

**Gold and Silver Lace      Part II.      By M. Jourdain**

FRANCE.

THE three centres of metal lace-making in France were Lyons,\* Paris, and Aurillac.

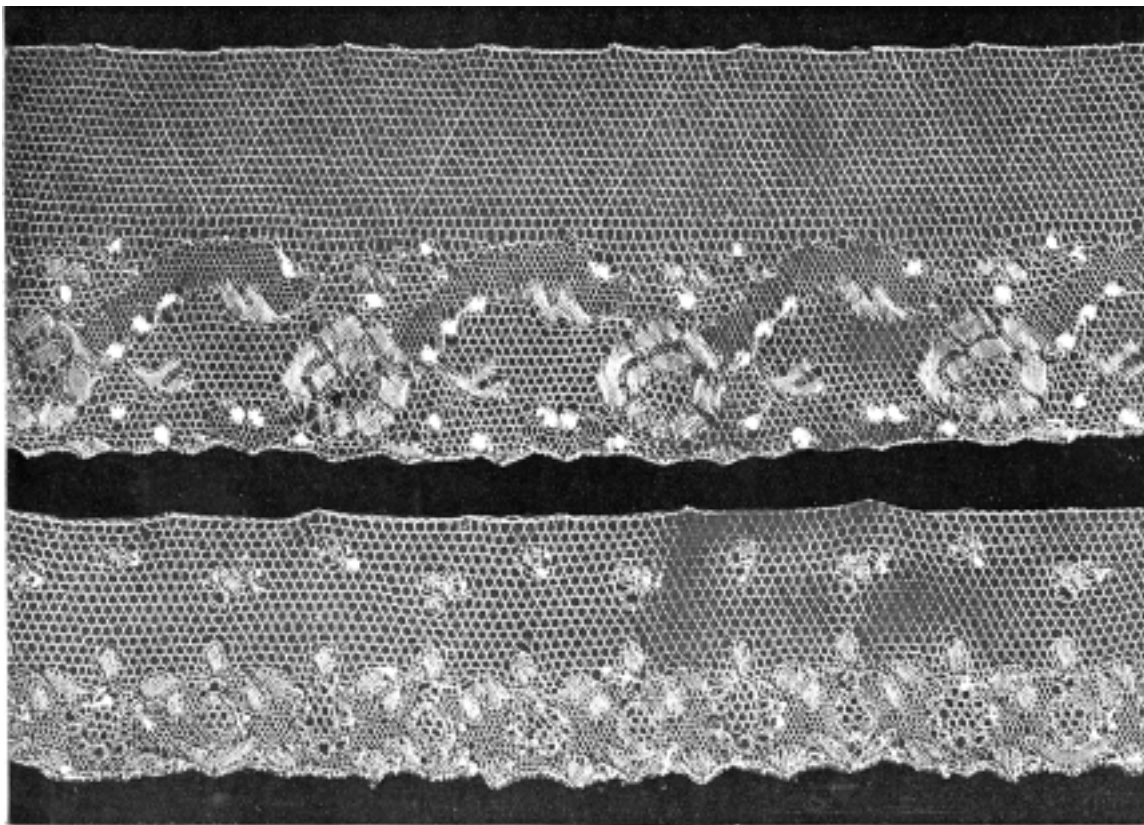
The *Livre Nouveau de Patrons* and *Fleurs des Patrons*, both printed at Lyons,† give various sketches to be executed “en fil d’or, d’argent, de soie, et d’autres.”

\* “Les dentelles d’or et d’argent, tout fin que faux, se fabriquent presque toutes à Paris, à Lyon, et en quelques endroits des environs de ces deux grandes villes.”—Savary.

† The first has no date; the second is dated 1549.

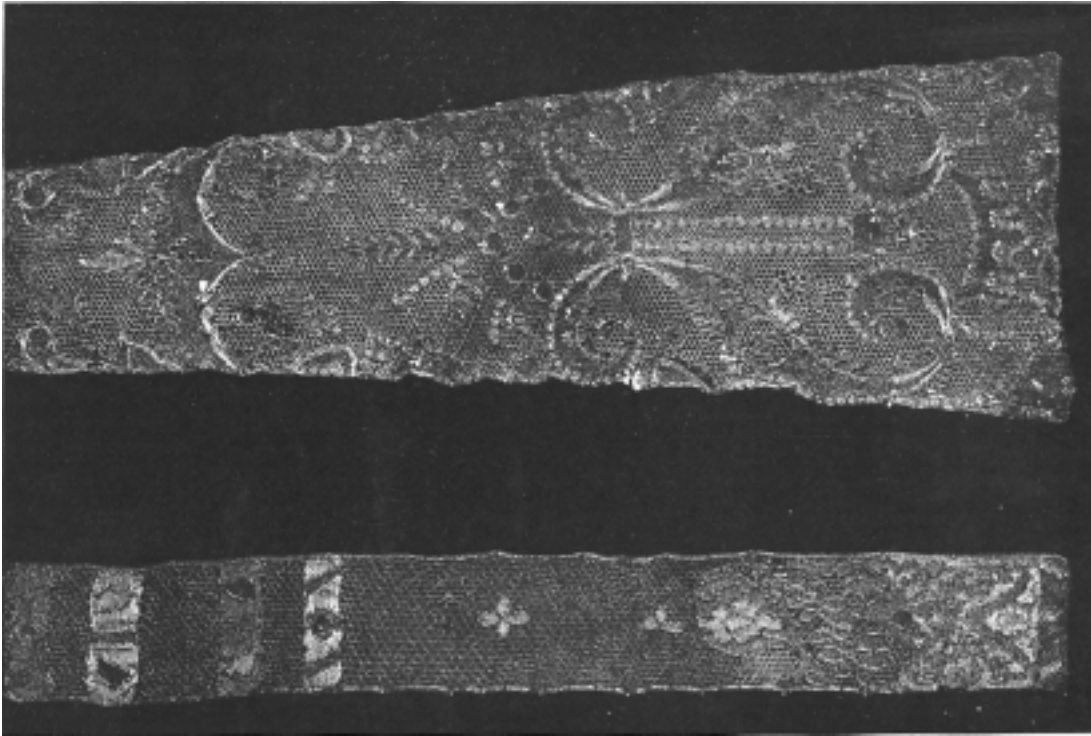
Lyons made gold and silver laces similar to those of Paris, but inferior in quality,‡ and towards the middle of the seventeenth century its manufacture was the largest in the kingdom, and had a large trade with Spain and Portugal. Upon the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, this manufacture, which was almost entirely in the hands of the Huguenots, was transferred to Geneva.

‡ “L’on travaillait plus particulièrement à Lyon l’or faux de Nuremberg.”—Seguin, *La Dentelle*.



METAL LACE      LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY      FRENCH

## Gold and Silver Lace



METAL LACE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY FRENCH OR ITALIAN

The gold and silver laces of Paris were superior in design and in the quality of the metal employed. In the seventeenth century the so-called Point d'Espagne formed a large article of commerce in France until the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, being introduced by one Simon Châtelain, a Huguenot, who died in 1675, having amassed a large fortune. In an inventory of the effects of the Duc de Penthièvre we have an entry of "Point d'Espagne d'or de Paris, à fonds de réseau."\*

Some specimens in the Museum at Le Puy, which are attributed to Aurillac, are not of wire, but of strips of metal twisted round silk.† Points d'Aurillac were highly esteemed in the seventeenth century, and the greater part of them were sent into Spain. Towards the close of the century they fell into disfavour—the "domaine du vulgaire."

During the nineteenth century attempts have been frequently made to make a mixed lace of silk and gold or silver at Caen and Bayeux, but the fashion has always been of short duration.‡

In the time of Louis XIV. the gold laces formed

of themselves a special commerce, and had their shops in the "rue des Bourdonnais and the rue Saint Honoré, entre la place aux Chats et les piliers des Halles." Their importance is shown by the sumptuary edicts of the seventeenth century, and also by their mention in the Révolte des Passemens.§

At the close of the seventeenth century metal laces were made with contrasting threads, some fine and some coarse; and sometimes the design was accentuated by a cordonnet of coloured silk chenille, as in a well-preserved specimen of gold and silver lace in the Musée de Cluny.

During the reign of Louis XV. gold and silver lace was still largely used; but the patterns were lighter, and, according to M. Seguin, it was then that the réseau ground was popular for metal laces.||

The hand-painted engravings in the Victoria and Albert Museum, representing ladies in costumes of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, are ornamented with gold and silver lace.¶ "The gold and silver laces shown in them are of two sorts, the one a small bordering of little fan-shaped motives, through the edge of which a twisted double thread passes, the other a broader sort of lace with a pattern traced in thick double lines of gold and silver gimp,

\* 1732. Garderobe de S.A.S. Mgr. le Duc de Penthièvre. *Arch. Nat.*, K. K. 390-1.

† "Au nombre des anciennes et belles pièces de dentelles qui font partie de ma collection, je signalerai surtout une sorte de guipure en fils d'or et d'argent trouvée au Puy, dont le dessin en entrelacs parfaitement accentués rappelle l'époque de la Renaissance."—M. Théodore Falcon.

‡ *La Dentelle*, Seguin.

§ *History of Lace*, Mrs. Palliser.

|| *La Dentelle*, Seguin. This is later than the use of the réseau in thread laces, which began about 1680.

¶ Nos. 1,197-75 and 1,196-75.

passing through the meshes of a réseau ground, with close work here and there, of twisting and close lying double threads.\*

An interesting collection of gold laces, many of which are French, is to be seen at the Cinquantenaire Museum at Brussels. Illustrations iv. and v. (see No. 65, pp. 11 and 12) is a piece of silver lace with square-meshed réseau ground covered with applied motifs of embroidery in coloured silks, representing flowers, fruit, and a church, which are certainly not French in spirit. The collection includes some French flax laces of loose make, in which motifs of gold are introduced. The collection of metal laces of the early eighteenth century, from St. Mary's Church, Dantzic, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, are either French or Dutch. The designs in the more elaborate specimens are certainly French, and are either of French manufacture, or of Dutch under the influence of the French emigrants.

SICILY AND RUSSIA.

Sicily was celebrated in early times for its gold metal laces; and in Switzerland, "Zurich," writes Anderson, "makes much gold, silver and thread lace."

The oldest specimens of Russian metal lace, according to Mme. Davydoff, show a row of lozenges upon a réseau ground. For these, the word *kroujevo* was used, which meant originally a trimming.† It was, indeed, only in the eighteenth century, when metal laces began to fall out of fashion, that the word *kroujevo* began to be used as a special term for bobbin-made thread laces. In the reign of Catherine II. there was an establishment of twelve gold-lace makers at St. Petersburg, which it is said were scarcely able to supply the demand.

ENGLAND.

Gold thread was made

\* *Catalogue of Lace, etc., in the South Kensington Museum*, A. S. Cole.

† "La Dentelle (kroujevo) est une garniture d'or ou d'argent le long de la basque et aux bords des vêtements de grande tenue des souverains, large ou étroite, grande ou petite, avec bordure ou frange." — *Les grandes sorties des Tsars*, Stroiéff (Moscow, 1844).



METAL LACE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY RUSSIAN

at a very early date in England. It is mentioned in 1238, when a mandate from the King commands the mayor and aldermen of the city of London to see that gold bore no colour but its own, except in the case of gold thread.‡ In this century English ladies used to make for themselves the gold thread needed for their embroidery, by twisting long narrow strips of gold round a line of silk or flax.§

Gold and silver passement was largely worn in Queen Elizabeth's time, the more expensive qualities generally being specified as of "Venice." By Elizabeth's sumptuary laws, no one under the degree of a baron's eldest son's wife (with certain exceptions) was allowed to wear passement of gold or silver. It was bought by weight;|| sometimes it was mixed with silk, and sometimes enriched with pearls¶ and spangles. A gold embroidered linen cap or hood of the seventeenth century in the Victoria and Albert Museum is fringed with lace of plaited and twisted gold thread, ornamented with gold spangles.\*\*

In the reign of James I., among the divers reasons of the scarcity in the county of Northampton,†† is said to be the great waste of coin by making gold and silver lace, and "gilding" daggers, coaches, "and such like vain things that might well be spared." Gold lace was considered as a cheaper and better investment than embroidery, for the lace could always be removed.

A "small" and "broad" gold lace is noted in a letter of this reign, and in both these a pattern with "the panes" (diamond-shape) with a cut in the middle is recommended as the best.†††

‡ *Close Roll*. 22 Henry III., m. 6.

§ *Old English Embroidery*, F. and H. Marshall (1894).

|| "Bone Lace wroughte w<sup>t</sup> sylver and spangells vij ounce at IX<sup>s</sup>. thounce. Ixij<sup>s</sup>." — *Extracts from the Accounts of the Revels at Court*.

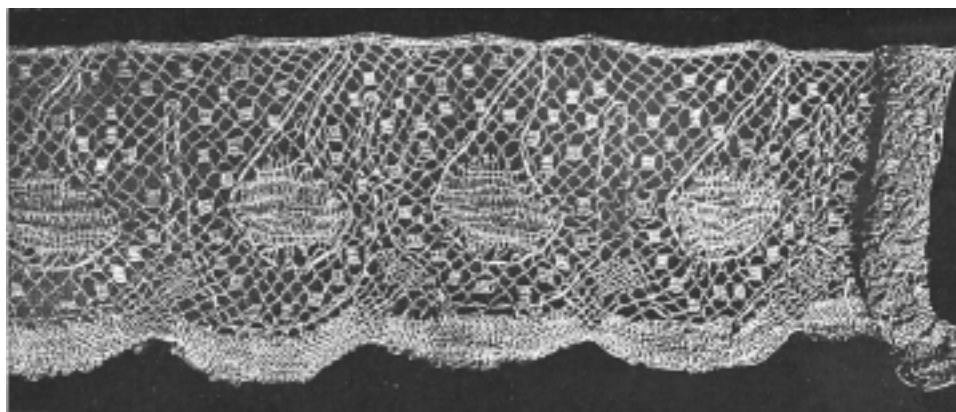
¶ In 1573, under the head of "Perles and Flowers," is an entry of "perles set upon silver bone lace for the Ladys Maskers heade." — *Extracts from the Accounts of the Revels at Court*.

\*\* 920-1,873, Victoria and Albert Museum.

†† *MSS. of Lora Montague of Beaulieu. Hist. MSS. Comm.*

††† 1693, April 15. "Imbrotheringe is now very dear. Also much gold lace worn, which in my opinion is

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At a time in this reign when the monopoly of gold thread was granted to George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, the thread was so scandalously debased with copper as to corrode the hands of the artificers, and even the flesh of those who wore it. This adulterated article was sold at an exorbitant price, and if anyone was detected making a cheaper or better article, the firm were empowered to fine and imprison him, while a clause in their patent protected themselves. Finally, the House of Commons interfered, and the monopoly was abolished. Gold embroideries and gold lace were then so universally worn by men and women, that the profit made upon a monopoly of gold and silver threads must have been immense.\*

In 1614,† Richard Dike and Matthias Fowle, merchants, obtained a patent for making gold and silver thread after the manner of Venice, which was to “forge, beat, and flat with hammers, and to cut with shears; and then to spin the same upon silk.” This method they failed to bring to perfection, whereupon they obtained a new patent with an addition for the “drawing of gold and silver wire and milling it after the manner of England and France.”‡ This, however, was not a new invention, but already an “old trade” in England.§

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cheaper and better. There is of divers sorts, some trimmed with small gold lace, and some with broad; in my opinion broad lace, of either the panes with a cut in the middle, is best.—*MSS. of G. A. Lowndes, Esq. Hist. MSS. Comm.*

\* In 1606 James had given a license to the Earl of Suffolk for the import of gold and silver lace.—*B.M. Bib. Lansd.*, 172, No. 59. In 1611 we find a re-grant to the Earl of Suffolk of the moiety of all seizures of Venice gold and silver formerly granted in the fifth year of the king.—*State Papers, Dom. Jas. I.*, Vol. LXIV., 66. In 1622 a lease on the customs on gold and silver thread lace is given to Sir Edward Villiers.—*Ibid.*, Vol. CXXXII., 34.

† This is referred to in the *Calendar of State Papers* under September 27th, 1604, but the correct date is 1614. The patentees also had a special license dated January 10th, 1616.

‡ *MSS. of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry.* Vol. I. *Hist. MSS. Comm.*

§ The art of drawing wire was introduced into England in 1560.

The English attempts at making gold and silver thread appear for a time to have been unsuccessful. In 1619, a license is given by the King to two persons to import gold and silver thread from abroad, “forasmuch as they cannot make gold and silver thread of a good colour.”

In 1622, a petition is made by two Dutchmen of Dort, showing that the manufacture of gold and silver thread, purle, etc., in England, was “a great waste of bullion,”|| the Dutchmen being possibly of opinion that it was more to their own advantage to export such articles into England. After a lapse of three years the petition is granted. In 1624, James renews his prohibition against the manufacture of “gold purles” as tending to consumption of the coin and bullion of the kingdom.”¶

Gold lace was exported in considerable quantities to India in the reign of James I., and continued to be so in the reign of Charles I.,\*\* by which time the manufacture of gold and silver lace in England†† had improved to such a degree that the officers of the customs in 1629 stated it to be their opinion that the duties on gold and silver thread would decay, “for the invention of Venice gold and silver lace within the kingdom is come to that perfection that it will be made here more cheap than it can be brought from beyond seas,” a boast which was really justified, for the lease of twenty-one years granted in 1627 to Dame Barbara Villiers, of the duties on gold and silver thread, became a loss to the holder, who, in 1629, petitions for a discharge of £457 10s. arrears due to the crown.

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|| *State Papers, Dom. Jas. I.*, Vol. CXXXII., 34.

¶ *Foedera*, Vol. XVII., p. 605.

\*\* *State Papers, Dom. Charles I.*, Vol. CXLIX., No. 31.

†† Milton's daughter, Anne, was brought up to the trade of making gold and silver lace. “Anne Milton is lame, but hath a trade, and can live by the same, which is the making of gold and silver lace, and which the deceased (John Milton) bred her up to.”—*Todd's Life of Milton.*

## The Connoisseur

An act in 1635, however, prohibits the use of "gold and silver purlles" except manufactured in foreign parts, and especially forbids the melting down any coin of the realm—a measure which generally follows upon a shortage of money.

A skilful fraud was introduced about this time from Holland. About 1637 an invention of drawing silver wire with a copper core, which was first practised at Dort, was brought into England, and works were set up at Stepney and Old Ford. The cheat was, however, discovered, and the King and Privy Council seized a great quantity of the manufacture.

In the reign of Charles II. the hand spinners of gold wire, thread, lace, and spangles of the City of London, petition that "Having heard a report that the Parliament intend to pass an Act against the wearing of their manufacture, they hope it intends the reform not the destruction of their craft, for by it many thousands would be ruined. Let every person," say they, "be prohibited from wearing gold, silver, and thread lace—that will encourage the gentry to do so."\*

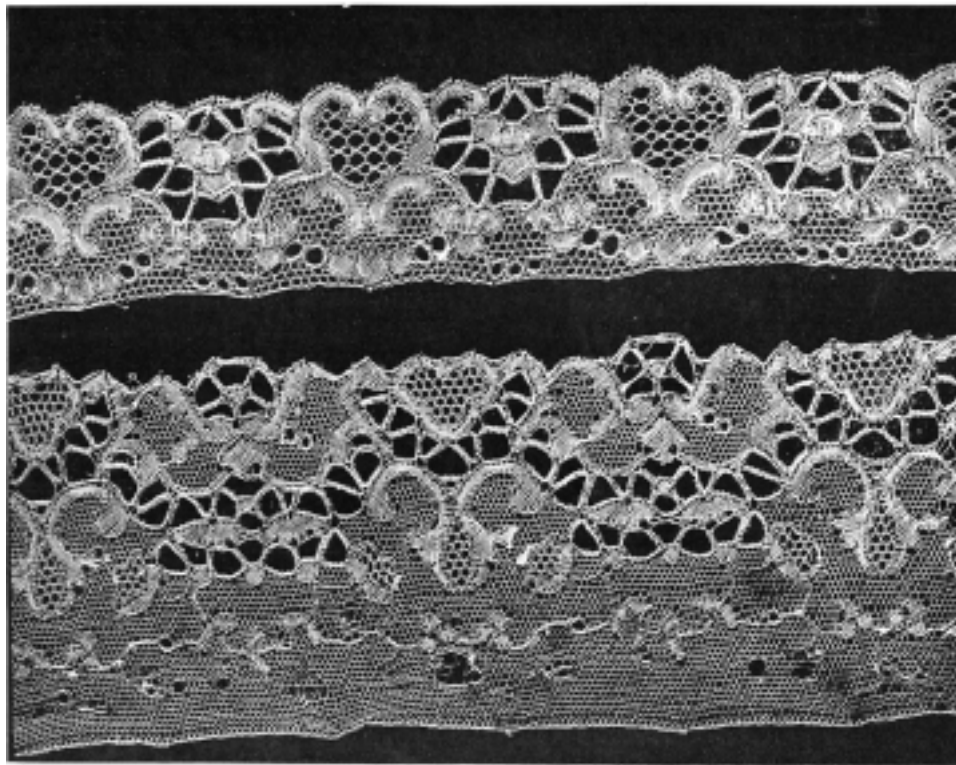
In 1664 the wire-drawers, spinners, and bone-lace

makers, "being many thousands in number," complain in a petition of the inferior quality of gold and silver thread. "The wire put on silk is now made so thin that it will not bear touching"; and while the proper proportion is 5 ounces of plate on 3 ounces of silk, now not above 2 ounces of plate is put on 6 ounces of silk.

The entry of foreign-made gold and silver lace was prohibited in 1711 by Queen Anne, under penalty of forfeiture and a fine of five pounds, in consequence of the excesses of fashion. Malcolm tells us of a green silk knit waistcoat, with gold and silver flowers all over it, and about 14 yards of gold and silver thick lace on it.† There was a marked tendency towards the end of the reign of George II. to encourage native industries, and in 1749 the royal assent was given to an Act preventing the importation or wearing of gold, silver, and thread lace manufactured in foreign parts. In the ensuing reigns gold lace was much less in use, and became restricted almost entirely to military dress, metal lace being replaced by thread laces throughout Europe.

\* Mrs. Palliser, *History of Lace*, p. 335.

† *Manners and Customs*, Vol. V., p. 230.



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