



FRONTISPIECE

Portrait by Mierevelt (1567-1641) in the MUSÉE DU LOUVRE, Paris, showing laces similar to those on Plate IV. The design in the border of the embroidered stomacher shows a close relation to lace.

COMPARISONS IN LACE DESIGN

By MARIAN HAGUE

IN REARRANGING, recently, some of the lace at the Museum for the Arts of Decoration at The Cooper Union, a plan was adopted to exhibit what we called "Similar Designs in Varying Techniques." This consisted mostly in the juxtaposition of needle-made and bobbin-made laces of like pattern, with the idea of comparing the effect of the techniques on design. A few examples were also shown in which representations of lace had been worked in embroidery or woven in brocaded silk. We did not get as far as paper lace, but we did show an 18th century example of pricked muslin to which starch or dressing had given almost the consistency of paper so that it should retain the pricking with exactness (Plate XV). If we had had such specimens, some of the exquisite cut papers of the 18th century would have been worthy of inclusion in our little show.

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The flowering of the Sumptuary Arts in the early 16th century, which resulted in the development of lace, brought a great rise of luxury and splendor in daily life; if one may judge from the testimony of art, the new fashions must have spread over Europe like wildfire. Paintings showing lace in costume before the middle of the 16th century are extremely rare, but after that time they increase in number with amazing rapidity. There is hardly a portrait of either man or woman in the 17th and 18th centuries that does not show lace in some form. There were periods when sumptuary laws tried to hold the fashion in check, without, however, stemming the tide for very long. Occasional portraits show respect for these edicts by representing their subjects in rich costumes but without lace, while many engravings, as well as the famous satirical poem

of the "Révolte des Passements" (1661), hold these ordinances up to ridicule.

Of the two principal forms of lace—that made with a needle, which developed from drawn-thread and open-work embroidery on linen, and bobbin lace, derived from the silk and metal thread passementeries used so lavishly on garments for both men and women of this period—the needle-made forms seem to have been the earliest to develop and to have set a pattern of design suited to the rather primitive degree of technical skill achieved by the workers of that day, one requiring simple geometrical forms. The early bobbin lace workers also produced white lace, in designs inherited from their passementerie crafts, which had formerly been used for gold, silver, and colored silks; but in many instances the craftsmen seem to have been content to braid and twist their threads into lines that were not only similar to, but that frankly imitated, the minutest detail of the sister art. If we look at Plate I, we see this very clearly illustrated. Plate II shows the imitation of lace design in woven silk. Plate III shows the gradual development of simple floral forms in the lace techniques and the imitation of those forms in embroidery.

Thus we see that the lace design of the 16th century was completely controlled by the exigencies of the techniques and had no derivation from forms of design in the other textile arts. But, by the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century, there had been great progress in technical skill; indeed, although the forms were conventionalized and the patterns not of great width, laces were increasingly filled with floral and scrolling forms. They still partook of the characteristics of passementerie, were frequently spoken of as "passements," and were used flat, both when laid on as bands or applied as edgings (Plates IV, V, and VI).

By the third quarter of the 17th century a change in design had been developed by the French lace workers. The sweeping curves of the Italian laces, such as we see in Plates V and VI, have given way to the French fashion, in which forms are smaller and more distributed, and a perpendicular arrangement known as the *Candelabre* pattern appears. This is shown clearly in a piece of *Point de France* in Plate VII. Such a

* The illustrations are all chosen from laces shown at the Cooper Union Museum, mostly from its own collection; the others are from the collections of two members of the Advisory Council of the Museum, the late Mrs. Robert B. Noyes and the writer. The letters "C.U." indicate the Museum of the Arts of Decoration, and "M.H." the collection of Miss Hague. The writer would like to thank Miss Elizabeth Haynes, Assistant in Charge of Laces and Embroideries at the Museum, for her able and interested cooperation in this project.

type of design, coupled with the use of the finer threads of France and the Low Countries, made possible the fashion of gathering, or setting on with fullness, for both French and Flemish laces. Since France by this time had superseded Venice as the originator of fashion, we see the Venetian rose points and *rosellines* abandoning their own tradition and adopting the French designs (Plates VIII and IX).

By the last half of the 17th century lace techniques had acquired such great skill that the workers were free to produce ornament forms as they appeared in other fabrics, woven or embroidered; and the fashion, or custom, in other textile design could now influence the forms to be worked in lace. This influence is particularly exemplified in the laces adaptable to large surfaces, such as the wide flounces which do not appear before the last half of the 17th century. These flounces were used on ladies' dresses and even as valances for dressing tables, if we may judge from paintings. The albs of church dignitaries were also decorated with these wide flounces, of which in the early 18th century the *Point de Sedan* (a type of *Point de France*) in needle-made lace and the lovely flounces of the fine Flemish laces, such as Brussels or, more rarely, Mechlin, in bobbin lace were the most outstanding examples. Plates X, XI, and XII show exquisite specimens of these wonders of the lace-makers' art. The characteristic design of these laces of the period of the French Regency (1715-1723) is shown in the large foliated and floral forms which cover the ground very closely, leaving almost no background visible between the forms.

To conclude our series of technical comparisons we come back to some of the narrower laces of the 18th century. Plate XIV shows the juxtaposition of a needle and a bobbin lace of the first quarter of the century, both representatives of distinguished types of lace.

Plate XV, No. 1, on the contrary, shows a lace distinctly plebian, being as much an "imitation" as was possible before the invention of machine-made imitations. It is a pricked muslin—one might almost say paper. No. 2 pictures an exquisitely embroidered muslin, used as a substitute for lace. If the purpose of making an imitation is primarily economy, there can have been comparatively little to choose between in the economy of time and skill required to produce a fabric such as this compared to the cost of production of the same design in laces such as Mechlin, Binche, or the needlepoints. This has, however, the added advantage of greater durability.

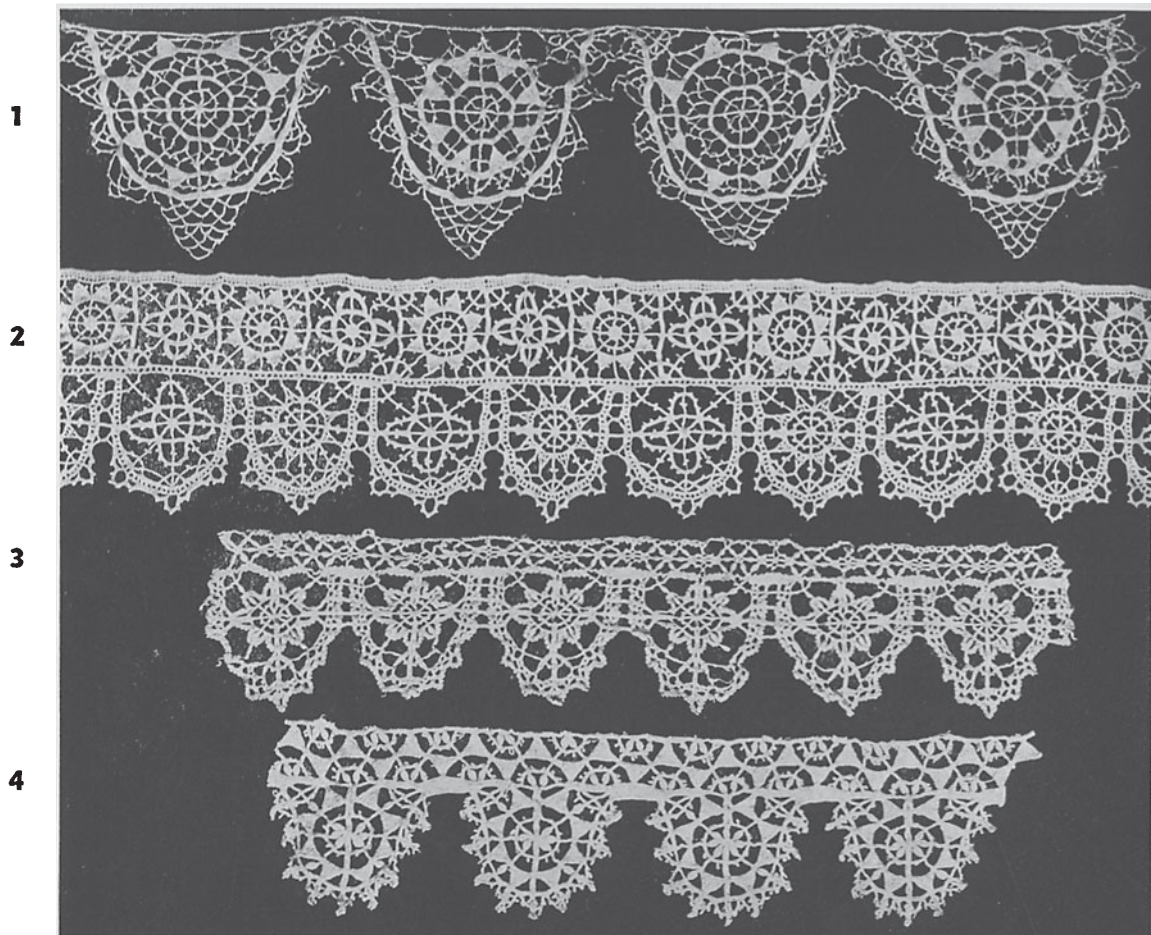


PLATE I

No. 1—Border of points, needle-made, of *reticello*, or geometrical type, such as was made in Italy and also in France and the Low Countries in the second half of the 16th century. (M.H.) No. 2—A strip of lace consisting of two parts; a band of insertion, which is needle-made, of *reticello*; the points forming the lower half of the lace, bobbin-made, following the *reticello* design with great exactness; even the same thread seems to have been used. A careful look is needed to see that the two halves of the lace are of different technique. (C.U.) No. 3 and No. 4—Both 3 and 4 are of bobbin make, still clinging to the designs natural to needle-made lace in its primitive form. (Both M.H.) All are in the late 16th or early 17th century. No. 1 might have been made in the Low countries, to judge by the thread; 2, 3, and 4 are Italian. The scale is slightly below life size.

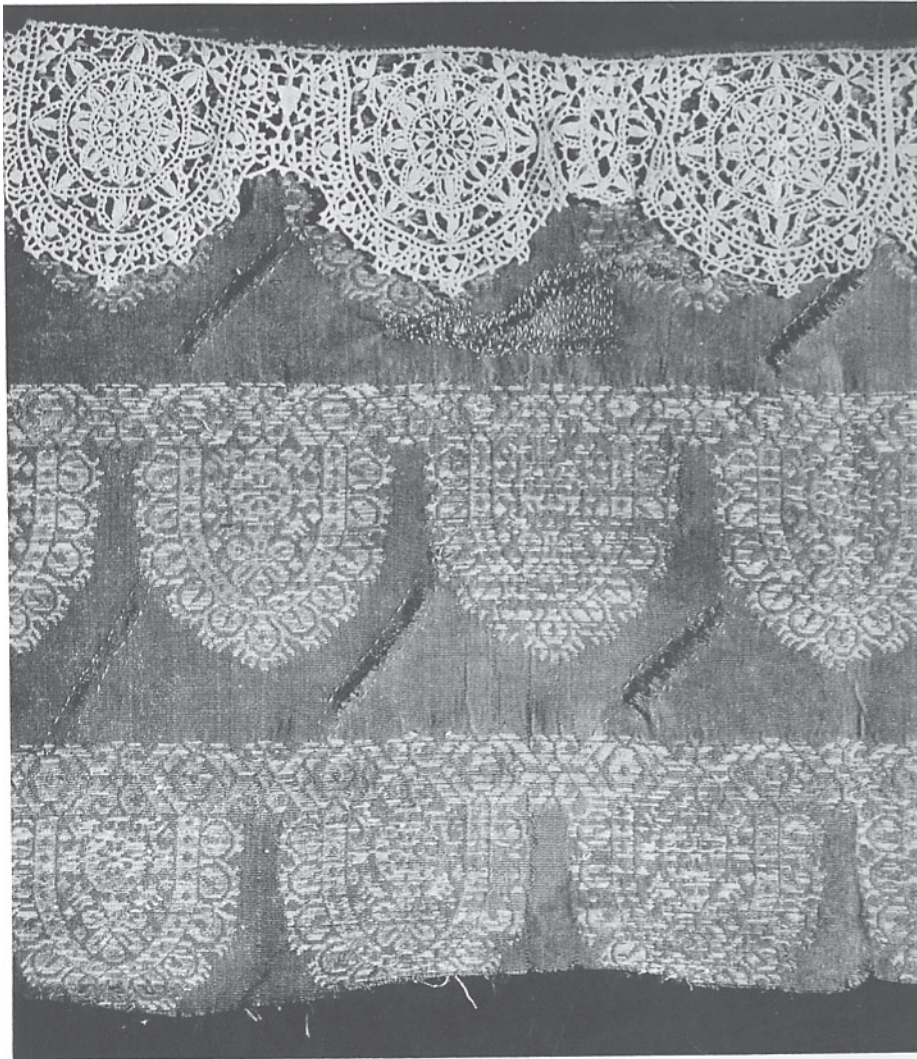


PLATE II

A piece of brown silk of the early 17th century, probably Spanish, brocaded with rows of deep scallops representing lace such as was used in costume at that time. The small diagonal slashes showing in the silk were a fashion often used in men's clothes at this period, a mode which had its origin in the cult for prowess in swordsmanship. Above is shown a border of needle-made scallops of similar form and period. The scale is slightly below life size. (C.U.) The use of lace as a design for a woven silk is indicative of the preoccupation over lace at that time, when to own and wear lace was so much *de rigueur* that it is said that sometimes even a house might be mortgaged to provide funds for its purchase.

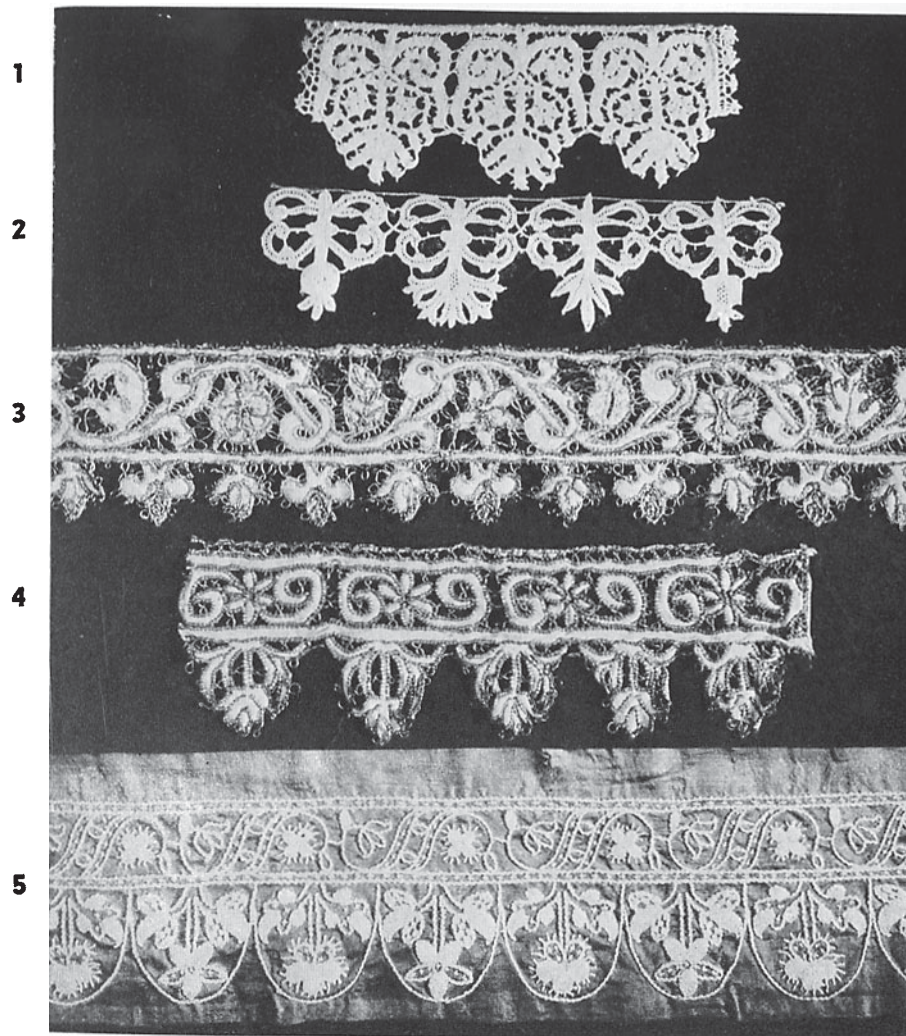


PLATE III

This plate is another example of lace design pervading other techniques. No. 1 and No. 2 are laces of similar pattern, but No. 1 is bobbin made and No. 2 of needlework. No. 3 and No. 4 are cut linen with edging and picots of gold thread sewed on with red silk. No. 5 is embroidery in white silk thread on a crimson silk scarf, with the evident intention of producing the effect of a lace border. All five pieces are probably Italian (although No. 3 and No. 4 are called in Italian *Punto di Spagna falso*, and all are of the late 16th or early 17th century. The scale is below life size. (M.H.)

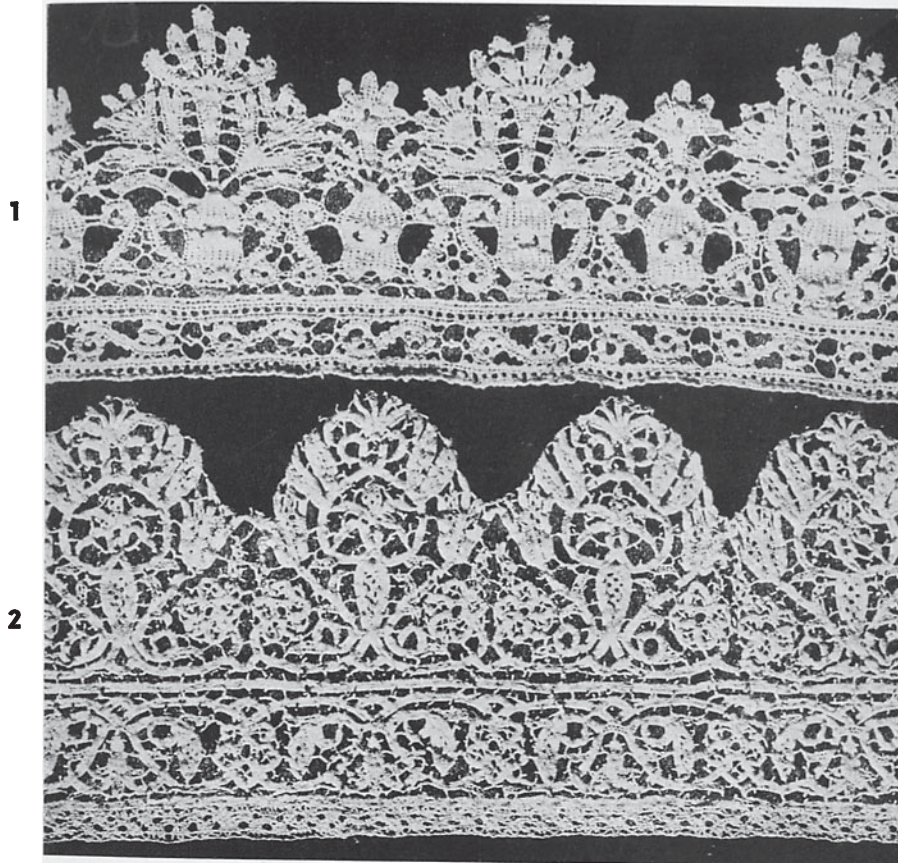


PLATE IV

Two laces of the first half of the 17th century. No. 1 is a bobbin lace, probably Italian, intended to be used with the points upwards, as for cuffs, judging by the familiar flower vase pattern. Portraits by Mierevelt and others show laces such as these in the wide cuffs and elaborate collars of both men and women. Width is $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches. No. 2 is needle made of similar design and origin. Width is $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Compare the laces on this plate with those shown on the costume in the frontispiece. (M.H.)

1

2

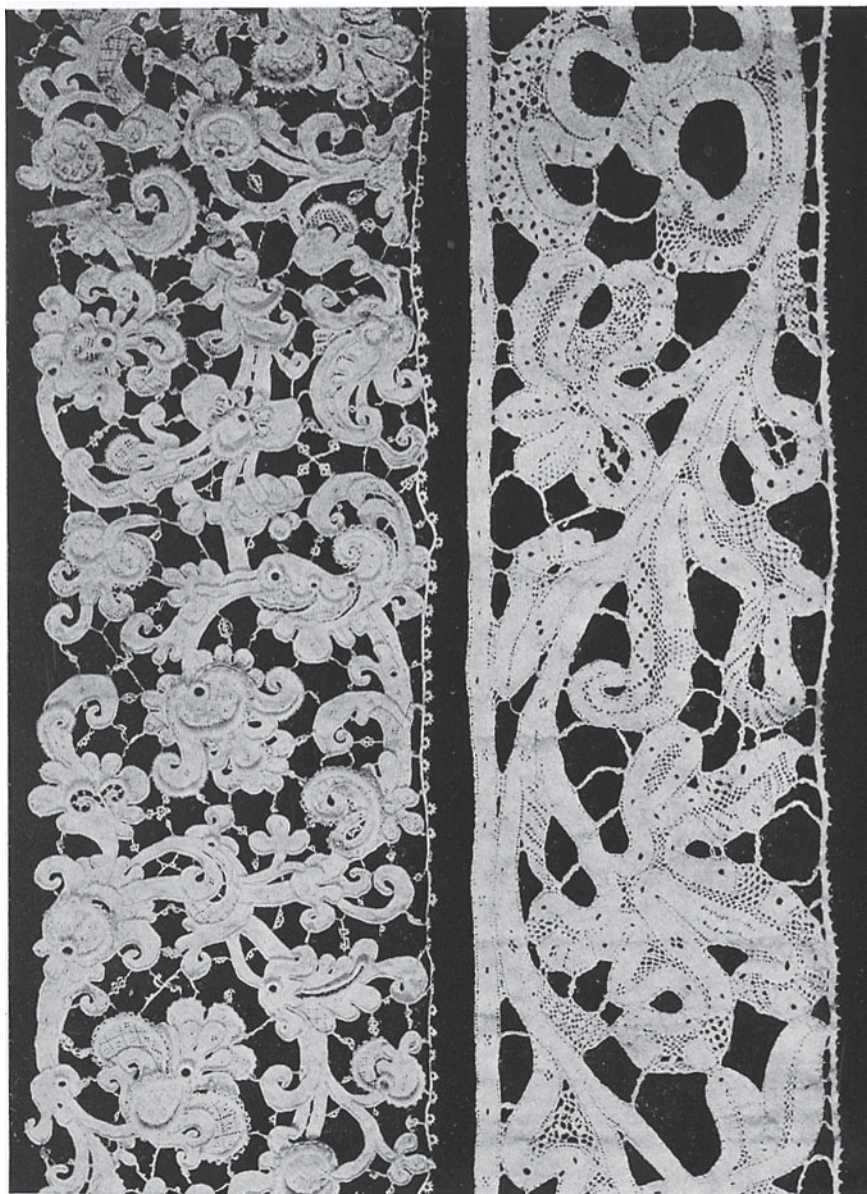


PLATE V

Two typically Italian laces showing the scrolling forms which were suited to use as flat bands. No. 1 is Venetian needlepoint, No. 2 is Milanese bobbin lace. Both are of the first half of the 17th century. Width of No. 1 is 4 inches. (C.U.) Width of No. 2 is $3\frac{7}{8}$ inches. (M.H.)



PLATE VI

No. 1—Venetian needlepoint of the most perfect execution, called *Gros Point de Venise*, or *Rose Point*, with typical Italian design of classic tradition. No. 2—Milanese bobbin lace of period and tradition similar to the one above, probably made as a cuff for an alb. These two specimens have been placed in juxtaposition because they illustrate so clearly the difference that technique makes in a line structure that is very similar. The firm and sculptured texture characteristic of the Italian needlepoint contrasts with the softer "linen stitch" of the bobbin lace, with its gentler, though delicately firm, outlines.

No. 1 is $8\frac{3}{4}$ by $14\frac{3}{4}$ inches. No. 2 is $14\frac{1}{2}$ by $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches. (C.U.)

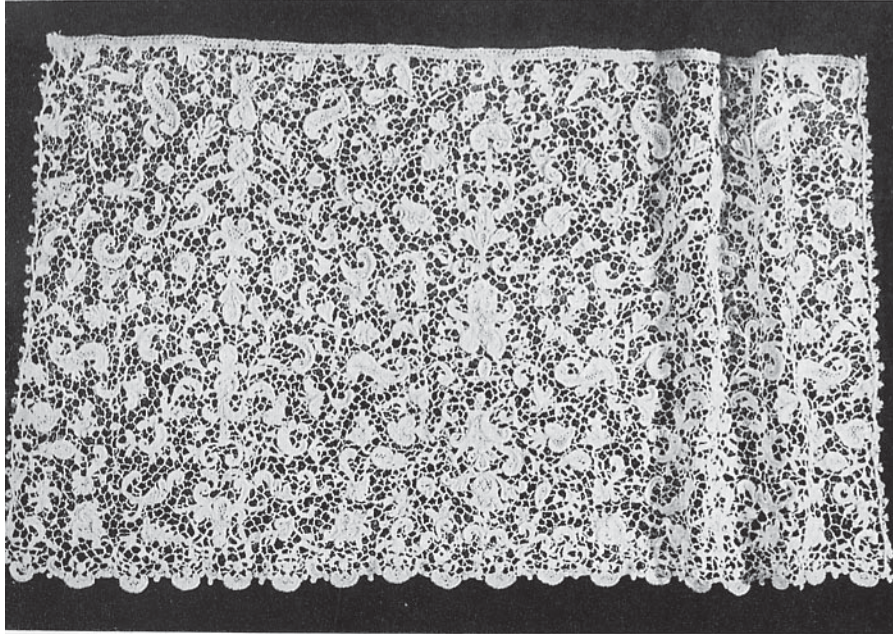


PLATE VII

Point de France, of the last half of the 17th century, needle made. The right hand side of this specimen has been laid in folds to show the greater adaptability of this form of design to the use of fullness. Width is $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches. (M.H.)

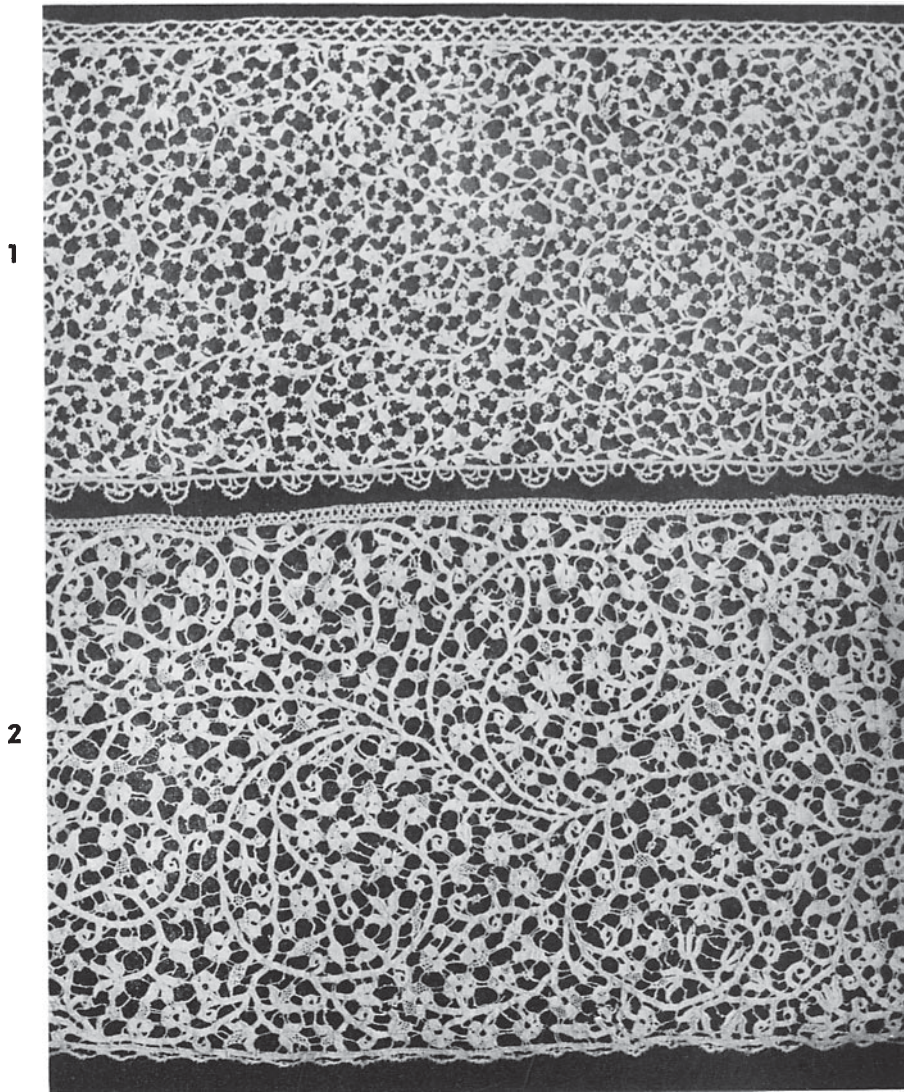


PLATE VIII

No. 1 is Venetian, a flat needlepoint of the late 17th century. No. 2 is a fine Venetian bobbin lace of similar design and period. The designs of these two Venetian laces illustrate the French influence in the distribution of the pattern, though these specimens do not include the perpendicular accent of the *candelabre* form, frequently appearing in the Venetian laces of this period. The scale is below life size. No. 1 is 6 inches in width. (M.H.) No. 2 is 7¼ by 11 inches. (C.U.)

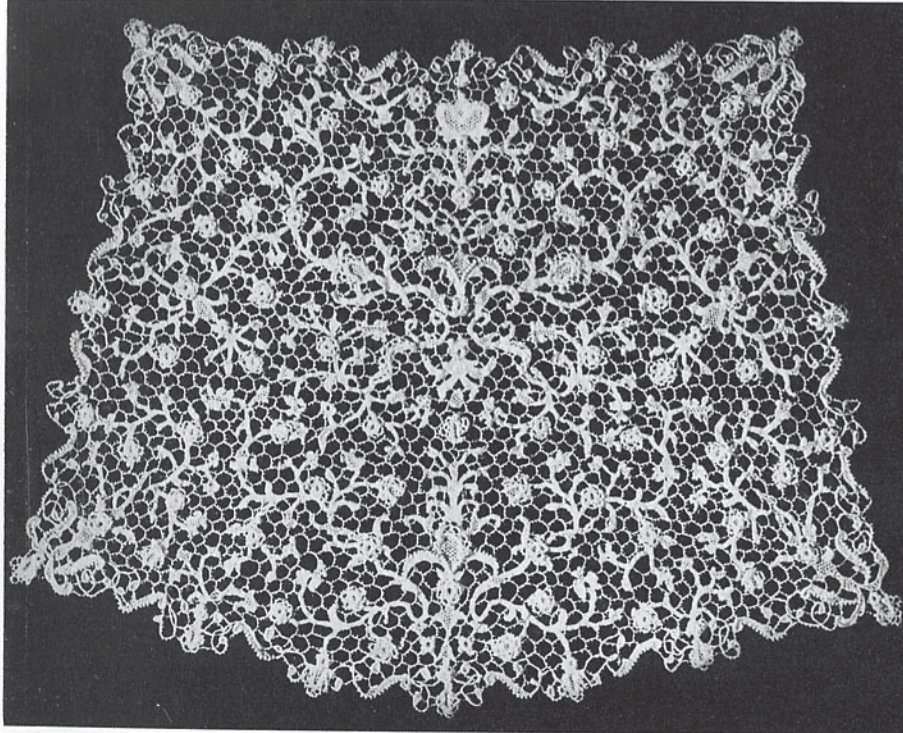


PLATE IX

This cuff of Venetian needlepoint lace of the middle of the 17th century shows in its *candelabre* pattern the influence of French design. The cuff is 11 by 8 inches. (C.U.)



PLATE X

Detail from a wide founce of *Point de Sedan* showing the type of floral forms and their arrangement developed in the first quarter of the 18th century. The detail shown in the photograph measures 15 inches in width by 19 inches in height. The total width of the founce is 25½ inches. (C.U.)



PLATE XI

Detail from a wide flounce of Mechlin bobbin lace of similar design as Plate IX. The detail shown in the photograph measures $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches in width by 20 inches in height. The total width of the flounce is $23\frac{1}{4}$ inches. (C.U.) To make a flounce, such as this, in the Mechlin technique is a real *tour de force* involving many hundreds of bobbins on the pillow at once and even so, must have been worked in perpendicular strips, afterwards joined on the pillow in the manner used for joining the *drochel* of the Brussels lace.

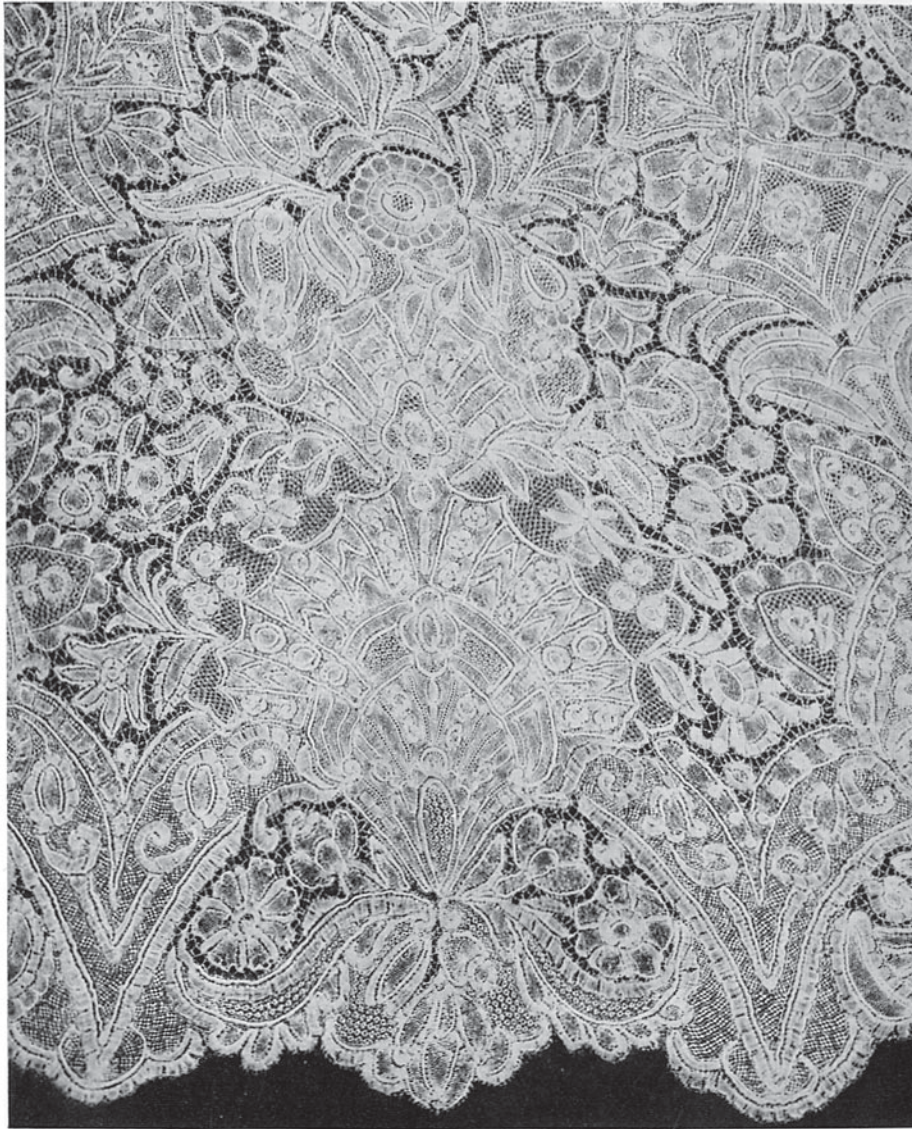


PLATE XII

Brussels bobbin lace of the same type of design as the laces on Plate X and Plate XI. The detail shown in the photograph measures 14 inches in width by 18 inches in height. The total width of the flounce is 24 inches. From the collection of the late Mrs. Robert B. Noyes.



PLATE XIII

A silk brocade, French, of the early 18th century, showing a design very similar both in arrangement and forms, to that of the three laces on Plate X, Plate XI and Plate XII. (C.U.)

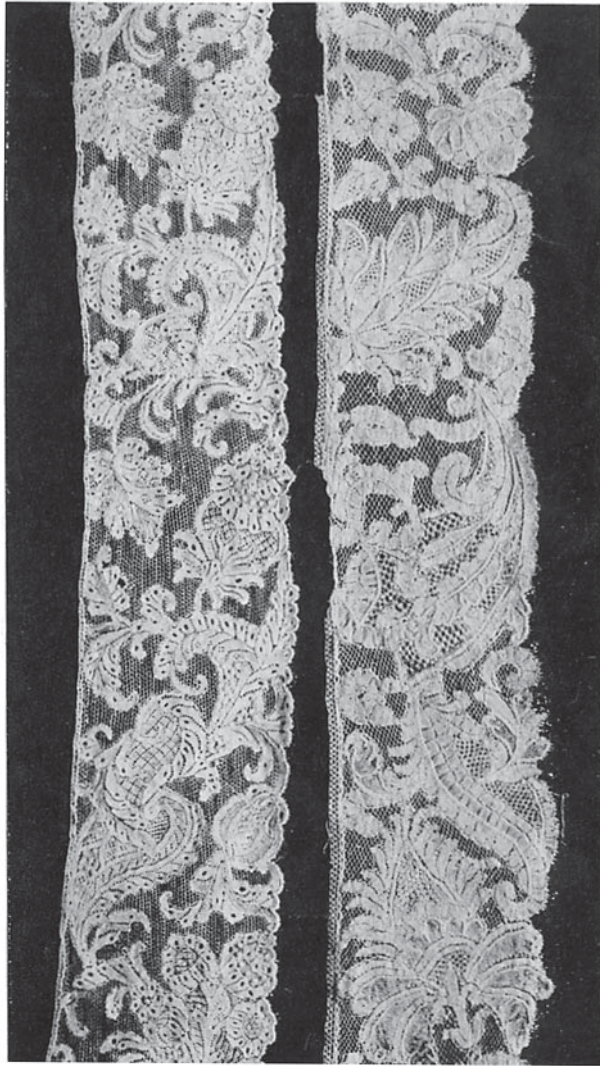


PLATE XIV

Two laces of the first quarter of the 18th century. No. 1 is the fine needlepoint known as *Point de Venise à réseau*, or grounded Venetian. Similar needlepoint was made in Brussels and the fact that the Venetian work was often made with the Flemish thread which was much finer than the Italian, adds to the difficulty of attribution. Width, $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches. (M.H.) No. 2 is the most exquisite quality of Brussels bobbin lace, the design reflecting French influence of the period of the Regency. The designs of these two laces show great similarity. Actual width, $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches. (C.U.) (See the article *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Needle Laces of the Low Countries*, by Mme. L. Paulis. BULLETIN OF THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB, Vol. XIII, Nos. 1 & 2, pp. 3-13. See also Plate VI.)

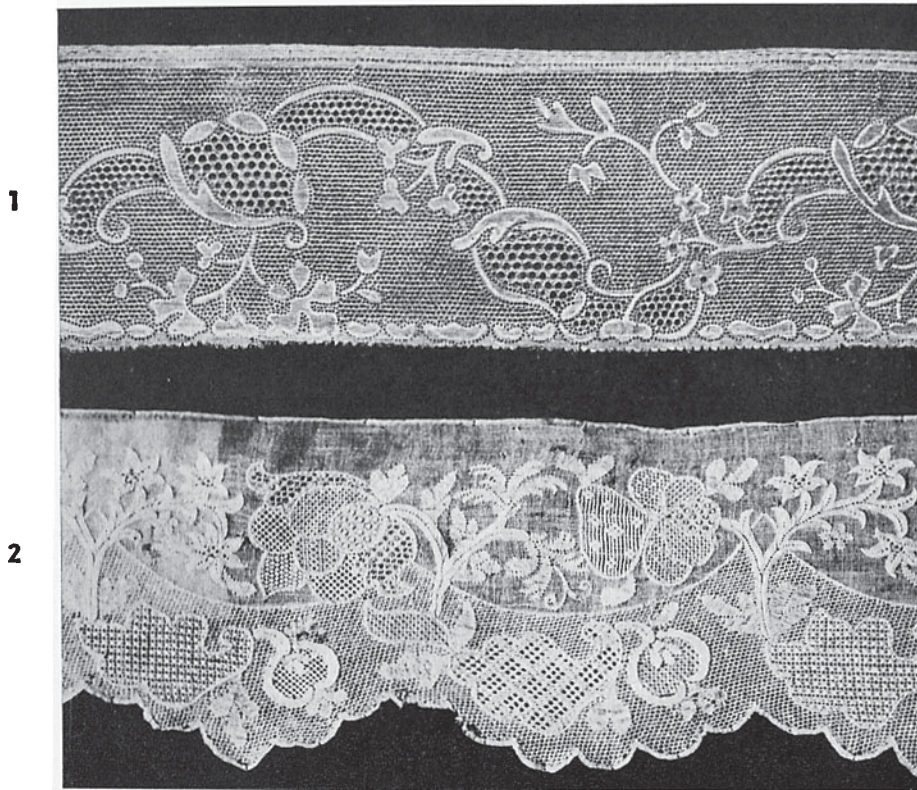


PLATE XV

No. 1 is a strip of fine muslin, probably French, late 18th century, treated with some starch, or dressing, which permitted pricking with bodkins of different sizes, giving an illusion of lace meshes. The unpricked parts are touched with white paint to represent the more solid portions of the design. (M.H.) No. 2, a more legitimate relative of lace, is usually called *filés tirés*, though embroidery would be more exact. It is worked on a very sheer, fine linen, or muslin, by the same type of stitches used in hemstitching, giving the impression of drawnwork. By using a coarse needle and very fine thread, an effect of openwork meshes is produced though threads of the fabric itself have not been withdrawn. Its date would be about the middle of the 18th century. This work was often used like lace for sleeve ruffles, caps, etc., in France and other European countries. It is sometimes called *point de Saxe*, or *point de Dresde*, because much was made there.

The dimensions are just below life size. (C.U.)

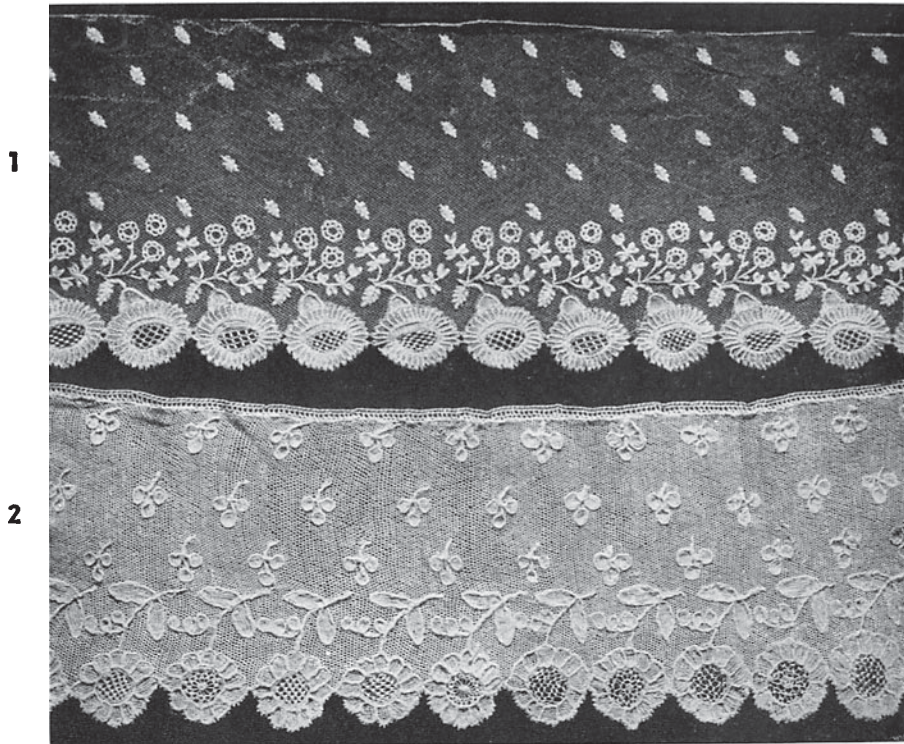


PLATE XVI

No. 1 is a very delicate Brussels bobbin lace in which the floral forms are applied on the *vrai réseau*, or *drochel* ground. By looking closely one can recognize the little strips, about $\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide, in which the exquisitely fine net of the ground was made. These were afterwards joined to make the larger surfaces needed for the rather sparse patterns which became the fashion at the very end of the 18th century and are often associated with Queen Marie Antoinette. The term *semé de larmes* is sometimes applied when the ground is sprinkled with dots, as in these specimens. (M.H.) (See the article, *Le Drochel*, by Mme. L. Paulis, BULLETIN OF THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB, Vol. VII, No. 2, pp. 3-13.) No. 2 is a needlepoint of similar design but probably much later workmanship, reproducing the patterns of the time of No. 1 and made in Burano, Italy, in the early 20th century. Width of No. 1, $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Width of No. 2, 4 inches. (M.H.)

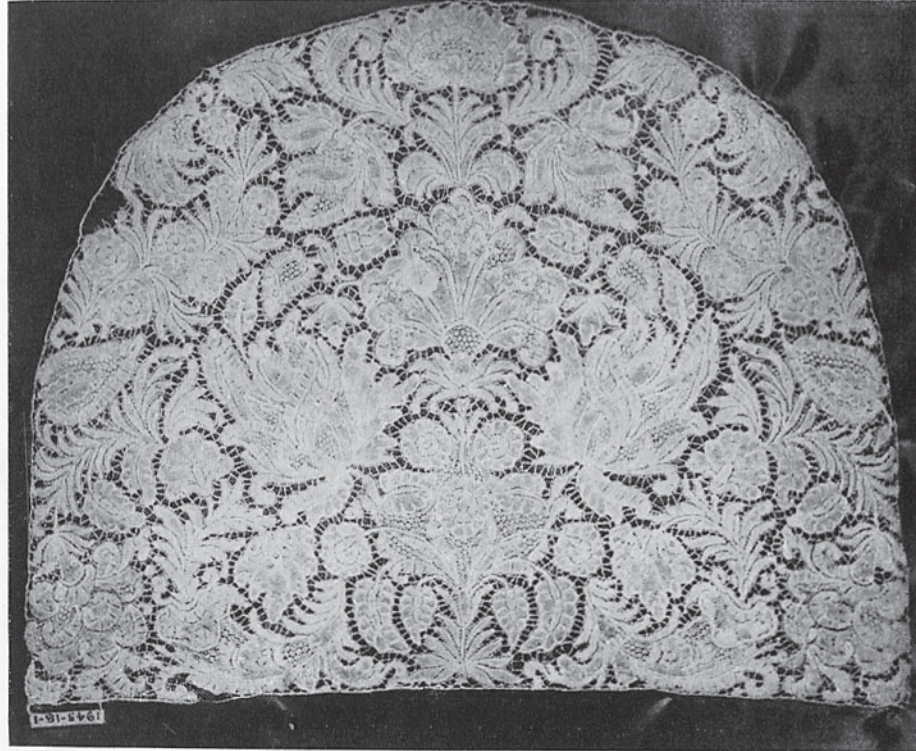


PLATE XVII

A cap crown, bobbin made, Flemish, Brussels, first quarter of the 18th century, of the type often called *Point d'Angleterre*. From the collection of the late Mrs. Robert B. Noyes.



PLATE XVIII

A rabat, or necktie-end, bobbin made, Brussels, middle of the 18th century. The hunter who appears in the center of our plate might be wearing just such a rabat. From the collection of the late Mrs. Robert B. Noyes.

A review of the foregoing pages suggests the observation that, during the first hundred and fifty years of the making of lace in Europe, the supremacy for sheer beauty goes to the needlepoints of Italy and France with their perfection of line and richness of detail (Plate VI, No. 1). But toward the last years of the 17th century the fine Flemish bobbin laces had acquired such delicacy both in texture and surface that during the 18th century the Mechlins, Valenciennes, Binches, and especially the marvelous laces of Brussels seem to surpass anything yet made, to be miracles of skill both in the sensitiveness of line and in the ethereal, almost flower-like quality of surface (Plates XVII and XVIII). It is in this aspect that they seem to outshine their sisters, the needle laces, although such examples as the *Point de Sedan* in Plate X and many of the laces of Argentan and Alençon, as shown in Plate XIX, carry on with great perfection the standard set for them in the earlier types.

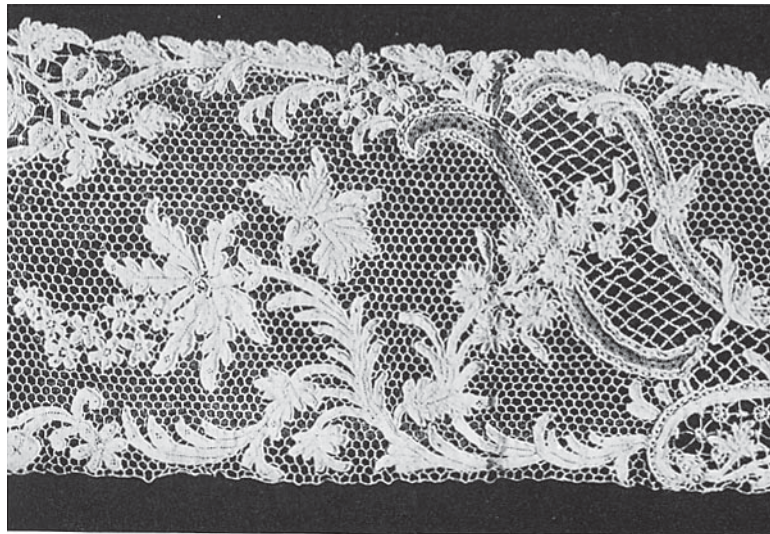


PLATE XIX

Needlepoint, French, middle of the 18th century. (M.H.)