

-LACIS-

( FILET BRODÉ )

BY

CARITÀ

# LACIS

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS IN FILET BRODÉ  
OR DARNING ON NET



COLOURED LACIS.

The design is worked in "Point de Reprise," in coloured silks upon a cream thread ground.

[*Frontispiece.*

# LACIS

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS IN  
**FILET BRODÉ**

OR DARNING ON NET: BY  
**CARITÀ**

FULLY ILLUSTRATED WITH PATTERNS AND  
WORKING DRAWINGS

FIRST SERIES



*IMPRÈSA OF QUEEN MARGUERITE  
OF NAVARRE (MIGNERAK)*

LONDON  
**SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & CO. Ltd.**  
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TO THE GENTLE WOMEN OF ALL LANDS  
WHO LOVE THEIR NEEDLE  
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK IN THE WORDS OF  
MAISTRE DOMINIQUE DE SERA  
“ À TOUTES DAMES ET DAMOYSELLES POUR PASSER  
LE TEMPS ET EUITER OYSIVETÉ ”

*The entire proceeds from the sale of this book are to be given to the  
Extension Fund of the West Ham Hospital*

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## PREFACE

**I**T is very difficult to find anyone in London who can give lessons in Lacis, and when the teacher is found the lessons are very expensive, and very many are required before one is able to work out a pattern alone.

In bringing out this the first of a series of diagrams for working Lacis or, as it is often erroneously called, Filet, I should like to point out that, by the help of these diagrams, no lessons are required.

By carefully following the lines of these diagrams and the directions given with them, the work will be found quite easy, and the worker is saved the annoyance and waste of time consequent upon having to undo much of the work when learning in the usual manner.

I have found so much difficulty in working according to the haphazard, and often incorrect, methods adopted by many teachers that I should like to save others from the same experience and at the same time open up to them a new source of interest and occupation.

Among the books published both in England and on the Continent purporting to teach this old art of Lacis I have not come across one that is of any real practical value.

Some are prettily got up, and at the first glance it seems as though something can be learned, but, alas! they all do no more than merely touch lightly on the fringe of the



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subject and, when we sit down with needle and thread, and the other necessary materials, to work a chosen design, disappointment and disillusion are our portion, for we are brought face to face with the fact that the instructions stop short at the point where the first difficulty occurs, and we either struggle on as best we can, or give it up in despair baffled in our endeavour to wrest yet one more secret from the industrious past.

The following words of Charles Blanc, although not really applied by him to Lacis, still very graphically convey the pleasure that will assuredly result in the attempt to work out the many intricate and clever designs as handed down to us through the ages :—

“When we see these traceries so skilfully plaited in which straight lines and curves intermingle, cross, branch out, disappear and recur, we experience a high pleasure in unravelling a puzzle which at first perhaps appeared to be undecipherable, and in acknowledging that a latent arrangement may be recognised in what at first and at a distance seems an inextricable confusion.”

It has taken many years to collect the designs which appear in this volume : some are from the old pattern books, some from worked specimens in my own collection of old Lacis, and some from the museums both at home and abroad ; while very many hours of patient and careful work have been spent in producing what is, I believe, an easy and practical method for working Lacis.

It is with much pleasure that I here acknowledge very gratefully the kind assistance given to me by the authorities



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of the British Museum, the South Kensington Museum, the Royal Scottish Museum and the Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh ; and I also wish to thank the Rev. John Anderson, of the General Register House, Edinburgh, for the facilities he afforded me of studying the Scottish records, more especially those relating to Queen Mary. My thanks are also due to Mr F. A. Cox, of the London Institution, for his help in suggesting books of reference, and to the authors and publishers mentioned on p. xiii., whose courtesy has enabled me to make use of their information and illustrations.

LONDON, 1908.

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- “Book of the Dead.”
- “Chaldæan Account of Genesis.” George Smith.  
(Messrs Sampson Low, Marston & Co.)
- “Chaldæ. Story of the Nations.” Zenaide Razogin.  
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- “Der Stil.” Semper.
- “Dictionnaire de l’Ameublement.” Henry Havard.
- “Egyptian Decorative Art.” Professor Flinders Petrie.
- “Early Man in Britain.” William Boyd Dawkins.
- “Five Ancient Monarchies.” Professor Rawlinson.  
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- “Grammaire des Arts du Dessin.” M. Auguste Charles Blanc.
- “History of Lace.” Mrs Bury Palliser.  
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## INTRODUCTION

FOR many years past there has been on the Continent a marked revival of Lacis.

Indeed, I doubt whether at any time it has died out in Italy, France, Spain and Portugal since the Mediæval days when such enormous quantities were made in the religious houses, as well as in every castle, palace and hall.

It is a pleasure to see that at last we in England are beginning to appreciate its beauty and its possibilities of utility, and I feel sure that if Englishwomen would only "take it up" as Frenchwomen have done, they too would be as deeply absorbed and interested.

I strongly advise women of all classes to master the technicalities of this very old form of lace; it is a delightful occupation and capable of infinite variety in the working out of the multitudinous and splendid designs that were made by men who knew and loved their craft.

We, in this modern life, as they of old, ever demand some new thing, but it is the old that is ever new, and I hope I shall not be acclaimed a heretic when adding that the old is ever best; in this instance, however, I think I make this statement with reason, for many have entered into the field as designers and workers of Lacis who are not imbued with the love of the old, and who have not the knowledge to save



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them from the pitfalls that await those who revive an ancient form of work without understanding the spirit of the age that produced that work.

There are many designs sold now that are a mere travesty of the old ; the character has all been taken out of them, and ineffective additions have been made.

The wise worker will, however, reject these, and will select designs that are really authentic. And if, furthermore, she would show wisdom by insisting upon having good thread, she may hand down to future times work that shall vie with the old.

There is in this work a vast field of interest, fascination, and enjoyment, offering a calm haven of rest to the weary-nerved. Surrounded as we are now by noise and excitement, we go back in thought to the old conventual days when so much of this work was done ; then, without a doubt, this gentle craft proved a solace from the weariness of *too* much quiet.

And even so to-day it may prove a haven of pure enjoyment and rest to the women wearied with the rush and hurry of modern life, and the old saying "*In labore quies*" may be verified once again.

There are many people to whom embroidery does not appeal—those who have not the gift of colour or design, and who are frightened by the many technical difficulties that this form of work presents. Again, there are many who have not the necessary time or eyesight to undertake the finer forms of lacemaking. There are also too many difficulties to be met with. For instance, it is almost impossible, nay, I will

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go further and say it is impossible, to find in England a teacher who can teach Point de Venise or Point d'Alençon as it ought to be taught. And again, it is quite impossible to get in England the thread for reproducing a lace approaching in the very least degree to the smoothness, gloss and fineness of any of the old laces. It is true that age, with its gentle, mellowing hand, has had much to do in bringing about this effect. Still the fact remains that the thread generally sold for lacemaking, either for needle-point or for bobbin lace made on a pillow, partakes much more of the characteristics of *cotton*, and becomes after one or two washings fluffy and rough, and it entirely lacks that beautiful pearly sheen and smooth, satin-like gloss that is a supreme delight in the old threads.

There is a thread sold now for lacemaking, but it is *too* glossy, and seems always to me to be prepared artificially—I mean as though the gloss were not an inherent quality, but as though it has been conveyed to the thread by some chemical process, as in the mercerisation of cotton.

I should here like to emphasise the point that in attempting to reproduce any of the old work, whether embroideries or any of the forms of lace, we should strive to obtain the materials that most nearly approach in quality, colour, texture and aspect those of a bygone day.

True, it is very, very difficult, but I think the remedy is in our own hands.

If all workers, those at least who love the beautiful and true, and to whom the idea of a cheap imitation is abhorrent, were to insist upon being supplied with good materials, in time

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the demand would create the supply. Those who are persevering, and those to whom the universal English creed of "It is very near" does not appeal, send abroad for the materials that they want because foreign manufacturers try to imitate more faithfully the old materials. As showing the keen anxiety abroad to produce good things, Dr Bock says that "prizes are offered at Lyons for the best gold and silver threads that will not tarnish." Until we can cast away the idea of cheapness and the fatal saying of "It is very near" or "It will do," we shall never produce work of any value, we shall never produce work that will live and be a joy and delight to succeeding generations.

When I speak of cheapness, I mean the cheapness that asks for and obtains a silk or thread that is a subterfuge. The age asks for a cotton that looks like silk, or for a cotton that shall look like flax thread.

An error is made on the other hand by some people who consider that a thing can only be good when very expensive, and that the mere price of a thing constitutes its value. The one doctrine is as sad and false as the other.

Why is the old work so beautiful, and why does it afford us never-ending wonderment and genuine delight, and why has it lasted for centuries with colours and texture unimpaired by the destroying hand of time?

Because this element of cheapness and modern hurry did not enter into the scheme—because every part of it was prepared with loving care and unwearying trouble by people who were artists first and craftsmen afterwards.

If anyone will examine the beautiful specimens of work—

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specimens either of embroidery or of lace that have been handed down to us from long ago—they will see that all were made by hand—not only the work itself, but all the materials that were used in producing it. The silks and wools and threads were spun, dyed and woven by people who spared no effort to produce a beautiful thing.

The thread was spun by sensitive hands, not by an unfeeling machine, and this method produced a thread whose slight irregularity and roughness was but an added charm and gave the subtle distinction and individuality that characterises so strikingly the personal element in all old work and is one of its greatest attractions.

The present-day method eliminates all this, and only lifeless and monotonous work is the result. And here I should very much like to point out that this individuality is such a precious dower that it should be cultivated to the utmost and in every possible way, for there is nothing produced by mechanical aid that can in any way imitate or replace it.

I know that there are a few who are striving to revive the old traditions of hand-made fabrics, but surely many more might enter this field of laudable effort.

There is plenty of work for people to do in producing materials that shall vie with the old, and we might then hand down, as a nation, work that would be as famous in the future as our “*Opus Anglicanum*” was in the past.

As things are now, most people have to be content with machine-made things, not because they *are* content, but because of the great difficulty in procuring any other.

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And here I am afraid I am going to offend many people, but I do so earnestly desire to bring home to Englishwomen the fact that, at the present time, we, as a nation, are poor in artistic and meritorious work, and the bulk of women fritter their time away over foolish work that is badly conceived, designed and arranged. Even in regard to Lacis I see that the debasement of this beautiful and unique work has already begun. In some of the popular illustrated papers instructions are given for working Lacis upon a machine-made net. Can degradation go further? Illustrations are also given showing the inartistic application of patterns to altogether inappropriate uses. It is very much to be deplored that before Englishwomen know what the *real* Lacis *is* they should thus be taught what Lacis should *not be*. It is this eternal striving after the meretricious of to-day that rings the knell of hope for anything better. Lacis has now for some years past been very extensively and beautifully worked by Frenchwomen, for use in their houses, to which its severe straight lines and geometrically arranged designs are peculiarly suited.

How much more interesting, for instance, might London houses become, both to the inmates and to passers-by, if our windows were made beautiful with both long and short curtains of Lacis arranged either in bands or squares set into fine "*limon*" or "*toile*," or even as whole curtains. Very many otherwise charmingly furnished rooms are too often spoiled because the curtains are not in harmony with the scheme of decoration.

Again, what possibilities are opened up to us of making our

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bed and table linen “ things of beauty ” instead of, as at present, commonplace and uninteresting.

One very great advantage that Lacis possesses over other fabrics employed in this way is that it is ever new and can be used for some time without looking tumbled and untidy, and if carefully washed is improved instead of deteriorated by the process, but it must be carefully made, and made of good materials, and finally joined to good linen fabrics.

Lacis has been used in the best Paris houses, and by the best-dressed women as trimmings for dresses, for some years past, but it is not the cheap machine-made variety that has made its appearance in London shops, nor does it bear any resemblance to the very poor imitation that is known by the name of “ Guipure d’Art ” or “ Filet Guipure.”

Some fancy netting in conjunction with darning has also been introduced. This, like most of the French productions, is graceful and charming, and it is so because French people so well understand the value of Lacis for dress trimmings, and they do not introduce inappropriate and incongruous patterns, but in a thoroughly artistic way succeed in differentiating it from the Lacis suitable to articles for house and table decoration.

In conclusion, I wish very strongly to urge anyone taking up Lacis to do so from the artistic point of view, and to endeavour to reproduce this work, both as to the designs and as to the quality of the necessary materials, in the spirit of the old examples.

There can be no better education for the woman who “ loves her needle’s worke ” than that to be obtained by a

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thoroughly exhaustive and careful examination of our beautiful pieces of embroidery and lace—and it cannot be too often repeated. Each time some new beauty, unnoticed before, extends our sense of the artistic fitness that was as the very breath of the people who lived nearer to nature than most of us do to-day, and who were not hampered by any considerations of a cheap commercialism. The colour sense also, which, alas, so often finds expression in crude and violent blendings of wrongly assorted colours, will be much improved; and the perception of the harmony of colours and beauty of form and design that the contemplation of beautiful things will assuredly produce will be ours in a rich degree. I can give no better advice than this: Go to the museums both at home and abroad and get inspiration and knowledge from the many fine pieces of work, of all descriptions and of all times, that have been made since the needle became such a wonder-working instrument in the hands of both men and women.



# LACIS

Opus Araneum.  
Punto a maglia quadrata.

# NETWORK

OR

# DARNED NETTING

## FRENCH

Point Conté  
Filet brodé  
La Broderie sur filet  
La Dentelle au filet

## ITALIAN

Punto a maglia quadrata  
Punto a magliata  
Lavoro di maglia  
Modano (Tuscany)

## LACIS

WHAT is Filet? What is Lacis? are two questions that one hears now, constantly, on all sides.

Much curious information is forthcoming in the replies, some people affirming that it is crochet, some that it is drawn-thread work, while there are many who do not recognise the difference between Lacis and cut work or between Lacis and drawn work.

This confusion can be very easily cleared away if people will remember that "Filet" is the French word for a net, and "Lacis" for network—meaning in this case that the net has been ornamented with a design darned or applied upon its surface. The French terms, "La Dentelle au Filet," or "La Broderie sur Filet," or even "Filet brodé," and the Italian form of "Punto a maglia quadrata," will perhaps throw more light upon this subject. In the dictionary of Antoine Furtière of 1684, Lacis is thus described: "Lacis espèce d'ouvrage de fil ou de soye fait en forme de filet ou de réseuil dont les brins étaient entrelassés les uns dans les autres."

The ground consisted of a network made by hand as fish and garden nets are made: on this ground the pattern was worked, usually by darning; the "*point de toile*" and the "*point de reprise*" being the stitches most generally employed. Sometimes the pattern was cut out of linen or other fabric and

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applied to the ground. The ground was commonly made of a white flax thread, hand-spun ; sometimes thread and silk of different colours were used, and in some cases gold and silver were employed, and all these different materials were brought into use for the darning. Great diversity was produced by the employment in various ways of these rich silks and threads. Again, a good effect was arrived at by varying the style of the darning, the worker giving light and shade to the work by using the “*toile*” stitch and the “*reprise*” stitch in the same piece. In another and later form we see the “*toile*” stitch surrounded by a thicker and apparently more glossy thread that outlines the designs. This latter form is called Filet Richelieu and was greatly in favour during the Renaissance period in France and Italy.

It is undoubtedly in the *net* form of design of primitive times, or the kindred interlacing of threads, as in the joining together the unravelled edges of materials and forming thereby a more or less elaborate network, that we shall discover the earliest idea and suggestion of lace which in Europe found expression in the many examples of Punto tirato (drawn work) and Punto tagliato (cut work). In many of these early varieties we find the threads carefully counted, some being cut and drawn out, while those remaining are worked together into reticulated or other complicated designs.

It is interesting to see in Lacis the application of the same idea carried out in an easier and quicker way. The careful counting and cutting of the threads, with the subsequent elaborate work upon this prepared ground, took far longer to do than merely to *net* the ground and darn the pattern upon

## *Lacis*

its meshes. Later on, however, these simple forms were found to be of too restricted a character for developing the utmost grace and beauty of design, and we arrive at the evolution of those splendid needle-point laces, so full of exquisite imaginings, that have held the admiration of the artistic world.

It is true that in the later specimens of Lacis we do get a more flowing pattern, some of the Renaissance pieces being very gracefully designed ; still the squares of the ground of netting certainly limited the versatility of the designer.

On the other hand, from this restriction we have had handed down to us patterns of so strange and quaint device, and so full of a mystic symbolism, that we are charmed in spite of their defiance of the recognised rules of art.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Lacis was known as *Opus Filatorium* or *Opus Araneum* ; when, however, the netted ground was unornamented by darning or by linen or other material applied to its surface, it was distinguished by the name of *Rezel*, *Rezeul*, *Rezeuil* or *Reseau* ; while that species made in Tuscany was further differentiated by the special name of *Modano* ; this plain netting was very much used for bed hangings and window curtains.

The following mention of “un coffre plat de Chippre ouré a personnaiges ouquel a un rezeul plain de rondelles de bois en facon de trinchouers,” which occurs in an inventory of Charlotte de Savoie in 1483, is perhaps one of the earliest references to “Rezeul.”

Later the word occurs very frequently, as in the inventory of Jeanne d'Albret, mother of Henri IV. “Une piece de

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rezeul de fil d'or et d'argent et de soye a plusieurs couleurs servants de pantés de daiz et contenant neuf aulnes."

"Elle se meist a faire un lict de rezel de soye cramoisie" is thought worthy of record in the "Heptameron," by Marguerite de Valois, sister of Francis I.

Louise de Vaudemont possessed a bed of "razzeuil a carry garny de trois pantés fond et douciel trois rideaulx pareils et deux fourreaux de quenoilles," and in the inventories of Gabrielle d'Estrées in 1599 mention is made of a "lict de carré de lenoute les pantés et mattelas (garnis) de lassis recouert de soye de couleur rebordée d'or et d'argent." In the same inventory occurs the following account of a bed that belonged to Jeanne d'Albret and had been transported to Paris by order of Henri IV. from the chateau at Pau: "Un petit lict a triangle le fondz de velours noir le dossier de velours vert couuert de rezeul d'or au milieu une escusson aux armoiries du feu Roy et de la feue Royne deux pantés sur fonds de tissu d'or sur satin cramoizin et aux dessoubz de chacune pante six rondz faicte de mesure ourage auquel y a six houppes de satin cramoizin et fil d'or et d'argent."

The Mediæval Lacis was very extensively made in the religious houses as well as in the palaces and castles, where queens and noble women sat surrounded by their maidens, continually working, and this we know was the custom in Italy, France, Spain, Germany and Portugal. In England we do not appear to have made so much, or the examples have been distributed in other countries, as we know a great deal of our English work was distributed, for we find unfortunately very little mention of English Lacis, and very few

## *Lacis*

examples now remain. The celebrated Altar Frontal that belonged to the late Mrs Hailstone is supposed to be of English workmanship. It is described in the catalogue of her collection as "one of the rarest specimens dating from at least three hundred years ago and consisting of a large Altar Frontal of Point conté" (this was a name also given to this lace) "namely the groundwork netted and the pattern darned in.

"The subject, the Passion of Our Lord, is divided into eight compartments, consisting of, First, Our Saviour praying in the Garden, the Eleven Apostles asleep and the Angel ministering unto Him.

"Second, the Betrayal with a kiss by Judas, and Simon Peter cutting off the ear of Malchus.

"Below, in the third compartment, appears Our Lord brought before Pilate.

"Fourthly, the Scourging, then in the centre of the frontal, is the soul brought up for Judgment. Above Our Saviour seated, on one side of whom appears the Virgin, on the other St John : both kneeling, with an angel to the right and left, the one holding a spear and Crown of thorns, the other a cross and three nails ; below appears the devil with the Agnus Dei at his feet, on the other side an angel, a crowned head and a bird.

"Then follow four other compartments, the subjects of which are the Carrying of the Cross, the Crucifixion, the taking down from the Cross and the Laying in the tomb : the whole encircled and interlined with Latin inscriptions above and on each side a Mediæval border.

## *Lacis*

“This frontal is fourteen feet long and four feet wide and there are fifty-six figures worked upon it.”

The comparative ease and quickness with which Lacis could be executed may have been one reason for its immense popularity during the Middle Ages, a popularity which has remained, through good and evil times, practically undiminished in most Continental countries until to-day.

The work is, when once the details are mastered, very easy, stitches being counted as in ordinary cross-stitch, and is merely the old familiar darning.

In the earlier examples the designs were usually geometrical, heraldic devices being arranged in conjunction with a diamond or lozenge pattern (see Fig. A) which divided the surface of the net into compartments.

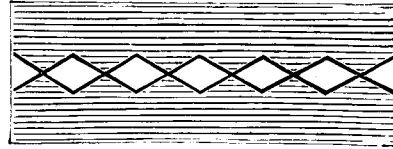


Fig. A.—Lozenge Pattern.

The Tau or Christian Cross, sometimes called the Gammadion, was a very favourite design. It took its name of Gammadion from the idea that it was composed of four Capital Greek Gammas joined together. Illustration 1 gives a form of this Cross as embroidered on a piece of early sixteenth-century netting that formed part of Dr Bock's collection and is now in the South Kensington collection.

The great fineness and perfect regularity of the netting can be clearly seen in these illustrations.

Lacis intended for ecclesiastical use was ornamented with sacred emblems or symbolical figures. The Agnus Dei, the beasts of the Apocalypse, the Dragon and the Lion, the



## *Lacis*

Fleur de lis, and the sacred monogram all found a place on these splendid pieces. Family hangings and funeral palls

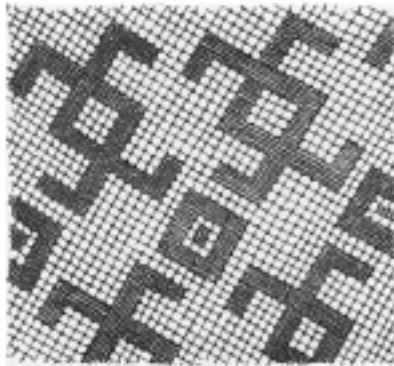


Illustration 1.—Spider Work.  
Fourteenth Century. (Bock Coll.,  
South Kensington Museum.)

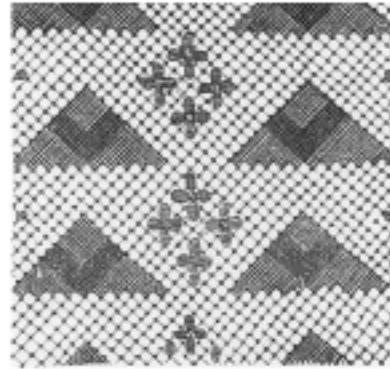


Illustration 2.—Spider Work.  
Thirteenth Century. (Bock Coll.,  
South Kensington Museum.)

were embroidered with armorial shields, royal or ducal crowns, death's heads and other symbols.

Scenes from Bible history, as in Mrs Hailstone's Altar Frontal, and mythological subjects are also frequently met with, and Illustration 3, taken from one of the old pattern books, depicts the Crucifixion. A very interesting Daniel in the den of lions was recently shown in a Lace Exhibition.



Illustration 3.—Crucifixion.

From the facility with which these scenes such as these could be produced it was extensively employed for Church hangings, altar curtains and frontals, and the geo-

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## *Lacis*

metrical designs were peculiarly suited to the straight lines necessary for bed furniture and valances and window curtains, as well as for the enrichment of tablecloths and all house linen.

The great strength and durability of it as a fabric, and the fact that repeated washings in no way diminish its beauty, must also be counted as factors in its popularity.

The old pattern books, the source from which we derive our most beautiful designs, were made by the Mediæval artists for the use of both men and women ; indeed one of these old books is dedicated to “*donne donzelle con gli huomini.*” In those days men worked as well as women.

These books are extremely rare, and are worth considerably more than the proverbial weight in gold, partly on account of their scarceness and also because they are fine examples of the art of the wood engraver. They are full of exquisite designs for *Passaments*, for *Punti a groppo, tirato, a maglia quadrata, a reticella or Radixeli* and the marvellous and fairylike Venetian points, *Punti di Venezia, Punti in Aria, Punto tagliato a fogliame, Punto di Burano, Argentella* and the *Merletti a Fuselli*, all these being the parent stock which produced the numerous laces in other countries.

To mention only a few of these, in France the *Point d'Alençon* and *Argentan, Valenciennes, Point de Paris, Lille, Dieppe, Chantilly* ; in Spain the *Point d'Espagne*, the pillow-made blonde, and the justly celebrated gold and silver laces ; in Belgium the *Point d'Angleterre, Mechlin or Malines, the Trolle Kant, the Antwerp laces*, and among these specially to be noted the *Potten Kant*—so well known from its graceful

## *Lacis*

vase of flowers—the Binche, that exquisite cobweb of lace, all of which were derived from the same source of pure ethereal beauty.

Laces such as Devonshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Irish have all received their inspiration from the Early Venetian. Unfortunately, however, in many of these laces made in England the very grave fault is apparent of using a cotton or a mixed thread instead of the pure flax in their manufacture. No true connoisseur can have aught but condemnation for this practice.

The best artists of the day did not disdain to design patterns for these books—even Titian is reputed to have done so; and as showing the favour in which they were held we find Catherine de Médicis appointing Vinciolo to be her own designer, and he followed her in her train of servants and dependants to Paris, where, through her influence, these different *points* were introduced into France, and she gave him the exclusive right of selling the Collarettes Gaudronnés made famous by her and her ladies.

Many of the dedications of these books very quaintly point out that these particular designs have not yet been seen nor invented: “Choze ni encore veuë ni inventée.”

For those who are not acquainted with them I transcribe the following dedications, feeling certain that they will be of interest, not only in showing the quaint phraseology of the authors but in pointing out what a very large demand existed for these books.

The earliest specimen seems to have been: “En primere a culoge (cologne) par metrepriere quinty demorât denpre leglie

## *Lacis*

de iii roies in 1527," and his dedication runs thus : " Liure nouveau et subtil touchant lart et sciēce tant de brouderie fronsseurs, tapisseries cōme aultres mestiers quō fait alesguille, soit au petit mestier, aultelisse ou sur toile cleric, tresvtile et necessaire a toutes gens usans des mestiers et ars dessuld, ou semblables, ou il y ha C et xxxviij patrons de diuers ouvraiges faich per art et proportion."

Taglienti in 1530 dedicates his book to each "valarosa donna & tutte altre donzelle, con gli huomini & insieme & fanciulli, liquali si diletтарono de imparar a disegnar, cuscir, & riccammar," and he says that this "opera nuova sara di grande utilità ad ogni artista : per esser il disegno ad agniuno necessario la qual e ititolate esempio di ricāmi."

Maistre Dominique de Sera wrote : " Le Livre de Lingerie enseignant le noble et gentil art de l'esguille, pour besongner en tous points : utile et profitable à toutes Dames & Damoyelles pour passer le temps et euter oysiveté." This was printed in 1534 at Paris, à l'enseigne du Pelican.

Jean Cousin in 1637, in his preface "L'Auteur aux Lectures," describes what he has seen "en Italie, Espagne, Romanie, Allemagne & autre païs dont je ne fais aucune mention à cause de trop longue plexité," and he says that he gives at least eighty designs for the use and singular profit of many, "hommes tant que femmes," and he lastly makes the statement that "Finis coronat opus." On the last page there is the *impresa* of Cavellat, a pelican in its piety, "Mors in me —Vita in me."

Other editions have different title-pages, but the title-page of the first edition of Federic de Vinciolo Venitien runs thus :

## *Lacis*

“Les singuliers et nouveaux pourtraicts et ouvrages de Lingerie. Servans de patrons à faire toutes sortes de poincts, couppé, Lacis & autres. Dédié à la Royne. Nouvellement inventez, au proffit et cōtètement, des nobles Dames et Damoiselles & autres gentils esprits, amateurs d’un tel art. Par le Seigneur Federic de Vinciolo Venitien. A Paris. Par Jean le Clerc le ieune, ruë Chartiere, au chef Saint Denis, 1587. Avec privilege du Roy.” And in his dedication to the second part “Le Seigneur Federic de Vinciolo aux Benevolles Lecteurs” sets forth that several authors before him had published certain patterns for work that “les Seigneurs, Dames & Damoysselles ont eu pour agréable,” he, to show “la bonne Volonté que je porte à la France, laquelle m’ayant été douce et favorable, depuis certains temps que j’ay quitté Venize, país de ma nativité,” wishes to portray the present “pourtraicts d’ouvrages magnifiques tous differës & non encor usitez en cette cōtree ni aultres, & que j’ay tenus cachés & incōgnus jusques à maintenant” (1587).

I will give only one more quotation from these old books, and that because it was made by an Englishman, Milour Matthias Mignerak. Unfortunately no one seems to know who he was, and only his book remains to tell us that he lived. It is dated 1605, and he calls it “La Pratique de l’aiguille industrielle du très excellent Milour Matthias Mignerak, Anglois, ouvrier fort expert en toute sorte de lingerie ou sont tracéz Divers compartimens de carrez tous differans en grandeur et invention avec les plus exquis bordures, desseins d’ordonnances qui se soient veux jusques à ce jourd’hui tant poetiques historiques qu’autres ouvrages de point de rebord.

## *Lacis*

Ensemble : Les nouvelles invencions Françaises pour ce qui est de devotion et contemplation. A la Très-Chrestiene Roine de France et de Navarre. Avec privilege 1605 du Roy. A Paris, par Jean Leclerc rue St Jean de Latran à la Salamandre roiale.”

This Roine was Marie de Médicis, and, although this work is dedicated to her, it is interesting that the daisy looking to the sun, the favourite emblem of Marguerite de Valois, the wife of Henry of Navarre, should form part of the design of its frontispiece.

The patterns in Mignerak's book consist of the queen's arms, a device which is shown on the cover of this book ; four Scripture subjects : Adam and Eve, the Annunciation, Ecce Homo and Mary Magdalene ; four Elements, four Seasons, Roman Charity, Lucretia and Pluye d'or, six arbres à fruits, six pots à fleurs, thirty carrés, grands, moyens et petits, six Bordures and, what is quite a novelty, six Passaments faits au fuseau, the first mention of pillow lace in any of the French pattern books.

Among some of the earliest specimens of Lacis of which we appear to have any record I must mention a cushion of network that St Paul's Cathedral possessed in 1295, and the three pieces of the same work that were in use in Exeter Cathedral in 1327.

The earliest pieces, however, that are now in our possession are the beautifully worked examples of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to be found in the glass cases in the Tapestry Room of the South Kensington Museum.

One (Illustration 2) is a piece of North Italian netting exe-

## *Lacis*

cuted in green silk embroidered with crosslets and triangular ornaments bearing *chevrons* in lilac and green, and close to it is a piece of very fine fourteenth-century netting, also of green silk ; this is darned in coloured silks with closely set rows of small shields bearing heraldic devices. Another beautiful specimen is of the fifteenth century, and has a design of double-headed eagles and flowers worked in coloured silks and linen threads within lozenge-shaped compartments. These two pieces are of German origin, as is also the blue silk net with lozenge ornaments embroidered in green and blue silk upon the reticulated ground, while the piece of remarkably fine green silk netting without any embroidery is Turkish work, and is of the sixteenth century. All these specimens are remarkable for the exquisitely fine netting of the ground, for the careful execution of the darning and embroidery, and for the soft and harmonious colouring of the materials employed in working them.

We have many references pointing to the fact that Catherine de Médicis and Marguerite de Valois were both highly accomplished needlewomen. Catherine had been taught the Venetian points before she left Italy ; and it was from her that her daughters and Mary, Queen of France and Scotland, learned this gentle art.

We know that when Mary was in Scotland she was in the habit of working while she listened to the sad and sombre counsels of her Scottish lords and advisers, and the many weary hours of her unhappy life and long imprisonment must undoubtedly have been lightened by this pursuit of her needle's craft.

## *Lacis*

Randolph says : “ I was sent for into the Council chamber where she herself ordinarily sitteth the most part of the time sewing some work or other.” And from Nicholas White, the Master of the Rolls, we learn that “ all that day she wrought with hir nydill and that the diversitie of the colours made the work seem lesse tedious and contynued so long at it till veray payn made hir to give over.”

There are numerous evidences of her work in the public records. For instance, in the will that she made just before the birth of James VI., she bequeaths “ tous mes Ourages maches et collets aux quatre Maries a Iene Stuart a Marie Arsquin Sonderland et a toutes les filles,” and in the inventory taken at Fotheringay in 1587 reference is made to “ le lict d’ourage de rezel ” and the furniture of a bed of network and Holland intermixed “ not yet finished.”

Some of the items are very quaint, the following is interesting, for it refers to the Phœnix embroidered upon the hangings of a bed :—“ Item ane tymmer bed that seruit for the brown crammofie veluot bed enrichit with the phenix in broderie,” and we find entries of “ aulnes de toilles pour draps de lict et te racotrer le lict de la Royne lequel estoict en partie brusle.” Perhaps this was the bed in which she narrowly escaped being burnt, at Stirling, through a candle setting fire to the hangings.

In the order for furnishing the nursery of James VI. there is the entry of “ Threttie elnes of fine camberage four pound of suying threide, sax pound of secunder threide in divers sortis.” And we learn also from the same inventories that the price of two and a half yards of “ *toile baptiste* ” or cambric was five pounds ; for forty yards of holland forty pounds.



## *Lacis*

And the item of "fourty drying claithis of all Sortis Delieret XIJ. in the chalmer on Skir Furisday at the wesching of the pure folkis fete" leads on to the statement that at this same "wesching" the queen wore an apron of cambric at forty or forty-five shillings a yard.

In addition to her skill in making this Rezel, Mary was also very accomplished as an embroideress, and many are the specimens of Petit Point, tapestry, and gold and silk embroidery that claim her as the maker.

Her sister-in-law, Marguerite de Valois, appears to have also made much of this netting, for we find in her accounts: "Pour des moules et esguilles pour faire rezeuil la somme de iiii S tourn," and again: "Pour avoir montè une fraize neufve de reseuil la somme de X sols tourn."

This plain netting varied according to the way in which it was made. In some cases loops were missed and in others several loops were netted into one hole, while the size of the individual loops was altered by the substitution of large or small gauges. A very favourite form was a diagonal net, and in this form it was very largely used for bed hangings and curtains, and in Sweden it is still so used.

In more than one old castle abroad I have seen bed hangings of net, both of the plain and darned varieties, one very beautiful example of the latter description being of red silk with many flowers worked upon it. The bed was a large four-poster, and there were four long curtains, and a valance both round the top and foot of the bed. I remember that the valances were peculiarly attractive on account of the way in which the design was carried out.

## *Lacis*

The colours were bright, yet soft and well toned down, as all old colours are, and the silks were rich and of splendid quality.

A close study of the fine specimens of old work in our museums and elsewhere reveals the great love of colour, and the subtle blending of the various tones together, that is so great a characteristic of the early and Mediæval workers, and were it pursued in England with more diligence would improve the national sense of colour, which I sorrowfully admit is not of high excellence. The modern use of aniline dyes is, however, one of the causes of the deterioration of our colour sense, and many people are ignorant altogether of the beauty and softness of the colours produced from vegetable dyes.

But to return, however, to our Rezel.

We find it recorded that Catherine de Médicis had a bed draped with squares of Rezeuil, and she appears to have kept the women of her household well occupied in making these squares, for in the inventory of her property and goods mention is made of a coffer containing “3817 such squares unmounted,” and in another “588 squares were found, some being worked with rosettes or with blossoms, and others with nosegays.”

To give other instances. Charles de Bourbon, in 1613, had “un pavillon de thoille de lin a bende de reseul blang et noir faict par Carré prisé.” Further on in this same inventory of Charles' effects we read: “Item trois pentes de ciel de thoille de lin a carreaux et raiseuil recouvert avec dossier pareil estoffé et petit carreau à point coupé garny de leur frange le

## *Lacis*

fonds du ciel de thaille de lin trois custodes et une bonne grace et un drap pareille thaille de lin à bandes de reseuil recouvert.”

One should notice how the “*thaille de lin*” is repeated and emphasised.

Sir J. Foskove, who lived during the reign of Henry VIII., had in his hall “a hanging of green saye bordered with darning.”

This admixture of Lacis and green silk was evidently held in great esteem, and there are many examples still existing and in a very fine state of preservation.

Tablecloths were constantly made in this way, the beautiful tone of the green and the soft glossiness of the silk proving a most effective mounting to the bands and squares of the netting.

In some cases a narrow silk fringe was added, but perhaps we find more frequently only a narrow bordering of the same silk ; and this idea was carried out when Lacis was used in conjunction with linen ; generally the hem was left with merely the selvedge of the linen to form the edge, or the threads were fringed and knotted (Punto a Groppo), the ends being allowed to hang loosely in a fringe.

This knotting, which was more or less elaborate, was peculiarly suited for this purpose, for, by its use, the idea of netting was continued, and yet it does not give the over-elaboration of this idea, as in those pieces which have a bordering sewn on, which bordering is composed of a narrow Lacis cut into vandykes and edged with buttonhole stitch. This never seems quite so appropriate a finish as those others that I have noted.

## *Lacis*

On the splendid pieces that were mounted with fine "*toile*" ornamented with Point Coupé we discover exquisite edgings of "Passaments," as the early gimp edgings were called, or of delicate pointed borderings of Punto Tagliato and Punto in Aria. These were often made entirely of gold and silver threads, or of linen thread with one of the metal threads used in conjunction with it.

I must not forget to mention the beautiful cover of Lacis and Point Coupé belonging to the Musée de Cluny at Paris, though, as it is so very well known, and has been so extensively copied, I refrain from giving an illustration of it.

I will, however, do so in the case of the cap of the Emperor Charles V., that, although in the same museum, may not be so well remembered. It was long preserved in the Treasury of the Bishop Princes of Basle, and is made of fine linen, with the Imperial arms embroidered in relief, with insets of Punto Tagliato, while round the upturned deep border of linen are rounded pieces of exquisitely fine Lacis. Detached sprays of leaves further ornament the plain linen.

Illustration 5 shows a Spanish or Italian cover of the first half of the sixteenth century, and is a very beautiful example of the use of coloured embroidery in conjunction with Lacis. The embroidery is worked "*au petit point*" in different gaily coloured floss silks on a fine silk canvas ground, and the "Point de Toile" and the "Point de Reprise" are both employed in the darning on the net. The cover, only half of which is illustrated, is bordered with a narrow silk fringe, in which all the colours of the embroidery are introduced.

## *Lacis*

This admixture of Lacis and coloured silk embroidery is very often to be seen in pieces of the sixteenth and following centuries. The embroidery called in Italy Trapunto or Punto

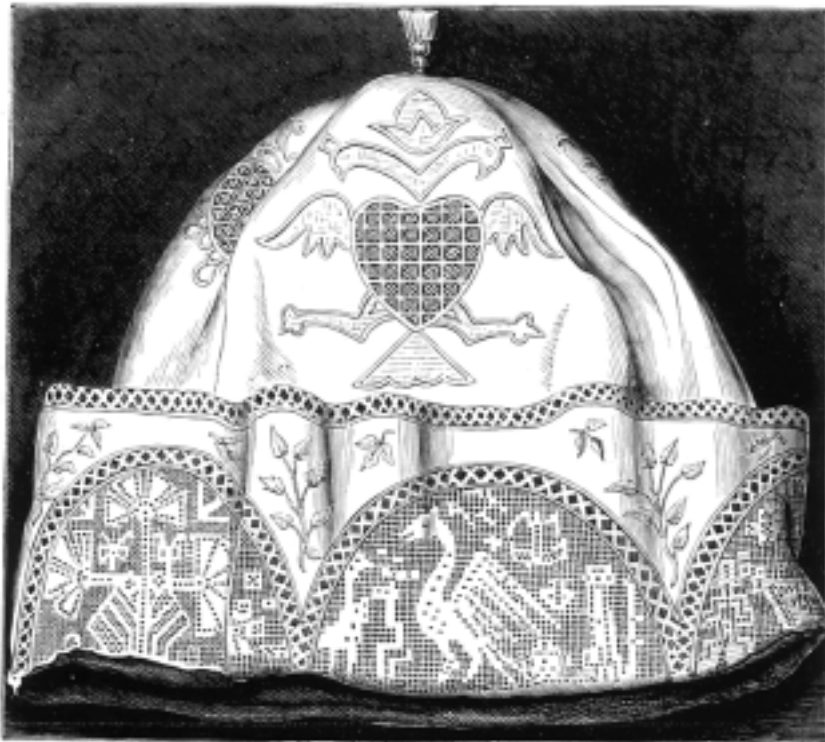


Illustration 4.—Cap of Emperor Charles V.

a Crochetti was carried out in many different ways, and I will give the names of some of the stitches as mentioned by Taglienti in his “Opera Nuova,” written in 1530: Damascino, rilevato, a filo, sopra punto, ingaseato, Ciprioto, croceato, incroceato, pugliese, scritto, fatto su la rate; and he says they are to be sewn in various coloured silks, gold

## *Lacis*

and silver thread, or black silk, for “Collori di huomo & di donna, camisciole con pettorali, frisi di contorni di letti, entemelle di cuscini, frisi di alcun boccassino & scufie.”



Illustration 5.—Cover of Lacis and Petit Point—Sixteenth Century.

When carried out in black silk it generally went by the name of Spanish stitch. In the Italian specimens these different stitches were worked sometimes in only one colour, but more

## *Lacis*

frequently in two or more, and so carefully was the work



Illustration 6.—Lacis and Point Coupé. Portuguese—Sixteenth Century.

executed that one almost universal feature of it is that both

## *Lacis*

sides are practically alike. In many of Holbein's portraits this embroidery is to be seen trimming the white collars and sleeves, and sometimes the dresses or cloaks, worn by the sitters.

In Illustration 6 we have part of a magnificent cover composed of squares of Lacis joined together and surrounded with bands of very fine Point Coupé. The netting and darning are perfect examples of this work, and it should be noticed how thoroughly in harmony with the whole scheme are the delicate point stitches that connect the different parts together and form the beautiful edging.

It is described in the South Kensington catalogue as a coverlet composed of squares of Lacis or darned netting, divided by linen cutwork bands. The squares are worked with groups representing the twelve months, and with scenes from the old Spanish dramatic story "Celestina," written between the years 1480-1490. It is Portuguese work of the sixteenth century.

Illustration 7 is an exquisite piece of coloured silk Lacis. The ground is of very fine netting, and the darning is carried out in Point de Reprise in delicate shades of fine silk. This piece is a beautiful example of Italian seventeenth-century workmanship.

In Illustration 8 we have the reproduction of a large and bold design, in which we see one of the terrifying animals that appear to have been so constantly before the eyes of workers in olden times. It is very difficult to say with any certainty what they are always supposed to represent, as, beyond the usual symbolical meaning, there was often a



*Lacis*

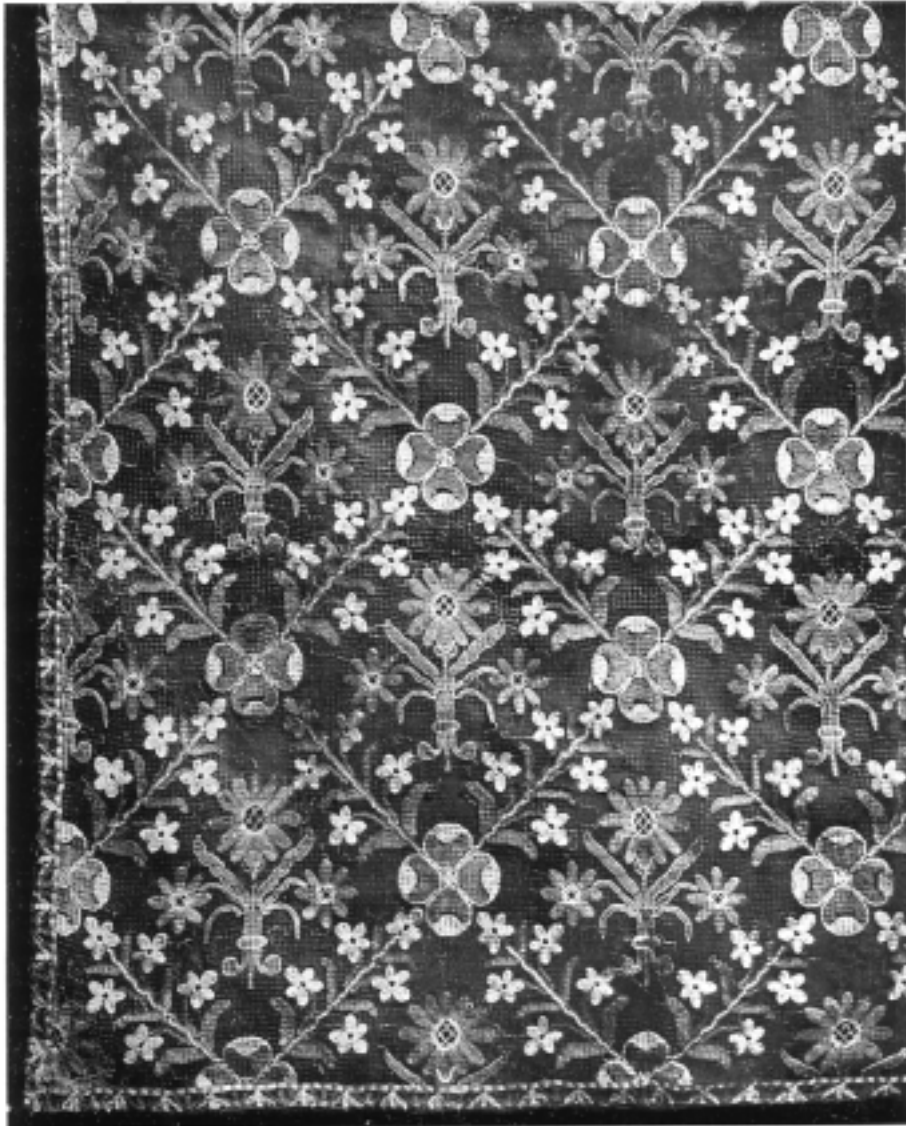


Illustration 7.—Coloured Silk Lacis. Italian—Seventeenth Century.

for use on special occasions, such as for marriages, births, or

## *Lacis*

funerals. This piece is of Spanish work, and is very carefully executed, and in a good state of preservation.

There was a species of netting made, principally in Sicily, with bobbins, somewhat in the same way that pillow lace is

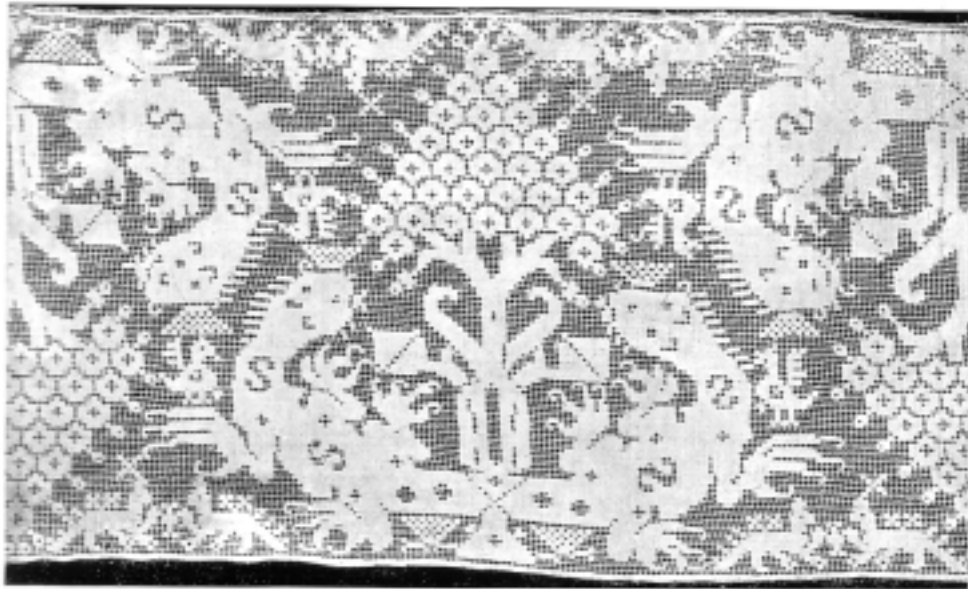


Illustration 8.—Spanish Lacis.

made, although of course the twist is not quite the same ; as this netting had no knots it was never of so solid and resisting a character as the hand-netted fabric, and the work upon its meshes bore more resemblance to embroidery than to the *counted* darning, for in this case the *counting* of the stitches of the design was not so servilely adhered to.

I hope in a future series to speak more of this and to give some illustrations of fine old examples.

The small square of bobbin net seen in Illustration 9 was

## *Lacis*

made for me by an expert laceworker with bobbins on a cushion, and it took her ten hours' steady work to produce it.

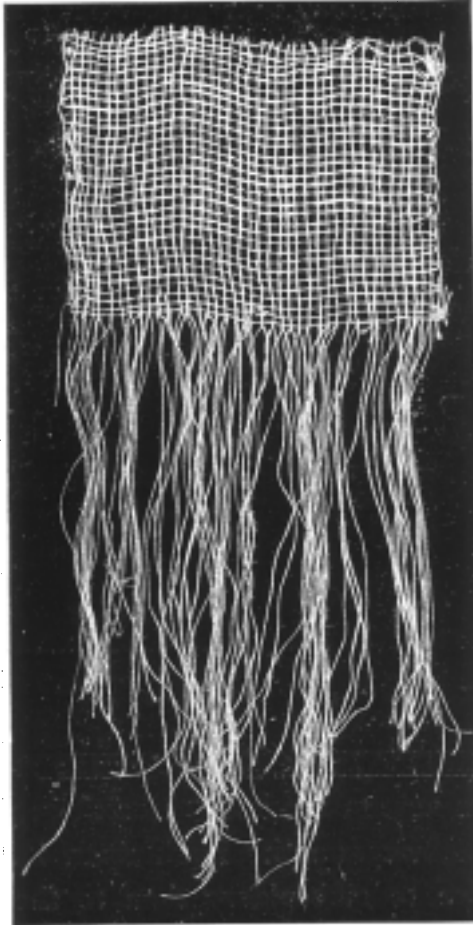


Illustration 9 —Bobbin Net made on a Pillow.

It is made with a very fine thread and would "go" naturally much quicker were coarser thread used, as in this case fewer bobbins would be required.

This kind of net was also made on a handloom, and it might interest weavers to reproduce it in this way.

In Illustrations 10 and 11 we have examples of Lacis worked upon this bobbin or woven ground. In the former the "*reseau*" is made in yellow silk, and the quaint dancing figures and the birds are darned in Point de Reprise in white flax thread. This is early seventeenth-century work.

The border No. 11 is worked in thread, the designs of figures offering sacrifices being outlined with red silk. This, like No. 10, is Italian work, but is late sixteenth-century.

## *Lacis*

Through the courtesy of the authorities of the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, I am enabled to give the two illustrations, Nos. 12 and 13, from the original pieces in their



Illustration 10.—Border. Seventeenth Century.

possession. One forms part of a large cover and is composed of alternate squares of Lacis and Point Coupé, and has a very interesting border which is enriched by a pointed edging.



Illustration 11.—Border. Italian—Sixteenth Century.

The other consists of seventy squares joined together by a twisted netting stitch. The designs of quaint beasts and birds are surrounded with a very graceful border.

Illustrations 14 and 15 are two very graceful Spanish borders. They were inserted in bands of coarse hand-spun

## *Lacis*

linen and were probably used for altar curtains, while Illus-

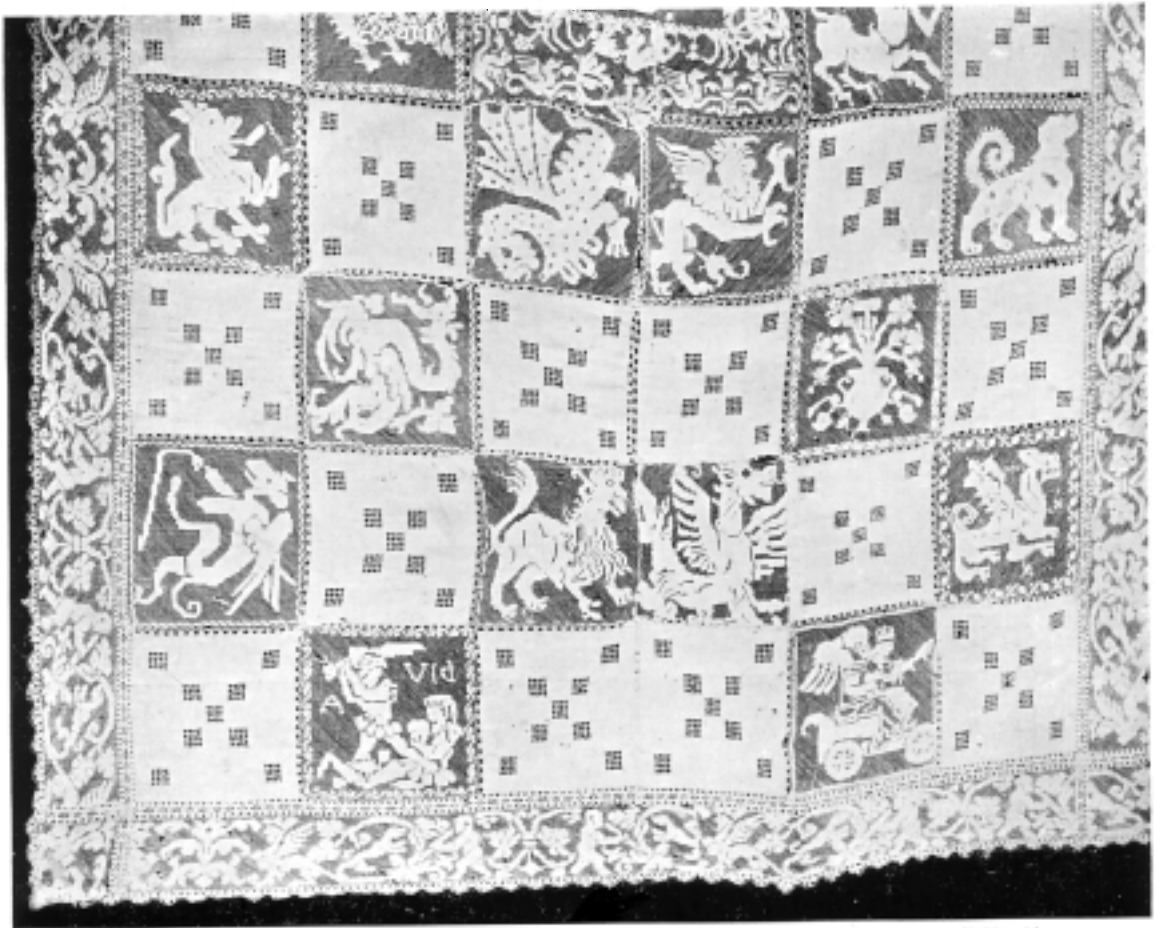


Illustration 12.—Cover Lacis and Point Coupé. Flemish.

trations 16 and 17 show the familiar and oft-repeated Pelican design.

I give in Illustrations 18 and 19 two examples of the *diagonal* form of the netted ground enriched with darning.

Illustration 18 has a design of birds with quaint elongated

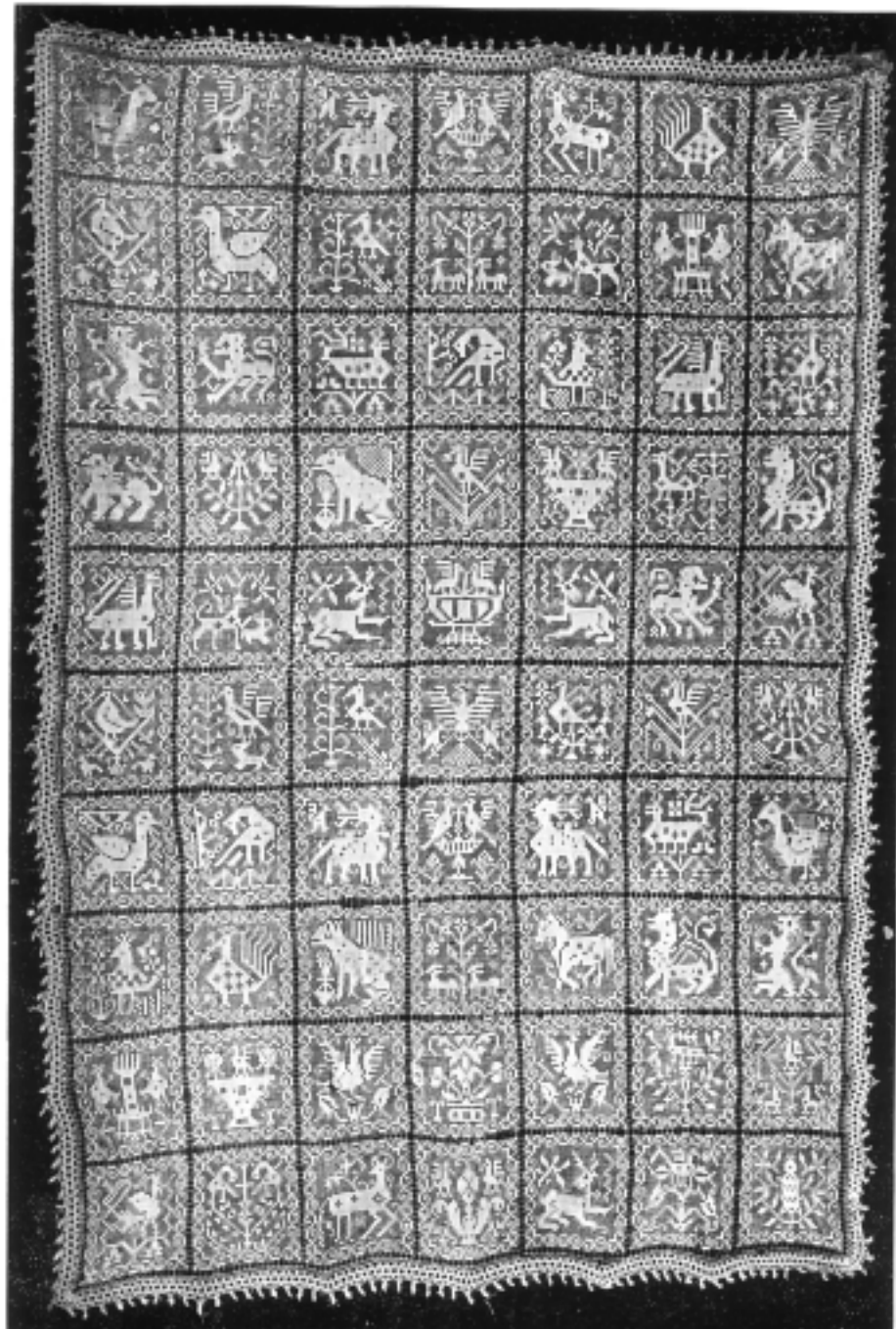


Illustration 13.—Cover containing seventy Squares.

## *Lacis*

beaks and legs, and graceful vases of flowers are introduced with good effect.

This specimen shows the ordinary "*toile*" stitch, enhanced



Illustration 14.—Border. Edge Fringe.

by a slight graceful tracery worked in a more glossy thread than is used for the rest of the darning.

The oblong piece of Lacis shown in Illustration 20, the



Illustration 15.—Border. Foliated Design.

pattern of which consists of birds and beasts among trees, is a representation of the Creation taken from a pattern book. It also is Italian sixteenth-century work.



## *Lacis*

In Illustration 21 we have twelve squares represented, that were probably joined together by bands or squares of Point Coupé or plain linen, and the designs are constantly to be met

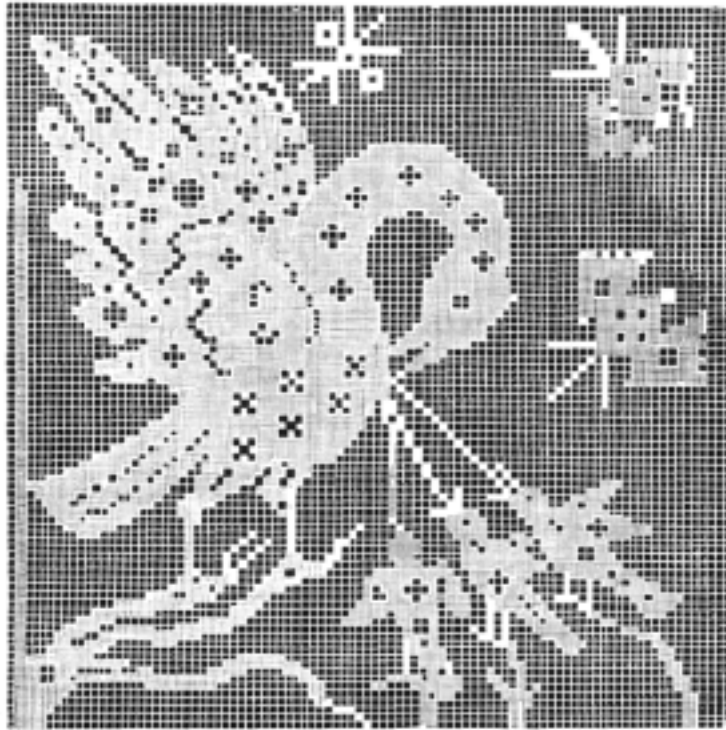


Illustration 16.—Pelican feeding its Young. Vinciolo.

with in many old covers used for ecclesiastical purposes. I give them because I think many people will find it interesting to work the whole set before attempting any larger piece. Each square contains from forty-three to forty-five holes or meshes. This is a size that is very easily worked by beginners.

Illustration 22 (frontispiece) is a reproduction of a piece of coloured Lacis, the ground of which is made of flax



## *Lacis*

thread in the natural colour, and the design is carried out in the simple “*reprise*” stitch in the various colours here represented.

Lacis was largely imported into France, and from the general tariff of exports and imports of the town of Lyons we find that the duty on “*garnitures de lits de point coupéz*



Illustration 17.—Pelican and Mythological Beasts.

*passemens lacis et garnitures de lits de toutes sortes les droicts en seront payés sur le pied de 6 pour cent.*”

According to several old engravings it would appear that Lacis was worked in frames resembling the modern embroidery frames, as also in rather narrow plain wood or metal frames.

Bachaumont, writing in 1775, speaks of a frame “*d’une fabrique singulière qu’un artist avait imaginé et suivant l’usage il l’a soumis à l’examen de l’Académie des Sciences et a sollicité des commissaires mais cette compagnie a jugé la machine trop futile pour s’en occuper et a rejeté la demande de l’auteur.*” He tells us that “*Tout le beau sexe est en*

## *Lacis*

“fureur contre ces savants.” I am inclined to think that the metal frames now in use are not altogether the best for the

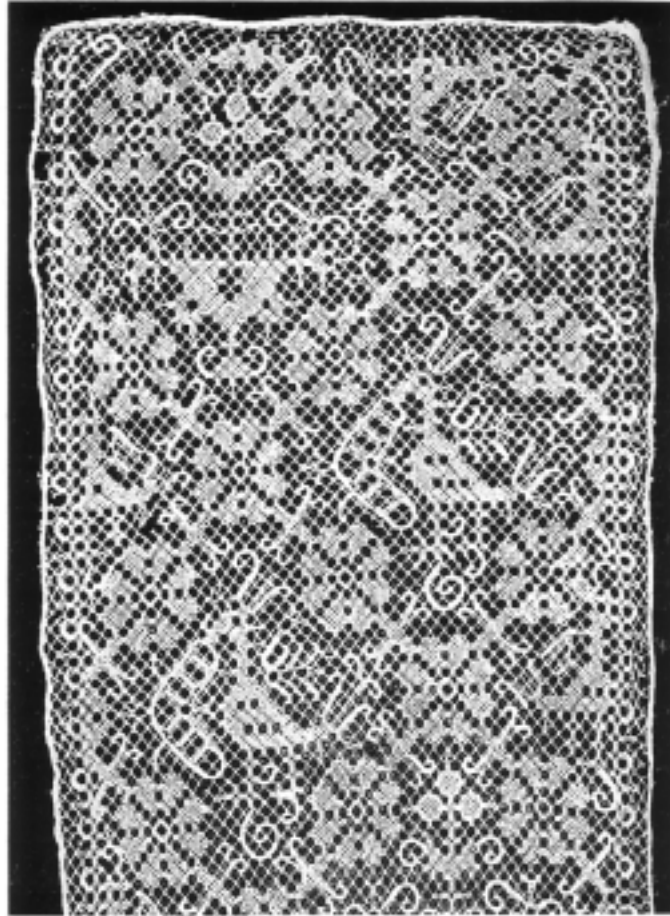


Illustration 18.—Lacis on Diagonal Ground.

purpose, and it is difficult to procure them of the right size for the different squares or bands of the netting. There is certainly an opening for someone to invent a frame to meet all requirements.

## *Lacis*

In conclusion I very much want to point out how much pleasure and interest could be brought into many lives, now perchance colourless and dull, were some fine piece of work undertaken and faithfully carried out. The mere seeking for

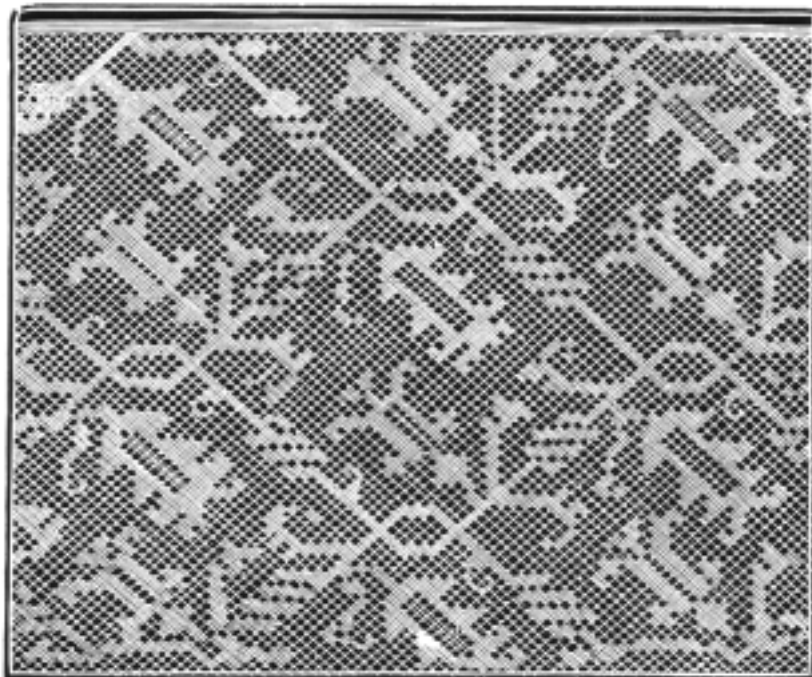


Illustration 19.—Lacis. Vinciolo—1588.

the necessary materials will produce the varied pleasures of hope and disappointment, excitement and dejection, pleasure and despair, and finally, let us hope, the joy of victory.

In looking back to the early centuries we see English-women's needlework renowned all over Christendom; so celebrated was it that "Opus Anglicanum" was synonymous with all that was best and most excellent, and we read how

## *Lacis*

Pope Innocent IV., in 1246, inquired where certain richly embroidered orphreys were made, and on being told in England exclaimed: "Truly England is our garden of delight, in sooth it is a well inexhaustible, and where there is great abundance; from thence much may be extracted." And he immediately despatched official letters to some of the Cistercian abbots in England, enjoining them to procure a certain quantity of such embroidered vestments and send them to Rome for his own use.

The Syon Cope, now in the South Kensington Museum, is one of the most perfect examples of our work in the thirteenth century. It is, according to Dr Rock,



Illustration 20.—The Creation.

## *Lacis*

“one of the most beautiful among the liturgical vestments of the olden period anywhere to be found in Christendom,”

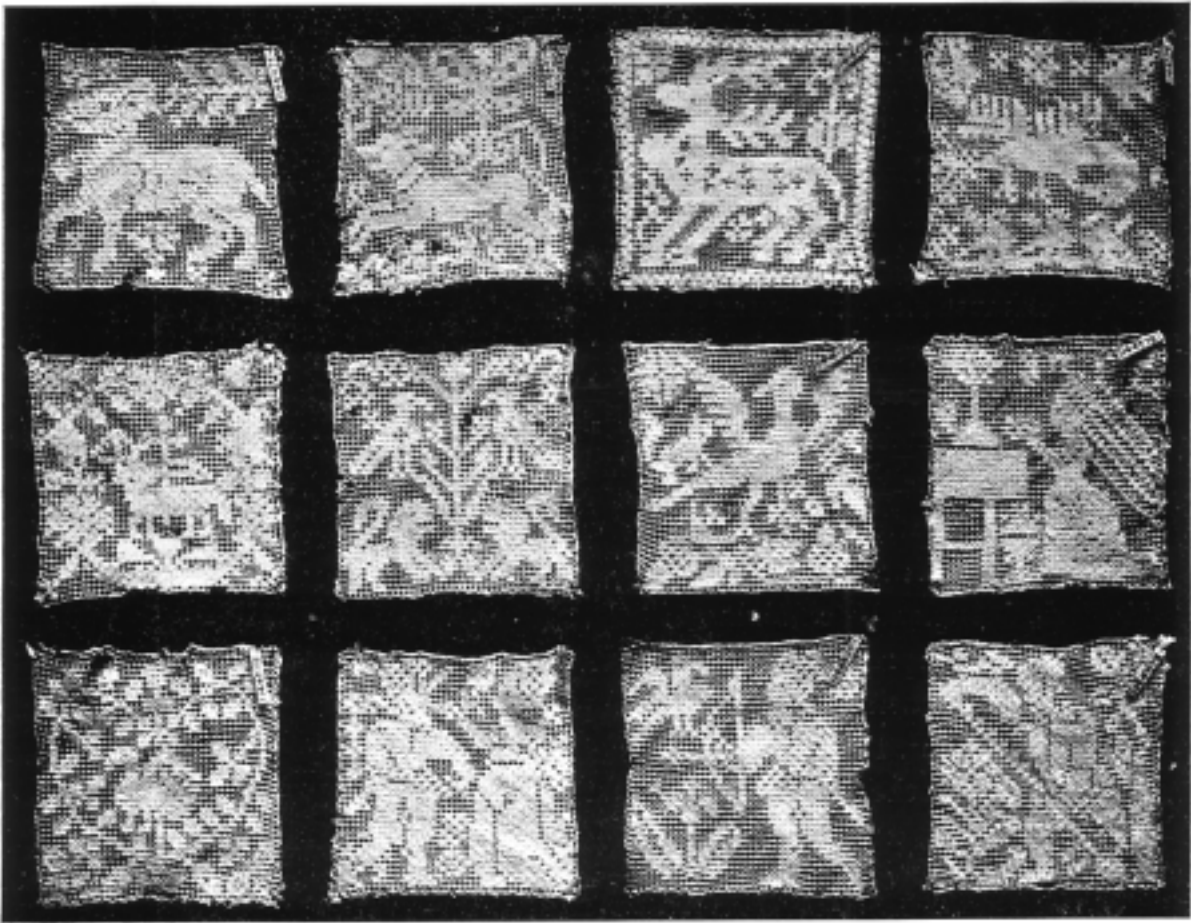


Illustration 21.—Small Squares.

and he says also “that it is shown by plentiful records and written documents from the days of S. Osmond to the time of Henry VIII. that the materials employed in English ecclesiastical embroideries were the best that could be found

## *Lacis*

in our own country or in far-off lands, and the art bestowed upon them was the best we could learn and give." Why has our good name passed from us? I think the answer is to be found in the above sentence by Dr Rock ; our materials to-day are not the best that can be found, and the "art bestowed" upon our work is, except in a few rare instances, not the best that "we can learn or give."

## SYMBOLISM

I FEEL sure that a few words on the symbolism of some of the beasts and birds that form such a vast menagerie in the old pattern books and in the worked specimens of Lacis, will make the working out of their quaint and curious forms still more interesting to those who are not acquainted with the hidden meaning generally underlying the mere technique in all old work, and at the same time I crave the patience and indulgence of all those who are well versed in sacred and legendary lore.

As partly explaining, and in a way perhaps shedding a new light upon, the question of the strange forms of the birds and beasts used symbolically in all ages, I think the following account given by Berosus worth quoting :—

He says that “in the midst of Chaos—at the time when all was darkness and water—the principle of life which it contained, restlessly working, but without order, took shape in numberless monstrous formations : there were beings like men, some winged, with two heads, some with the legs and horns of goats, others with the hind part of horses : also bulls with human heads, dogs with four bodies and a fish’s tail, horses with the heads of dogs, in short, every hideous and fantastical combination of human forms, before the Divine will had separated them, and sorted them into harmony and order.”

## *Symbolism*

Berosus, who was a priest of the Babylonian temple of Mardouk, describes how the “ walls were covered with paintings representing the infinite variety of monstrous and mixed shapes with which an exuberant fancy had peopled the primeval chaos, and he speaks of them as still existing at the time he wrote.” Though nothing of them now remains we have representations of the same kind on many of the cylinders which were used as seals and talismans.

In all times Ignorance was ever the sister of Superstition, and we find incredible virtues or vices attributed to strange objects, though there is generally a substratum of truth gained by the careful examination of the habits and characteristics of animals supporting the fabric of extravagant and fanciful conceptions.

Some animals are attributed with the possession of more than one virtue or vice. For instance :

The Unicorn is emblematical of purity, and this arose from the fable that it could never be captured except by a virgin stainless in mind and life, while it symbolises also the belief that its horn is an antidote to poison, and for this reason it is found so constantly as a pattern on Lacis when used for all objects in connection with food.

The Hart or Hind has also a double meaning as a type of solitude and purity of life, while the Lion is held as a symbol of solitude, Christ and the Resurrection, and is emblematical of power, strength and sovereignty.

The Lamb has many meanings : sacrifice, innocence, meekness, modesty.

The Peacock is held by some writers to symbolise the Resurrection, on account of the legend that tells us that its



## *Lacis*

flesh is incorruptible and that it sheds its feathers in the winter only to put on more brilliant hue in the spring. It is also taken to represent wisdom and worldly pride.

The Pelican, which is constantly shown with its wings outspread, pecking at its breast, is also representative of the Resurrection. Cavellat, one of the old designers, took this for his *impresa* with the motto: "Mors in me—Vita in me," as I have pointed out in the article on Lacis.

The Phœnix is another bird that symbolises the Resurrection, and also the traveller's return.

The Eagle means Empire, while the Double-headed Eagle naturally supposed double royalty, and Ezekiel represents Egypt and Babylon as two eagles: "A great eagle with great wings, long winged, full of feathers which had divers colours"; and: "There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers."

The Fish is the symbol of water and the rite of baptism, and the Dragon is an emblem of sin.

The Apple, which is naturally often found in the old designs in reference to the Garden of Eden, is an emblem of man's fall and original sin, while the Pomegranate bursting open showing the seeds inside is taken as a symbol of the future hope in immortality.

When two animals are represented together their meanings are joined, as in the Lion and Goose, which represent strength and prudence; Lion and Eagle, strength and dominion; Lion and Dove, strength and gentleness.

Many more examples might be given, but I think these are sufficient for the purpose I intend.

## FLAX

FLAX.—Natural order, *Lineæ* ; class, *Pentandria* ;  
order, *Pentagynia*

*Linum catharticum* ; *linum angustifolium* ; *linum usitatissimum* ; *linum perenne*

Latin: *Linum* ; Greek: *Λινον* ; Slav: *Len.* ; German: *Flachs* ; French: *Lin.* ;  
Welsh: *Llin* ; Spanish: *Lino* ; Italian: *Lino* ; Portuguese: *Linbo*

I THINK that a short account of flax and the manner of its cultivation and production as given to us both by ancient and modern writers, and from the representations on the Egyptian tombs, will be useful in pointing out the very high esteem in which it was held, and in proving the wonderful strength and durability of which it is possessed.

The late Miss Anne Pratt tells us, in her delightful book on “Wild Flowers,” that the different varieties of flax are to be found growing on sandy and chalky hills or among our corn-fields. The plants are well known from their beautiful blue-coloured flowers. The flax that is cultivated for producing linen thread has, however, a darker and a more purple-blue flower than the perennial flax, while the cathartic flax has small white flowers. She tells us that this species is often called “Mill Mountain” in country places, and is used as an infusion for the cure of rheumatism. It is also cultivated for its thread.

## *Lacis*

She says that the “necessary process of macerating the flax in water was very deleterious in such streams as were used for drinking either by man or animals, and, in the reigns of Henry VIII. and James I., Acts were passed forbidding that any flax should be steeped in a stream or rivulet used for drinking purposes, and denouncing heavy penalties on a violation of these laws.” The fibres of the flax, *linum usitatissimum*, that are used for making linen, cambric, lawn, and lace are exceedingly tough, and have to undergo many processes before they are ready for spinning.

This very toughness, however, is one of the many virtues it possesses, in addition to great flexibility and strength; its brilliant gloss and pearly sheen constitute also one of its greatest beauties. It withstands the ravages of moth and time, is unimpaired, even improved, by repeated washings, and its durability is infinite.

We have records pointing to the very early origin of this product of the fields, but it was probably not until other substances had been tried, and the want had been felt for something that would produce a more perfect and durable fabric than the skins or hair of beasts, that the first introduction of flax as a medium in needlework, and in the manufacture of the many forms of linen, took place. In primitive times it was the custom for skins to be cut into thin strips and, after being dried, to be twisted into the semblance of a thread, and so used for sewing.

The fibres of known, and to us unknown, plants and trees that seemed to offer a suitable substance wherewith to make or mend the clothes of early man had been employed to

## *Flax*

provide him with curtains and coverings for his house and wrappings for his body when laid to rest in the tomb before he entered the Great Land “where they wander in the dark.”

In any case, the cultivation and preparation of flax have provided work for countless generations, and its many valuable properties have been of inestimable benefit to mankind.

We have constant mention in the Bible of flax and fine linen and nets; the first reference to flax occurs in Exodus ix. 31—in the account of the plague of hail: “And the flax and the barley were smitten; for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was balled.” From Joshua we learn that “Rahab hid the spies with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof,” and Isaiah says: “They that spread nets upon the waters shall languish, moreover they that work in fine flax and they that weave net works shall perish,” and there are so many references to fine linen and fine twined linen that I will only notice a few of them.

This “fine twined linen” has been supposed by some authorities to mean silk, but, according to Mr Yates, entirely on very slight evidence, and he agrees with Braunius, and says that “there is no mention of silk in the whole of the Old Testament and that it was unknown to the Hebrews in ancient times.” Where it does so occur, as in some translations, “the use of the word appears to be quite unauthorised.” I refer those of my readers who care to pursue the subject further to “*Textrinum Antiquorum*.”

When we read in Ezekiel xxvii. 7 of the “fine linen, with brodered work from Egypt, was that which thou spreadest forth

## *Lacis*

to be thy sail," it recalls the fact that the Egyptian sails were usually very beautiful specimens of fine embroidery, symbolical designs, especially that of the Phœnix, which, being emblematical of the traveller's safe return, was of frequent recurrence.

Ezekiel again speaks of this fine linen and brodered work in the sixteenth verse of the same chapter: "They occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and brodered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate."

In the building of the Tabernacle we are told that "all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen," and we are all familiar with the directions for making the veil and curtains for the Temple and the robes and garments for the priests: "the coats of fine linen of woven work for Aaron and his sons," and that the veil and hangings of the Sanctuary were to be "of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, of cunning work."

The "veil of the temple that was rent in twain" was, as we learn from Josephus, of Babylonian work, and had been dedicated by Herod. The description is so full of charm that I will quote it for the benefit of those to whom it may not be familiar. "The Beautiful Gate of the Temple was covered all over with gold. It had also golden vines above it from which hung clusters of grapes as tall as a man's height. It had golden doors of fifty-five cubits' latitude and sixteen in breadth, but before these doors there was a veil of equal largeness with the doors. It was a Babylonian curtain of blue, fine linen, and scarlet and purple—of an admixture that was truly wonderful. Nor was the mixture without its mystical

## *Flax*

interpretation, but was a kind of image of the universe. For by the scarlet was to be enigmatically signified fire, by the fine flax, the earth ; by the blue, the air, and by the purple, the sea ; two of them having their colours for the foundation of this resemblance ; but the fine flax and the purple have their own origin for this foundation—the earth producing the one, and the sea the other.

“This curtain had also embroidered upon it all that was mystical in the heavens, excepting the twelve signs of the Zodiac, representing living creatures.”

The Babylonian embroideries were very greatly esteemed on account of their high artistic merit, their beautiful colouring and splendid workmanship ; their very excellence, however, leading, in one case, as in that of Achan, to the sins of covetousness and theft. For we know how he coveted and stole “a goodly Babylonish garment,” and we also know what punishment was meted out to him.

And now that ever-increasing interest is gathering round the once-forgotten Euphratean Valley, and fresh knowledge is almost daily being gained, I should like to quote the following passage from Mr G. Smith’s “Ancient History of the Monuments,” for it points out how the foundations of our civilisation and culture were rooted in that “Glory of Kingdoms.” After saying that the “Babylonian is without doubt the oldest of civilisations,” Mr Smith continues thus : “To us the history of Babylonia has an interest beyond that of Egypt on account of its more intimate connection with our own civilisation. Babylon was the centre from which it spread into Assyria, thence to Asia Minor and Phœnicia, then to Greece and

## *Lacis*

Rome, and so to all Europe. The Jews brought the traditions of the Creation and of the early religion from Ur of the Chaldees, and thus preserved they became the heritage of all mankind, while the science and civilisation of that wonderful people [the Babylonians] became the basis of modern research and advancement.”

A good deal of controversy has taken place as to the material that was in use among the Egyptians for mummy cloths, some asserting that these were of a cotton fabric, whilst others maintain that they were made of linen. The matter was one of considerable difficulty until various specimens were examined under a powerful microscope, when the structural differences existing between the fibres of flax and cotton were clearly noticed, and the fact was established that the mummy cloths were undoubtedly made of linen—the finer qualities being used for the inner wrappings and the coarser kinds reserved for the outside.

Mr James Yates, in “*Textrinum Antiquorum*,” says that “the ultimate fibre of cotton is a transparent tube without joints, flattened so that its inward surfaces are in contact along its axis, and also twisted spirally round its axis : that of flax is a transparent tube jointed like a cane, and not flattened nor spirally twisted,” and he quotes Dr Ure, who, with Mr Thomson and Mr Bauer, made exhaustive experiments to prove the differences existing between the two materials.

Dr Ure says that “the filaments of flax have a glassy lustre when viewed by daylight in a good microscope, and a cylindrical form, which is very rarely flattened. Their diameter is about the 2000th part of an inch. They break

## *Flax*

transversely with a smooth surface, like a tube of glass cut with a file. . . . The filaments of cotton are almost never true cylinders but are more or less flattened and tortuous, so that when viewed under the microscope they appear like a riband from the 1000th to the 1200th part of an inch broad, and in another like a sharp edge or narrow line. They have a pearly translucency in the middle space with a dark narrow border at each side like a hem. Mummy cloth tried by these criteria under the microscope appears to be composed both in its warp and woof yarns of flax and not of cotton. A great variety of swathing fillets have been examined with an excellent achromatic microscope, and they have all evinced the absence of cotton filaments.”

Many of these mummy cloths have been found in an almost perfect state of preservation, and have been subjected to very severe treatment for the purpose of discovering their strength, a test which has proved how almost indestructible they are.

The subjoined illustration from Mr Yates’ book will show



Illustration 23.—Fibres of Cotton.

Fibres of Flax.

very clearly the difference that exists between the two fibres.

It is well known that the Egyptian flax was, and still is, of a more prolific growth than the European varieties, and that in Egypt it attains a greater height than elsewhere.

This is undoubtedly due to the climate, and it is very



## *Lacis*

naturally supposed that different varieties of flax were sown to produce the different qualities of threads—or that there was more than one method of cultivation for the coarser and finer plants. In support of this, Pausanias says that when flax is raised to be manufactured into cambric and fine lawn, twice as much seed is sown in the same space of ground.

“The plants then grow closer together, the stalks are more delicate and slender, and the fibres of each plant are firm in proportion.”

Herodotus speaks of Byssine Sindon as being the material from which mummy cloths were made. This cloth of Byssus symbolised firm faith, according to one writer, who further adds that “its threads surpass even ropes of broom in firmness and strength.” We know that the priests and those serving in the Temple were ordered to wear linen undergarments, and that woollen materials were forbidden to be used next to the skin during the performance of their religious duties. This arose from the fact that linen is cleaner and less liable to receive infection than wool, and it is more easily cleansed and purified.

Philo, who is quoted by Mr Yates, says that “the Jewish high priests wore a linen garment of the purest Byssus, which was a symbol of firmness, incorruption, and of the clearest splendour, for fine linen is very difficult to tear. It is made of nothing mortal and becomes brighter and more resembling light the more it is cleansed by washing”; and Plutarch tells us that “the priests of Isis wore linen on account of its purity.” He also mentions the opinion of some who thought that “flax was used for clothing because the colour of its blossom re-

## *Flax*

sembles the ethereal blue which surrounds the earth.” The more generally accepted idea was, however, that the whiteness and brilliance of its threads symbolised incorruptible purity and cleanliness.\*

Pliny has written at great length about flax, and given us much interesting information as to the method of its cultivation and the renown of some of its varieties when spun and made into fine linen, some of which he compares to “woven air.” He appears, however, to be of the same opinion as many of the present-day anti-motorists, and views swift motion with feelings of wonder not unmixed with fear. I hope I shall be forgiven for quoting him at some length.

“To begin with those productions of the earth which are confessedly useful, and which have filled not only all lands, but also the seas : flax is sown, and yet can neither be reckoned grain, nor garden-stuff.

“But in what department of life will it not meet us ? And, what is a still greater miracle, it is a plant which brings Egypt to Italy, and so rapidly, that two præfects, Galerius and Babilus, went from the Straits of Messina to Alexandria, the one in six days, the other in seven, and last summer Valerius Marianus, one of the Prætorian senators, went there from Puteoli in nine days with a very gentle gale. . . .

“How daring and full of wickedness is human life ! That a plant should be sown for the purpose of receiving winds and storms : that it should be a little thing to be carried by the waves alone, and that now even the main sails are not suffi-

\* Mr Yates holds the opinion that *βύσσος* (Byssus) meant fine flax, and *λίνον*, coarse or thick flax. *Sindon* was used to denote linen cloth.

## *Lacis*

cient for our ships, but although single trees are long enough for the yards, other sails are added above them : that, moreover, a sail is expanded at the prow, and another at the stern, and that death is challenged in so many ways ; finally, that anything should spring from so small a seed, which can carry the whole globe to this side and to that, appearing with so slender a stem, and rising to so small a height above the ground : and that it should not attempt this by its own strength, but by being bruised and beaten and reduced to the softness of wool, so as to accomplish the whole as the result of injury and extreme audacity.

“ No execration can be too great to be uttered against that inventor, of whom we spoke in the proper place, who was not satisfied that man should die upon the land, but contrived that he should perish even unburied.”

He mentions various kinds of flax of superior excellence which were produced in the plains of the Po and Ticino in the country of the Peligni and about Cumæ in Campania, and says that “ no flax was whiter or more like wool than that of the Peligni,” and that he preferred the linens of Faventia on account of their whiteness, and states that “ those of Rhetorium are equally white and have also the greatest degree of fineness and density but have no down.” He adds : “ In the quality of its strength this thread exceeds even that of spiders and it sounds when you try it with your teeth. On this account it is worth as much as any other kinds.”

The following passage from “ The Life of the Emperor Carinus,” by Flavius Vopiscus, is remarkable as proving the value attached by the Romans to the linen imported from

## *Flax*

Egypt and Phœnicia, especially to the transparent and flowered varieties. “Why should I mention the linen cloths from Egypt or those imported from Tyre and Sidon which are so thin as to be transparent, which glow with purple or are prized on account of their laboured embroidery?”—unlike Pliny and the Emperor Alexander Severus, the former of whom remarks that “attempts have also been made to dye flax and thus to infect it with the same insanity as woollen cloths.”

Alexander Severus, it appears, was a great admirer of beautiful linen, and preferred it plain and “without flowers or feathers interwoven as practised in the East and neighbouring countries.” “If,” said he, “linen cloths are made of that material in order that they may not be at all rough, why mix purple with them?” But to interweave gold in linen he considered “madness, because this made it rigid in addition to its roughness.”

Flax undoubtedly lends itself by its flexibility and tenuity to the lengthening out of its fibres in a very remarkable way, and the Egyptians attained to very great perfection in spinning threads of extraordinary fineness—some of their threads, although spun by hand, being composed of three hundred and sixty-five separate threads or strands. Of this fine thread the corselet presented to the Rhodians in 2300 B.C., by Amasis, King of Egypt, was made, and we are told that “each thread of the corselet that he gave to the Lacedæmonians was worthy of admiration, for though very fine every one was composed of three hundred and sixty threads all distinct.”

A peculiarity of Egyptian weaving that has been noticed

## *Lacis*

by several writers was that more threads (sometimes as many as double the number) were used in the warp than in the woof, and Sir G. Wilkinson mentions a piece of mummy cloth now in the British Museum that appears to be made of yarn “nearly one hundred hanks to the pound, and forty threads in an inch in the warp and about sixty-four in the woof”; “another piece, found at Thebes, containing one hundred and fifty-two threads in the warp and seventy-one in the woof.” He further gives a still more wonderful example of a piece of linen containing “five hundred and forty (or two hundred and seventy double) threads in the warp to the inch and one hundred and ten in the woof.”

A specimen of muslin in the museum of the East India House, the finest production of the Dacca loom, has only one hundred threads in an inch in the warp and eighty-four in the woof, and some of our cambric has only one hundred and sixty in an inch of the woof and one hundred and forty in the warp.

The price of a scruple of flax was the same as for a scruple of gold, and in speaking of asbestos linen Pliny describes it as “live flax,” and says: “That variety which is of a red colour becomes resplendent in the fire; when it has been found it equals the prices of excellent pearls.”

The washerwomen of Egypt used a wooden implement shaped something like a plane for smoothing linen after it had been washed. “Some of these have been found at Thebes and are about six inches long and made of athul or tamarisk wood.”

Illustration 24 is of one found at Thebes, while Illustration

## *Flax*

25 is a Scottish beetle, and was given to me by an auld wifie. It is still used in some parts of Scotland, though the use is fast dying out, and is surely a survival of this ancient form of ironing. The form is, however, different, and the method of using it is also different, for while the Egyptian method would appear to have been the smoothing of the linen as in ironing, the Scots place the clothes between several folds of some soft material and attain this smooth-

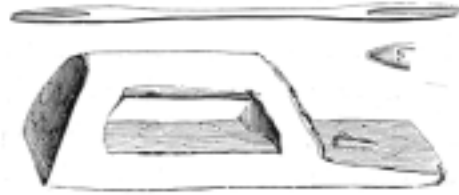


Illustration 24.—Egyptian Plane.

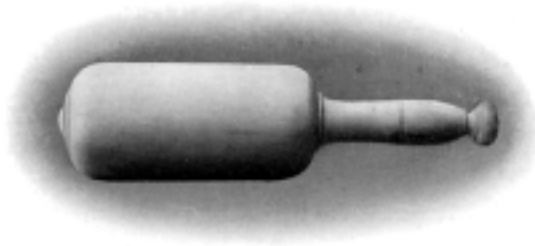


Illustration 25.—Scottish Beetle.

ness by repeated beating. A similar object is in use also in Germany.

These two implements having such a wide web of time between them are still one more proof of

there being nothing new under the sun and of the old being eternally new.

From the representations on the Egyptian tombs we learn how the cultivation and preparation of flax and the arts of spinning and weaving were carried on by these ancient people, and it is interesting to note that the methods then adopted were practically the same as are now employed in those parts of the world where flax is cultivated.

In Illustration 26, which is from Mr Yates' book, we see

## *Lacis*

the flax being grown and, when fully ripe, pulled up by the roots, the seeds being stripped off and allowed to fall to the ground. "The stalks were then steeped in water warmed by the sun, and they were kept down by stones placed upon them, for nothing is lighter than flax. When the membrane or outer skin becomes loose sufficient maceration has taken place. They are taken out and repeatedly turned over in the sun until completely dried ; they are afterwards beaten with mallets on stone slabs."



Illustration 26.—Preparation of Flax.

This beating and hammering was for the purpose of still further loosening and separating the outer from the inner fibres and to effect the softening and disintegration of the gums and oily substances that lie under the outer rind of the stalk ; and finally, to complete thoroughly the separation of the finer or inner portion from the many outside pieces of skin and fibre still found adhering, iron combs or hackles were brought into play. The outer fibres were of too coarse a character to be used for anything but for making ropes and common hemp cloths. Lamp wicks were made from this tow, though they were also manufactured from old linen.

## *Flax*

Illustration 27 shows an Egyptian comb which was used for combing flax. "Two of these combs were found at Thebes, and are in the Berlin Museum, one having twenty-nine teeth, the other forty-six."

The following illustrations, 28 and 29, are of a Scottish comb and two *carders*. Formerly they were in constant use, and even now are still employed by some of the old spinners for dividing and cleaning the flax and wool before it can be used for spinning. The two flat carders have about fifteen

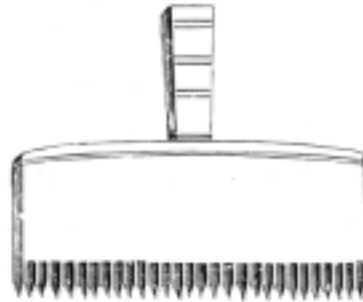


Illustration 27.—Egyptian Comb.

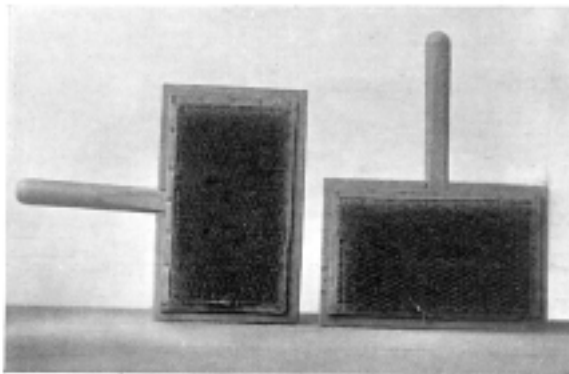


Illustration 28.—Scottish Carders.



Illustration 29.—Scottish Comb.

hundred little pins or points of wire set into the wooden handles. These pins are about half-an-inch in height. I counted the teeth in another old pair of carders and found between two thousand five hundred and three thousand points.

The wool, after being slightly oiled, was placed upon one carder and the other was drawn sharply backwards and for-



## *Lacis*

wards across the wool ; a variation of this movement was caused by an occasional twist of the hand, and the rough and matted wool was soon converted into soft and smooth "riffans," the name given by the old Scottish spinners to the long, soft, fluffy strands of wool that resulted from this treatment. I was told by a Highland lady that an expert carder could more than keep pace with two very quick spinners, supplying them with "riffans" as fast as they could spin.

The Scottish comb, as seen in Illustration 29, was in use about seventy or eighty years ago, but is now rarely to be found.



Illustration 30.—Reel or Rock.

The flax was buried for a few months in the peat; it was then dug up and the comb was brought into use for "hackling" it.

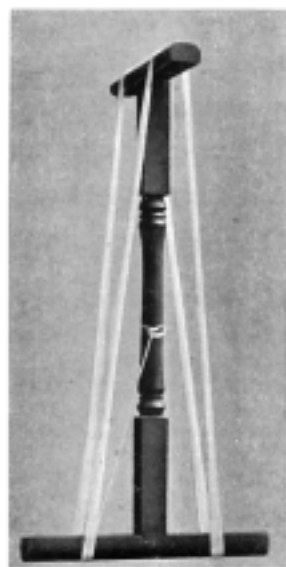


Illustration 31.—Scottish Winder.

The next illus-

trations, 30 and 31, show two old winders, upon which the wool or thread was wound after it had been spun ; as the bobbins became filled, the wool was wound round the winder ; it was then thoroughly washed, to free it from the oil, and tied up in hanks ready for dyeing or for using in its natural colour.\*

\* The two carders and the double T-shaped winder were most kindly lent to me by an old inhabitant of Strathpeffer.

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The following picture I think, will be interesting models of these once

Illustrations 32 and 33 are of two spinning wheels made by Sir R. Arkwright in 1769. No. 32 is a hand - spinning wheel, and in construction very much resembles the Scottish wheel shown in Illustration 37. This, however, was a wheel for spinning flax, and has the spindle attached, a feature which is of course not necessary for a wheel used in spinning wool.

The wheel No. 33 shows Sir R. Arkwright's first application of drawing rollers to cotton spinning. The Roving wound on bobbins placed at the back of the frame was led successively through four pairs of rollers revolving at speeds in the ratio 1 ; 1.16 ; 1.33 and 6.25, so that the cotton was drawn out to a fine thread.



Illustration 32—Sir R. Arkwright's Hand-Spinning Wheel.

## *Lacis*

The next is a very beautiful German Tyrolese wheel of the seventeenth century, and is in our possession in the South Kensington Museum. It is exquisitely carved, and is very complete in all the details. A winder on the same principle as the Scottish winder



Illustration 33.—Sir R. Arkwright's Wheel for Cotton Spinning.

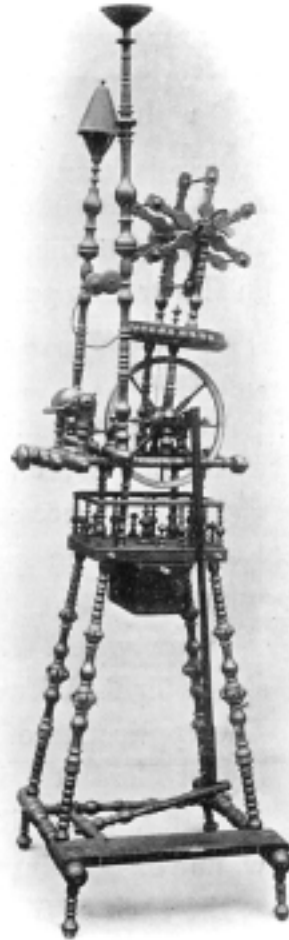


Illustration 34.—German Tyrolese Spinning Wheel.

will be noticed attached to one side, and the spindle for holding the thread resembles some of the specimens found in Egypt.

## *Flax*

The very small wheel in Illustration 35 is a French one of the eighteenth century ; it is very charmingly painted with flowers upon a dark green surface. It is also to be found in the South Kensington Museum.

In the Museum of Antiquities in Edinburgh there is a spinning wheel similar in size but made of plain unornamented wood. Some fine flax is still wound round the bobbin, and in the Royal Scottish Museum there is an exquisite wheel,

made in what

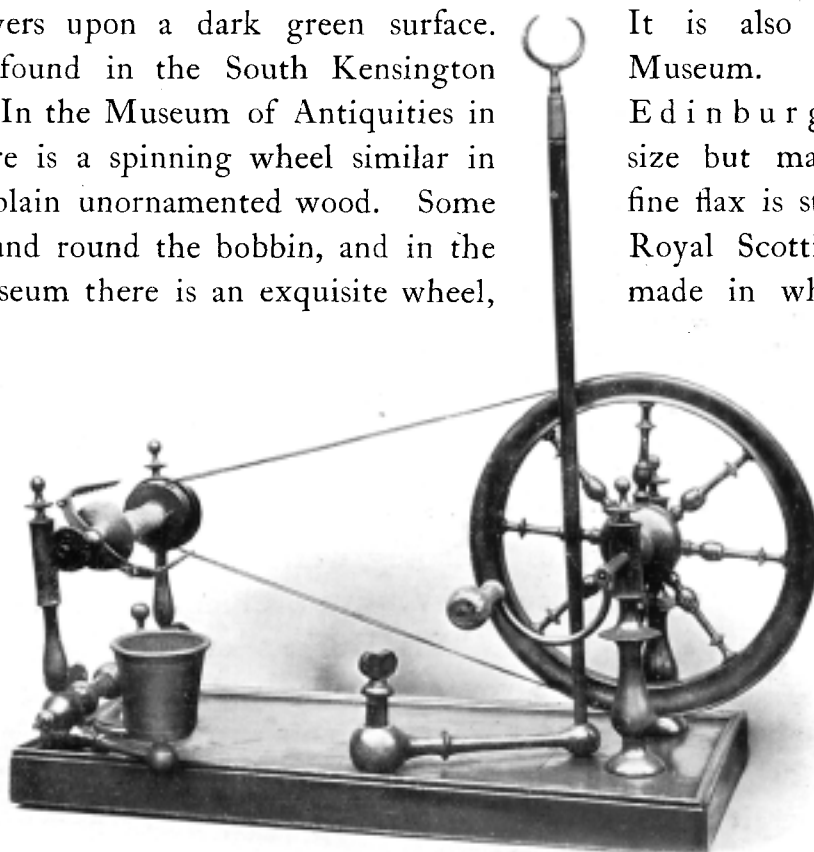


Illustration 35.—French Eighteenth-Century Spinning Wheel.

appears to be gilded metal studded with jewels, an agate forming the handle ; the base is painted in Chinese style with brilliant colours. It belonged to Mary of Lorraine, Queen of James V. and mother of Mary Queen of Scots, and formed part of the collection of Linlithgow Palace. It was exhibited in the Stuart Exhibition a few years ago.

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These small wheels seem to answer to the description given of them in “La Grande Encyclopédie” and in “La Dictionnaire de l’Ameublement,” where we learn that, if not actually invented, they were at least brought to a state of great beauty and perfection by a Sieur Mercier, *tourneur*, formerly of Fauxbourg Saint Antoine and in 1748 of rue neuve Saint Roch, and that at least he was the inventor of the wheels made in “*bronze doré*” the first of which was brought out in 1746. We must, however, conclude that Sieur Mercier could not have been the originator if this wheel really belonged to Mary of Guise.

At a sale of rare effects in 1784 wheels to put on the knee, “à mettre sur le genou,” were sold.

In several pictures by Watteau, Boucher, and Chardin we see “les grandes dames” spinning, winding thread or silk, and embroidering, and Louis XIV. gave a Chinese wheel to the Duchess of Burgundy. This Duchess of Burgundy was Princess Adelaide of Savoy, and in Savoy there are still to be found at the present day women spinning with the distaff.

In 1605 spinning was the fashion, and “le dauphin s’amusait à filer,” but as he was then only about four years old it was probably only an amusement. In 1736 the Abbé Soumille invented a wheel that could be used without it being necessary to hold the thread between the fingers, and the “*Mercur*e” of 1736 gives the following account of it:—“On les fixe au point qu’on veut pour le nombre de croisages et quand le fil est aussi fixé on ne peut pas se méprendre et l’on croise toujours égal, il ne faut pas plus de temps pour croiser jusqu’à 25 fois que jusqu’à 3. Ce qui rend cette invention plus

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estimable c'est la simplicité et son prix ; les serruriers peuvent les faire pour 20 sols chacun."

Illustrations 36 and 37 are two Scottish spinning wheels, and are about sixty to eighty years old. They are still in good working order. The smaller wheel, still in use in Shetland, is of a shape not so commonly met with as the larger one. The small box to be seen on the sloping *table* of the larger wheel was for holding any little scraps or ends of wool that



Illustration 36.  
Shetland Wheel.



Illustration 37.—Scottish Spinning  
Wheel.

accumulated during the process of spinning, and was considered an additional feature of usefulness in a well set-up wheel.

In Illustration 38 we have a typical auld wifie sitting at her wheel spinning. By her side is to be seen the "reel" on which the wool was wound after it had been spun.\*

Illustration 39 represents two Scottish lasses spinning and carding ; the riffans are lying between them on the ground.

\* I am very greatly indebted to a friend for having taken the photographs from which Illustrations 38 and 50 have been reproduced.

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It will be noted that the wheel has the rather unusual feature of two bobbins, while the distaff with which it is provided indicates that this wheel was used for spinning flax.



Illustration 38.—Auld Wife spinning.

The same kind of distaff, although the upper part of it seems to be missing, is to be seen in Illustration 38.

I know that to a certain extent spinning has been taken

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up again by some people, and I think it might become a pleasant occupation for more, in view of the very soothing effect it has upon one's mind and temper. An old Highland spinner with whom I had much "twit-twat" told me that if ever she sat down in a bad temper to spin—and her spinning



Illustration 39.—Typical Scottish Lasses spinning and carding.

meant stockings for many bairnies and yarn for blankets and tweeds for the whole household—she always forgot her troubles, and very soon felt quite happy again, and she very much regretted that now she need spin no more.

But to return to our subject.

In Egypt, after the flax had been combed, it was slightly moistened and twisted together by aid of the spindle, and then



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beaten again with a stone in order to bring out its glossiness—as it was found to be very much improved in proportion as it was beaten.



Illustration 40.—Women weaving.

Sir G. Wilkinson tells us that the spindles were generally small, being about one foot three inches in length, and several have been found at Thebes and are now preserved in the museums of Europe. “One of those I found at Thebes, now in the British Museum, had some of the linen thread with it.



Illustration 41.—Women using a Distaff.

“They were generally of wood and, in order to increase their impetus in turning, the circular head was occasionally of gypsum or composition; some, however, were of a light plaited work made of rushes or palm leaves stained of various

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colours and furnished with a loop of the same materials for securing the twine after it was wound.”

In the next illustrations, 40, 41, we see women weaving and using the distaff as represented in the sculptures.

In Illustration 42 men are engaged in spinning and making a kind of network.

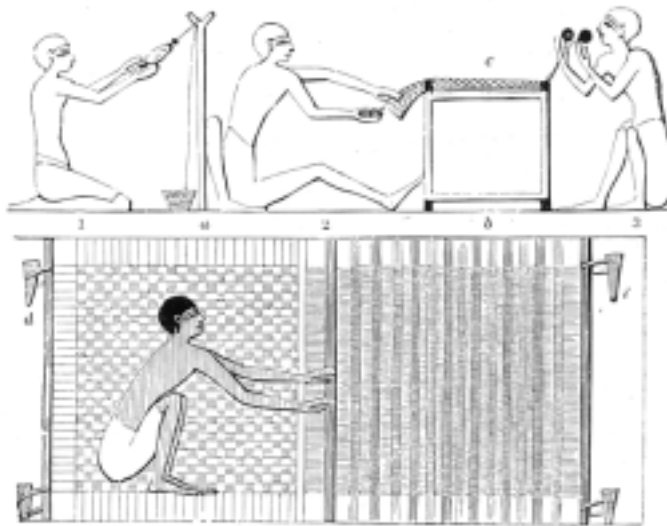


Illustration 42.—Men engaged in spinning and making a Net.

Boyd Dawkins tells us that “the art of spinning and the manufacture of linen were introduced into Europe in the Neolithic Age, and have been preserved with little variation from that period to the present day in certain remote parts of Europe, having only been superseded in modern times by the complicated machinery so familiar to us. The spindle and the distaff or perforated spindle whorls are of stone, pottery or bone, such as are constantly found in Neolithic tombs and habitations. Thread from the Swiss lake cities is proved to

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be of flax, and there is evidence of weaving in some sort of loom.”

I am greatly indebted to Mr Fred R. Coles, of the Scottish National Museum of Antiquities, for giving me permission to make use of the following illustrations and descriptions from two articles written by him in *The Reliquary*, January and April 1899, on some very interesting Scottish spindles and distaffs that are in the Edinburgh museum.

Mr Coles tells us that “as far as the distaff is concerned there are two well-marked types of decoration, the Highland

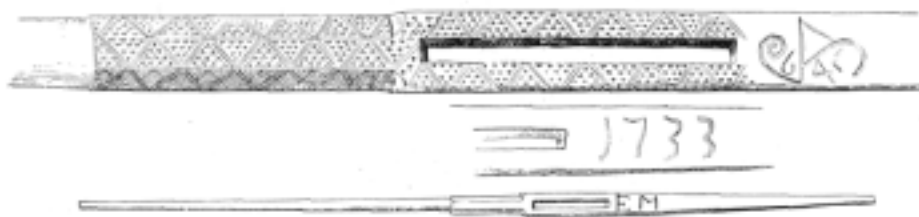


Illustration 43.—Lowland Type of Distaff from Carluke, Lanarkshire.

and the Lowland, and although specimens of the latter group may vary considerably in details there is no possibility of confusing these two types.

“Illustration 43 is of a Scottish distaff of the Lowland type from Carluke, Lanarkshire, and measures 2 feet 10 inches.

“The date 1733, the initials E. M. in copper inlets, and a puzzling symbol are slightly but carefully incised on one face of the butt.”

Illustration 44 shows elaborate carving. This distaff, whose length is 3 feet  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inches, gives us an example of through-cutting, with six pellets left in the groove. Mr Coles is somewhat of the opinion that these pellets may

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have been inserted after the groove was cut. The distaff is a fine specimen, and the workmanship shows gracefulness and care.

Illustration 45.—“This is perhaps the most elegant specimen of the whole group, and in respect of its decoration, stands alone. It is of dark mahogany, carved with great care, under-cut, and inlaid with small bars, squares, oblongs and discs of ivory, the stem being further inlaid with three hearts and a thistle and six vertical measure marks. . . . The tapering end is tipped with ivory.” This distaff measures 1 foot 6 inches.

“Considering the peculiarity of the style of decoration, the inlaid work outweighing the carving, and also the fact that 1 foot 6 inches is the exact third of the French ell (which was six quarters), it is quite likely that the pretty distaff should be attributed to a French source rather than a purely Scottish one.”

Illustration 46.—“Unique specimen of the Highland distaff from Ceanamonie, Loch Alsh. The parallel triangles and the horizontal bands of this remarkable example are cognate with the decoration we usually find on the brims and sides of the sepulchral urns of the Bronze Age,



Illustration 44.—Scottish Distaff, showing Through-Cutting.

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while its interlaced work is a reminiscence of that of the sculptured stones. It is 2 feet  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length."

Illustration 47 represents "an almost ludicrously small spindle piercing a huge whorl cut out of a lump of peat." "It is made and used by the fishermen in Dunrossness, Shetland, for spinning 'tippetts' of horse tail for fastening to the hooks."

Illustration 48 shows the carved butt of a spindle "two sides of which are carved in diagonals, the third has a heart, the fourth is left blank, but the top is set diamond wise and has an incised square. The length of this spindle is  $10\frac{2}{3}$  inches."



Illustration 45.—Mahogany Distaff.

The most richly decorated of all our spindles, as seen in Illustration 49, is that from Kilmuir in Skye. "A hexafoil figure is carved into the butt end, and below is a space  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches long divided into three bands of varied interlaced work ; just below this is a neatly bored hole piercing the spindle right through."

Spindle whorls were made of many curious substances ; but probably the most original is one simply formed from a potato ; one such specimen is to be seen in the museum. It belonged to an old woman at Daviot, in Inverness-shire, and was being used by her in 1864.

Illustration 50 is of a Scottish spindle and whorl. It is made of wood, and is unornamented except for a

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groove cut round and for two circles incised upon both sides of the whorl. It is very smooth and well polished from constant use, and the usual crochet-hook end over which the flax passed is much worn. I am told that the impetus was given to it by the spinner quickly rolling it up and down the skirt of her dress.\*

This method is quite different to that followed in France and Italy, where women are still to be found spinning as they walk along the country roads, and a following illustration (51) will show how spinning is still practised in those countries,

\* The ancient Egyptian women appear to have used their spindles in exactly the same way as will be seen on referring to Illustration 41.

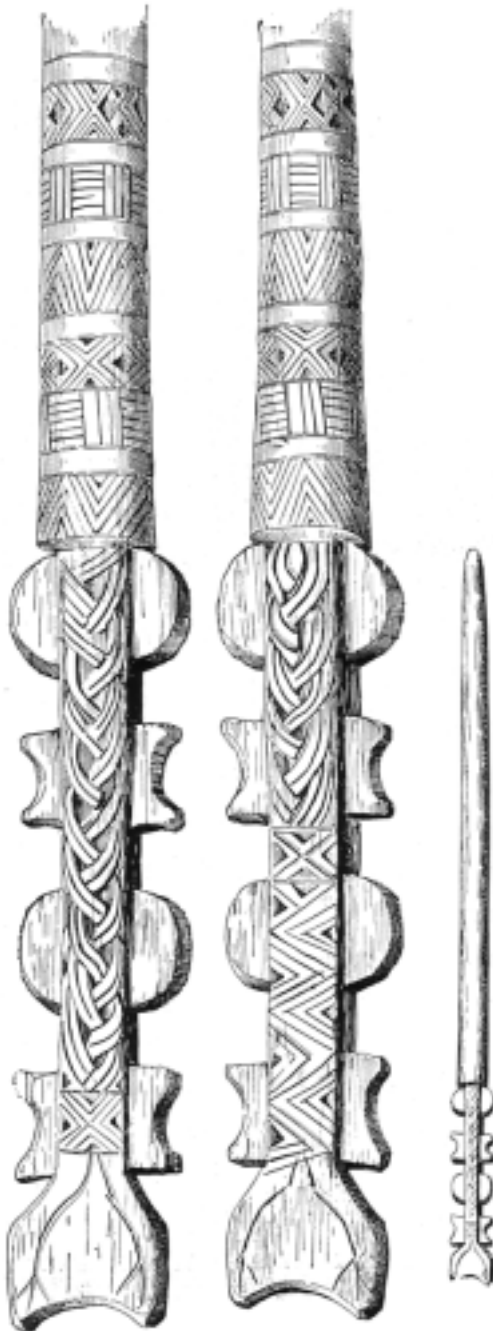


Illustration 46.—Highland Type of Scottish Distaff.

## *Lacis*

while in Illustration 52 a Russian distaff and the manner in which it is used is to be seen.



Illustration 47.—Spindle with Whorl cut out of a Piece of Peat.

The Italian distaff is about seventy or eighty years old, and has the same form, and is constructed in the same way, as its predecessors in Egyptian and Roman times. It is made of cane, with straw tightly plaited round it.

The Russian distaff, the character of which differs distinctly from all other distaffs illustrated here, is made of wood, in the shape of the letter L, and is gaily decorated with brightly painted figures. The spinner sits on the lower part and draws the flax from the top.

The Phœnicians, who were the great traders in ancient times, are supposed to have introduced linen fabrics into Europe; “the earliest known piece was found in the tomb of the Seven Brothers in the Crimea. Its date is 300 B.C.”

It was probably by them that it was imported into Greece, Sicily, Malta, and other countries where it was not grown, or only grown in very small quantities.

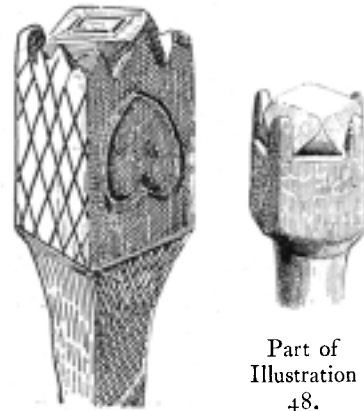


Illustration 48.  
Butt of a Spindle.

Part of  
Illustration  
48.

Among the countries most celebrated in more modern

## *Flax*

times we must mention Spain, the beauty of whose flax and linen, especially that of Hispania Citerior, near Tarraco, is



Illustration 49.—Carved Butt of Spindle from Kilmuir, Island of Skye.



Part of Illustration 49.

supposed to be due to the river flowing near, in which the flax was steeped, and the River Lys is said to pro-



Illustration 50.—Scottish Spindle and Whorl.

duce the same beneficial effect upon the celebrated flax of Courtrai.



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At Bayonne “they made the finest of linens, some of which is made open like network, and the thread is finer than hair.” Some of the cambric or fine linen that was specially woven for the Normandy Cauchoise veils answers



Illustration 51.—Italian Distaff.

to this description, as it is distinctly *net*-like in the manner of its weaving. The Netherlands and Holland linen are justly celebrated, while the Brussels thread is wonderfully fine, the finest specimens being, as is well known, spun in damp, underground cellars. It is so fine “as almost to escape the sight,”

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and from one pound of it lace to the value of £700 can be made.

I think I have brought enough evidence to show how



Illustration 52.—Russian Distaff.

justly celebrated flax has been in all ages where the beauty and durability of a fabric was a thing to be desired, and I now wish to add one example to show how the discontinuance of its use brought about the almost total decline of a once flourishing trade.

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From about the middle of the seventeenth century the lace of Tönder in Denmark began to be celebrated.

It was largely influenced by Flemish taste, was well made and of fine quality, 20,000 people being employed in its manufacture. In 1712 it is said that the exports of this lace amounted to £11,000 or 100,000 rix dollars, and that fine thread was imported from the Netherlands, for which sometimes as much as 100 rix dollars per lb. was paid.

In 1830 cotton thread was substituted for this fine flax thread, and Tönder lace gradually declined until, in 1840, there were not more than six lace manufacturers in Schleswig.

In conclusion I would tell my readers of an old Spanish proverb that may be of use to “*donne donzelle con gli huomini*”—“Choose a wife and fine linen by daylight.”

## A SHORT ACCOUNT OF NETS

WE have innumerable evidences of the immense antiquity of nets and net-making, and I think that a slight reference to this very early industry may be of interest to some of my readers, so that I ask them to wander down the dark labyrinths of primeval times to see through the dim and shadowy mists, still enshrouding those bygone days, the creation of an art that bears witness to man's ingenuity, industry, and perseverance—its absolute simplicity arguing undoubtedly a very primitive origin.

It had its beginning in far-off ages, flourished through the changes and storms of the older civilisation, and still survives at the present day.

If we would fix a date when nets were first made we are confronted with an insoluble problem, for that early past yields up no records, and only vague conjecture tells us that they were made long before any account of them could be written on one of life's many pages, and so long ago that all traces of them have perished in the dust that buries all.

However, long anterior to the Grecian and Roman times, even before Egyptian and the still older civilisation of Chaldæa, we can imagine these makers and users of nets, men who sought their food in the deep waters; and we wonder if these prehistoric weavers found their inspiration

## *Lacis*

for the net pattern in the intersections of the fish scales, or in the interlacings of the many vegetable fibres that grew and flourished so abundantly in the early gardens of the world.

As lending colour to this idea we see (Illustration 53), in a very ancient Chaldæan representation, four warriors swimming

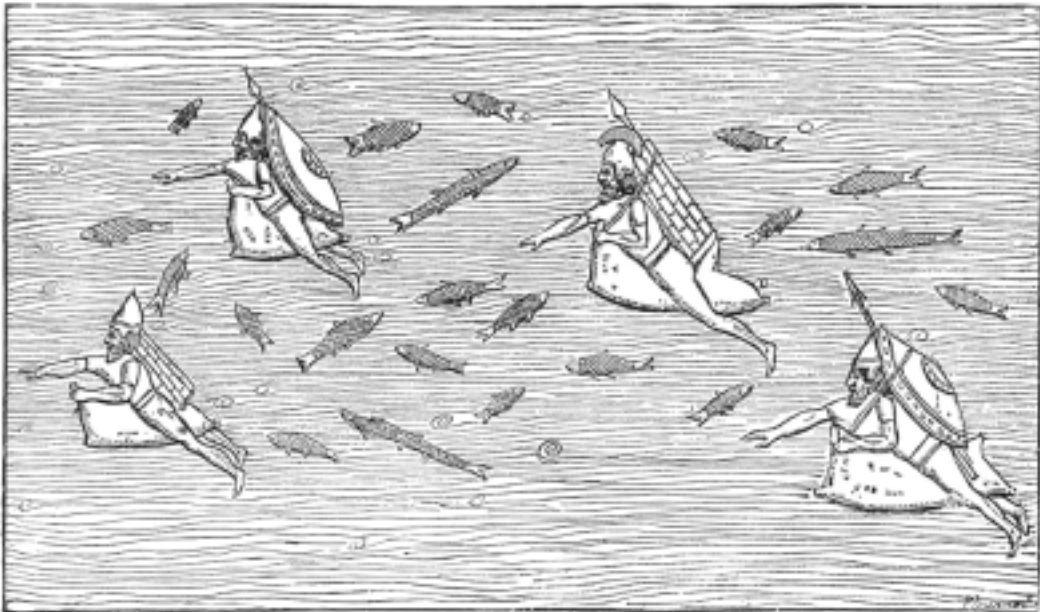


Illustration 53.—Warriors swimming on inflated Skins across a River.

across a river supported by the skins of beasts. These skins are inflated by air in the same way as when used to give buoyancy to rafts; in the water around are fish of many sizes, all represented with a netted design upon their backs, instead of by the very perfect rendering of the fish scales as we see them portrayed on the statue of “Êa the Fish,” or “Oannes,” that mythological fish god for whom the Chaldæans, according to their historian, Berosus, claimed

## *A Short Account of Nets*

the vast interval of over 259,000 years between his first appearance and the first King of Chaldæa, and a still vaster interval of 432,200 years between the first king and the Deluge! (Illustration 54.)

And, look where we will, we find this same pattern in different forms: as traceries on Babylonian and Assyrian carvings, and particularly in the delineation of the "Sacred Tree," the "Tree of Life," the "Sacred Hom" or "Homa" of Assyria, Persia, and, in fact, of all Eastern countries.

The representation of the pine cones (Illustration 55) will show how this net design has been applied, and the pattern of Sicilian silk (Illustration 56) is evi-



Illustration 54.—"Oannes."

## Lacis

dently traceable to the same Eastern source. The elaborate fringes which are such a well-known feature of all Assyrian and Egyptian sculptured robes, and appear as adornments to



Illustration 55.—Cones.

their horses' trappings, display a reticulated heading formed by knotting the threads together before they are allowed to fall into a loose fringe or heavy tassel. What again are the Chinese

forms of lattice-work, the tartan, and the intertwined convolutions of Celtic design but subtle transmutations of this fundamental idea?

Be this as it may, we can easily conceive that netting was one of the earliest industries of mankind, for the necessity of finding food for himself and his children must have been keener than the desire of providing them with clothes, and hunger would be the great incentive to discover an easy and quick method of catching the animals required for food.

As primitive races do to-day, so would those of years gone by employ for the making of nets, strips of the skins or sinews of beasts or the fibres of plants dried and twisted together, and would probably coat these *threads* with some of the gums found exuding from trees. And here I wish to



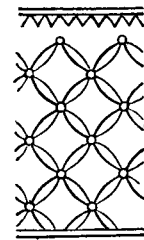
Illustration 56.  
Sicilian Silk.

## *A Short Account of Nets*

notice some beautiful and interesting examples of native bags, mats, nets, and articles of dress from Paraguay, Guiana, and the Papuan Gulf, which are to be seen in the South American and adjacent galleries in the British Museum.

There is, for instance, from the Papuan Gulf, an elaborate collar made of coix seeds most ingeniously strung together with regularly and perfectly formed meshes, and in a garment that resembles a cloak, and is of Abyssinian origin, there is a very perfect rendering of the "Fundata,"\* or net design, carried out in cowrie shells.

This Fundata design (illustrated in No. 57) is constantly found on Egyptian walls and ceilings, and the simple lozenge shape, carried out by means of cones



Egyptian.

Illustration  
57.—Fundata  
Design.

of terra cotta embedded in the moist mud or clay, formed the decoration of the external walls of Chaldæan buildings.

The beautiful network of ribbons or lace fastened by a jewel at each intersection that was so favourite a trimming on dresses during Mediæval and Elizabethan days is but an adaptation of the same design.



Illustration 58.—Dyak  
Mesh used in making Nets.

The very charming little tool of brown wood (Illustration 58), polished by long use to a

\* Virgil calls the casting-net *Funda*, which is the common term for a sling. *Fundata*, derived from this, was therefore generally used to denote the design of netting.



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delightful smoothness, I also found among these exhibits, and it is described as a “Dyak wooden mesh, used in making nets.”

The carefully carved grooves on the trefoil-shaped head are quite Chippendale in character.

The label descriptive of the next picture (Illustration 59) tells us that it is a “bone pin, used in weaving,” a description that does not adequately convey what a very pretty object it is. The carving, though simple, is very good, and it is a pin



Illustration 59.—Dyak Pin used in weaving.

that might find a place quite appropriately among other beautiful implements of work.

Mention must also be made of a small fish-net that is to be found among the products of the Kayam tribe, and recalls those made in Egypt long ago.

The following illustrations (60, 61, 62, 63) will be of interest in showing some of the different varieties of nets made in ancient times, the great similarity both in their construction and use to those of the present day being worthy of note.

All these specimens demonstrate most clearly the universal application of the Fundata design, and from the adaptability of very widely differing materials to the formation of network we can undoubtedly discover one reason for its long survival. For not only have nets been composed of shells and

## *A Short Account of Nets*

beads and different fibres, but the very finest threads, silks, and gold, and even silver, threaded with jewels, have been employed.

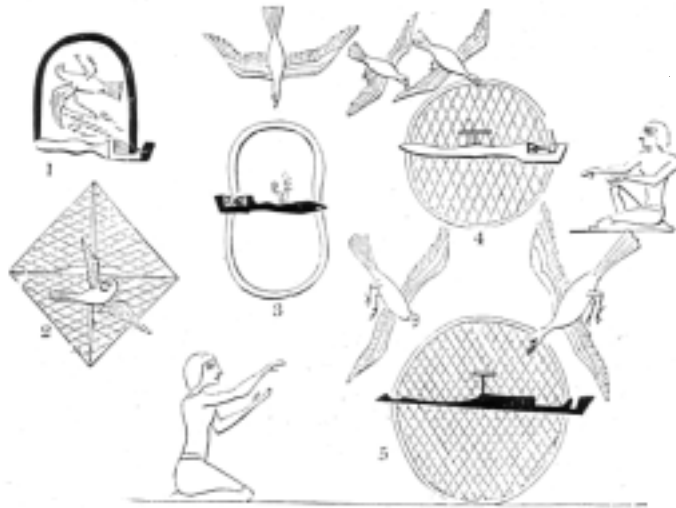


Illustration 60.—Bird Traps.

in making them, and in later ages we arrive at a very high state of perfection in their manufacture, the netting or caul-



Illustration 61.—Portion of Net.

work of Egyptian times far surpassing any that is produced to-day.

## *Lacis*

From numberless references in the Bible, from the carvings and pictures on the tombs of the long since happy dead, and even from the contents of the tombs themselves, we have abundant evidence of the favour in which nets were held.



Illustration 62.—Bas-relief Nets.

Figures of people have been discovered in Chaldæan tombs on whose heads nets have been found still confining their luxuriant hair.



Illustration 63.—Fishing with a Drag Net.

The following illustration (64) of the beautiful E'T'E, wife of Sechemka, Superintendent of Agriculture, whose statue is now in the Louvre Museum, shows us a complete overdress of coloured beadwork, through the interstices of which the underdress of white can be seen, and we notice

## *A Short Account of Nets*

that the netting is finished at the foot with tassels that form a fringe.

This arrangement is very frequently met with among Egyptian antiquities, and the same bead coverings, often of that wonderful brilliant blue, are to be found on many of the mummies, the patterns differing according to the size and shape of the beads employed and the manner in which they are linked together.

Professor Petrie tells us that the net pattern is found in Egypt during the twelfth dynasty, which corresponds to 2130 B.C., and that it became more usual in the eighteenth dynasty, and was generally found upon the dresses of goddesses; we find it ornamenting the state robes of dead Egyptian kings, and many of the figures painted upon the monuments are wearing tunics made of netting, the loops of which are formed with gaily coloured silks.



Illustration 64.  
E'T'E.

Pliny, writing about flax, mentions a kind called Zælic, which he says "first came from the same part of Spain into Italy. It is of the greatest use in making hunting-nets. The city from which it is called is in Galicia, near the ocean. The flax of Cumæ in Campania is also highly prized, more especially for catching fishes and birds, and for hunting-nets." And he adds: "For we use flax no less to form snares for the destruction of all other animals than for the destruction of ourselves. The hunting-nets of Cumæ are strong enough to take boars: the purse-nets of the same material even turn

## *Lacis*

the edge of iron ; and we have seen them so fine as to pass through a man's ring with their running cords, one man carrying a sufficient number of them to surround a forest. A still more extraordinary circumstance is that each thread of these nets consists of one hundred and fifty fibres."

In Latin the word *Retis* or *Rete* was used to designate nets in general, special names being given, as with us, to each particular kind. From Pliny we learn that the nets used at the gladiatorial shows as a protection against the wild beasts were "knotted with amber," and Homer speaks of them as "the flax that catches everything."

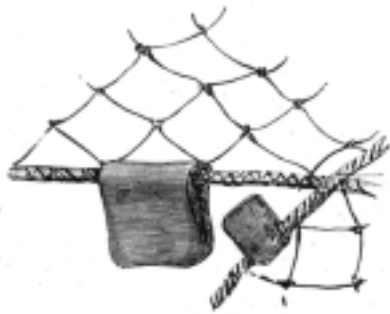


Illustration 65.—Portion of Net with Leads attached.

There are in the Berlin Museum specimens of nets made in Egypt three thousand years ago, with the leads and floats still remaining, and the accompanying illustration (65) shows one now in the Berlin Museum that

was obtained by M. Passalacqua, who describes it as "Un filet de pêche à petites mailles et fait avec du fil de lin. Cet object, qui est garni de ses plombs, conserve encore les morceaux de bois qui garnissaient sa partie supérieure ainsi qu'une courge qui l'aidait à surnager."

There is also in the Berlin Museum an Egyptian wig, in which the netted ground, with the long and flowing curls attached, is clearly to be seen.

That these ringlets were made of sheep's wool certainly detracts from the idea of beauty or of cleanliness.

## *A Short Account of Nets*

The two nets shown in Illustrations 66 and 67 are very beautiful examples that were found in a tomb of the Egypto-Roman period, at Fayoum, in Middle Egypt. They are supposed to date from the third to the seventh centuries B.C.

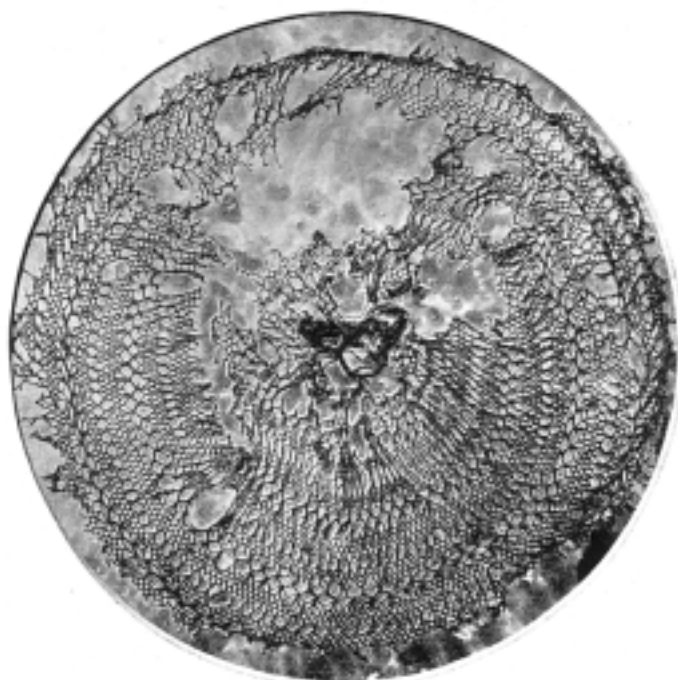


Illustration 66.—Egyptian Net.

The round one is almost perfect, and shows that different-sized meshes were used to make it.

The smaller piece is interesting because the manner in which it was fastened is plainly to be seen, for there is attached to it a narrow fillet of ribbon, to which a small button still adheres. Both nets appear to be made of a dark brown silk.

These, and also the almost perfect specimens of the flax

## *Lacis*

purse and woollen bag, which are illustrated below (Illustration 68), are in the possession of the South Kensington Museum.

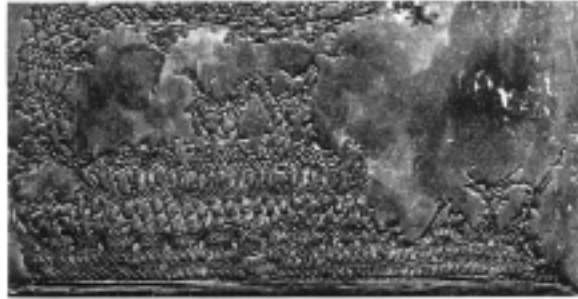


Illustration 67.—Egyptian Net.

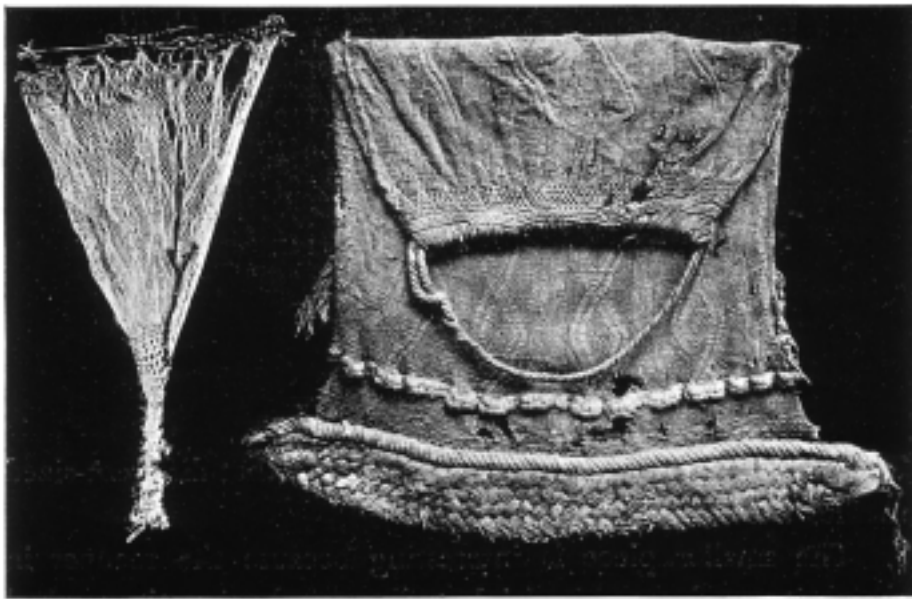


Illustration 68.—Egyptian Bag and Purse.

The flax purse is thus described as “consisting of several groups of threads taken together and plaited, and the upper

## *A Short Account of Nets*

portion is composed of these same threads knitted and forming curved bands uniting and enclosing crosses on a network ground. The purse has been further decorated with bands of coloured wool." Found in ancient tombs at Akhmim Panopolis, Upper Egypt.

The bag is "of red and black wool knitted," and is from an ancient Roman cemetery in the Fayoum, Middle Egypt.

This bag and purse, although not strictly examples of pure netting—for the threads are interlaced as in knitting and no knots are to be seen—are such interesting specimens that I am sure I shall be forgiven for giving a description and illustration of them.

In Egyptian archæology the net was considered as a symbol that guarded the souls of those who, after immersion in the great river, might be imprisoned in the net, and "the Goddess NET or NEITH, the divine Mother, the Lady of Heaven, the Mistress of the Gods, was one of the most ancient deities of Egypt, and in the Pyramid text she appears as the mother of Sebek. Like Meht-Urt she personifies the place in the sky where the sun rises.

"In one form she was the goddess of the loom and the shuttle, and also of the chase ; in this respect she was identified by the Greeks as Athene. She is depicted in the form of a woman having upon her head the shuttle or arrows, or she wears the crown and holds arrows and bow and sceptre in her left hand."

We have numberless references to nets in the Bible, but I will only refer to a few of them.

The terms cauls, network, checker-work, and snares are



## *Lacis*

all employed, while in the Alexandrine or Septuagint version a clear distinction is made between the casting-net and the sean.

“He [the Chaldæan] hath drawn him in a casting-net and gathered him in his seans, therefore his heart shall rejoice and be glad. Therefore he shall sacrifice to his sean and burn incense to his casting-net.”

In the description of the building of Solomon’s Temple we read of the “nets of checker-work” made by Hiram of Tyre, that cunning worker in all works of brass; and in Exodus mention is made of Bezaleel, who is described as a deviser of curious works in gold and silver and brass, “and he made for the altar a brazen grate of net-work.”

Isaiah speaks of “cauls” and of “they that spread nets upon the waters” and in chapter fifty-one, verse twenty, “Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net.” And, “for a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and many among them shall stumble and fall and be broken and be snared, and be taken.”

In Ezekiel we read that “Tyrus shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea.”

The sean, the French term (*Seine*) for which is in everyday use among our fishermen, was, and still is, one of the largest nets made.

The nets now made in the Tunny fisheries in the Mediterranean are often a mile long. Some Russian nets, however, surpass them in size, many of these, although hand-made, attaining the great length of three thousand yards.

The Chinese make nets of the “wild” silk; these they

## *A Short Account of Nets*

afterwards soak in oil for the purpose of rendering them invisible.

On the other hand, however, as a reverse to this picture of large nets, we read of those that were made not "larger than a purse for the pocket," and among the luxurious habits of the Sicilian prætor Verres, it is recorded that he had a small and very fine linen net filled with rose petals "which ever and anon he gave his nose."

"The women of Theurapia on the Bosphorus are renowned to-day for the exquisitely fine netting that they do. They ornament it still further by netting raised flowers upon its ground." Central and South America also produce darned netting, and that made in Chili is of the old lozenge pattern; men and women are both engaged in making it.

Both Cyprus and Malta have been noted for very fine netting.

I suppose most people are acquainted with the mittens made in Malta, which are celebrated on account of their lightness of texture and also because they are so skilfully made that it is impossible to detect any joins.

I wish I could accord the same meed of praise to a piece of modern netting shown me in a London shop lately where I was inquiring about lessons and materials; this piece resembled more nearly a piece of *macramé* and owed its beauty (?) to the very large number of knots that appeared upon its meshes.

There are in Illustrations 69 and 70 examples of modern Cyprus netting; the centre of the round mat is, however, made in "tattling," and the rest of the work is done with a

## *Lacis*

sewing needle, which is used instead of the ordinary netting needle. In both these specimens the meshes are wonderfully

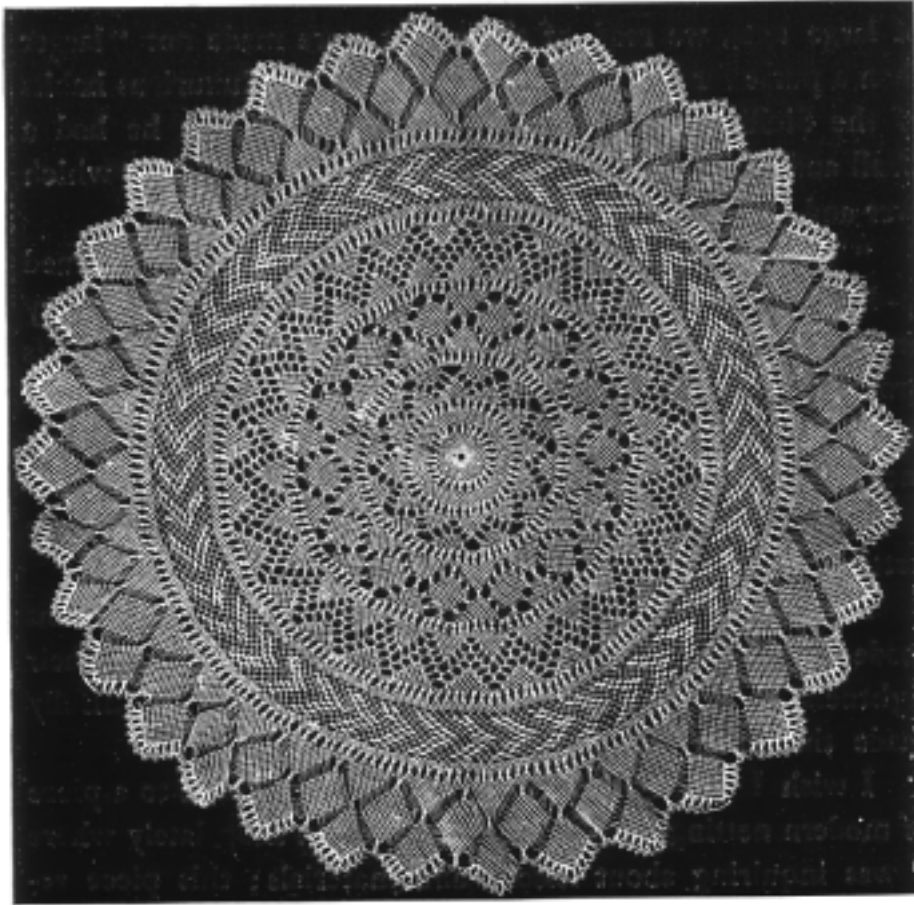


Illustration 69.—Cyprus Netting (modern).

regular, and the knots unavoidably caused by the joining of the thread are, as in the Maltese netting, hardly to be perceived. In Mrs Palliser's "History of Lace" this netting is designated Jewish work (Illustration 71). This reminds us of

## *A Short Account of Nets*

the marvellously minute work executed by Jewish people, who were cunning workers with their needles; their silk embroideries, resembling the most exquisite point lace and representing the most beautiful flowers have been justly celebrated from the earliest times.

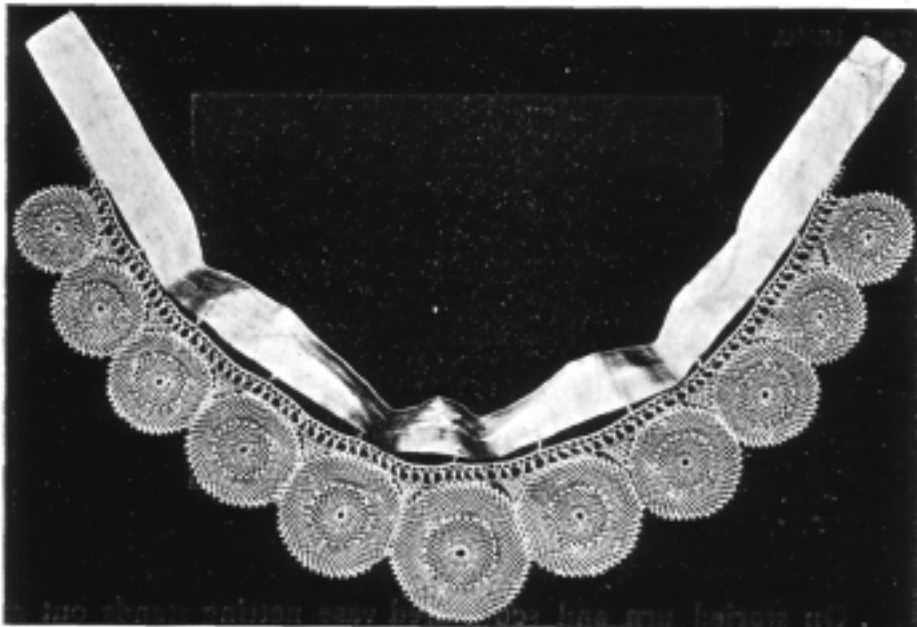


Illustration 70.—Collar made in Cyprus.

Netting is still the occupation of many Swedish women to-day, and they use the plain variety very largely for window curtains and other hangings for the house.

I hope in a future series to give fuller information, with specimens, of this work now being done in these countries.

Ornamental netting executed in the finest gold and silver

## *Lacis*

threads, and further decorated with precious stones, has been applied to purposes of dress from time immemorial, and many are the examples from those early Babylonian and Egyptian days of highest luxury, from the more refined, and perhaps more effeminate elegance of Greece and Rome to the first Napoleonic Empire, with its recrudescence of Egyptian art and taste.

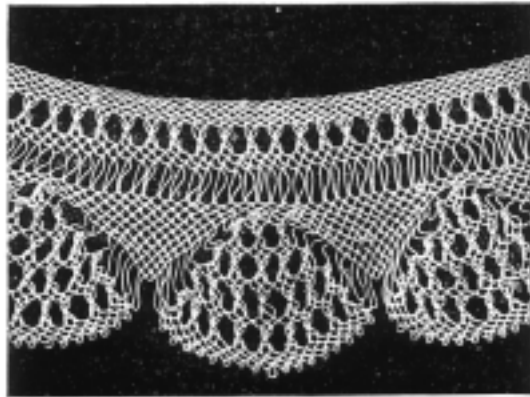


Illustration 71.—Jewish Netting.

On storied urn and sculptured vase netting stands out as one of the most generally accepted ornaments of dress, and golden fillets, and jewelled nets “fine as the filmy webs the spider weaves” are constantly represented.

In the inventory of 1393 of the Duke of Burgundy mention is made “d’un petit pourpoint de satin noir et la gorgerette de maille d’argent de Chippre.”

Queen Philippa would not be recognised without her caul, and in her time as well as in the later time of Marguerite de France, Duchesse de Savoie, daughter of Francis I., born in

## *A Short Account of Nets*

1523, gold nets and fichus, as well as fronts of dresses, were worn by all women of high degree.

In the inventory of Mary Queen of Scots there is the following description of a dress so ornamented :—“ Une robbe de veloux noyer faicte a bourletz tout le bor coupe par escaille bordee dune frange dargent et le tout de ladite robbe est de refeu dargent faict a mode de passément et rosé par deffus ladite robbe dont elle est toute couuerte.”

In Baxter's “ Egyptian, Grecian, and Roman Costumes,” there are many figures showing the application of netting to dresses, and the Marguerite de France mentioned above is pictured with a netted fichu of gold, the ends of which are tucked into the square bodice of the green dress she is wearing.

And now in concluding this section I will give two quotations.

Dickens' picture in “ Hard Times ” of Mrs Sparsit “ netting at the fire-side in a sidesaddle attitude with one foot in a cotton stirrup ” is, perhaps, rather more prosaic than the following :—

“ Ideal visits I often pay you ; see you posting round your sylvan walks or sitting netting in your parlour and thinking of your absent friend,” which is redolent of the fragrance of the old-time roses and lavender associated so pleasantly with the women of a past generation who loved domestic joys, and to whom the plying of their needle was an unceasing delight.

## *Lacis*

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR NETTING THE SQUARES AND OBLONG BANDS USED IN LACIS

NETTING will not be found difficult to learn, and it is a pleasant and easily accomplished work. The necessary implements and materials are not expensive when we compare their price with the prices of some of the necessities for other branches of needlework.

The beauty of netting consists in the perfect regularity of the loops and the tightness of the knots ; it is also largely influenced by the quality of the thread or silk employed in making it. I wish very strongly to point out that only the best quality of flax thread should be used, as any but the best thread or silk is liable to break when subjected to the strain put upon it in making the knots that close in each mesh, necessitating a fresh join in the threads and impairing the beauty of the net as it is almost impossible to hide the join, and extremely difficult to keep the loop the same size as the others.

I strongly advise all learners of Lacis to make the nets they require, and for this reason—by so doing they are sure of having the square or band of netting of exactly the right size, both as regards each individual mesh, and also in regard to the band or square itself.

Netted squares are to be bought ready-made but, apart from the fact that many are imperfect, I am of the opinion that conscientious workers will be more satisfied to work the whole thing themselves, and they will feel that they are thereby following the traditions of the old workers.

## *Squares and Oblong Bands*

In these ready-made squares some of the loops are not of equal size, and very often it will be found that they have been omitted altogether. Much, too, is alas ! machine-made.

No true lover of the beautiful will, however, consider this worth buying, as the time spent in working upon it is only time thrown away, for the work when done will be of no importance from an artistic point of view and its commercial value can only be of very small amount.

I think that the making of nets for Lacis might prove a remunerative occupation to many who are debarred through many causes from other work. It would give pleasant employment to many an old woman and would be work that she could easily do. I am told that we could not hope to compete with the foreign-made article, but I think it should be a means of providing at least pocket-money for many an auld wifie, who, while forced to live with a married son or daughter, likes to feel that she is doing something to bring grist to the mill. I see a large future for people in the country of very many pleasant hours spent in working Lacis, and should the demand be large for netting—well made by hand, and of good thread—I feel that our people should reap this harvest, and that we should not be obliged, as, alas ! too often we are, to send our money abroad for the lack of a little energy on the part of some amongst us who could thus start an industry in villages where time too often hangs heavily upon many who have no settled occupation. Netting is pleasant work, it is quickly and easily learned, and offers no strain to old or weak eyes.



## A DESCRIPTION OF TERMS AND MATERIALS USED IN NETTING

THE following are the materials required for netting :—

NEEDLES, GAUGES, THREAD, STIRRUP, or CUSHION.

As will be seen from Illustration 72, the needle has an opening at each end, something like a two-pronged fork, thus

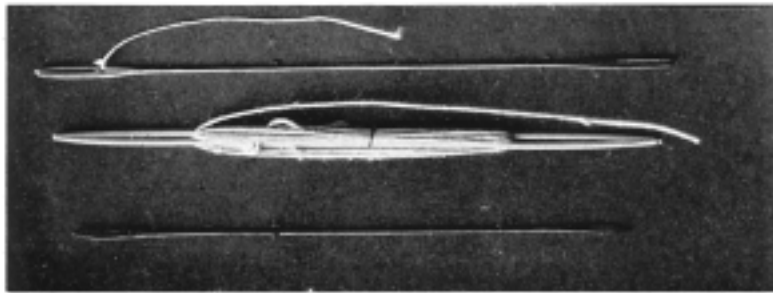


Illustration 72.—Netting Needles.

enabling the thread to be wound upon it. A small hole is to be found near one end. The thread can be passed through this hole. Do not tie it to the needle, merely hold it down by passing the thread over the end.

In the case of there being no hole you must simply pass the thread into the slot or opening of the fork, hold the end

## *Terms and Materials*

of it down, and pass the rest over and over lengthwise, until the needle is sufficiently full. The needle should not be too full, for it must be able to pass easily through each loop; practice will soon determine the exact quantity.\*

Needles are made of steel for fine work, and of bone and wood for coarser netting. Those used must be proportionate to the size of the mesh or loop to be made, not so large as to be difficult to pass through the loops, nor so small as to hold

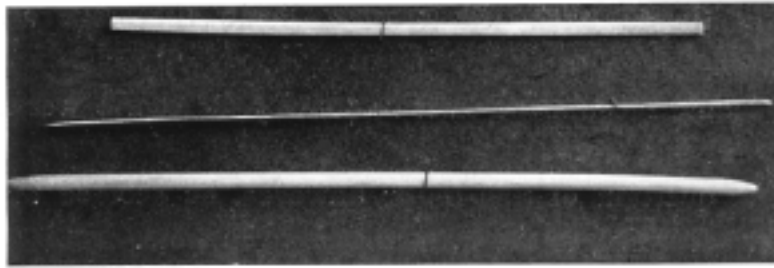


Illustration 73.—Gauges

only a short thread, in which case constant joining will be necessary. The sizes are numbered from 12 to 24.

Illustration 73.—Gauges. These are the forms upon which netting is made, the thread being passed round them during the process of making the knots, and it is they that regulate the size of each individual loop. They are made of steel for fine work and bone or wood for coarser work. An ordinary steel or bone knitting pin will be found to answer

\* I should like to speak of the Italian manner of filling the needle, for it is certainly better than ours, as more thread can be wound upon it without its becoming bulky. Instead of passing the thread over the needle lengthwise, it is wound round the needle in a slanting direction. It passes, of course, through the pronged ends.

## *Lacis*

the purpose very well. Care should be taken in the choice, and pins that are rough or uneven should not be used, because, not only will the worker find it difficult to make the knots slip easily over the rough surface, but there is danger that the thread may catch, and a break in the thread is a thing to be carefully avoided.

Thread.—The thread to be used both for the netting and for the darning should be a pure flax thread, and the colour should be the natural greyish-white colour slightly tinged with the creamy shade that flax always possesses.

I should recommend sizes 2, 4 and 5 for coarse work and 6 or 7 for fine work.

The question of size must, however, be decided by the worker according to the work that is to be done.

The best results will be obtained if workers will use the best flax thread procurable, both for the netting and the darning, for it retains its softness and suppleness in spite of successive washings, and it alone guarantees a work that can be preserved indefinitely. In point of durability alone flax thread is without comparison. The toughness and length of its fibre, allowing of great tension without injury, its beauty of texture, its smooth and satinlike surface, and its pearly, glistening hue place it without exception at the head of all materials to be used in the adornment of fabrics that must from time to time be cleaned by washing; indeed, careful washing but adds to its beauty, as the brilliant sheen seems enhanced thereby. This, however, can only be when the flax is pure and is not mixed with cotton. Much of the so-called thread

## *Terms and Materials*

is unsuitable for the uses to which we wish to put it. It will be found to get into knots, and loss of temper and time can be the only result. I know one kind that knots itself so tightly that, like the Gordian Knot, it cannot be untied, and must be cut, thus necessitating the joining on of a new thread.

The initial cost is rather more than that of cotton, but flax will wear for many, many years, and be a constant joy, not only to the worker, but to those who enjoy her work after her.

Illustration 74. — Stirrup. This may be made of a piece of stout thread, twine, tape or ribbon, about sixty inches long.

Some workers who like their accessories to be dainty and elegant use an embroidered stirrup. This can be made easily, and a length of ribbon about two inches wide, embroidered in coloured silks, or even a plain or Pompadour ribbon, would look well. It can be passed round the foot and the length should be such as will permit the first row of netting to be on a line with the waist. This is a point, however, which each worker will find out for herself.

A stirrup is also sometimes made with a piece of wood about four or five inches long and about one and a half inches wide. The idea of this is that the foot does not become tired as soon as when only string is used. Two



Illustration 74.  
Stirrup.

## *Lacis*

holes should be bored in the wood and the ribbon passed through and then tied.

A shorter stirrup, measuring about twenty inches, to which the netting can be attached, may be pinned to the skirt, but undoubtedly the stirrup passed round the foot is the simplest

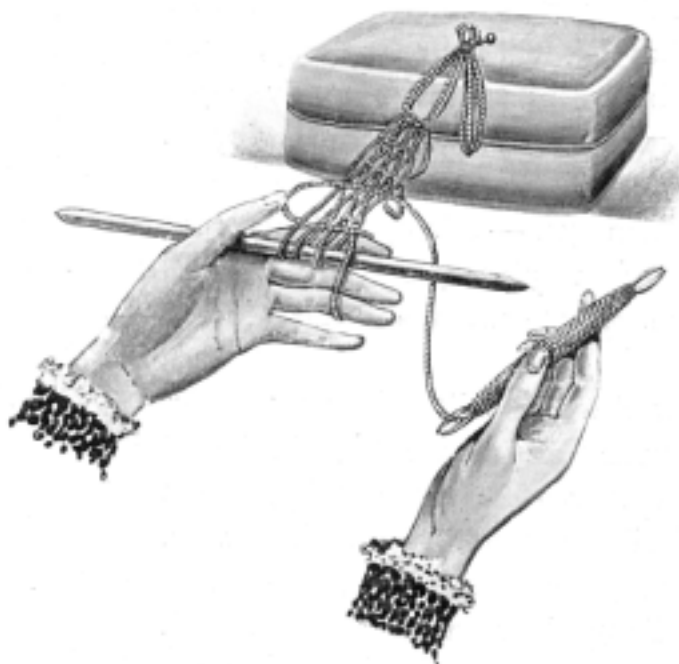


Illustration 75.—Cushion, showing how to attach the Netting.

and best method of obtaining a firm grip or hold on the netting ; and I recommend all beginners to use it in preference to any other device.

Cushion.—This is best when made of lead. A cover should be made of stout calico into which some sawdust must be put to form a stuffing on the top of the lead. When this has been securely sewn, an outer and more ornamental cover can be put

## *Terms and Materials*

on over the first one. The reason why it is better to have a heavy cushion is that it is to form a firm point of attachment to enable the worker to get the right amount of grip or pull when forming the knots (Illustration 75).

Illustration 76.—Foundation loop to be attached to a cushion. The foundation loop that can be attached to a cushion takes the place of the stirrup, and may be made of a strong piece of thread or fine string, which must be tied into



Illustration 76.—Foundation Loop attached to a Cushion.

a loop about four or six inches long, having a smaller loop at one end. Pin the larger loop very securely to the cushion and begin to make the net by tying your working thread to the small loop. The illustration will show more clearly what is meant.

Each loop or mesh in netting counts as one stitch; four knots are, however, required to form what is called the mesh or loop.

*To increase.*—This is done by netting two loops into one of

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the meshes of the preceding row. In the case of rectangular or diagonal netting these loops are always made at the end of each row. To make this quite clear, you must net to the end of a row and then work two stitches or loops into the *last* loop of the previous row.

*To decrease.*—Take the last two stitches together at the end of every row. This is done by netting the last stitch as far as to where you insert the needle into the loop, continue to put the needle through the last loop as well as through the loop immediately preceding the last. This reduces the netting by one stitch.\*

To determine the size required to copy a given piece of netting, it is sufficient to measure two sides of any loop or square hole of the netting—that is, the circumference measurement of the gauge should equal two sides of a square or hole of netting.

Another method may be employed. Pass a knitting needle into one of the loops, and if it passes through easily, leaving a small space all round between it and the sides of the loop, you will find that this will give you the sized gauge necessary. The former method is, however, more accurate.

\* I find it somewhat difficult to define clearly the terms used in netting, as a fashion has crept in of using the same word *mesh* to designate both the loop or mesh of the net itself and the form or gauge, be it wood, bone, or steel, upon which the mesh or loop is made.

To many, perhaps, this will not be productive of confusion, but for those workers who are hampered by a want of sufficient clearness in technical terminology I propose to employ the word *gauge* when speaking of the form on which each individual loop or mesh is made, and I shall make use of the word *mesh* or *loop* only when referring to each hole formed in the netting.

## TO JOIN A NEW THREAD TO THE KNOT

**W**HEN a join in the working thread is necessary, it should always be made at the side of the netting.

Use a weaver's knot in joining the thread. I will describe how this should be made.

Cut off the thread at about two inches from the net.

Take the new thread in your right hand and pass it *behind* the thread that you have just cut, so as to form an X. Hold both firmly between thumb and first finger. Now pass the new thread, at about three or four inches from the junction of the two crossed threads, round the left-hand point of thread



Illustration 77.—Weaver's Knot.

and behind it, bringing it towards you. Hold it down with the thumb, holding down also the point which is towards the left with the second or middle finger.

Now pass the loop thus formed over the right-hand point and pull up the new thread *firmly*, so as to form a tight knot.

Cut off the ends.

I will now describe how to do the stitch of netting, and wish the directions could be as simply and quickly given as by Milour Mignerak, who, in his "Discours du Lacis," gives the following instructions for making the squares and bands



## *Lacis*

of net. He says : "Begin a single stitch and increase on each side till the required size is obtained." If a long strip or border was to be made the netting was continued to its prescribed length and then finished off by reducing a stitch on each side till it was decreased to one.

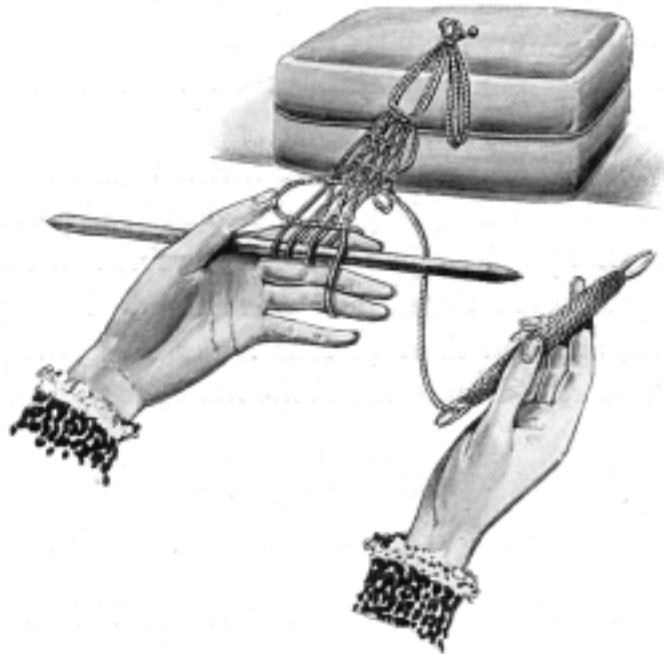


Illustration 78.—Netting. First Position of Hands.

In the olden days this was doubtless simple enough to people who lived in an atmosphere redolent of the sweet fruit of patient labour, but in these days it will hardly suffice without some further explanation.

We will suppose that the needle is threaded and the foundation loop fixed to the stirrup or cushion. Begin by tying the end of the thread with which the needle is filled to

## *To Join a New Thread*

the foundation loop. An ordinary double knot is all that is here needed.

Take the gauge in the left hand, holding it horizontally between the thumb and first finger. Keep the fingers stiff. Hold the needle in the right hand and place the gauge close up to the foundation loop. Put the thread over the gauge

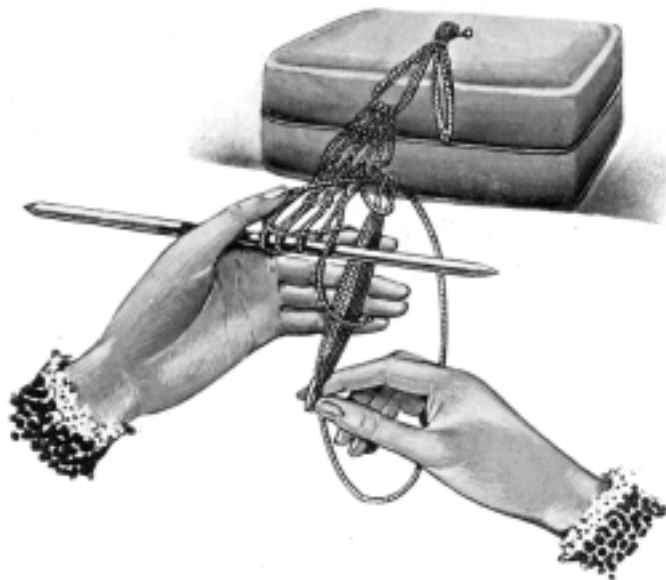


Illustration 79.—Second Position of Hands.

and *round* the three first fingers of the left hand, and *behind* the gauge and on the first finger. Hold it down with the thumb, then throw the thread round from left to right, and push the needle through the loop on the gauge and into the foundation loop. The thread that now in this way lies over the little finger, as well as over the others, must be held on the little finger while you release the other fingers—*i.e.* first,

## *Lacis*

second, and third, from the first throw-over of the thread. Draw up gradually, in the meanwhile keeping the netting tightly strained on the stirrup, then release the little finger and pull the thread tight, thus forming the knot. The gauge must be held quite close to the knot of the previous row.

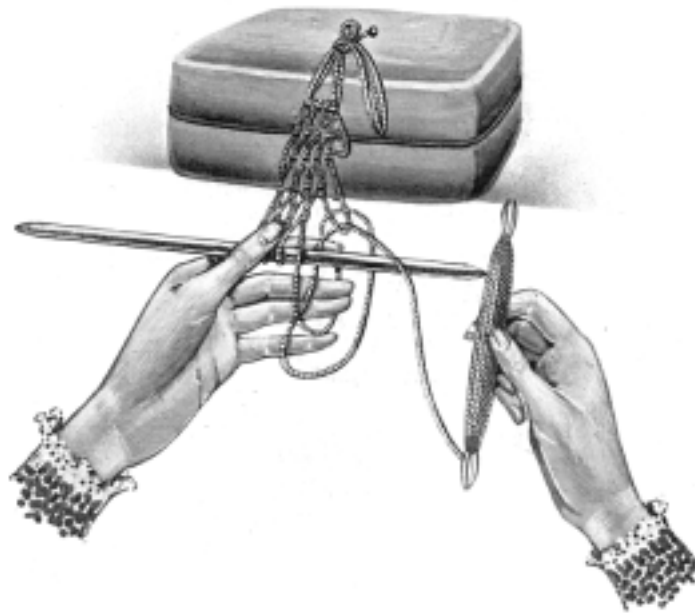


Illustration 80.—Third Position of Hands.

Of course at the beginning there is no previous row, but the foundation loop takes the place of it.

It is in this final drawing up that any difficulty occurs, but practice will soon make this quite easy. If attention be paid to keeping the netting taut on the stirrup, and to holding the gauge close to the last row of loops, regular netting will soon result. It is the tightness of each individual knot that ensures for netting such firmness and durability.

## *To Work a Square in Netting*

In Illustrations 78, 79, 80 the first, second, and third positions of the hands in netting are very clearly to be seen.

Each row of netting is formed in the same way and is always worked from left to right. When one row is completed, turn the netting over and work as in the former row. The first stitch of the next row is made by passing the needle through the loop last made.

The worker will soon find how much thread should be taken off the needle for working each stitch, but about twice the length of the needle is generally found to be enough. After the stitch has been thoroughly mastered the worker can begin to make a square—which is done as follows.

### TO WORK A SQUARE IN NETTING

ATTACH the thread from the needle to the foundation loop by tying it in an ordinary knot.

Work one stitch (*i.e.* netted loop) into the foundation loop. This is the first row. Take out the gauge. Turn the work.

Net two stitches or loops into this first row.

Draw out the gauge. Turn the work.

Net three stitches into this second row.

You continue thus to increase by netting two stitches in

## *Lacis*

the last loop of each row until you have netted the number of stitches desired for the width of the square.

This will, however, be one stitch more than the total number of requisite stitches.

To make this quite clear we will suppose that a net containing forty stitches is desired.

The last row of increasing before you begin to decrease should therefore consist of forty-one stitches.

Now do one row plain, neither increasing nor decreasing.

To form the other half of the square you must take two stitches together at the end of every row.

Continue so decreasing until only two loops remain on the gauge.

These two loops must be netted together, but before you finish the stitch draw out the gauge and continue to tighten the knot in the usual manner until you have drawn it up closely.

The drawing out of the gauge before you finally draw up the last loop is for the object of ensuring an equal regularity of this loop with all the others.

The square is now finished, with the exception of freeing it from the foundation cord, which you may either cut or untie and gently draw through your first loop.

## *Netting an Oblong*

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR NETTING AN OBLONG

To execute an oblong piece of netting you must proceed thus :

Begin by tying the thread to the foundation loop and net one loop, turn and continue to work each row as directed for the netted square, until you have the desired number of loops at the side ; but in this case you must have *two more* stitches in the row than are required for the width of the oblong.

Then net one row without any increasing. Now you must increase on one side and decrease on the other until the band is as long as is required. When as many squares can be counted down the increase side as are required for the length of the oblong, finish the last angle by decreasing at the end of every row.

It is a good plan to prevent confusion to mark the side upon which you increase with a coloured thread, and care must be taken that the loops on this side are not made smaller than the others ; this is a fault that is often made, but it must nevertheless be guarded against.

When netting a band it is not necessary to net one plain row before decreasing, as is the case when netting a square.

It is a good thing to stretch out quite evenly and squarely the piece of finished netting and then to slightly dampen it, afterwards laying a thin piece of muslin over it and pressing it with a moderately hot iron. The netting thus prepared will be found to be firmer, and the task of putting it in the frame will be greatly facilitated.

## *Lacis*

### DIRECTIONS FOR DARNING ON THE NETTED GROUND

Materials required:—Square or oblong light metal frames; squares or oblong bands of hand netting made from pure flax thread; pure white flax thread, sizes 2, 4, 5 for coarse work and 6 or 7 for fine work. Coloured silks and threads can also be used

#### DIRECTIONS

THE metal frames are at present best procured from abroad, or from someone who imports them. I see no reason, however, why we should not be able to make these, as their construction is very simple, and I hope our manufacturers will make them for us before very long.

They should be firm enough to allow of the net being tightly stretched upon them without bending or being pulled out of shape, and at the same time they must not be too heavy or the hand will be tired by holding a heavy frame during the process of working. The frames must be chosen to correspond in size and shape with the size and shape of the piece of work that is to be executed.

It will be found better to have the frames from three to five millimètres (equal to about one eighth of an inch) larger than the size of the netting, as the worker is then enabled to stretch the square of netting to its fullest extent, and thereby the perfect elasticity and flexibility of the “ground” is ensured. I see that some directions say that

## *Darning on Netted Ground*

the *net* should be left *loose* upon the frame. Anyone who has worked Lacis knows that the work can only be comfortably and well done when the ground is taut. Any slackness is a mistake, and the work when finished is liable to shrink when washed. At the same time, the worker must not *strain* the net until there is danger of the threads breaking. It should be tight and firm, but not strained to breaking point.

The frames are sold all ready for the work to be attached,

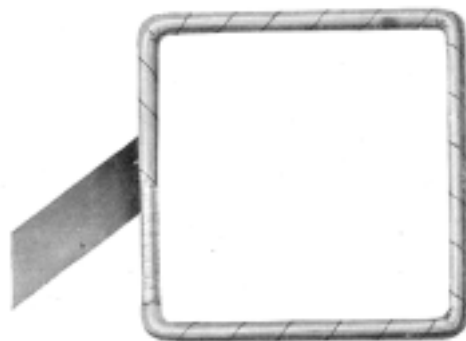


Illustration 81.—Preparing the Frame.

but, should it be necessary to cover them, proceed to do so in this way (see Illustration 81).

Fold some thin wadding firmly round the wire frame and over this wind some ribbon in a slanting direction—a narrow china or sarcenet ribbon, without an edge and about half-an-inch wide, is best. Secure the end to the wadding and proceed to wind the ribbon round and round the frame very evenly and smoothly, taking great care at the corners so that these shall lose none of their rectangular form, and see that the ribbon is quite tight at these corners. When the frame



## *Lacis*

is quite covered, sew the end of the ribbon very neatly to the point at which you began, keeping the join quite flat. Any inequality in the preparation of the frame will cause the netting to be strained unequally when applied to the frame,

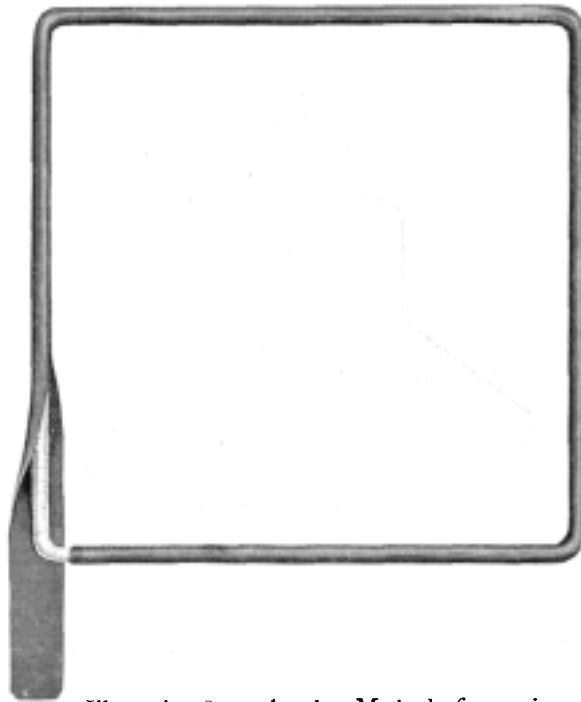


Illustration 82.—Another Method of preparing the Frame.

and this must be guarded against, as the beauty of the work consists in the perfect evenness and trueness of the net and of each individual mesh of which it is composed.

The frame (see Illustration 82) can be prepared in still another way by winding round and round the wire some “coton à repriser.” This is a soft cotton composed of many

## *Squares or Oblong Bands*

strands, and is very suitable for the purpose of covering the metal, as with a little care it can be made to lie quite smoothly. Now take a piece of china ribbon exactly the width of the metal wire of which the frame is made. Lay the ribbon under the wire and bring the two edges together. Sew these edges together neatly and evenly. This manner may perhaps be found easier than the one of winding the ribbon round and round the frame which I have before described.

The frames are of different sizes and shapes, and are measured by millimètres, as are also the squares or bands of netting.

### SQUARES OR OBLONG BANDS OF FILET (OR NET)

THESE can at present only be bought abroad. It is true that some are to be found in the London shops ; many, however, that I have examined, are not made of good thread, and the netting is carelessly executed.

I think some of our village industries might profitably undertake the making of these, for there is sure to be a great demand ; but they must understand that, unless equal, both in quality of thread and evenness of mesh and finished work, to those now bought abroad, there will be little or no demand for them.

## *Lacis*

The size of the mesh is measured in millimètres and the square of netting by the number of meshes it contains—I mean that a square of netting is made larger or smaller according to the size and number of the meshes of which it is composed. Of course the squares or the oblong bands must be chosen with regard to the size of the pattern that is to be worked. In this respect Lacis is very like *cross-stitch* work—indeed, some of the cross-stitch designs may be used, provided that the good *old* patterns are selected, and not those that suggest Berlin woolwork.

The *size* of the squares is of course further determined by the size of the thread employed in netting the square or band. I have laid so much stress in my article on *thread* upon the good quality of the flax as a factor in producing good work that I will only say now that these squares of netting must be of the best flax procurable, and care must be taken to see that the netting is evenly made, as it is in this that the beauty of the work consists. Not only must the square be true, but each individual mesh must be true also. Very often one finds that a mesh is unevenly made, or that some have been missed out altogether.

The squares of netting can be made of flax thread or of coloured silks or threads. White flax thread is, however, generally the most satisfactory and the one that was most usually employed in the olden times.

## *Thread for Darning*

### THREAD FOR DARNING

THE thread used for darning should correspond in size with that which has been used in making the netted squares.

The use of a fine thread is not to be recommended unless in exceptional cases ; a coarse thread both for the netting and darning produces a better effect. Too fine a thread makes the work appear poor and thin. In most of the specimens of old Lacis a coarse thread has been used, and even in the fine pieces the effect of the fineness has been produced by the small *gauge* employed in making the net and not through the medium of so fine a thread as is now often used in the modern work. These remarks are intended to apply only when a piece of Lacis suitable for house decoration is to be undertaken ; when the work is intended for dress trimmings the finer thread and a larger mesh would undoubtedly be more suitable, for here lightness and a lacelike effect are to be desired.

For fine church pieces a finer net was used, but these were evidently "tours de force," and the whole character of the work seems to be best preserved by the employment of a moderately coarse thread composing the netted ground and the darned design.

# *Lacis*

## NEEDLES

Long, Blunt-Pointed Needles, Harness (Size 3, 4 and upwards)

THE special needles generally used in working Lacis are long, blunt-pointed needles with small eyes, and of the same thickness throughout. They are sold both in England and France under the name of harness needles. The necessity for the blunt point is that the needle easily passes over and under the threads both of the netting and of those used for the darning without splitting them, and the length is also necessary when many stitches have to be darned consecutively. The needles are perhaps somewhat difficult to thread, especially when a thick thread is used, on account of the eye being somewhat small, and I think that a slightly larger eye could be made without in any way interfering with the passing of the thread. These needles are to be bought in any of the large shops, and can be had in different sizes ; Nos. 1 to 6 are those usually sold. No. 4 is perhaps the most useful size for all ordinary Lacis.

## DIRECTIONS FOR ATTACHING THE NET TO THE FRAME

THERE are several methods of attaching the net to the frame. The following will perhaps be found to be the most generally convenient.

## *Attachment to Frame*

Begin by cutting the skein of thread through once only. This will give the right length of thread that is convenient to work with. If shorter than this, more frequent joining is necessary, and if longer the worker will find that the thread becomes untwisted, and consequently looks thicker than the rest of the work. This effect is obviated by merely cutting the skein through once.

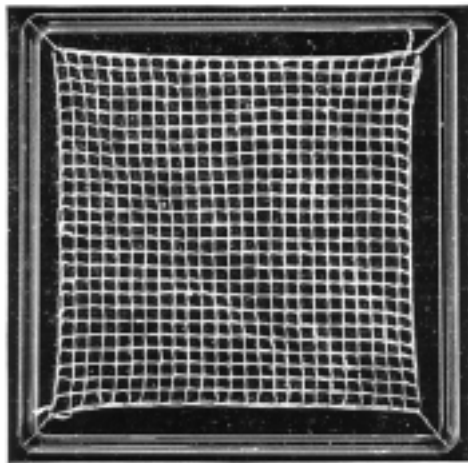


Illustration 83.—Net attached to Frame.

Take one strand, double it, and proceed to tie one of the corner meshes of the netting to one of the extreme corners of the metal frame ; tie it quite securely and cut off the thread neatly. Do exactly the same at each of the other three corners. Your frame will now look like this (see Illustration 83).

You will notice that the netting is quite evenly tied at about three millimètres or one eighth of an inch from the frame.

## *Lacis*

Now thread the needle and attach the thread firmly at one of the corners, and proceed to sew the sides of the net to the sides of the frame, passing the needle through each mesh at the side of the net (take both threads that form the edge of the net) and round the frame itself. Draw the thread up tightly and evenly and *gently* after each stitch. The reason for *gentleness* is to prevent the snapping of the thread which would result from too sudden a strain were the thread to be pulled sharply.

The stitches must be made to lie round the frame (do not sew into the ribbon) in a perfectly straight direction and not at all in a zigzag or slanting one. The object to be attained in this fixing of the net to the frame with so much care and precision is the perfect regularity and trueness of the netted square as a whole and also of each individual loop in the same square or piece of netting.

Without this care the work when finished will present a most unsightly aspect, and will be irregular and out of shape and the darning will be either too loose or too tight. Another point to be noted, and to which I have before referred, is the difficulty of darning upon a loose foundation.

Sew the other three sides to the frame in exactly the same way as I have described for the first side.

The pull on each stitch in sewing into the frame must be a regular and even one ; if pulled too suddenly or with a jerk there is danger of breaking either the thread you sew with (this is of course of very little importance) and there is also the danger of breaking the threads that form the sides of the netted square. This is to be carefully avoided, for the

## *Attachment to Frame*

strength of the edge will be impaired and the annoyance and delay that will result will be great.

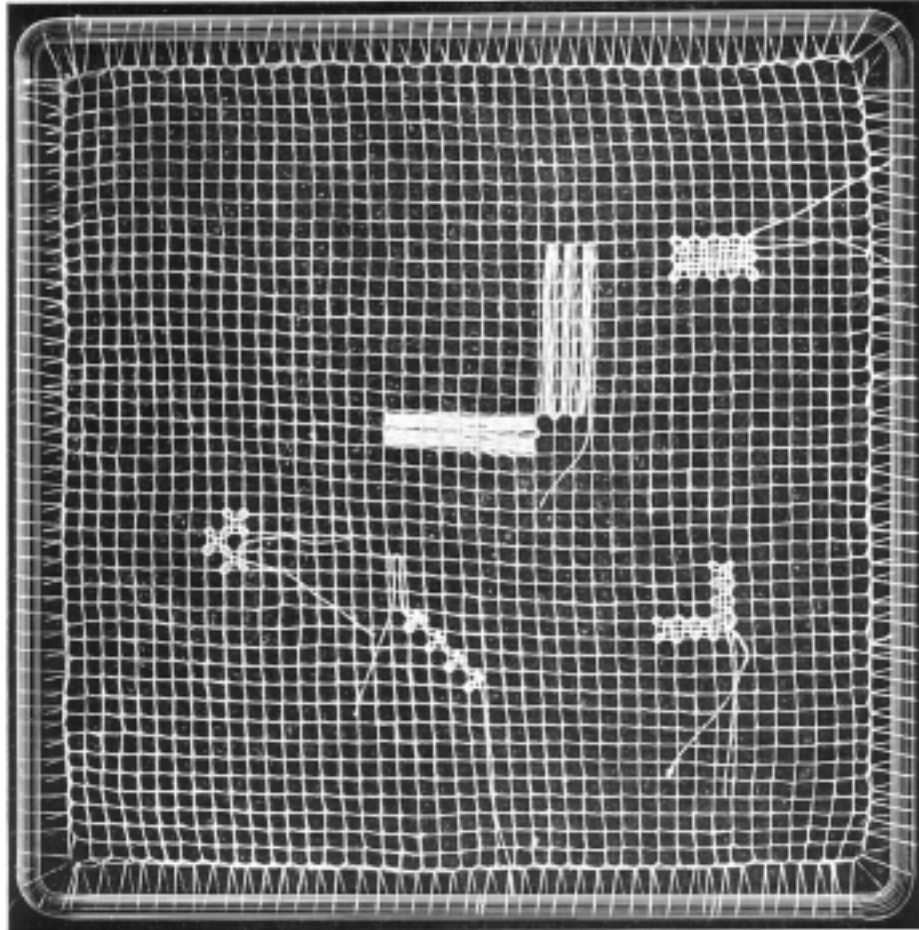


Illustration 84.—Frame with Net attached showing Stitches.

Be careful that the same distance is maintained from the sides as from the corners, *i.e.* three to five millimètres, one eighth of an inch (see Illustration 84).



## *Lacis*

Some workers prefer a frame having small rings attached inside each corner, to which they fix the corners of the net. The advantage of this arrangement is that one frame can be used for different-sized squares, but I do not recommend this form of frame, for I find that the darning is not so easily accomplished as on one prepared according to the first method.

I however strongly recommend the following method, for by its use the net is stretched in such a way that the darning is greatly facilitated and greater quickness can be attained than by the previous methods.

Attach the net at each corner of a frame very slightly larger than the net itself, and proceed to sew it closely to the frame at each of the four sides so that the edge of the netting touches the inside of the frame.

Keep the net well and evenly stretched in every sense.

Of course this method can only be adopted in cases where the pattern does not extend to the extreme edge of the net.

When the net has been attached in this way you will observe that the side which was uppermost during the process is on a slightly higher level in regard to the frame than the under side, and this higher side is the right side, and the darning must be done upon this, all knots being made to lie on the under side, where they will not be seen.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR WORKING POINT DE TOILE

POINT DE TOILE is formed by two stitches darned up and down or in a perpendicular direction and of two stitches

## *Point de Toile*

darned backwards and forwards or in a horizontal direction across the net.

The first rule for this stitch is, over one line of the net, under the next line of the net, both in going up and down, and in going across. The same rule is to be observed in turning the corners and also in passing into any of the so-called "little loops" that have been formed when the pattern has necessitated a *turn*.

This Point de Toile is to be seen in Illustration 84, towards the upper right hand of the frame.

If you will look again at Illustration 84 of the frame with the square of netting attached you will see three single stitches towards the left.

These show how these isolated stitches were often worked. This manner of working, though not invariably employed, still occurs very frequently; by its use greater neatness and solidity are obtained. You will observe how in the three stitches the corners are all perfectly surrounded, whereas in the four stitches that slant towards the right there is only one corner in each that is properly covered.

We will now begin to work the Point de Toile stitch from the accompanying diagram, as this will be an easy guide to the correct use of the larger diagrams that have been made for the different designs.

When a worker has thoroughly mastered this stitch, and the rule for passing from one loop to another loop, not much further difficulty will be experienced. Many instructions tell the worker to tie the thread to a line of the net. This is by no means necessary, and would only give the trouble of

## *Lacis*

untying it later on. The right plan is to leave about two inches of the thread on the needle hanging down underneath the net. In this position it will not become entangled with the rest of the working thread, and when you have finished the design, and have returned to the point whence you started, this end must be tied to the thread that is on the needle. In many of the old pieces no knots are to be found, the thread being merely darned in and out for a short distance.

Hold the frame lightly and easily in the left hand and allow it to rest between the three first fingers and the thumb. By keeping the fingers slightly bent, you will find that the frame is easily supported and that you can turn it, to the right or left or up and down, when the pattern necessitates a change in the direction of the thread.

This example of Point de Toile shows that four stitches have to be worked perpendicularly and four stitches horizontally.

Count as in any cross-stitch pattern the position of the first stitch, so many from the side, so many from the bottom of the net. It is generally best to begin at the right-hand side, although I have found some pieces of old Lacis that have been begun at the left-hand side. The first *pass* of the needle should be *over* a line of the net, and not *under*.

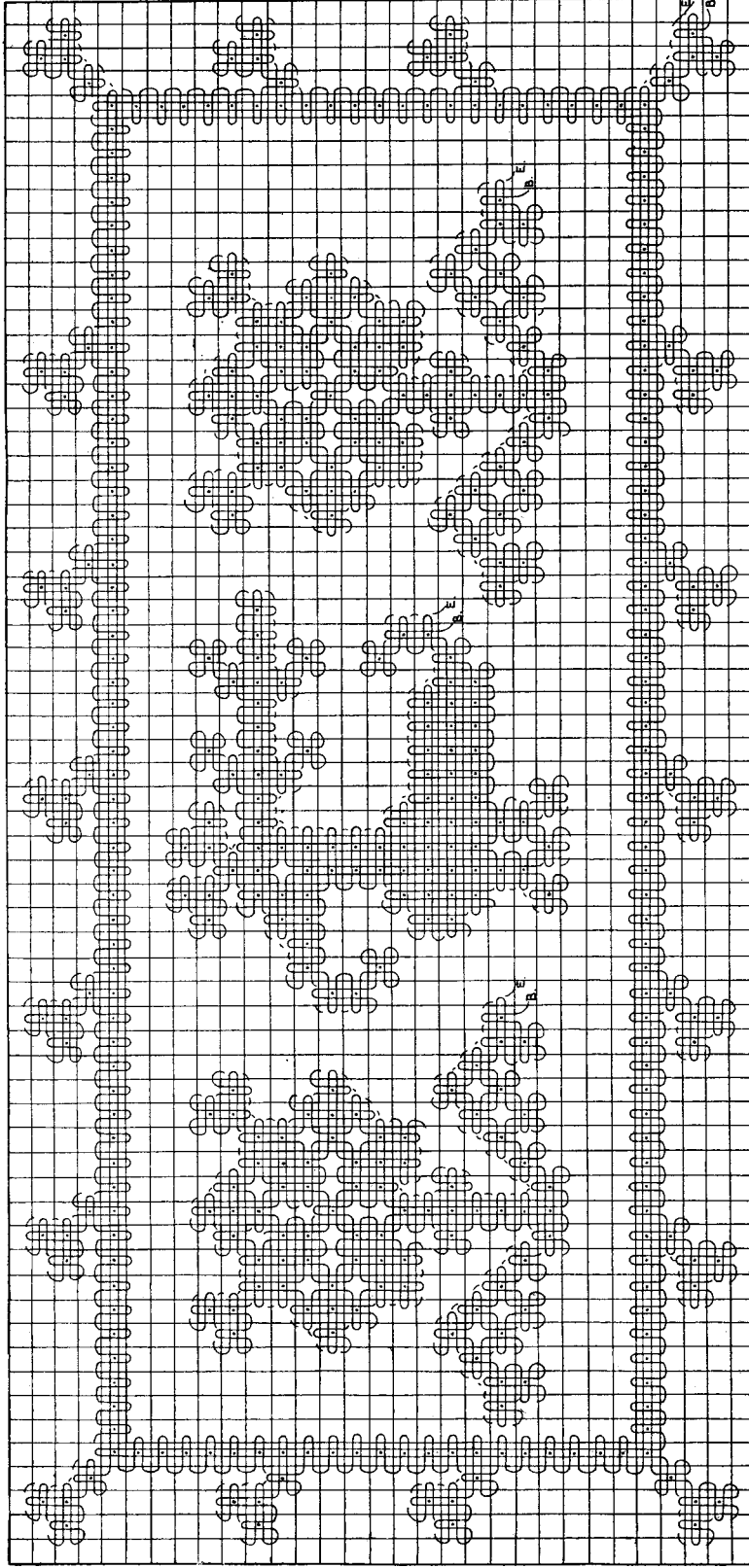
To save a very long description we will arrange a pattern of four stitches going up and down and four stitches going across. You will notice that the diagram is composed of six squares in length and six squares in width.

The horizontal lines that represent those of the netting



Illustration 86.

DIAGRAM 1.



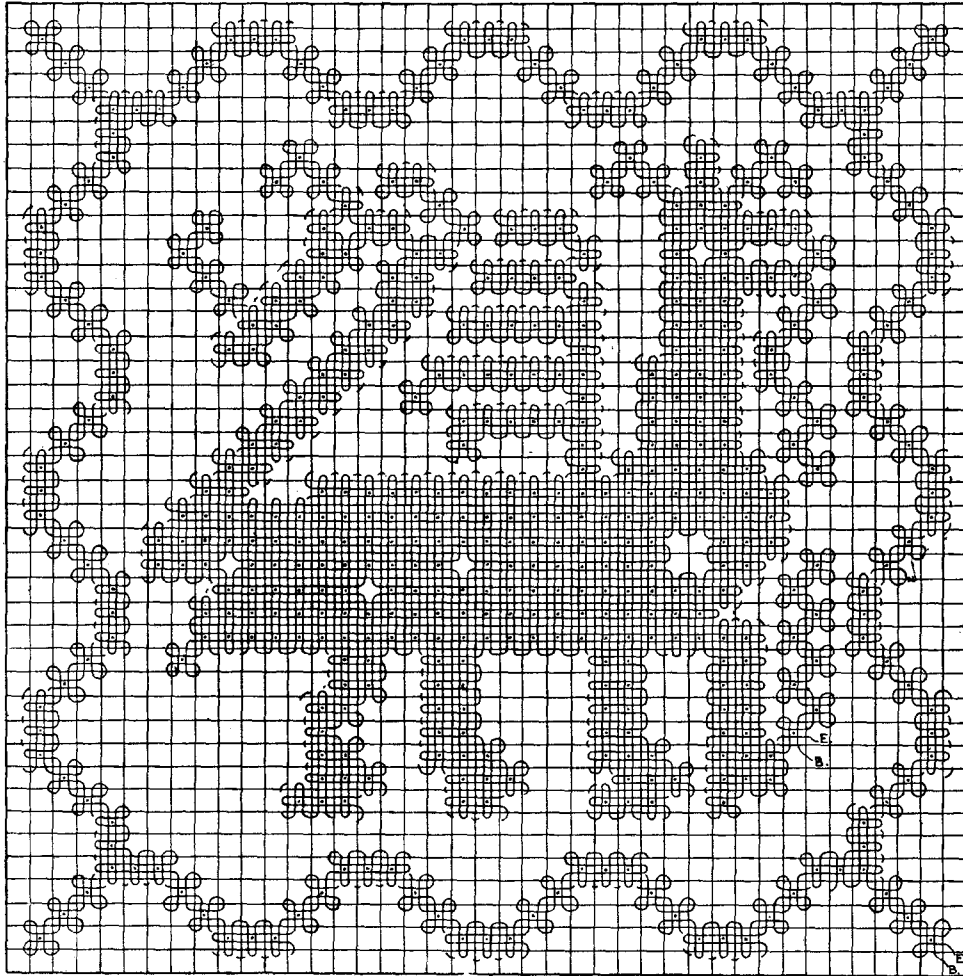
Thirty-one Holes of Net in depth will be required for this Border. The Number of Holes in length is optional, as the Pattern can be repeated.

## *Point de Toile*

out, still keep the frame in the same position as directed

Illustration 87.

DIAGRAM 2



39 × 39 Mailes: Stitches. A Net of 41 Holes × 41 will be required for this Pattern.

above, point the needle towards you and put it *under* line 5 ;  
*over* line 4 ; *under* line 3 ; *over* line 2 ; and *under* line 1.

## *Lacis*

Draw out the needle. Now point the needle upwards and pass it *over* B, and *under* line 1 of the hole on the left of those already partly darned ; draw it out, and pointing the needle towards you pass it *under* line 2 and *over* line 1. Draw out the needle and now pass it *under* line C, and continue in this way until you have finally passed it *under* line E.

You are now going to form the corner, and to do this comfortably it is better to turn the frame from right to left, still holding it between the fingers and thumb, over which it should move quite easily. The right side will thus be at the bottom. Now pass over line 1 (this is of course the line 1 at left—see diagram) and with the needle still pointing towards you pass *under* line E, and alternately over and under the remaining threads until you arrive at line 1 on the right. When at this point turn the frame back again to the first position—pass *over* line A, and darn back (over and under) to line 1—that is, at the left.

Now pass *under* line 2 (at left), *over* E, and into the loop formed by your first lines of darning. The needle must be passed into this loop from underneath and drawn out and then passed *under* line D ; draw it out, and this time pass it into the next loop from above. Pass over the following lines and into the loops in the same way until you reach line A. Now continue darning backwards and forwards until you have finished the four perpendicular stitches. Then pass the needle *over* line B, and into the top loop from underneath and finish the loops of the four stitches exactly as you did the others, being very careful to go over and under alternately. Lastly, pass the needle *under* line A, where you will find the

## *Weaver's Knot*

end of the thread that was left there at the commencement. Tie these two ends together firmly and neatly underneath the net. If they are properly tied the knot should be imperceptible.

This stitch should be practised until quickness and perfect regularity of darning is attained ; the threads must neither be too loose nor too tight, and in no way must they drag upon the net.

Should the thread become twisted in the process of working it can be untwisted by letting the needle hang down, when the thread will slowly untwist.

The worker must endeavour to pass the needle over and under the lines without taking out the needle more than is absolutely necessary ; when the needle is taken out too often the thread becomes untwisted, and consequently appears thicker than the rest, thus spoiling the evenness which all good Lacis should possess.

When it becomes necessary to join a new thread proceed to do so in the following manner.

### TO MAKE A WEAVER'S KNOT IN FASTENING ON A NEW THREAD WHILE WORKING

LEAVE about four inches of the working thread. After unthreading your needle hold this thread in your left hand between the thumb and first finger.

Take a new thread and place one end of it *behind* the



## *Lacis*

working thread so as to form an X. Hold both firmly between thumb and first finger. Now pass the new thread, at about three or four inches from the junction of the two crossed threads, round the left-hand point of thread and behind it, bringing it towards you. Hold it down with the thumb, holding down also the point which is towards the left with the second or middle finger. Now pass the loop thus formed over the right-hand point, and pull up the new thread *firmly* so as to form a tight knot. Cut off the ends. Thread your needle with your new thread, or you may do this before you make the knot. Practice will soon enable you to make the join at a place where it will not show.

The quick turning of the frame is of much advantage, for a great saving of time can be effected in this way, and the darning itself can be considerably facilitated by a slight movement of the fingers that support the net. By a very slight upward and downward pressure the needle will be found to *darn* in and out of the threads much more easily than if the frame is held rigidly in the hand.

I should like workers to notice the difference in the appearance of the darning when the loops are merely slung on, and when they are held in position by the passing in and out of what I will call the returning thread.

An increase in neatness is apparent, and the work has a much more finished look, and the strength also is thereby undoubtedly increased. There is still another point in its favour, and this is the ease with which the worker is enabled to conduct her thread from one part of the design to another without being obliged to encroach upon the clear ground.

## *Weaver's Knot*

Some workers, through ignorance in working, and not being able to "faire suivre le fil," as French workers describe this way of executing the designs, twist their thread round some of the lines of netting that should be left clear, or they pass more than once into loops, thereby producing a thicker effect in some places than in others.

In learning to work out a design in Lacis by any of the ordinary methods, the great difficulty undoubtedly consists in so conducting the thread that all portions should be worked and the ground left clear and without any thread encroaching upon it.

To carry the thread from one part of the design to another without leaving portions unworked, or without passing several times into the same loops, presents almost insuperable difficulties to the novice. This is because teachers have not discovered the secret of this old work, and many are the ways of teaching it, all more or less inaccurate. I hope that these diagrams will enable people to appreciate the ingenuity and cleverness of the old designers, who most certainly never worked in any careless and haphazard way. Each pattern was designed with a view to the perfect carrying of the thread, and not, as we are told to-day, without any rule.

The thread is carried easily and naturally through the many convolutions of the design, the ground is left intact, and the worker knows without any trouble the portions that must be left unfinished until the end.

The passing into the loops already formed by the turn in each line of darning has a twofold object, the first that of facilitating the passing of the thread and also that of giving

## *Lacis*

solidity to portions that would be left without this support, a support which is most necessary in producing a perfect Lacis.

Much of the ready-made modern Lacis is without this, and many of the corners are left unguarded, rendering it useless when it has been washed. The old Lacis was never so made, and this is one of the reasons for its very great firmness, and for the fact that the designs stand out so clearly from the ground. If you examine any of the old pieces you will see that the darning remains intact and perfect, each line and corner being neither loose nor dragged, and all are carefully surrounded.

It is true that mistakes are often to be found in specimens of old work, but we must however remember that each age has had its careless workers.

In working from some of the diagrams it will be found that the needle must occasionally pass under or over two or even three threads. This is necessary for the correct working out of the designs, because according to the old Mediæval method a thread has sometimes to be darned across one or more meshes of the netting without at once being darned back again. Workers should therefore be very careful to see that the rule for "over and under" be rigidly adhered to in the case of the lines of the *netting* itself, and with a little practice they will find that they will very soon be able to keep the rest of the darning regular.

I wish to call my readers' attention to the necessity of choosing a suitable fabric to serve as borderings to the finished work, so that they may evade the grave fault so apparent in

## *Point de Reprise*

modern work of associating a machine-made lace or trimming with an example of a lace made long before lacemaking machines were invented. The effect is entirely incongruous and in the very worst taste.

I should also like to suggest that a hand-woven in contradistinction to a machine-made material be employed as a mounting, in keeping with the strong characteristics of *Lacis*.

### POINT DE REPRISE

THE *Point de Reprise* is a much less complicated stitch than the *Point de Toile*, and the execution of it is very much more rapid, as it consists only of half the *Point de Toile* stitch and there is no crossing of the threads. There are also no loops that need be passed into. The stitch can be used both in a horizontal and perpendicular direction, and examples of so working it in conjunction with the *Point de Toile* are to be seen in much of the old work. Its employment has the effect of producing light and shade, this being due to the different colour assumed by the thread on account of the light showing *upon* the longer length of thread instead of shining *through* the interstices of the closer darning of the *Point de Toile*.

Very little description is necessary ; a careful examination of the illustration will, I think, enable anyone to work this without any further instruction.

A slightly thicker thread can be used for the *Point de Reprise*, so as to obviate the necessity of passing backwards and forwards so often.

## *Lacis*

This stitch is to be seen on Illustration 84, in the centre of the frame.

Although in my Preface I say that with the help of the diagrams no lessons are necessary, I should strongly advise inexperienced workers to have one or two lessons merely to learn the technique of preparing the frames and darning upon the net when framed. Those who are adepts in the other branches of needlework should experience no difficulty in learning Lacis from the instructions and diagrams.

I do not propose to enter into a description in this first series of other forms of Lacis. I hope, however, should workers be sufficiently interested, to bring out later on designs that are less well known, and that are full of charm and variety.

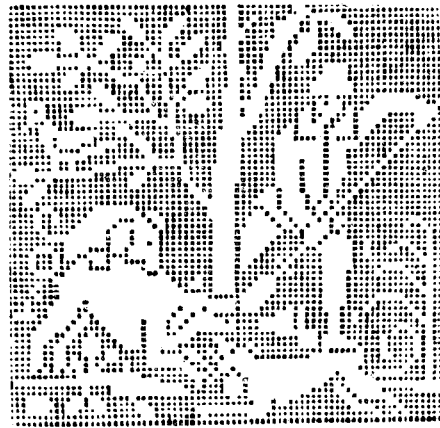


Illustration 88.—The Boar Hunt, from an old Pattern Book.

FINIS

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