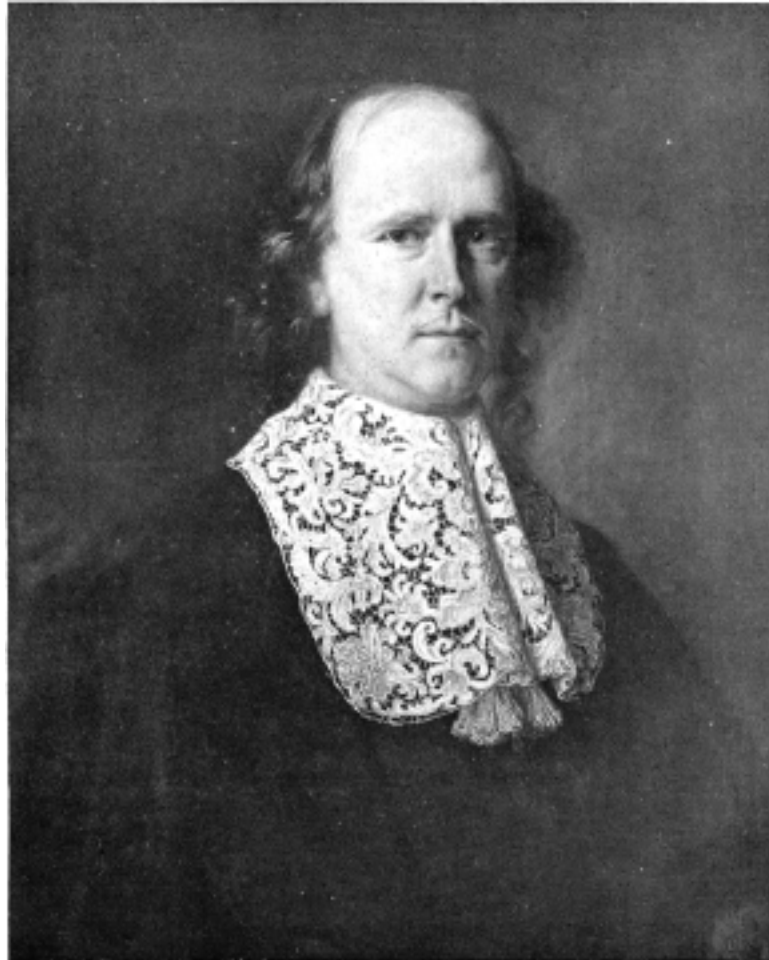
No open spaces or *jours* are introduced into the *toile*, which is of an even and close button-hole stitch, varied by very small pin-holes arranged in lines or veins, or in simple chequer, chevron, or diamond diaper patterns, subordinated to the general effect of the design. In a specimen in the possession of Mr. Sidney Vacher the pin-holes form a date.

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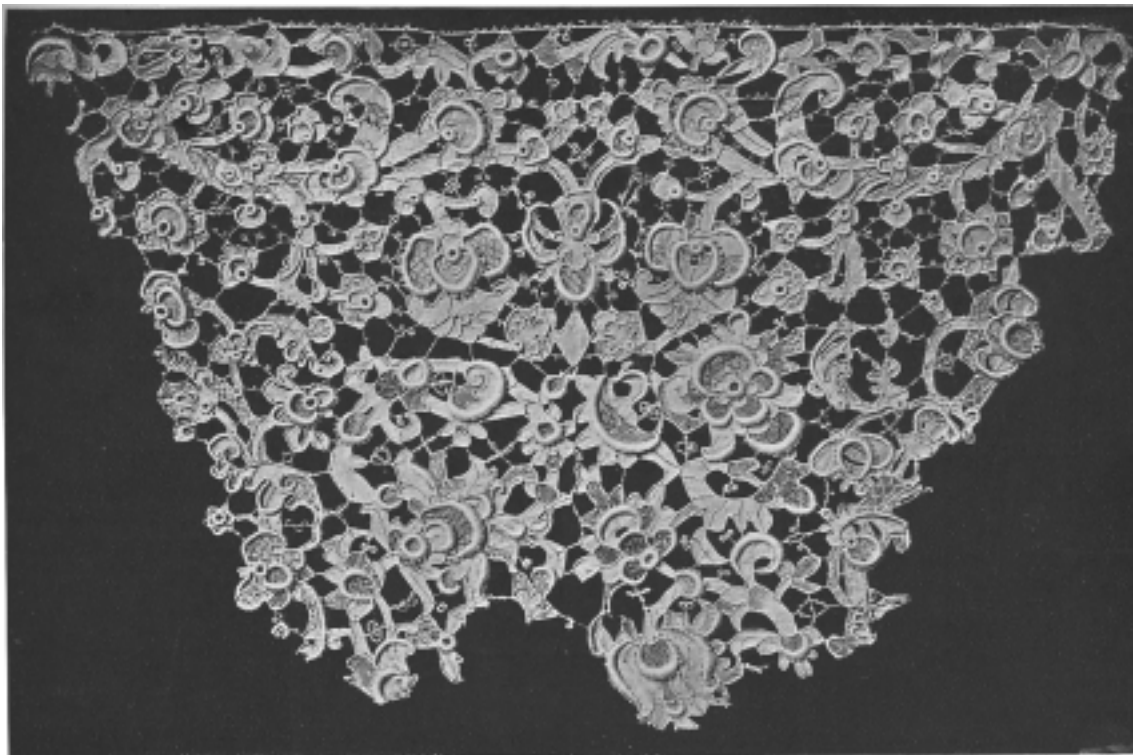
The design is connected by a groundwork of brides, which have been already noticed in flat Venetian. Some pieces, apparently without brides, are to be seen even in public collections—pieced specimens which have lost their brides which are more liable to be destroyed than the thicker work.* In such cases the scroll design originally free, and linked by its background of brides, is wrenched and bent from a natural to a debased, flattened, or irregular curve, in order that portions of the design may touch one another. Such specimens can be recognised by the overlapping and encroachment of certain details, and by the absence of continuity of design. As it is often impossible to fill up the required space with the scroll in its new

* An exceptional piece now and then appears to have been made with no brides, like the Cluny collar, or with a minimum of brides as in a fine specimen in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

position, detached details of flowers springing from nowhere are sewn in, the main line of the scroll is broken again and again, and the whole piece presents a fortuitous concourse of detached ornament. In the clumsily pieced specimens illustrated one flower can be seen overlapping part of a leaf; a small detached flower is suspended in an open space without any connection with a stalk or scroll, and the strain of the sewing has dragged and torn it at the junctures. The flower applied upon the scroll in the right-hand corner is imperfect, the scroll in its new position wrinkles, and will not lie flat. As the flowers are often taken from pieces of different design and quality, the difficulty of combining them into a continuous or even coherent pattern can readily be imagined. In more carefully treated pieced specimens, the thickness and heaviness of the brideless design alone is noticeable.



PORTRAIT OF A MAN, SHOWING COLLAR OF ROSE POINT (FRENCH SCHOOL)
CORSINI GALLERY



SPECIMEN OF *PIECED* ROSE POINT, WHERE DETACHED FLOWERS ARE JOINED INTO A MOSAIC WITHOUT FORMING ANY CONSECUTIVE PATTERN



SQUARE OR PALE FOR COVERING THE PATEN, OF NEEDLEPOINT LACE
 THE DESIGN DISPLAYS TWO ANGELS HOLDING UP THE CHALICE,
 ABOVE WHICH IS THE SACRED MONOGRAM I.H.S.
 ROSE POINT, 17TH CENTURY (THE DETAILS OF THIS PALE ARE PIECED)
 VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM