

MACRAMÉ LACE.

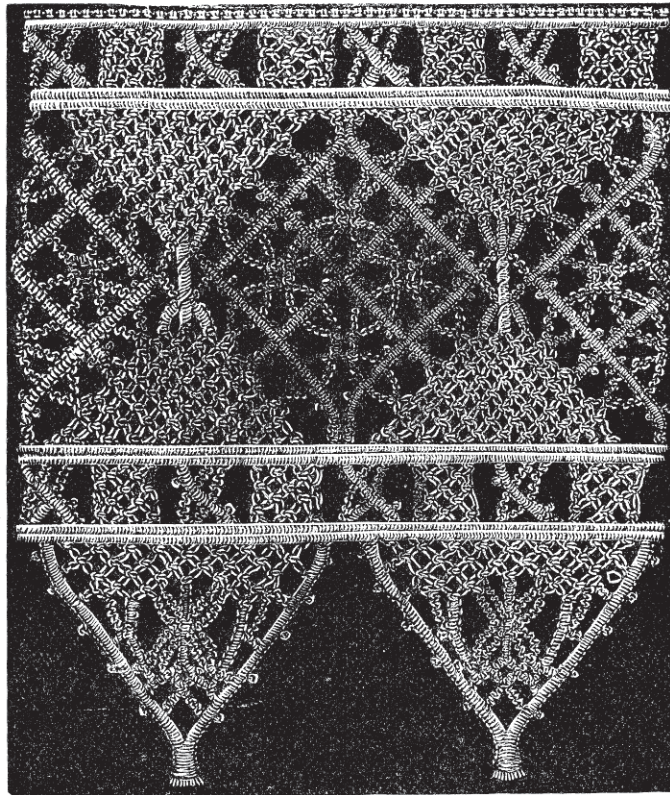
"WILL you buy any tape,
Or lace for your cape,
My dainty duck, my dear-a?"

AUTOLYCUS.

"Full happy is he," begins the artful Acropia, "to whom a purse, by this manner and by this hand wrought, is dedicated. In faith he shall have cause to account it, not as a purse for treasure, but as a treasure in itself."

"I promise you," says Pamela, "I wrought it but to make tedious hours believe I thought not of them."

THE "ARCADIA."

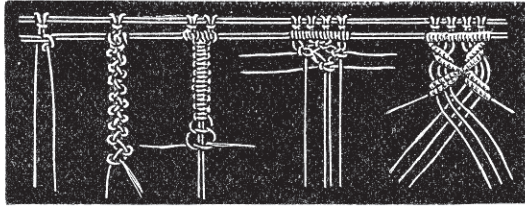


NO. 1. MACRAMÉ (GEOMETRICAL STYLE—ITALIAN).

THE first meaning of the word lace is, I believe, simply a string. It is seen in another form, as latchet. "The latchet of whose shoes," etc.,—that is, "whose shoe-lace," though we also use the expressions, "shoe-string" and "shoe-tie." So Crashaw in his pretty poem, "Wishes":

"I wish her—beauty,
That owes not all its duty
To gaudy 'tire, or glist'ning shoe-tie."

And the ladies of our own time speak of their stay-laces. Latch has the same origin, for the original latch was a string. Left hanging out, the latch-string meant hospitality; whoever came along could pull it and let himself in. "Pull the latch, my dear, and come in!" said the wolf to little Red Riding Hood. But if the door were not to be opened, the string, the latch, was pulled in. Perhaps if one were to consult a



NO. 2. KNOTS FOR MACRAMÉ LACE.

dictionary, he might find "lassoo" to be derived from the same root.

In the sense of string, lace is often found in old English poetry. Chaucer, in describing the Shipman, says :

"A dagger hanging by a las hadde he
About his nekke under his arm adown."

And Spenser :

"Bind your fillets fast,
And gird in your waste,
For more fineness, with a tawdry lace."

What the next stage was is not easy to trace. The string may have become a band, and this band may have been ornamented by drawing out some of the threads of the cloth and hemstitching the threads into a pattern. That a notion of open-work of threads spread about and dividing a surface up into irregular spaces had early become associated with the word lace is evident from Shakspeare's use of that word in describing Duncan's appearance after his death :

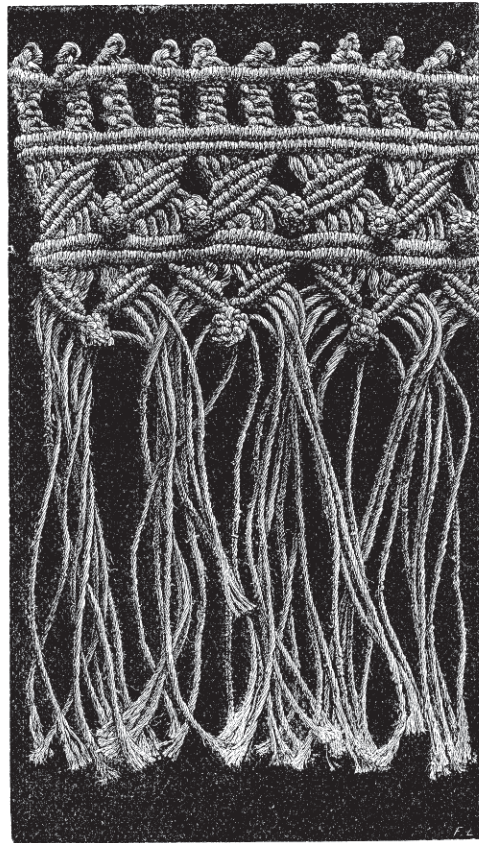
"Here lay Duncan,
His silver skin laced with his golden blood."

That is, his blood was streaked about his face, and the white skin showed between.

The earliest laces were produced in this natural, easy way. It was not till much later that "making" lace—creating a pattern out of threads by twisting them about pins stuck into a cushion, and in other ways far removed from the aboriginal and somewhat savage procedure first described—was introduced. The original lace—to employ the word in its modern acceptation—was Gothic in principle; it was "sincere," to use the fashionable slang of our day; it was an ornamentation produced by playing upon the actual structure of the thing ornamented.

At Shottery, the woman who lives in Anne Hathaway's house, and shows it to strangers, brings out, for a fee, a pair of sheets and two pillow-biers (or cases), which she alleges, and which we believe on the spot, to have

belonged to Shakspeare, and to have made a part of the furniture of the famous second best bed. These sheets and pillow-biers are ornamented by two strips of lace that run the whole length of the sheets and across the middle of each pillow-bier in such a way that when the bed is "made up," and the pillows are in their places, the ornamented work makes a continuous band. This is as I remember it, but 'tis now nigh ten years since, and I may be mistaken in the detail. The woman, who played that her name, too, was Hathaway, informed me that in the old time these sheets were only used at lying-in times and at funerals. This may have been true, for certainly they were in good preservation after close upon three hundred years. She told me also that a lady came once a



NO. 3. PATTERN OF MACRAMÉ LACE. (AMERICAN DESIGN.)

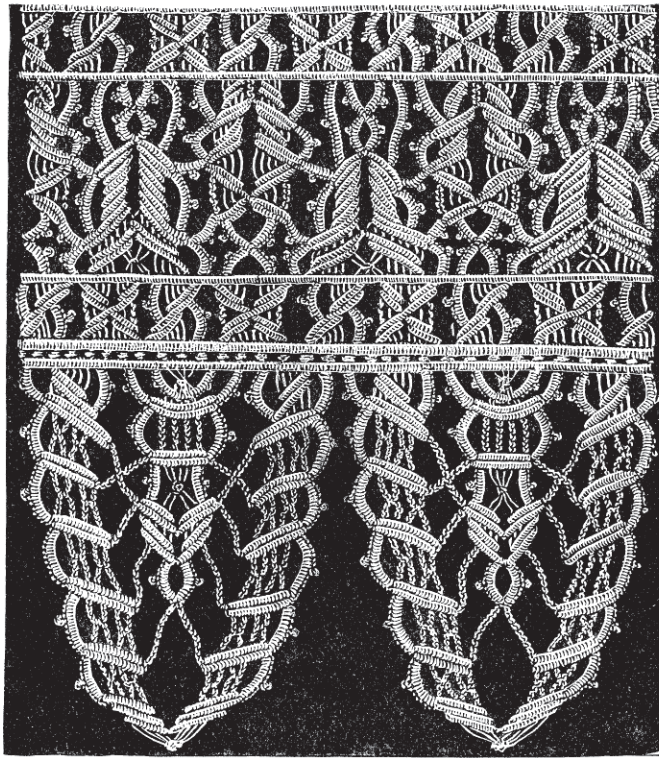
year from Stratford and looked over these pieces of linen and darned them wherever they needed strengthening. This lady must have had fairy fingers and an artistic sense,

for the darning she did was as delicate as lace.

Nowadays, when the Renaissance of the Old-Fashioned is in full vigor, our ladies, looking about for something to do, have welcomed the revival of the old ways of making lace as well as that of the old embroidery stitches. Some of them have performed wonders with the "darned lace," producing work as spirited as the old, which darned lace, by the way, was introduced to

esque handiwork. The turn of the tide has brought up, among other remembrances of the past, a lace with an odd name, "Macramé," derived, it is said, from the Arabic and signifying "fringed border."

This is an old manufacture, the original application of which appears to have been to supply garments, and even altar-cloths and towels with fringes. And the use of a fringe is, besides the use there is in ornament, the protecting the edges of that to



NO. 4. LATE SIXTEENTH CENTURY MACRAMÉ. (ITALIAN).

us on this side the water in a picture, I believe; for what attracts one person will attract another, and I remember how much my curiosity was excited by the table-cloth that Gérôme has put upon the table at which Molière is breakfasting with Louis XIV. in the picture well known by the engraving. And, if the reader cares for such trifling, he may find in another picture, the "Portrait of a Florentine Princess," by A. Bronzino, in the Bryan Gallery, New York Historical Society, a lovely hand and a lovely head encircled by some well-painted lace of the old knotted-work. The lady's handkerchief, too, is bordered with the same pictur-

which it is applied from wear-and-tear. The Eastern people often put fringes a foot long upon the ends of their rugs, and besides blending the rug well with the floor,—shading it off, as it were,—these fringes really keep the edge of the rug from being turned up by the foot.

Now, for all such purposes, and for the trimming of dresses made of the sensible, coarse, and, we may add, picturesque, stuffs so much in use at present, the macramé lace will be found very serviceable. It is made of a strong and handsome linen thread spun by the Barbour Flax Company, and at the office of the Domestic Sew-

ing-machine Company, New York, where the lace is made to order, there are always people ready to teach the making of it, and to provide customers with the materials. The threads are of different sizes and colors, and it is claimed that ladies can readily learn to make the knots (shown in No. 2). Afterward it will be easy to vary the pattern in accordance with the taste and ingenuity of the worker. We have had a few of the best patterns engraved. Nos. 3, 5, and 6 are from the manufacturers here. Nos. 1 and 4 are taken from an excellent manual, "The Queen Lace Book," published at the office of the "Queen" newspaper in London. We recommend this manual to those of our readers who would like to know something about the history of lace, but who have neither the time to read, nor the means to buy, such luxurious books as the late Mrs. Bury Palliser's complete and thorough work on the subject.

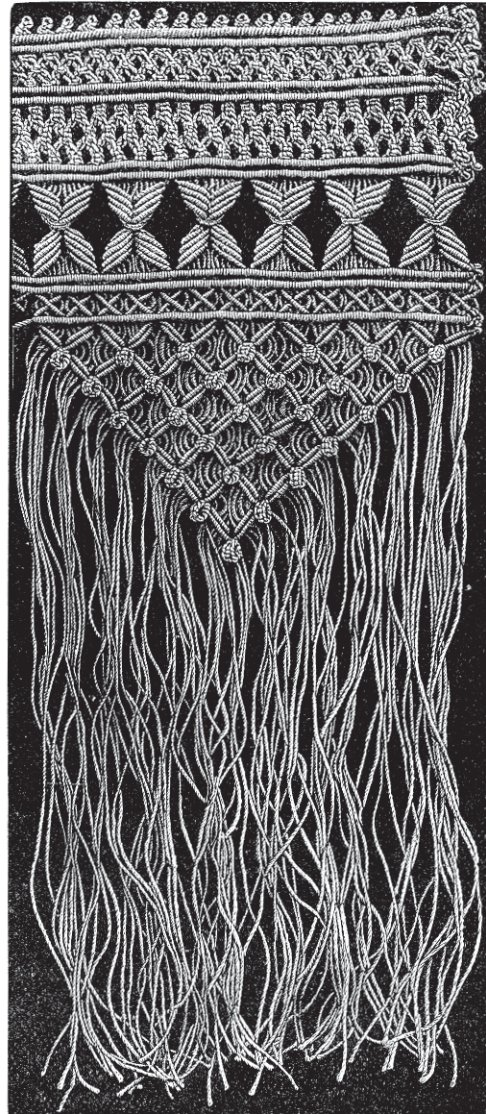
The only drawback to one's pleasure in this and some other revivals is that their cheapness and the ease that attends their production make them common; there is too little temperance in their use, and, as we see them everywhere, we come to weary of them. When they were originally made, there was little machinery in the world and little commerce. Almost everything was made by hand, either wholly or in part, and whatever mechanical appliances were employed were of the simplest. Manufactures sprang up in wide-apart places, and, for lack of easy means of communication, circulated but little, and that slowly, outside these bounds. The mode of production gave an individual character to the things that came out of these workshops, every maker following his own taste, and it was long before enough people saw them to create a demand for copies and imitations.

Now, all this is changed, and the universal employment of machinery and the wide spread of commerce, which, to use Dryden's fine expression,

"Has made one city of the universe,"

have rubbed a good deal of the bloom from the ancient manufactures, by crowding the market with cheap and clever imitations. Not to speak of other things,—pottery, for instance,—lace has suffered a good deal by this cheapening. Imitations—some very coarse, and others very fine—are made of the more expensive sorts, and when there comes along a manufacture that is too cheap

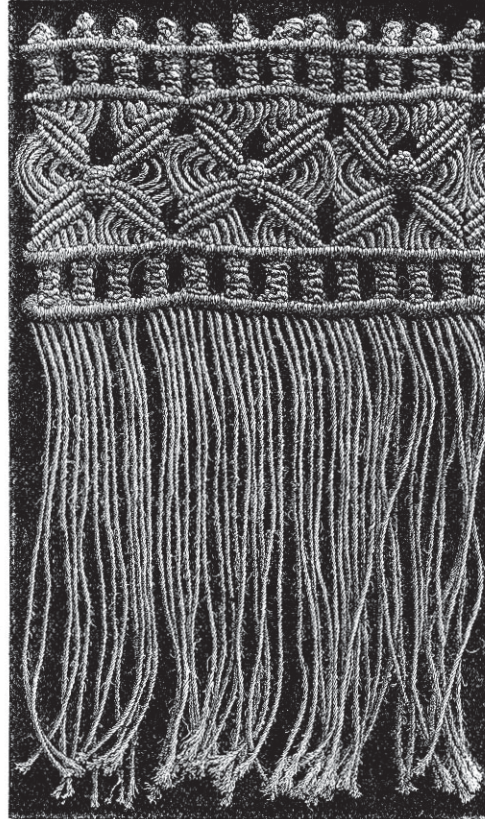
and too easily made to be worth imitating, it runs about like wild-fire, and we beat our brains to devise new and unheard-of ways of displaying it. Chairs and tables, sofas and mantel-pieces, towels and table-cloths, curtains and piano-covers are fringed with it, and there is danger it may soon become as much of an eye-sore as the common run of Japanese goods. In the old time it would not have been easy to have found any market at all for such lace as this, nor was it, indeed, made to sell, but merely for home use,—a cheap substitute for better material,



NO. 5. MACRAMÉ LACE. (AMERICAN DESIGN.)

like the rag-carpets of our grandmothers. Of course, too, no house would have much of it, nor was it probable two pieces of it would be found with the same pattern. The linen thread was spun by the people who made the lace,—all linen being home-spun in those days and much of the linen cloth home-wove. The difficulty of making the lace prevented its becoming tiresome,—a danger that threatens not only macramé lace, but all our other “decorative art” revivals.

It may be said of most of these things, as is said of a certain kind of cheese, that a very little goes a great way. A drop of attar-of-roses will scent a drawer for a thousand years, as any one may prove who will try it, and so a very little macramé lace will be enough in any household. It will serve to take the edge off the commonplace of an occasional pine-table, or to enliven the upstairs bedroom mantel-piece, or, edging the toilet-cover in the spare bachelor's bedroom, will perhaps cheer the occupant's loneliness with thoughts of the womanly fingers that wove it. But we do not think it serves any useful purpose wound around flower-pots, or fringing wood-boxes, or helping parlor coal-bins to play the gay deceiver and put on Ottoman airs; nor do we see how good taste and common sense can continue to live together like brother and sister, as they should do, if we keep on putting this sturdy peasant lace, born in a cottage and meant for hard work, to doing duty for silk fringe round chairs



NO. 6. MACRAMÉ LACE. (AMERICAN DESIGN).

and tables covered with the most expensive silk plush.

