



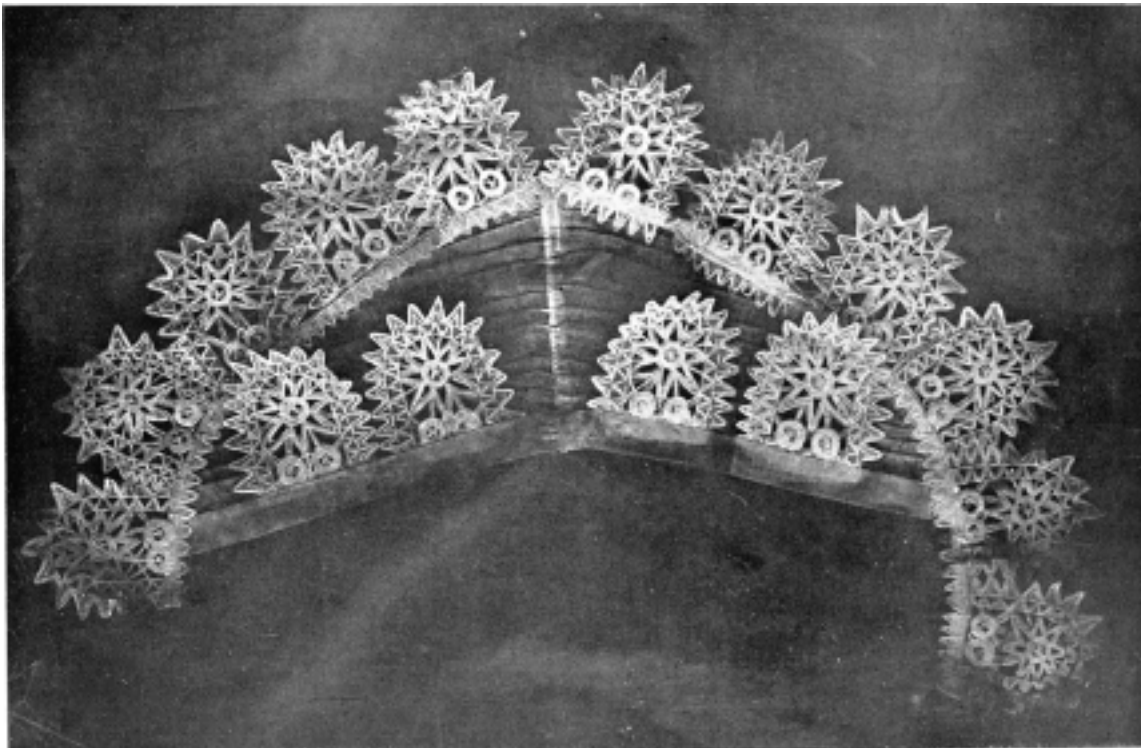
**R**UFFS  
BY MRS. F. NEVILL JACKSON

A COLLECTOR of fine laces usually acquires such specimens as are valuable for their beauty of design and workmanship; sometimes pieces belonging to one of the great types alone form a most interesting series, for in thus specialising it is possible to obtain a fairly complete history and to trace the gradual evolution of certain characteristics, and so gain an intimate knowledge of the development of the type.

Occasionally, however, we come across specimens of lace whose interest depends not on their beauty

nor on their connection with a particular type, but on their antiquarian interest alone. It is to this class that the ruffs which are the subject of this article belong, and it is with enthusiasm that we approach it, for authentic specimens are so rare that we are fortunate in being able to illustrate three varieties which were undoubtedly made at a time contemporary with their fashion in wearing.

There are many reasons for the extreme rarity of a "find" in this particular item in the dress of past days, the most potent being the fragility of the ruff. Added to this the wear of lace-trimmed ruffle was "hard," for as every practical woman knows, it is the cleaning, not the wearing, of lace and cambric



POINT GOTICO ON UPRISING COLLAR FOR DECOLTAGE



**HÉLÈNE FOURMENT**

By Rubens

Photo by Hanfstangl

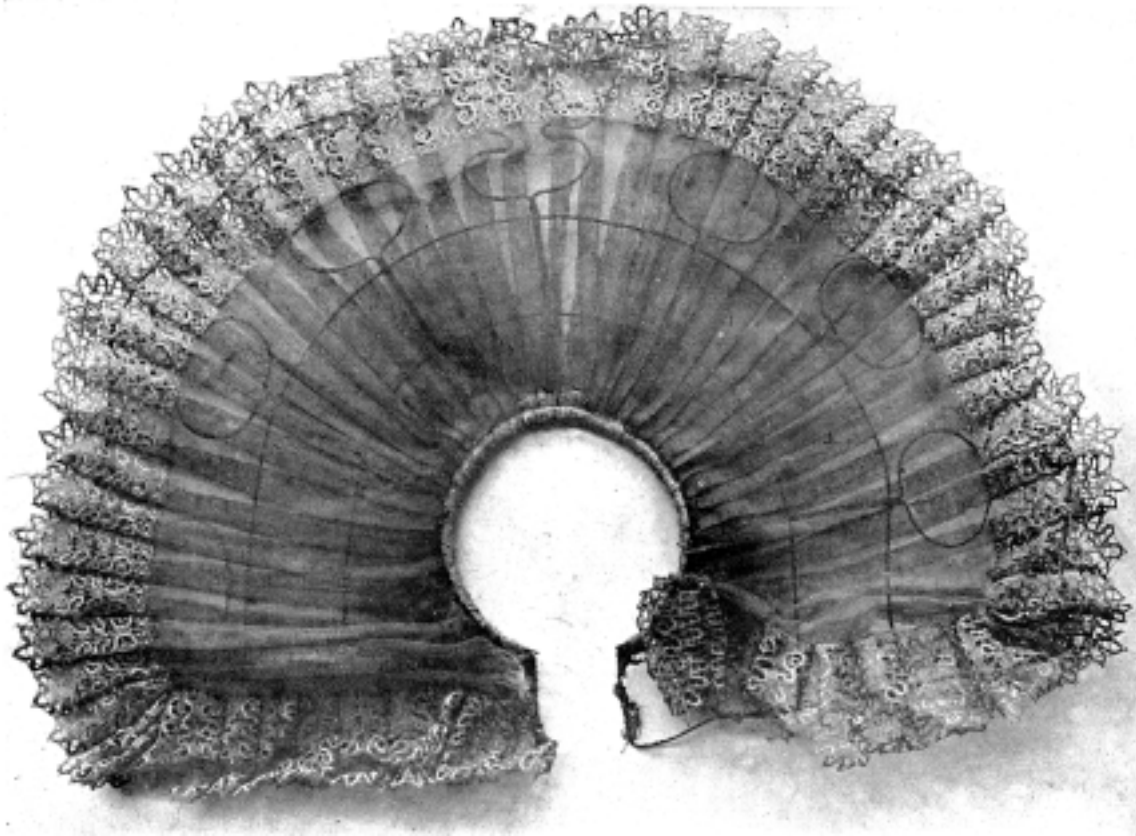
Munich Gallery

## Ruffs

which destroys it, and the washing must have been frequent to preserve the desired snowy whiteness or stainless yellow tint. Starch, so necessary for the successful set of a ruff, is a very destructive agency—it was called the “devil’s broth” in those days, when anything not completely understood was attributed to the agency of the evil one.

The art of starching reached England about the middle of the sixteenth century, the wife of the Queen’s coachman, who was a Dutchman, Gwyllam Boenen by name, having brought it with her from

Another reason for the destruction of old ruffles is the fact that the lace on them was much more durable than the cambric or lawn on which they were sewn, so that many a roll of guipure which has been found laid by with antique costumes probably formed the trimming of the ruff, but being separated from the foundation has lost much of its antiquarian interest. The large quantity of lace required (we read of “eight yards of ruff of cambric with white lace called hollow lace” in a wardrobe account of Queen Elizabeth) would suggest to the thrifty inheritor of an old



LACE-EDGED CAMBRIC RUFF WITH GILT WIRE SUPERTASSE

Flanders. Later, Madame Dingham van der Plasse, also from Flanders, set up as a clear starcher in London. Stowe says: “The most curious wives now made themselves ruffs of cambric and sent them to Madame Dingham to be starched, who charged high prices. After a time they made themselves ruffs of lawn, and thereupon rose a general scoff or by-word that shortly they would make their ruffs of spiders’ webs.” This enterprising Mrs. Dingham took pupils at £5 apiece for teaching the art of starching with setting sticks, struts, and poking sticks made of wood or bone; £1 extra was charged for teaching the making of the starch.

ruff whose foundation was tattered that the lace could be utilised for some other purpose, when ruffs were no longer modish.

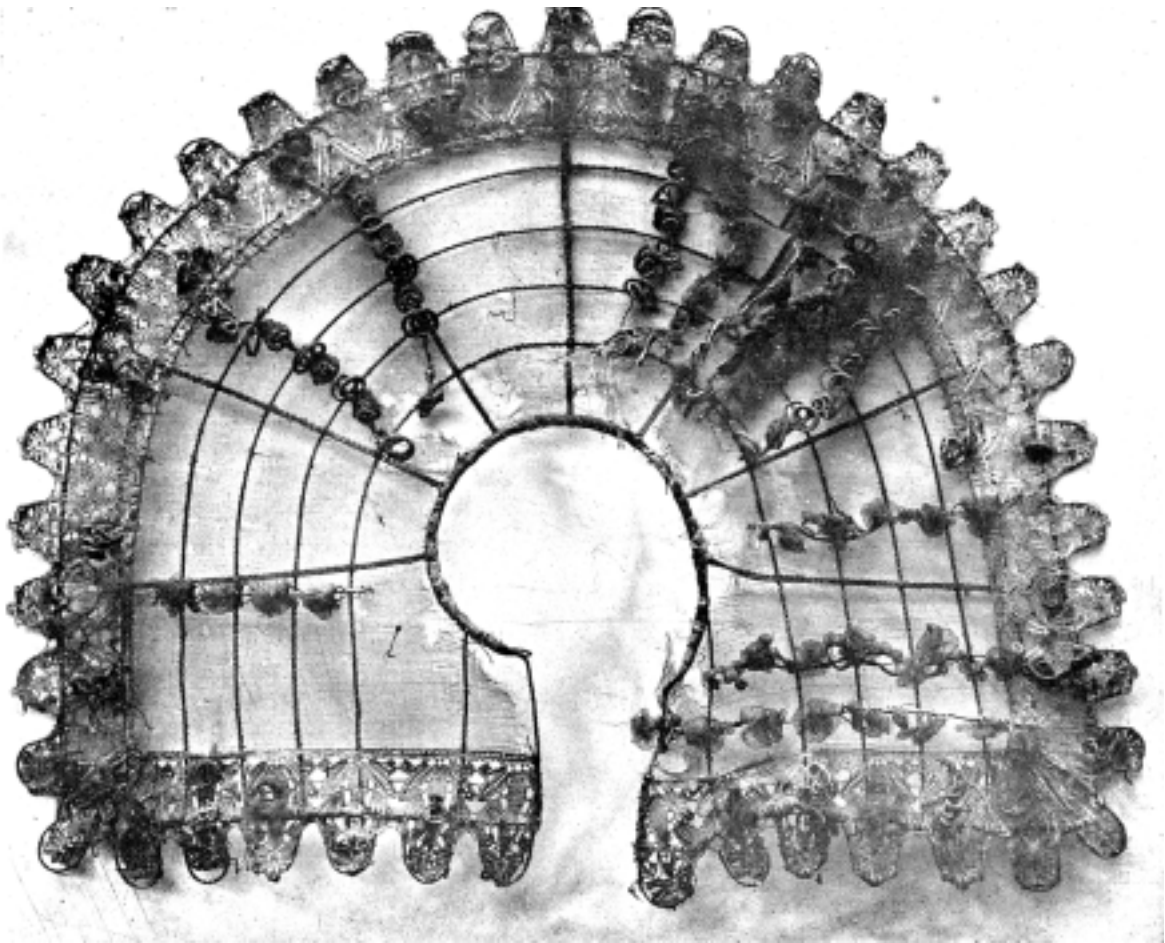
The evolution of the ruff is an interesting subject, and though it is with that famous dresser Catherine de Medici that we chiefly associate the outstanding collar, lace-edged or completely composed of lace, we must look earlier for types of neck frills from which the Medici collar evolved.

The fraise, as it was called in France from its resemblance to the fold round the neck of a calf, was first used by Henry II. of France to conceal a scar on his neck, and like all variations of dress

## *The Connoisseur*

initiated in such high quarters, was universally adopted by the courtiers of either sex, so that the ruff, now looked upon in its present attenuated and degenerate use as exclusively the adjunct of a woman's dress, was at first not only worn by men, but introduced by a man. Under Henry III. of France the men are described as "mignons frisés et fraisés"; the ruffs were made of a huge size, and it is said by a gossip of the day that the Queen was

purpose, and "lawn with laid work for ruffs." Such ruffs as will be seen in the pictures of the period were pleated closely, and in getting them up poking sticks were used for separating the folds when ironed. Such an operation was not considered beneath the notice of the dandies of the court, and Henry III. of France was called by the satirists of the day the "Ironer of his wife's ruffs," for he is said to have adjusted the poking sticks with his own royal hands.



RUFF LACE EDGED WITH WIRES ORNAMENTED WITH ROLLED CAMBRIC AND FLOWERS. SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

obliged to have a spoon with a handle two feet in length in order to eat her soup. The fashion spread all over Europe, and the pictures by Rembrandt, Holbein, and other masters of the day show this stage of the life of the ruff with great exactness.

Introduced earlier into England, the ruff had grown to enormous dimensions by the time of Elizabeth, and in her Royal wardrobe accounts there constantly appear items such as "bone lace for ruffs," "hemming and edging of cambric" for the same

Cut work and embroidered cambric was used as edgings on the ruffs besides the bone laces and purplings, and the narrow simple twisted thread laces of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Frequently small seed pearls were sown at the edges, and sometimes "silver and spangles" are mentioned amongst the enrichments of the lace-trimmed ruffs, besides rubies and other precious stones.

Of the three examples shown in our illustrations, two were worn close to the neck, the third edged the



PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG LADY  
BY VAN DYCK  
(BRERA, MILAN)





MARIE LOUISE,  
PRINCESSE DE TASSIS  
BY VAN DYCK



**PORTRAIT OF A LADY AND CHILD**

By Rubens

Photo by Hanfstangl Dresden Gallery

## Ruffs

decoltage in the way so gracefully shown in many of the pictures of Rubens and Vandyke. Both of these masters realised the decorative value of the ruff, and have left us splendid examples of its use in many fine portraits. In each ruff illustrating this article, the elaborate wiring necessary for the outstanding effect is clearly visible, and it is interesting to note that in one case an elaborate trimming has been added to hide the supports. This trimming is made with cambric, which in some places is twisted and stitched into the semblance of flowers and leaves, just as the dressmakers of to-day make flowers and foliage of muslin and chiffon. Sometimes the second variety of ornament shown in our old ruff is made by tightly rolling the cambric and then twisting and knotting it; this also successfully hides the wire. The wire supports, however, were not always concealed. The "supertasse," as it was called, was sometimes whipped over either with gold, silver or silken thread. Stubbs, writing in 1583, says: "There is also a certain device made of wires, crested for the purpose . . . called a supertasse or underpropper. This is applied round their necks under the ruff upon the outside of the band, to bear up the whole frame and body of the ruff from falling or hanging down."

Such underpropping was indeed necessary when the ruff was worn in double and sometimes in three tiers; "they have now newly found out a more monstrous kind of ruff of twelve, yea sixteen lengths apiece, set three or four times double, and it is of some fitly called three steps and a half to the gallows." This extravagance was deplored by all sensible folks like the enormous outstanding hips of the seventeenth century, or the crinoline of the early nineteenth, but even the anathemas of the Church were powerless to moderate the enormities, and some of the finest records of the beautiful geometrical laces of the day which remain to us are on the monuments in our cathedrals and churches, the effigies of Queen Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots on their tombs at Westminster Abbey being examples which readily occur to us. Such designs are found in the early lace pattern books of Vinciolo and others. A passing fashion for yellow tinted ruffs occurred in the early days of the reign of James I. It has been stated that this fashion came to an abrupt end on the conviction for murder by Mrs. Turner, who was not only hanged in her yellow ruff, but was the inventor of the starch which produced the tint; but we find that five years after she had paid the penalty of her crime the Dean of Westminster ordered that no lady or gentleman wearing yellow ruffs be admitted to a seat in the church. This order, we are interested to note, was "ill-taken" by the King.

Gradually the ruffle was modified in shape, more costly and wider laces were used, and as a natural consequence less voluminous folds and pleats were used in order to display the design of the lace to better advantage. Then came the flowing locks and wigs of the Stuart period, which made the wearing of ruffs impossible for men. The falling collar *rebbatu* came in, and finally the cravat only, when the size of the wig had increased so that only the front portion of the collar could be seen.

Ruffs for men's wear may be said to have died in the reign of James I. though his son Charles is represented as wearing one on the coins struck in the first two years of his reign.

The outstanding collar, however, was much too graceful and becoming an accessory to be easily relinquished by women. It lingered on in use by them many years after it had been discarded by men—even now it is occasionally revived. At the court of Napoleon I. it was frequently used in outlining the decolage of women's dresses, and in the design for a dress of a royal princess at the Coronation ceremony in Paris a Medici collar was *de rigueur* with the graceful Empire dress of embroidered velvet and satin.



UPSTANDING COLLAR WORN BY PRINCESSES  
AT THE CORONATION OF NAPOLEON I.