

## THE LACE COLLECTION OF THE MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS, PARIS

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THE lace collection has recently been charmingly rearranged in a large salle giving on the central pelouse between the two long wings of the Louvre.

The different periods of lace, with many subdivisions, are to be seen in the collection, but with less precision of classification than I could wish for in our own collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The early Italian linen-works are in the minority. A bed-cover of filet of very fine net is put together with modern work; it is the gift of the Marchesa Arconati-Visconati. In the borderland between the early geometric period and the later Renaissance, are two very beautiful specimens, in one of which the linen is largely cut away and replaced with needle-point stitches, the whole being enriched with gold thread, and an altar or table cloth of surpassing beauty, geometric in type. In this the regular spacing of the linen and certain of the rosaces are of the early Renaissance, while the figures of man and beast in the open spaces and in the pointed scallops of the border are of the transitional punto in aria belonging to the first

Detail of "Point de France" showing ship motive that appears also in the seal of the City of Paris. Original in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

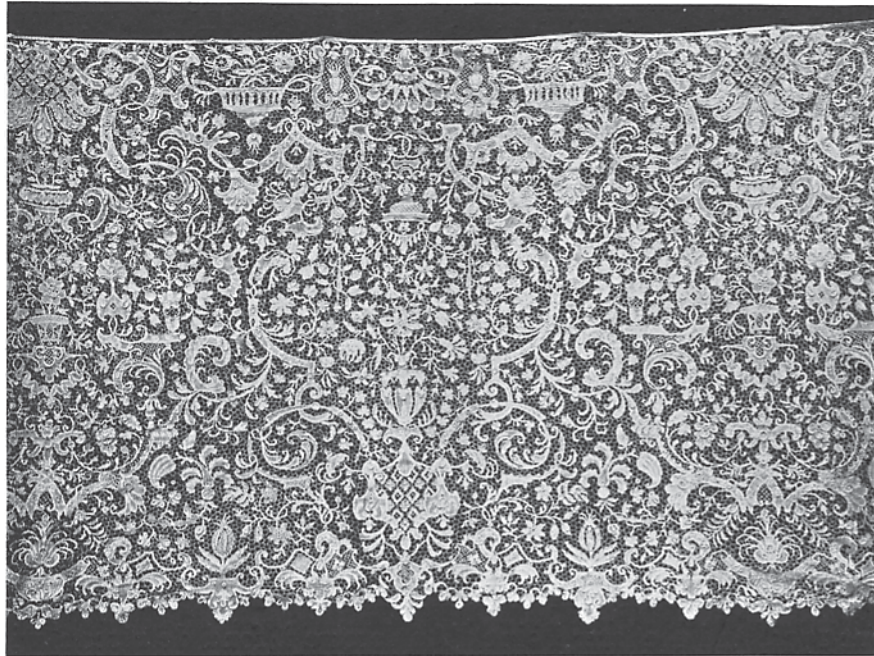


ALTAR OR TABLE CLOTH—CUT LINENWORK AND NEEDLEPOINT, ITALIAN, FIRST HALF OF XVII CENTURY. FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS

half of the eighteenth century. A collar of deep falling points is also of this period.

There are many small specimens of the Venice Points, no large





DEEP FLOUNCE OF POINT DE FRANCE, END OF XVII CENTURY  
COLLECTION OF MADAME LIONEL NORMANT

piece representing the innumerable laces sent from Italy to France three hundred years ago.

The important laces are the Points de France, and the later laces of Argentan and Alençon.

Madame Lionel Normant's gift,<sup>1</sup> some years ago, of a deep flounce of Point de France of the early years of the eighteenth century, well known to collectors, is placed across the center of a large standing case at one end of the salle.<sup>2</sup> The charming design has the characteristic grande bride picotée grounding of these splendid laces—doubtless a bas de rochet of some prelate, the figure-pieces being reserved for the Princes of the Blood Royal. Two caps above, and two rabats below, form centres for an arrangement of the laces of Alençon and Argentan.

1. Cf. Author's translation of Monsieur Ernest Lefebure's *Les Points de France*, p. 58.

2. A flounce of this same design was exhibited in the Special Loan Exhibit of Laces held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art during the Summer of 1919.

One superb framed specimen of Argentan, is rare on account of its unusual width, and had the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, some years ago, been able to acquire a larger piece, we also might have had our share, as I was authorized by the Metropolitan Museum to purchase for a certain sum, and relinquished it with regret. The remainder of this beautiful flounce, I understand, is now among the treasures in the Museum of Lyons.

The gifts of Madame Doistau, of lighter Alençon Louis XVI and Empire, are charmingly arranged in a central standing case, the interest and coup d'œil of the arrangement heightened by little coiffes of these delicate laces—parasols of black lace, etc.

There are many barbes of both French and Flemish laces in long cases near the walls, and old engravings show the use of all these beautiful needle-points.

Two rabats, known to all connoisseurs who frequent the loan collections of lace, are Flemish work, the rare Point d'Angleterre à brides about 1700, and the later Point d'Angleterre à fond de réseau<sup>1</sup> with birds and the chinoiserie of the early eighteenth century.

Smaller specimens are mounted in a revolving standing case of many leaves.

This collection, with other things of interest and beauty in the Museum, should certainly be visited by the members of the Needle and Bobbin Club when in Paris.

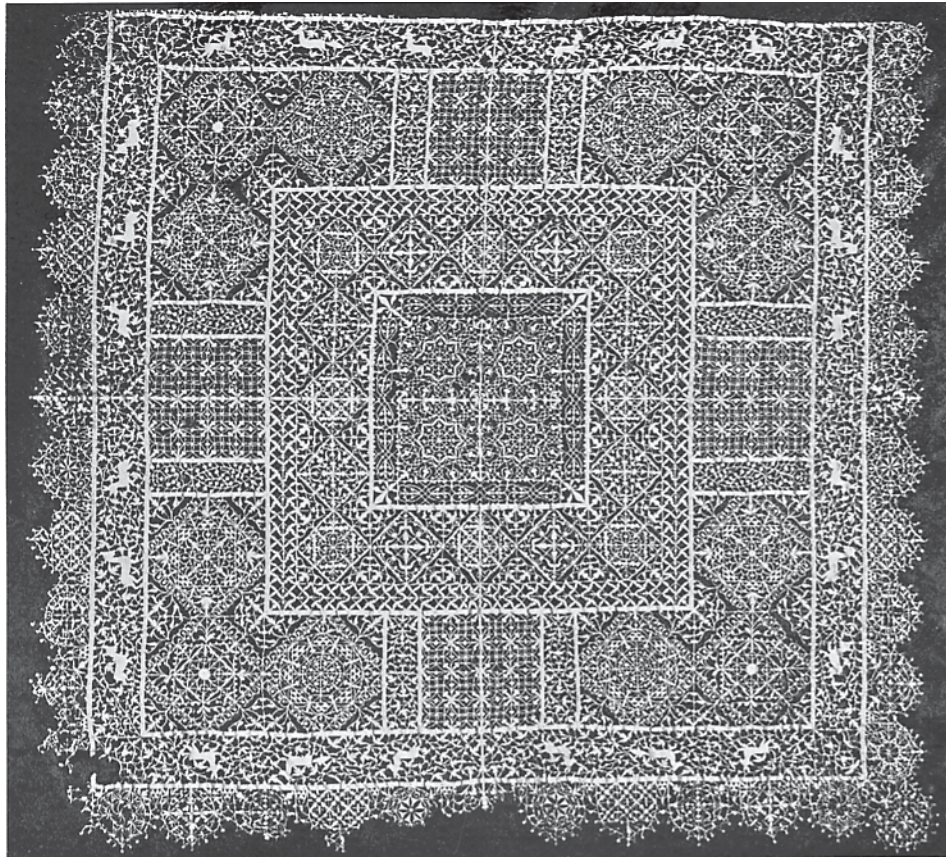
The Points de France having increased in number at the Metropolitan Museum, to an extent which fifteen years ago would have seemed incredible, it will be interesting and profitable for lace-lovers and collectors to study what they are and whence they come.

Two big dispersions of skilled lace-workers to other countries, took place in France—the first after the Revocation de l'Edit de Nantes, in 1685, when many found refuge in England, Flanders, and Germany—and the second during the French Revolution of 1789.

Seguin notes that at the earlier date, "le haut commerce" was in the hands of the Protestants, as ample funds could be obtained by borrowing, whereas the Church of Rome taught that lending at in-

1. Cf. *Les Points de France*, p. 70.





CUT PARCHMENT PATTERN FOR NEEDLEPOINT LACE, VENETIAN, XVI CENTURY, FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS

terest was usury. Many Huguenots lived in Brittany at that time, not far from the lace-making centres of Alençon and Argentan, and those who did not renounce their faith fled in numbers to other lands, an irreparable loss to France.

Before speaking of the second exodus in 1789, I must remind my readers of the training in dexterity of French needlewomen, through copying the Italian linen-works, and the magnificent Venetian laces brought to France to supply the demand of the extravagant courtiers of the reign of Louis XIV. To prevent these immense

sums from going to foreign countries, Colbert established the monopoly between the years 1665-1675, when all work and designs had to be submitted to the bureaux of the Royal Manufactory, in spite of protests and *emeutes*. The greatest decorative artists of the day drew these lines, and thus carried the industry to the highest pitch of artistic excellence. Some of the figure pieces are ascribed to Berain, and also the charming design of *Le Roi Soleil*, illustrated in the frontispiece of *Les Points de France*—far more beautiful in the deeper flounce than in this smaller piece, the royal Sun glinting through the folds of lace. The genius of this artist lightened the heavy lines of the Louis XIV design, in keeping with the delicate fabric in which these lines were to be reproduced, supported by the hexagonal mesh of the *grande bride picotée*. Lebrun, Bailly, Bonnermer are other names of artists currently mentioned, but these can hardly be attached to individual specimens.

Monsieur Lefebure has reproduced the design of *Le Roi Soleil*, and a valuable addition to our collection would be a gift of two or three metres of this most beautiful lace, and also, if possible a copy of one of the figure pieces, designed for the royal princes. The *rabat* of the collection *Ikle*<sup>1</sup> would be a gem to add to our interesting class of the *Points de France*.

Monsieur A. Lefebure tells me that there were thirty superb flounces worked at this time, and where these are to be found is well known. Therefore no word of a nun, or other person, would suffice, only the sight of the most authentic documents, and signed papers before a notaire, would guarantee the purchaser, should at any time one of these treasures come into the market.

When the lace-makers were again dispersed, during the French Revolution in 1789, many went to Flanders and also to Italy, taking their patterns with them. Italy thus copying the *Points de France*, and *Points de Sedan*. The technique, according to the same authority, is as different as night and day, with less openwork in the solid parts (*toilé*), and as patterns lengthen when copied, these laces can easily be verified.

1. Cf. *Les Points de France*, p. 44.

It will be evident what careful expertizing should precede the purchase of an important piece of lace.

These French designs, worked in Italy, I should class as such—"Point de France (or de Sedan, and the epoch of the design) probably worked in Italy in the nineteenth century."

The new term which appeared in the Beer Catalogue of "old, or early Burano," I think complicates an already difficult subject, the design being evidently French. For many years, this name has been given to the short but exquisite transition (about 1700 A. D.) from the heavy laces to the fine flat needle-point with the delicate Alençon or Burano grounding, and known as Alençon, Louis XIV in France—early Burano, in Italy—and old Brussels needle-point in Flanders, the design distinguishing the work of each country.

Laces were terribly mutilated in the last century—deep flounces cut into so-called "cardinal capes," or the smaller rounded collars of our grandmothers' day. There may be bits of authentic Point de France among these disjointed remnants of *la belle époque*.