



DETAIL OF BRUSSELS FROUNCE. FLEMISH, ABOUT 1790
FROM THE COLLECTION

THE SUMMER LACE EXHIBIT AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

BY FRANCES MORRIS



WHILE the summer loan exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum has been extensively reviewed by the daily press and in the field of magazine literature, inasmuch as the laces were drawn almost exclusively from the collections of our members, the event should not pass unnoticed by the Club BULLETIN.

The fabrics are confined to works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and only slightly over a hundred specimens are shown. This is due to the fact that the scope of the exhibit was necessarily limited to the number of cases obtainable for a proper setting, the tapestries occupying all the space that might otherwise have been availed of for large wall cases. However, the examples held in reserve may perhaps form the nucleus of some future exhibit.

In such a wealth of material it is impossible to select one piece that is more interesting than another, for each has its distinctive charm. Take,

for instance, a beautiful fragment lent by Mrs. Gino Speranza, the pathetic remnant of a needlepoint chalice veil dating from the end of the sixteenth or early seventeenth century, with the crowned eagle and winged dragon of the Borghesi arms and the inscription "Ecce Agnus Dei . . ." framing the sacred Lamb in a central medallion. It is difficult to imagine a vandalism that could ruthlessly damage so valuable a document, for without doubt this piece was designed for Cardinal Scipio Borghese, the nephew of Pius V, who was Pope from 1565 to 1572. A second piece of this quality, from the collection of Richard C. Greenleaf, has the same



DETAIL OF CHALICE VEIL. NEEDLEPOINT LACE
WITH ARMS OF THE GRAND DAUPHIN LOUIS, AND POPE ALEXANDER VII
FROM THE COLLECTION OF MRS. J. PIERPONT MORGAN, JR.

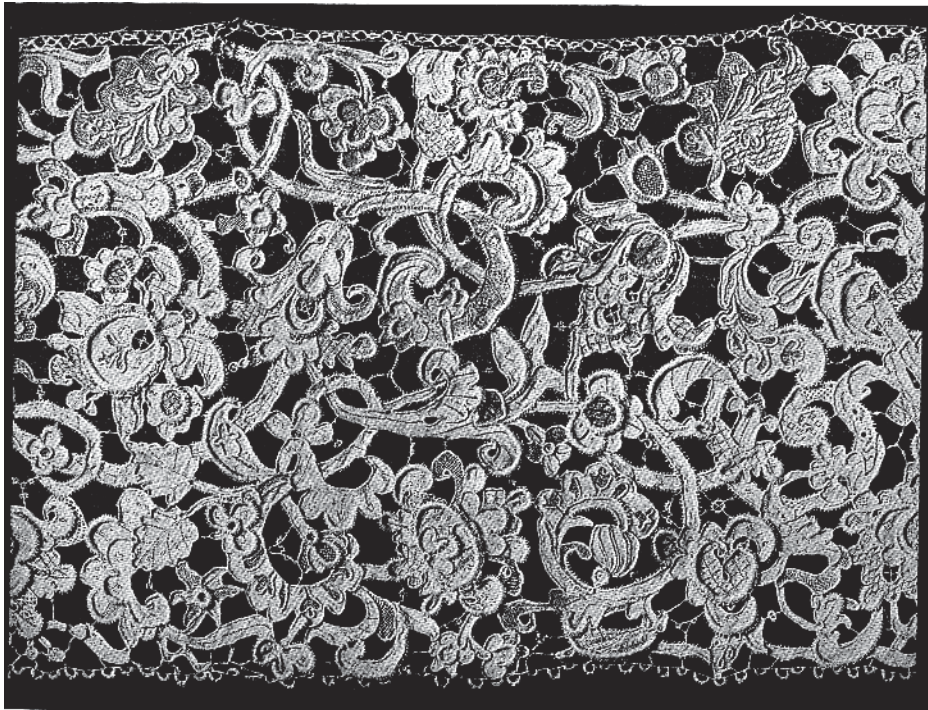
delicacy of technique and charm of pattern; it might readily have been worked by the same hand, or at least in the same convent or atelier.

The arms of another prelate figure in a chalice veil from the collection of Mrs. J. Pierpont Morgan, Jr., a lace-edged linen square that was bequeathed to the Convent of St. Joseph by Mme. Louise de France, daughter of Louis XV, who was herself a member of the Carmelite Order. The two principal motives in the design of the lace are the crowned "L"—the arms of the Dauphin of France—and a three-tier mountain, the arms of the Chigi family. The combination of these two heraldic devices indicates that this lace was originally designed for use on *les langes bénites*, the baptismal linen presented to the crown of France, at the time of the birth of the Grand Dauphin Louis (1661–1714), by Alexander VII (Fabio Chigi), the reigning Pope in 1661. The Italian Provenance of this piece



DETAIL OF BENEDICTION VEIL
NORTH ITALIAN GUIPURE, LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
FROM THE COLLECTION OF MRS. GEORGE J. WHELAN

being thus established, it is of further interest to note that as its technique is the same as that of Burano needlepoint, we have here a rare example of the early fabric of that lace centre. This may also be true of the unusual strip of needlepoint showing the Madonna and Child framed



VENETIAN POINT IN RELIEF, SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
FROM THE COLLECTION OF MRS. ROBERT W. DE FOREST

in medallions, examples of which are preserved in the collections of Mrs. Fahnestock, Mrs. J. Pierpont Morgan, Jr., and the Metropolitan Museum. In connection with these two pieces should also be mentioned the medallion chalice veil with its central group, the Virgin and a kneeling donor, worked in a similar stitch, and probably of the same provenance; a piece lent by Mrs. DeWitt Clinton Cohen.

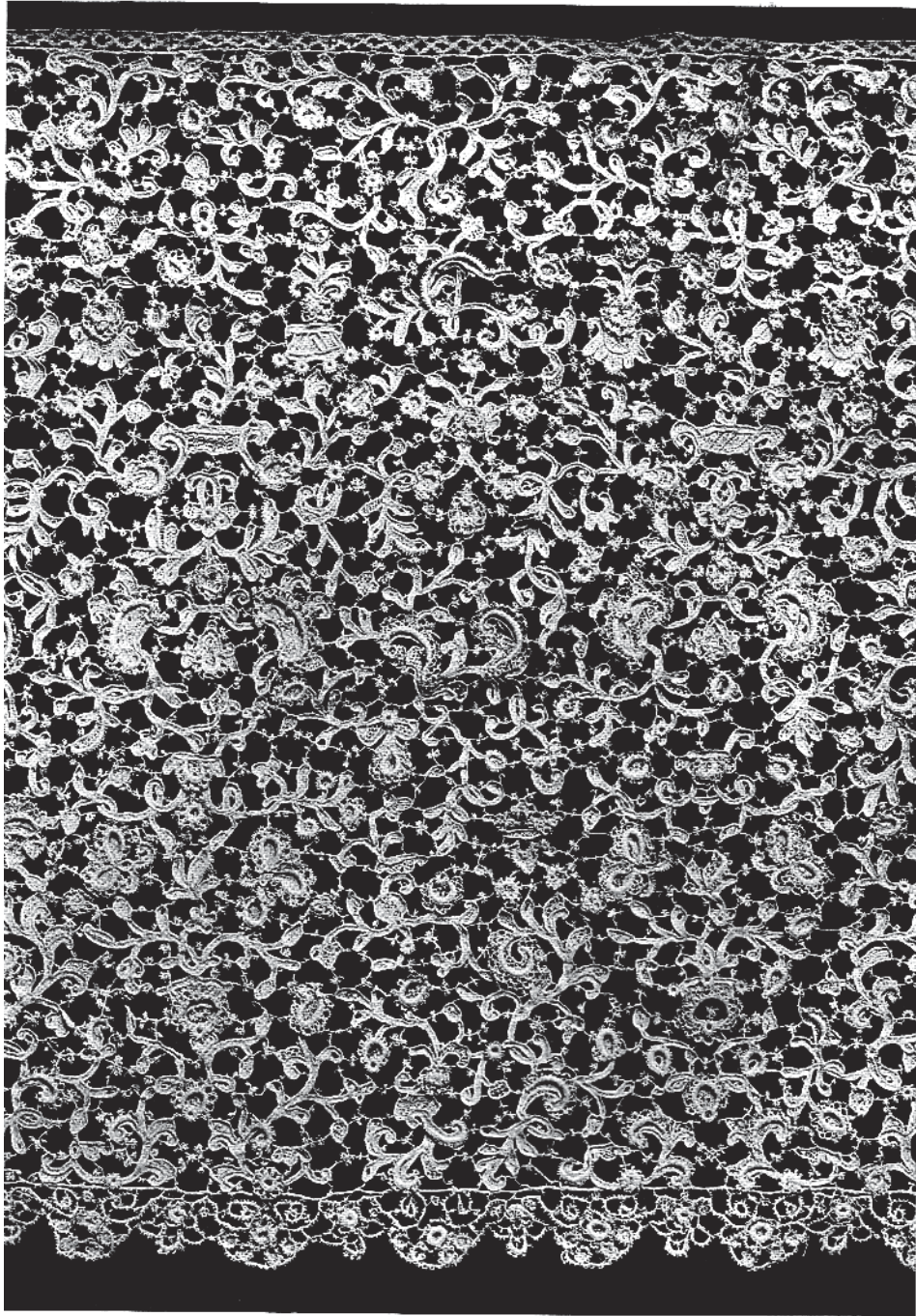
Of somewhat later date is another ecclesiastical piece, a benediction veil, from the collection of Mrs. George J. Whelan, a fine bobbin work similar to those preserved in the Musée Cinquantaire, at Brussels.

While this veil has many features indicating Flemish origin,—for instance, the central group, which is almost an exact copy of Rubens's "Holy Family,"—the foliated terminals of the scrolling field pattern reflect more truly the Italian type found in the guipures of Milan and Genoa.

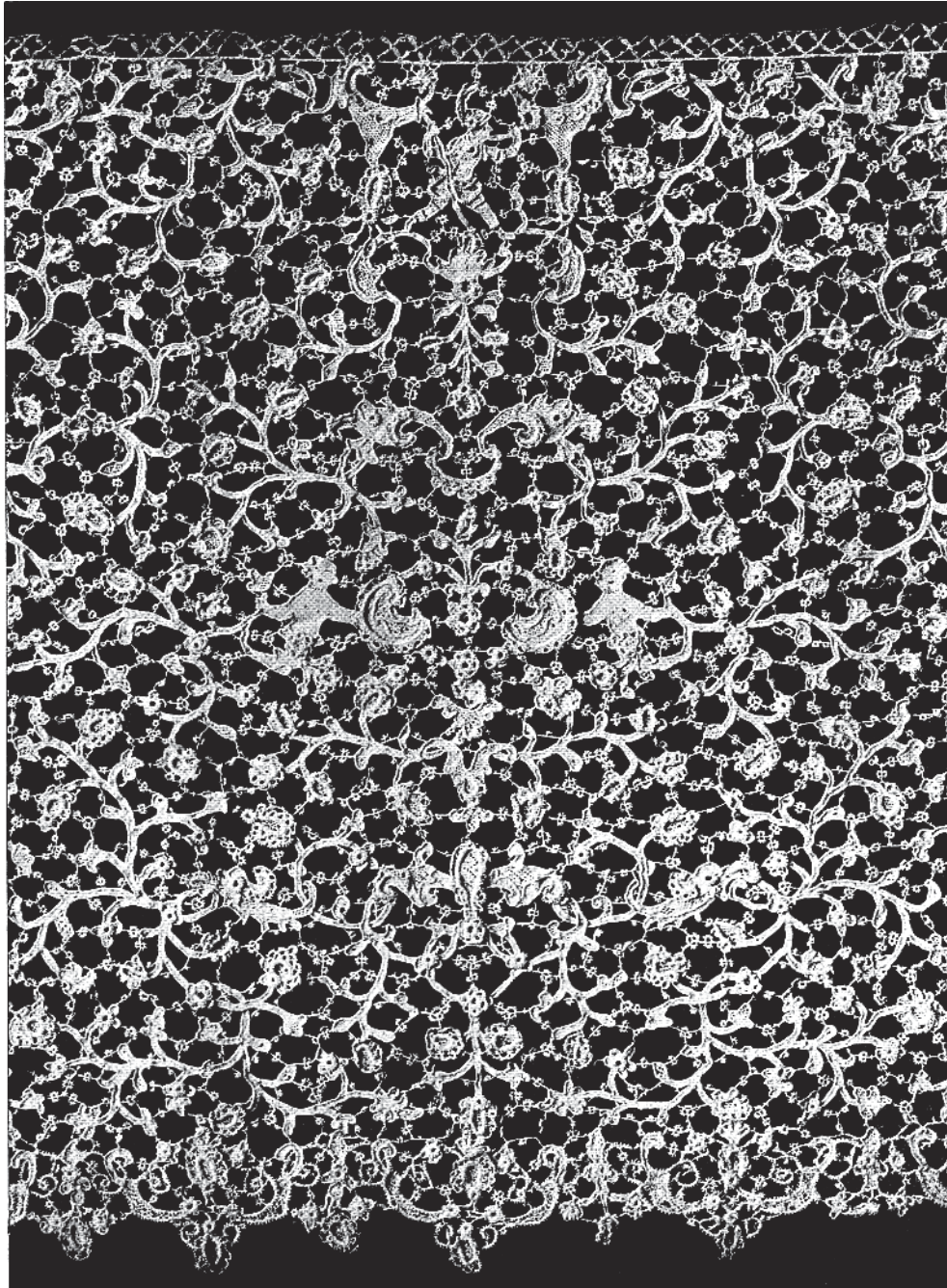


FRENCH NEEDLEPOINT, SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
FROM THE FLORENCE BLUMENTHAL COLLECTION

Les dentelles à personnages, always attractive to collectors, are delightfully represented in this exhibit. Especially interesting is the flounce of rose point from the collection of Mrs. Harris Fahnestock, a strip of some three yards in length, perfect in quality and design. In this the designer apparently availed himself of local motifs which mark the work as distinctly Venetian; for have we not here the Doge's herald with his up-raised trumpet, the lion of St. Mark's, the mermaid, sea-horse and dolphin? What could more perfectly reflect the legendary lore that still lingers about the tide-swept isles of the Lagoon?



ROSE POINT. ITALIAN, END OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
FROM THE COLLECTION OF MRS. JOSEPH PULITZER



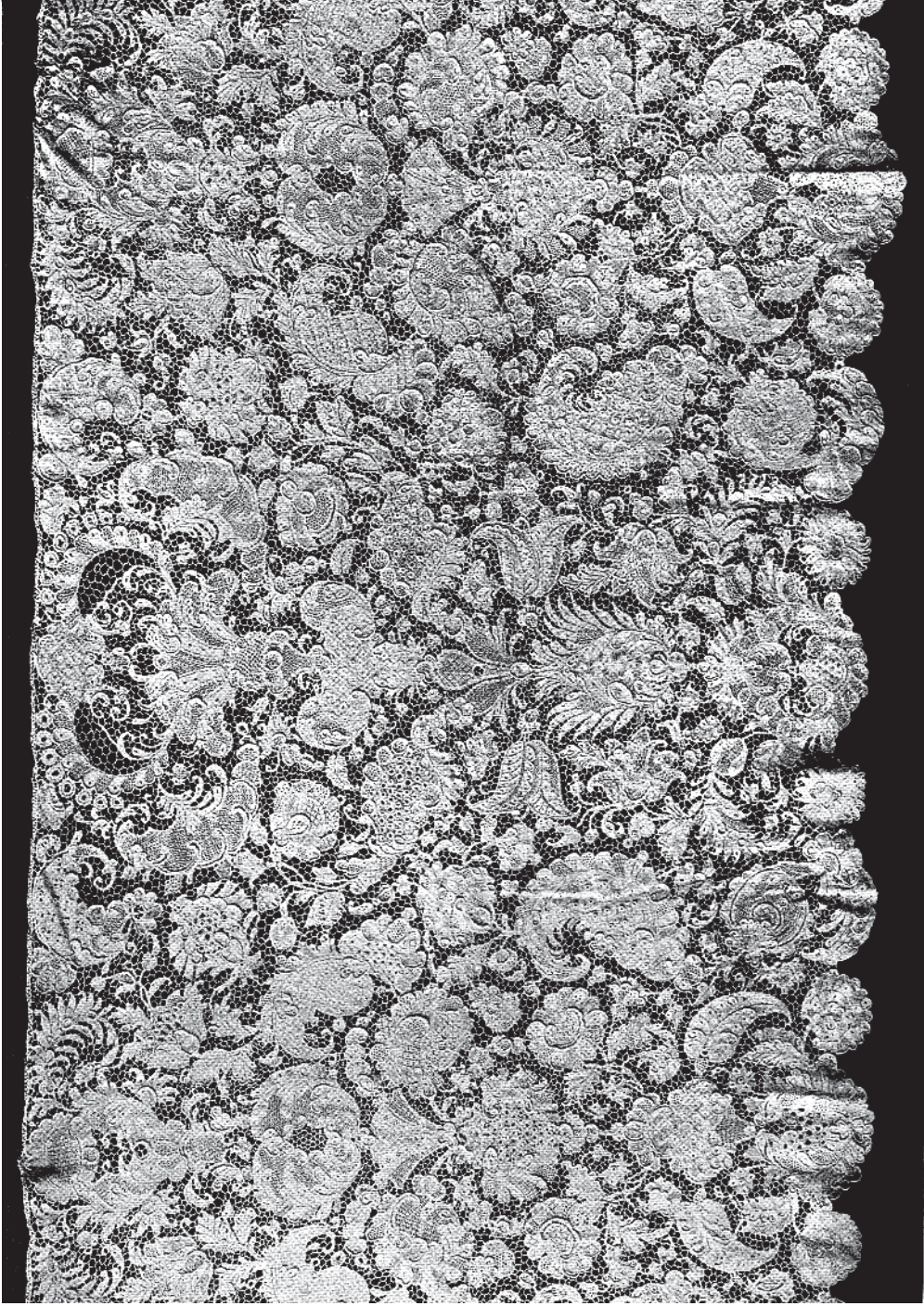
ROSE POINT, WITH FIGURE MOTIVES
ITALIAN, END OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
FROM THE COLLECTION OF MRS. HARRIS FAHNESTOCK

In quite another vein is a strip of old Brussels or point d'Angleterre from the same collection, a dainty bit that mirrors the gay court life of France under Louis XV: the courtier and his lady with attendant cupids, the little page in pursuit of a fleeing dog, the spouting swan, a motif that appears again in another strip of the same fabric, lent by Mrs. William Bayard Cutting, in which the bird motif is much more formal and wears a chain about its neck. A very early use of this device is found in a bit of fine damask preserved in the Cooper Institute Museum, a fragment of North Italian silk weaving of the fourteenth century.

Another figure piece is shown in the *bas de rochet*, lent by Mrs. George T. Bliss, a Bruges fabric of delicate scrolls, in the midst of which appears a charmingly depicted harlequin head wearing a cocked hat plumed with a jaunty feather, and a *ruche*, or, what is more likely, a collar of bells, about the neck.

Some of the most alluring figures, however, are those found in the cases of lappets. These dainty bits of femininity, the *fond de bonnet* and the *barbes* that in the eighteenth century composed the *barbes pleines* of the court beauties of France, form one of the most attractive features of the exhibit. The lappet, which in England is recorded in royal archives of the time of Elizabeth, has always been cherished by England's enthusiastic lace collectors, from which source many of the beautiful specimens in American collections have been acquired. Unfortunately, some of the most choice sets have been dismembered; untoward circumstances having forced the one-time owner to part with her treasured heirlooms piece by piece, they have gradually drifted into private collections on this side of the water, and, in several instances, are once more reassembled in the present exhibit.

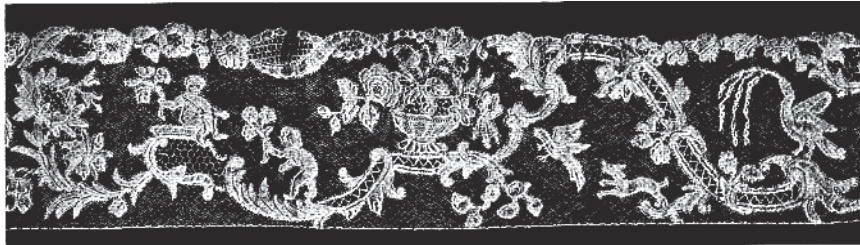
In so short a review of this important exhibit, only a word can be said in passing of the marvelous beauty of the needlepoint flounces that have been brought together. Historically, the wedding lace of Queen Charlotte naturally takes precedence; in beauty of design, however, there are many equally interesting. Take, for instance, the points de France, exhibited by Mrs. George T. Bliss, Mrs. Whelan and Senator Clark; the splendid flounce of flat Venetian from the Florence Blumenthal Collection, and the exquisite flounce of point d'Argentan, lent by Mrs. Herbert L. Satterlee, with its delicate floral sprays, birds and butterflies, illustrating the



FRENCH NEEDLEPOINT, EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
FROM THE COLLECTION OF MRS. GEORGE T. BLISS

high standards maintained by French lace designers in the eighteenth century.

With these great examples of the lace-maker's art may also be classed the pillow-made flounces that are here represented; the marvelous Brussels fabric which, like the Queen Charlotte lace, is one of the many exceptional pieces in the collection of Mrs. J. Pierpont Morgan, Jr. The patience of the native *dentellière* weaving with cobweb thread the delicate mesh of this piece, finds its parallel in the marvelous strip of rose-point lent by Mrs. George J. Whelan, in which the myriads of picots, fashioned by the skilled needle of the Italian worker, vie with the filmy



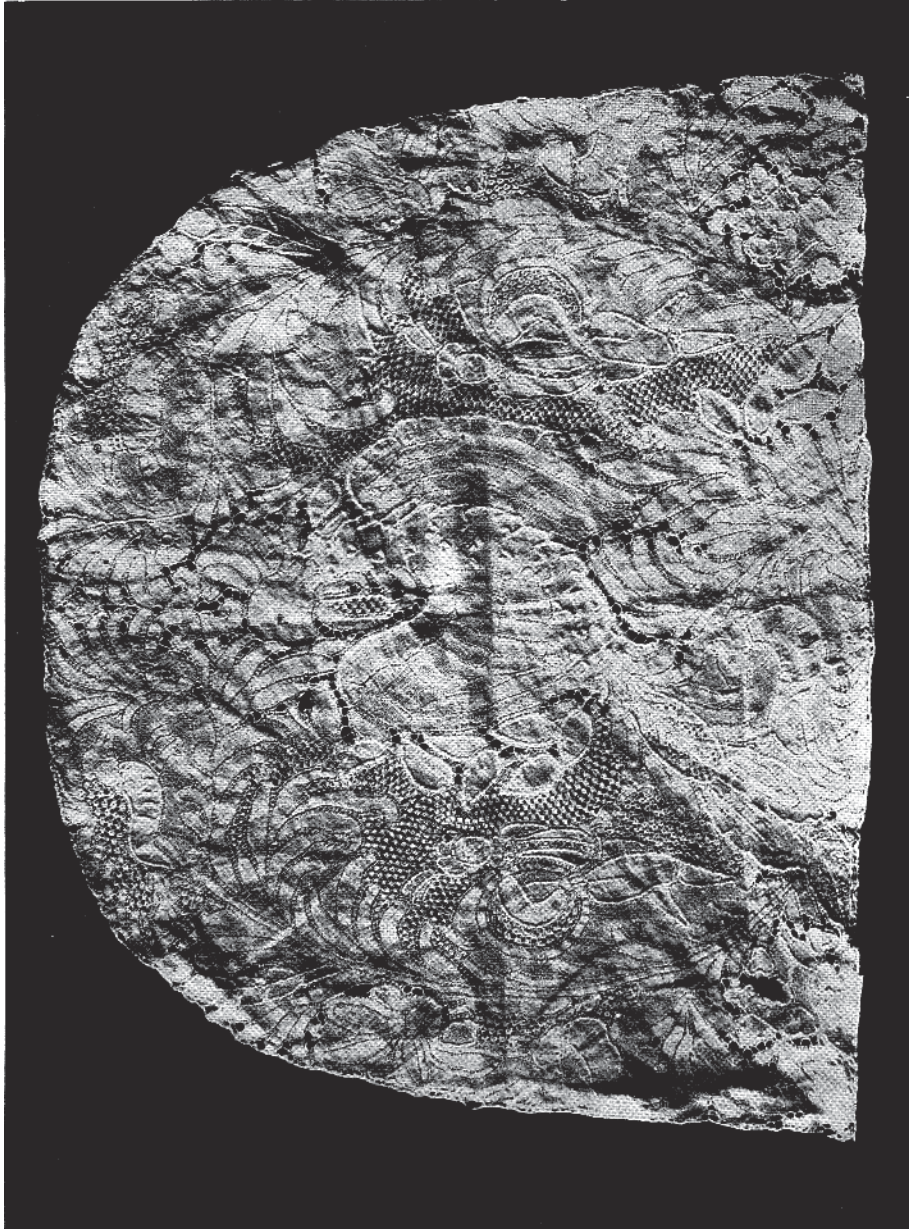
"POINT D'ANGLETERRE." BRUSSELS, EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
FROM THE COLLECTION OF MRS. HARRIS FAHNESTOCK

net so deftly wrought by the play of the Flemish bobbins. The detail of this Brussels flounce, illustrated in the frontispiece,—one of the four groups which appear in its full pattern,—reflects the influence of the painter David; in fact, so exquisite is the drawing that it might almost be attributed to the pencil of this master, inasmuch as he is known to have furnished designs for lace fabrics. Be that as it may, the work is of unusual beauty and ranks among the most beautiful Flemish lace fabrics in existence.

While, as stated above, the art of David furnished models for figure motives, that of Pillement, who, like many another artist of his period, turned to the Jardin des Plantes for inspiration, is reflected in the floral patterns. This is true in the case of the flounce just described, but the resemblance is even more marked in a Brussels flounce of "point d'Angleterre," lent by Mrs. J. Pierpont Morgan, Jr., in which the slender sprays of harebells remind one of the foliage so often employed by that artist as



DETAIL OF POINT D'ARGENTAN FLOUNCE. FRENCH, LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
FROM THE COLLECTION OF MRS. HERBERT L. SATTERLEE



CAP CROWN, "POINT D'ANGLETERRE." FLEMISH, EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
FROM THE COLLECTION OF MRS. MC DOUGALL HAWKES

a delicate screen for some charming bit of chinoiserie, a gracefully turned bridge, a turreted pagoda or a stately Oriental poised beneath a spreading umbrella.

But one might go on indefinitely describing in detail each of the hundred and twelve pieces that form the exhibit, and yet much would remain untold, for a volume might be written on the beauties of the Italian needlepoints alone—the lovely “Punto in Aria” with its quaint patterns of angular sprays of lobe-shaped leaves still dependent upon the supporting linen, like a timid child clinging to its mother’s hand; then the pointed petals that, with a more adventurous spirit, peer over the edge, and push forward delicate stems that in time support bell-shaped blossoms which, like simple garden flowers under intensive cultivation, emerge resplendent in the perfected Venetian fabric. In this group of the exhibition particular care was given to the placing of the lace so that the various steps in its development might be followed.

Among the bobbin laces, however, this was impossible, for collectors seem more partial to eighteenth-century fabrics than to the early types of this branch of lace-making, and these were not well represented; many interesting examples, however, are found on cut linen works, such as altar cloths, chalice veils and the like, and probably in an exhibition of that character many varieties would be forthcoming.

The cordial coöperation of our Club members in helping the Museum to make possible so splendid an assemblage of the lace-maker’s art, is something of which the organization may well be proud, and it is to be hoped that the exhibition may be visited, during her stay in this city, by the Belgian Queen, whose interest in the development of the lace industry in her country is referred to in the letter from our foreign correspondent, Mme. Mali-Kefer, of the Musée Cinquantenaire in Brussels (published in this issue).

The exhibition will remain open during October, and the large attendance, especially during the first month, when, on one hot Sunday afternoon in July, over six hundred visitors were recorded,—visitors who gave the cases more than a casual passing glance,—shows an increasing tendency on the part of the public to appreciate and value the beauty of hand-made fabrics, an interest which it is the aim of our Club to foster and maintain.