

Valenciennes

Part II.

By M. Jourdain

ACCORDING to Peuchet\* the sole defect of Valenciennes was its indifferent white; but one quality of thread was used, the value of which in Arthur Young's time ranged from 24 to 700 livres a pound, but though expensive, the price of the flax was but one-thirtieth of the selling price of the finished lace. This thread came from Flanders, Hainault, and Cambrésis.

The designs were pricked upon green parchment prepared at Lille, and a favourite pattern remained in use as long as it was in demand.†

The design was the special property of the manufacturer, it was at the option of the worker to pay for its use and retain her work, if not satisfied with the price she received. Valenciennes can be detected no matter what its design, which is often derivative, imitative, or directly borrowed from Mechlin, Brussels, or Alençon, by the absence of cordonnet and by its peculiar mesh. Some rare experimental specimens were made by the Valenciennes workers in which an occasional cordonnet was introduced, but such works are very exceptional. Open à jours are of extremely rare occurrence; their fillings are very similar to those of Mechlin.

No lace was so expensive to make from the number of bobbins required for fine lace of wide width. "While Lille lace-workers could produce from three to five ells a day, those of Valenciennes could not complete more than an inch and a half

in the same time. It took ten months, working fifteen hours a day, to finish a pair of men's ruffles, hence the costliness of the lace." At the present day all the bobbins which are employed in the "mats" or ornament do not pass into the ground, which is a great economy; they are removed to the next motif.

After the French Revolution, when so many lace-makers fled to Belgium, Ghent, Alost, Ypres,‡ Bruges, Menin and Courtrai§ became the centres of a new and inferior Valenciennes, each town having a distinctive feature in the ground. These laces are as a rule less close in workmanship, less solid, and cheaper.

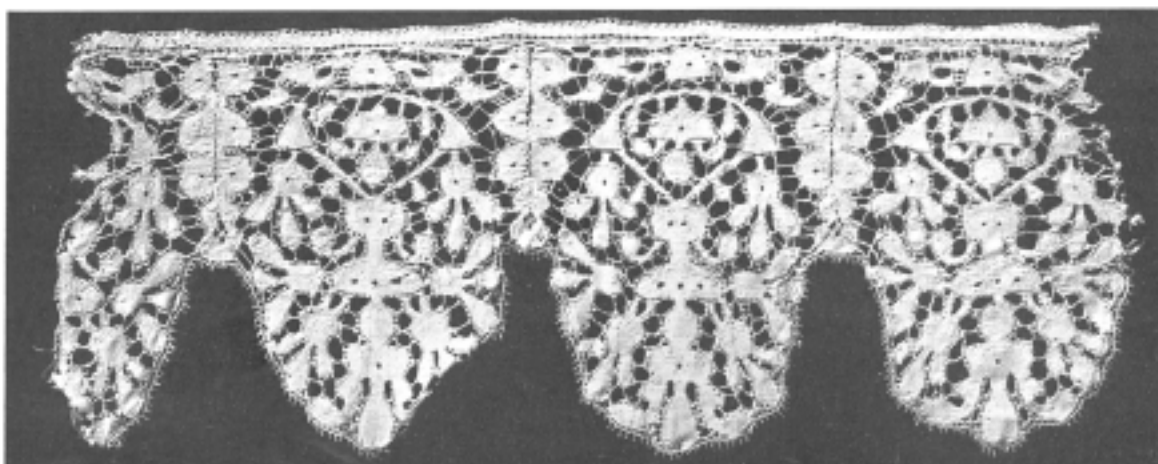
At Ypres, which makes the best quality of Belgian Valenciennes, the réseau is made of a plait of four threads, and forms a diamond-shaped mesh. In Courtrai and Menin the grounds are twisted three and a half times; and in Bruges, where the ground has a circular mesh, the bobbins are twisted three times; that made at Ghent|| in East Flanders, is square-meshed, the bobbins being twisted two and a half times. Valenciennes

‡ As early as 1656 Ypres began to make lace. In 1684 it was already much decayed. It rose again after the influx of Valenciennes workmen after the French Revolution. In 1833 the wire ground was adopted.

§ "Courtrai makes the widest Valenciennes. Valenciennes of Courtrai was much sought after in the eighteenth century both in England and France."—Peuchet.

|| Savary cites the Fausses Valenciennes of Ghent, which he declares are "moins serrées, un peu moins solides, et un peu moins chères."

\* *Dictionnaire de la Géographie Commercante*, 1789.  
† (*Ibid.*)

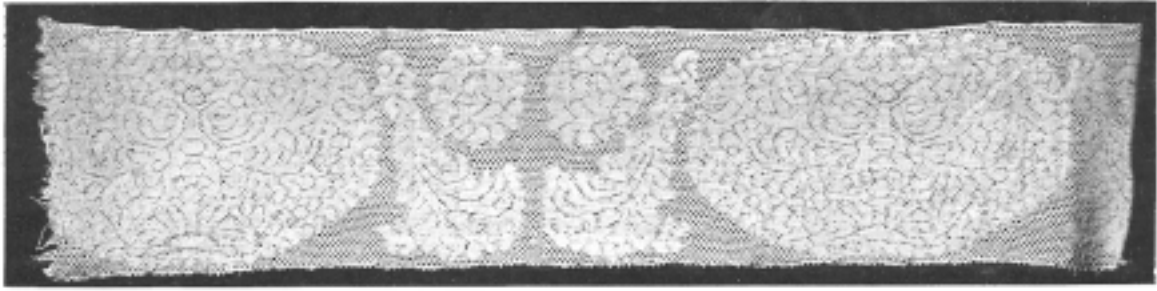


BOBBIN-MADE DUTCH LACE

EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS, BRUSSELS

## The Connoisseur



DUTCH BOBBIN LACE

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

laces made outside the walls of Valenciennes were designated as *Fausse Valenciennes*, whether made in Belgium or in the Département du Nord, at Lille, Bergues, Bailleul, Avesnes, Cassel, and Armentières.\* Of these latter centres Bailleul produced † the largest quantity: chiefly (before 1830) of a narrow straight-edged type for the Normandy market. ‡

At Dieppe,§ in Normandy, Valenciennes with the square ground was introduced in 1826, by the sisters Fleury and Hubert from the Convent of La Providence at Rouen, and took the place of the old point de Dieppe, which is very like Valenciennes with small round meshes. Of this lace, Peuchet,|| writing at the end of the eighteenth century, says that the designs were inferior, but that an attempt was being made to introduce lighter, less crowded designs. The thread came from Flanders, from Saint Amant. Point de Dieppe¶ requires much fewer bobbins, and whereas Valenciennes can only be made in lengths of eight

inches without detaching the lace from the pillow, the Dieppe point is not taken off, but rolled.\*\*

### DUTCH LACE.

Holland, in spite of its proximity to Flanders, seems to have produced little lace during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In 1667, however, the Dutch themselves set up manufactures of lace, to rival France which had laid prohibitive duties upon foreign goods.

No trace is found of the manufacture of point-lace set up at Amsterdam by refugees from Alençon. The Dutch lace, as it appears in portraits, is thick, strong, and bobbin made. A type of scalloped lace, the pattern of each scallop repeating upon either side of a central line, has a design of tape-like continuous scrolls arranged rather closely together in leafy or fan forms, or some pendant blossom of conventional †† form; this lace was in use from about 1630 to 1650. ‡‡ Other Dutch varieties of lace are pieces in design like early Valenciennes with conventional rolling scroll with blossoms; or a pattern of flowers and fruit strictly copied from nature.

The thread used in Holland was the famous Haarlem thread, once considered the best adapted for lace-makers in the world. "No place bleaches flax like the meer of Haarlem."

\*\* The lace of Eu, resembling Valenciennes, disappeared at the French Revolution. Valenciennes was made in Northamptonshire for a short time.

†† Among the Dutch laces in the Victoria and Albert Museum is a pillow-made edging in the manner of early Italian pillow-laces, but of thicker design (No. 604, 1854).

‡‡ See 286, 1890; 861, 1853; 153, 1885.

\* "Armentières et Bailleul ne font que de la Valenciennes fausse dans tous les prix."—*Peuchet*.

† The laces of Bailleul "have neither the finish nor the lightness of the Belgian products, are soft to touch, the mesh round, and the ground thick, but it is strong and cheap, and in general use for trimming lace."—*Mrs. Palliser, History of Lace*.

‡ Small quantities of Valenciennes have been made in Le Puy, Bohemia and Northamptonshire.

§ It is said to have had considerable trade at the end of the seventeenth century, and to have slackened since about 1745.

|| *Dictionnaire de la Géographie Commercante*, 1789.

¶ *Mrs. Palliser*.



DUTCH BOBBIN LACE