

FRONTISPIECE
COLLAR OF VENETIAN NEEDLEPOINT LACE.
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

SOME UNPUBLISHED LACES

from the

COLLECTION OF RICHARD C. GREENLEAF

By MARIAN HAGUE

THE BULLETIN OF THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB is very fortunate in being able to show a group of laces of outstanding quality which Mr. Greenleaf has recently added to his already superb collection. The owner's interest in lace is of many years' duration, and he has built up the collection with keen discrimination and sagacity. He has had the good fortune that comes to those who have patience and a watchful readiness to take advantage of opportunity. To make such a collection requires a familiarity with the most important museums as well as the treasures of private collectors and a knowledge of where the great historical pieces are held. One must know, as well, the history of lace making and its techniques and design.

Mr. Greenleaf long ago decided that he would gather only perfect specimens and his preference has been for finished pieces such as *rabats*¹, collars, cap crowns, lappets and sleeve garnitures, pieces complete in themselves rather than mere lengths or yardages, although his collection contains also some beautiful flounces and narrow laces distinguished for their quality of design and workmanship. Thus the first two pieces of this group are collars and the third is a flounce.

It is interesting to remember that in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries lace was as much a man's necessity as a woman's. In the seventeenth century, especially, when it was employed so lavishly by the court and clergy, men made more use than women of the richest and most important laces. The portraits of great prelates, such as Fénelon and Bossuet and many of their contemporaries, show albs with wide borders of the most splendid types. The most exquisite of the *rabats* or cravats that remain to us were those made for the young princes, the duc de Burgogne and the duc d'Anjou, the grandsons of Louis XIV, and

¹ A square of lace gathered at the throat and used as a cravat.

collars such as that shown in the frontispiece appear in portraits, not only of the king and his brother, but of courtiers and others as well. Colbert, in particular, the celebrated Minister who established the great lace industry in France, is shown in many portraits wearing such collars as these.

The subject of our Frontispiece, which the owner holds in highest esteem, is a man's collar of the most beautiful quality of Venetian needle-point dating from the middle of the seventeenth century. It is of the same *rich and splendid quality as the superb collar in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London*. The arrangement of the design is similar, a scrolling stem of foliated and floral ornament, although in our piece the units of design are on a somewhat smaller scale, the open spaces of the field slightly greater, and the tie-bars or *brides* more numerous.

The magnificent collar of like shape and period in the Cluny Museum in Paris is very close to ours in richness of sculptural forms and in the structure of the design. The main difference is that in the Cluny collar there are no *brides*, the forms of the pattern touching each other and needing no other connection. This very skilful arrangement of the pattern is considered by some a mark of slightly earlier workmanship. As for pure pleasure to the beholder it is difficult to choose between the two pieces.

The second specimen is also a man's collar (Plate I), similar in form and design but of more delicate texture; it is a bobbin made fabric of Flemish or Italian origin. In this piece the pattern is accented with gold thread, a very rare feature which suggests the possibility of Spanish influence. Collars of similar shape and technique are preserved in the Musée des Arts Decoratifs in Paris and in the Amélie Piot collection in Geneva. Neither of these, however, shows the addition of gold thread.

It is interesting to note that among the settlers in the early American colonies were persons of means both able and inclined to bring with them from their native country such luxuries as lace collars. This is evidenced by a portrait in the Art Museum at Worcester, Massachusetts, painted about the middle of the seventeenth century, of John Freke (1635-1675), attorney and merchant of Boston — a handsome figure in a long, buttoned coat with elaborately puffed undersleeves and holding gloves — who wears a collar which, to judge from its design, might be of bobbin workmanship.² It is of the same shape as the one here shown. A companion portrait of Mrs. Freke shows her quite as elegantly dressed, wear-

² Known to the writer only by a photograph.



PLATE I
COLLAR OF BOBBIN LACE, FLEMISH OR ITALIAN.
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

ing, and her child as well, a collar and head kerchief or whisk trimmed with laces of the various types fashionable at that period.

The third piece in this present group, unlike those preceding, is a flounce, twenty-four inches wide, of Brussels bobbin lace of the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, which, in contrast to the two preceding specimens, must have been designed for ladies' use. (Plate II.) Its little figures, nymphs and amorini, of which there are seven in each repeat of the design, certainly have no connection with any church use or masculine activity. It is of Brussels technique, the ground being of the type known as *bloemwerk*, but the figures among the floral forms reflect the French influence of that time for they strongly resemble those in *Points de France* of the period of Louis XIV. In the pattern the posture of the figures suggest garden activities. At the top is a nymph who seems to be seated above a fountain or little waterfall, holding a cornucopia of flowers in her arm. Below her are two winged cherubs, one with a bow, the other with arrows, while below this group, in turn, is a tree in a pot balanced on either side by a figure wearing a feathered head-dress and bearing a watering pot from which a stream pours onto the roots of the tree. The most important figure in the design, both from size and position, is another nymph in fluttering draperies posed in an almost dancing position with hand at her breast from which a copious spray falls into a cup held by a cherub at her feet. As she stands on a small pedestal she probably represents a little fountain. In classic times such figures often represented the divinity of a source. (Plate III.)

In its supple texture and quality of workmanship this flounce is typical of fine Flemish lace making and its ground as well is characteristic of the work produced in that area. But the figures, so characteristically French in style, are superposed on the well known Brussels background.

As our article deals with laces hitherto unpublished in Mr. Greenleaf's collection, a list is appended of pieces appearing in well known lace publications before they had become a part of his collection.

RABAT — Point de Venise à Réseau, Venetian, First Half of the Eighteenth Century. Illustrated in *Ancient Needlepoint and Pillow Lace* by Alan Cole, London, 1874. At that time this rabat was owned by Mr. Dupont-Auberville.

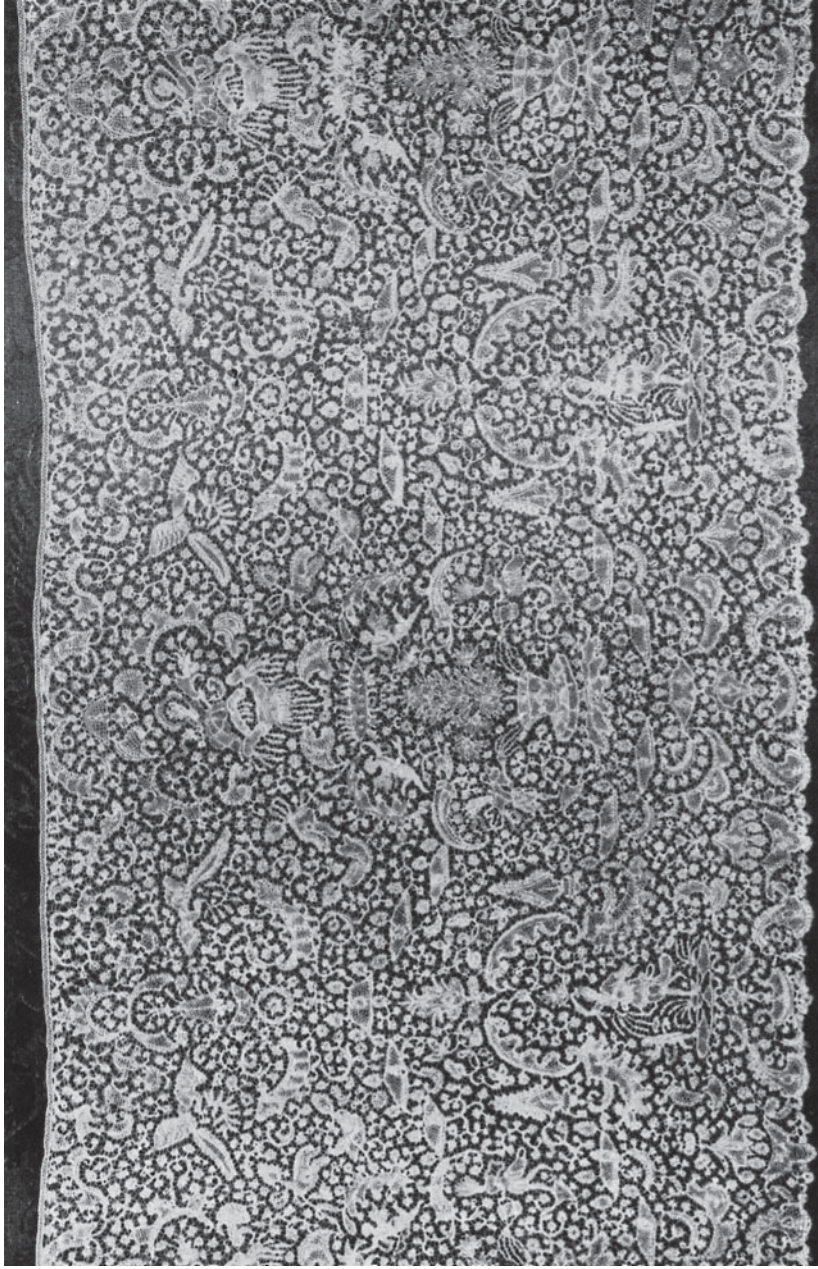


PLATE II
FLOUNCE OF BRUSSELS BOBBIN LACE.
LATE SEVENTEENTH OR EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.



PLATE III
DETAIL OF PLATE II.

RABAT — Point de France, French, Second Half of the Seventeenth Century. Small figures playing on musical instruments. From the Leopold Iklé Collection. Illustrated in *Les Points de France* by Lefébure, translated by Margaret Taylor Johnstone. (Plate VII.)

RABAT — Point de France, French, Second Half of the Seventeenth Century. Small figures dressed as Roman warriors, angels, dolphins, a figure of Bacchus, etc. From the collection of Mme Porgès. Illustrated in *Les Points de France* by Lefébure, translated by Margaret Taylor Johnstone. (Plate VIII.)

RABAT — Point d'Angleterre, Flemish, Early Eighteenth Century. Regency period. The figure of Minerva in a formal garden. From the Lescure Collection. Illustrated in *Dentelles Anciennes de la Collection Alfred Lescure* by E. van Overloop. (Plate V.)

APRON — Punto in Aria, Italian, Sixteenth Century. Birds and Flowers. From the Antolini and Leopold Iklé Collections. Illustrated in *Old Italian Lace* by Elisa Ricci. (Detail shown) Plate 266.

SMALL ALTAR FRONTAL — Gros Point de Venise, Italian or Spanish, Seventeenth Century. The figure of Saint Theresa in the center. Illustrated in *Les Points de France* by Lefébure, translated by Margaret Taylor Johnstone. (Plate VI.)

FLOUNCE, GARNITURE, BORDERS and LAPPETS — Illustrated in *Antique Laces of American Collectors* by Frances Morris and Marian Hague.

FLOUNCE — Plates LX, LXI.

GARNITURE — Plate XCIV, fig. A.

BORDERS — Plate XIX, fig. B, Plate XXI, fig. A, Plate LVII, fig. B, Plate LVIII, fig. B, Plate LXVI, fig. C, Plate LXXXIII, fig. D.

LAPPETS — Plate LVI, fig. A, Plate LXXXVI, fig. A.