

NO. 6 PART OF A CURTAIN (?) OR TABLIER OF NEEDLEPOINT.

PUNTO TAGLIATO A FOLIAMI. ROSE POINT. VENETIAN. 17TH CENT.

The property of the Duke of Devonshire.

POINT DE VENISE A RÉSEAU.

ITALIAN.

PHOTOGRAPH NO. VII.



NO other specimen of this class of Needlepoint Lace—point de Venise à réseau—was comparable for fine design and workmanship with this excellently preserved piece, belonging to Monsieur Dupont Auberville. According to the entry in his catalogue, it appears that he thinks that this work may have been executed at Burano, an island adjacent to Venice. He calls it “Point de Venise à réseau : Fabrique de Burano.” The ordinary and authenticated punto di Burano is of a much coarser character than this fine lace, while the designs are petty imitations of Alençon Lace, with which the Burano Lace was no doubt intended to compete. But Venice possessed secrets in the art of point lace making, which neither the diplomacy of Colbert’s agents nor French money could transport even to Alençon. It therefore would seem to be a conjecture that an outlying island hitherto known to have produced somewhat archaic needlepoint lace of coarse thread, should have been able to outstrip Venice, the world-famed lace-making centre, both in graceful conventional design and in perfection of workmanship. As Monsieur Dupont seems to give us a choice of name, we prefer to call this “Point de Venise à réseau” only, of which a description is given at page 6 of the Introduction.

This point lace was undoubtedly the parent of the fine point d’Alençon, as well as of the early Brussels needlepoint. But Alençon never produced such delicate work, although its *gimp* and *modes* are very close imitations of those in the Venetian point à réseau. And Brussels could not reach the high standard of workmanship either, being forced to content herself with a frequent and almost characteristic use of *modes* more open than those fine and close *modes* belonging to the Venetian point à réseau.

The design of this specimen is flat and purely conventional ; it seems to have some remote relationship to the more massive Italian pillow-lace (see Photograph XVI.A.), made about the same time, while the slight *cordonnnet* plays so unimportant a part in the general effect as to lead one to think that the old Valenciennes and Mechlin lace-workers may have received some inspiration from this kind of lace. In the centre is the oldest form of the *réseau rosacé*, a peculiarity of a species of Alençon Lace, which has been called Argentella (see page 8). The general appearance of the design in question would seem to give the work a date somewhere about 1650, that is, at the time when the fine point laces of Venice, rose point, raised point, &c., were largely in circulation. The French were diligent under the tuition of the Venetian workers in their attempts to imitate, and were to a considerable extent successful. Upon this, the skill and invention of those Venetians who remained at home to sustain their lace reputation were sorely taxed, and they perfected their *point à réseau*. Here their labours as the *principes* amongst art lace-workers culminated. As success attended the results of the lace establishment at Alençon, so the Venetian trade and art declined, and the new Alençon point coming into existence, developed, and finally supplanted its prototype. Hence it is that the “point de Venise à réseau,” having possibly had but a short existence, soon died out, and the comparatively few specimens of it have from year to year become so rare, that when a lucky collector comes across a pièce of it, he is puzzled, and the only way out of his difficulty in assigning to it a name, is to call it old “Brussels point,” which it much resembles. The Brussels Needlepoint Lace, however, lacks the precision and extreme niceness of execution. The *cordonnnet* in the Brussels straggles, and the *modes* are much fewer in *number*. The style of the design is more floral and less conventional. It is, however, a crucial test of acquaintance with lace, to say what is old “Brussels point,” and what “Venetian point à réseau.” The earliest Brussels needlepoint, almost contemporary with the Venetian, is a purely imitative, though rare, lace ; the design and quality of such work scarcely qualified it to be represented amongst the assemblage of specimens here shown.



NO. 7. PIECE OF NEEDLEPOINT LACE.
POINT DE VENISE A RESEAU. ABOUT 1650.
The property of Monsieur Dupont-Auberville.



POINT DE VENISE A BRIDES.

ITALIAN.

PHOTOGRAPH No. VIII.



BE LONGING to Mrs. Alfred Morrison is a handsome flounce of Venetian design and workmanship, of which this plate shows a portion. It is of the late seventeenth century, made at the time when the newly imported lace-workers at Alençon were the formidable competitors of their Italian brethren, who in vain sought to prevent the point-lace reputation of their country from being eclipsed by that of Alençon, as it ultimately was.

Regarding the work as a design, and comparing it with lace designs of the period executed in France, the conventionality of the ornament and the absence of the use of actual natural forms are apparent. For style, the extravagant working together of forms, almost without thought as to the creation of a graceful and, one may say, comprehensible unity, gives the work a position in the Rococo class of design. The pendent spirals on each side of the fantastic pine-apple seem to have no connection with the rich canopy which overhangs it. They are merely appendages to unwieldy masses of decoration which develop into straying forms whose only use is to cover the surface. Perhaps this design should be judged of as one for surface decoration. But even in this respect it seems to have faults which err against those principles of surface decoration given to us by the works of Oriental artists, who have won a supreme position as surface decorators. The variety of the grounds, the modelling and emphasizing of certain quasi-leaves and flowers, are at complete variance with the principles of those Oriental artists, whose decorations of *surfaces* are, when necessary, rich, always decorous, and consistent. In spite, however, of the numerous adverse criticisms it would be possible to pass upon the design of this flounce, its workmanship is unimpeachable. Throughout it abounds in the daintiest devices of point lace-work. The *modes* especially mark its Venetian origin. Little bunches of the well-known hexagonal device—but essentially of the contemporary Venetian *point à réseau* description—which sprout from the horns of plenty on each side of the stalk of the pine-apple—the square meshes of the spotted *réseau* used as a filling-in for the awkward-shaped pieces above the spiral pendants—the minute but marked and regular open-worked fibres to the foliations above and below the pine-apple—with other similar peculiarities, decide one's opinion that this work is Venetian. Some authorities have assumed that such work as this, in which a hexagonal *bride* ground is used, must therefore belong to the so-called Argentan class. The workmanship of these Venetian hexagonal *brides*, apart from the little loops along their edges—called *picots*—is of a less accurate and crisp appearance than that of those made for the so-called Argentan Lace, and a reference to Photograph IX. will at once show this.

This specimen is most interesting and well worth careful study.





No. 8.

PIECE OF NEEDLEPOINT LACE WITH GROUND OF HEXAGONAL *BRIDES-A-PICOTS*.

VENETIAN. ABOUT 1670-80.

The property of Mrs. Alfred Morrison.



POINT DE FRANCE, ALENÇON.

FRENCH.

PHOTOGRAPH IX.



WHEN describing the specimen shown in Photograph VIII., reference was made to the general likeness which exists between Point de Venise of that class, and Point de France, as exemplified by the Photograph before us, taken by permission of Mrs. Austen, who owns this valuable flounce of lace.

The design may be first considered : on the whole, it is more bound together than that of the Point de Venise flounce, but naturalistic imitations of flowers, birds, vases and other material objects are freely interspersed with the ornamental portions. Those last named are essentially of the French Rococo period, late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. The heterogeneous character of the design, and the indiscriminate introductions of flowers of all sizes and scales, of birds, of a hymeneal torch crossing a Cupid's bow, of growing and expanding ornaments, which spring from anywhere, of a vase, of a fanciful palm stump, satisfactorily convinces one of its French origin. But the treatment of the workmanship differs from that of the Venetian point (Photograph VIII.) in the important feature of the raised and continuous outlines to the petals of the flowers, the leaves, and the ornamental forms throughout. This outlining is a speciality of Point d'Alençon. Many of the smaller *modes* are also peculiar to Alençon lace. The open and well-defined ground of hexagons upon which are figured the vase and the palm stump, is a speciality of so-called Point d'Argentan, each side of a single hexagon being composed of a number of microscopical button-hole stitches. Above and below the hexagonally grounded portions, the ground-work consists of what is termed *réseau rosacé*. This is similar to the ground-work of Photograph X. A, called Argentella, a lace considered by some to be of Genoese origin. It is also similar to the ground of No. XIII. A, which, however, is Point d'Alençon.

Thus in this large specimen the peculiarities of Point d'Alençon, so-called Point d'Argentan, and the so-called Genoese Point, "Argentella," are combined to produce a French design.

The supposition that parts of this work might have been done in localities of which two were separated by long distances the one from the other, at a time when there were no railways, and when keen rivalry existed between such localities, can receive no consideration : the work was evidently made entirely at the one centre, and that centre was Alençon, where were employed the Venetian workmen imported by Colbert the Minister of Louis XIV., who conferred the title of "Point de France" upon this mixture of lace devices, in the production of which the ingenuity of skilled lace-workers was highly taxed.



No. 9. PORTION OF A NEEDLEPOINT LACE FLOUNCE.

A FINE KIND OF POINT D'ALENÇON CALLED POINT DE FRANCE AND POINT D'ARGENTAN. LATE 17TH CENTURY.

The property of Mrs. Anster.



(A) ARGENTELLA LAPPET. (B) VALENCIENNES
LAPPET. (C) POINT D'ALENÇON.

FRENCH.

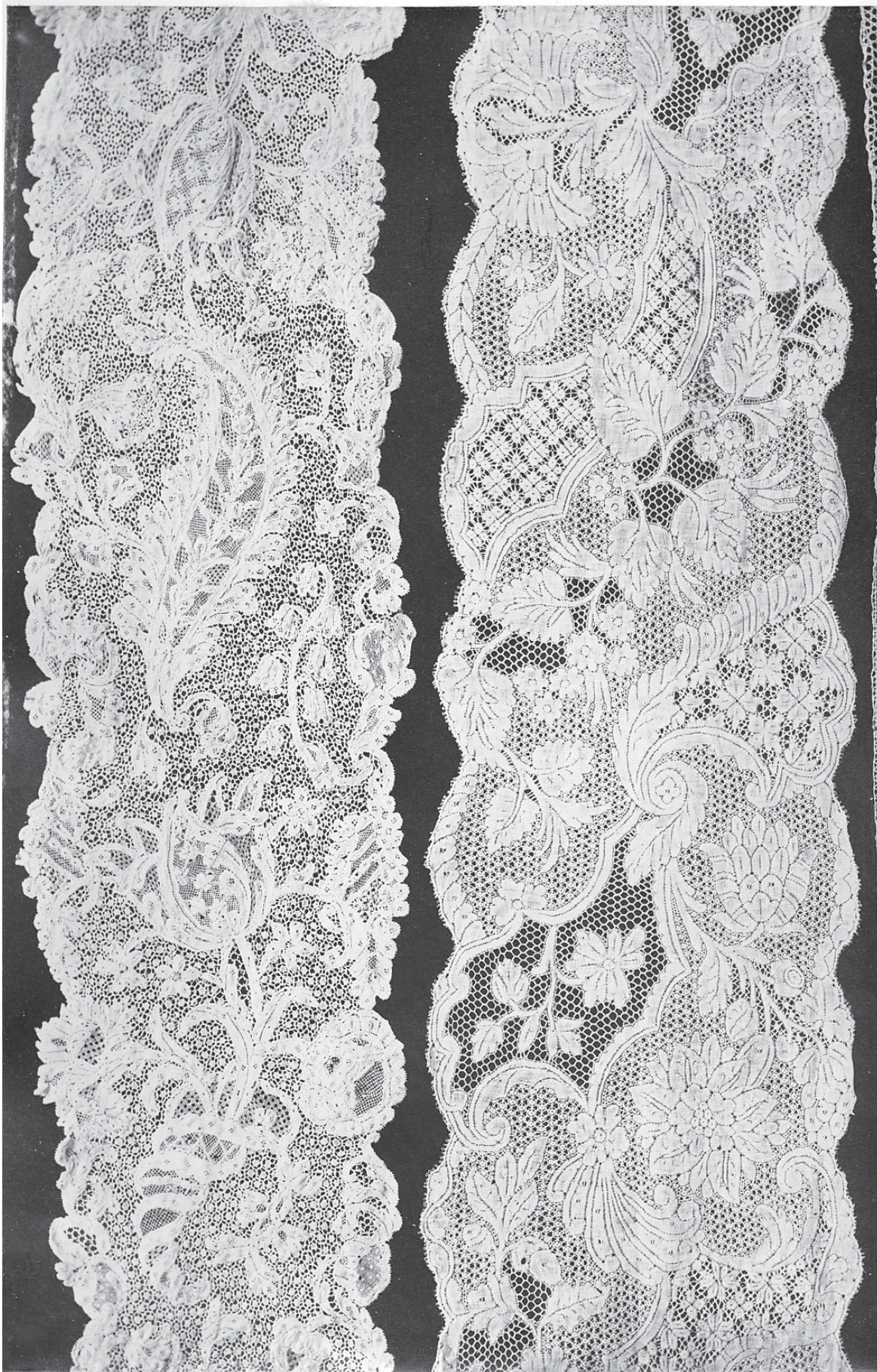
PHOTOGRAPH No. X,



THESE three specimens were brought into juxtaposition for the purpose of demonstrating the differences of texture between needlepoint and pillow laces (see page 4). In the centre, we have an example of Valenciennes lace, the design of which seems to have been derived from some Mechlin lappet. It is a fine piece of pillow lace, and is rare. (See Photographs XI. B and C, and description.)

The Argentella lace is sometimes said to be of Genoese origin. Its technicalities resemble those of the delicate and latest Venetian laces; but the profuse use of the *réseau rosacé* gives the idea of Point de France (Alençon—see Photograph No. IX). It seems probable that this Argentella lace dates with the earliest productions of the Venetians, who were brought over to work at Alençon. Whilst an adherence to conventionality of design is maintained, there are indications in specimen X. A, of a desire to meet the French taste by imparting to the conventional tulips and leaves a naturalistic treatment. The *rosacé* device quickly became popular with the French, since one finds so many variations of this theme occurring in the rich and early class of Alençon lace. The *cordonnnet* of the specimen before us is, like that of the Alençon laces, of button-hole stitch. Examples of a stout thread *cordonnnet*, an offspring of the slighter thread always used in the Point de Venise à *réseau*, is sometimes to be found in this Argentella lace. This kind of work may perhaps have been made in Italy (see XIII. B and description), but the name would appear to be an Italianized rendering of *Argentan*; and it is just as likely as not that some of the Venetians working as soon at Argentan as others were at Alençon, made the Argentella lace. We have already referred to the period that elapsed before Colbert had the means of establishing on its largest basis the factory of Alençon lace (see page 8), and this would help to account for the *Argentan* work, called Argentella, dating from the same time as that of the Alençon; moreover, the precise period of the founding of a lace establishment at Argentan is not known. The works distinguished generally as Point d'Argentan and Point d'Alençon have many characteristics in common, which we think precludes them from being separated and classed differently.

The strip C is another variety of Alençon lace. In it should be noticed the extreme delicacy of the *picots* upon the edge of the little ornamental sprays, as well as the fine *réseau* filling in along the border, which unfortunately has not been photographed so distinctly as might be desired. The date of the strip is about 1690 to 1700, although some persons consider it to be of the Louis XIII. period—an impossible time for Alençon, however, since that manufacture was not *begun* until the reign of Louis XIV.



No. 10a.

PART OF A LAPPET OF NEEDLEPOINT LACE.

POINT D'ALENÇON. LATE 17TH CENTURY.

The property of Mrs. MacCallum.

No. 10b.

PART OF A LAPPET OF PILLOW LACE.

VALENCIENNES. EARLY 18TH CENTURY.

The property of Mrs. MacCallum.

No. 10c.

STRIP OF NEEDLEPOINT LACE.

POINT D'ALENÇON. FRENCH. ABOUT 1660-70.

The property of Mrs. Frank Morrison.



(B and c) VALENCIENNES PILLOW LACE. FRENCH.

(A) POINT DE VENISE A RÉSEAU. ITALIAN.

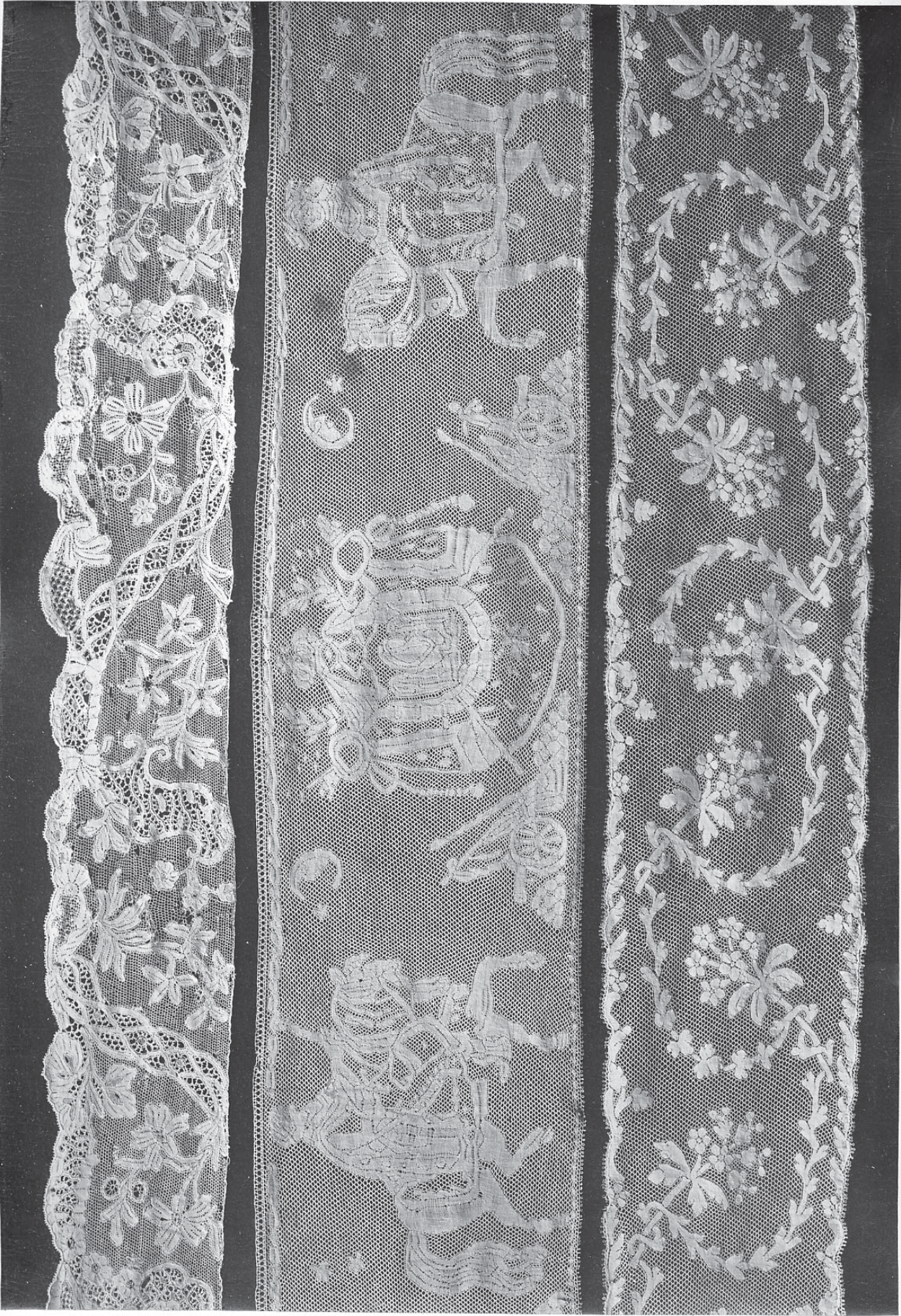
PHOTOGRAPH No. XI.



VALENCIENNES is without question the purest of pillow laces. Throughout, but one quality of thread is used. Any effect of pattern depends solely upon the ability of the lace-maker, who may not resort to those aids which the employment of variously sized threads would supply. Valenciennes can inevitably be detected, no matter what the design may be, whether founded on a suggestion from Mechlin, from Brussels, or from Alençon, by the absence of a *cordonnnet*. Some rare experimental specimens were made by the Valenciennes workers, in which an occasional *cordonnnet* is introduced, but such works are so exceptional that little apprehension need be entertained of their confusing lace amateurs. A magnifying glass quickly rights matters and sets doubts at rest. The elaborate twistings in the mesh of the *réseau* never fail to assert themselves and to re-assure the inquirer. The two examples B and c here given come from Mons. Dupont's Collection; B is of comparatively late date. It was made for the Emperor Napoleon I., whose portrait as a species of equestrian Cæsar faces that of the Empress Josephine, while the Imperial Arms, flanked at the base by cannons and flags, appear between the two. c, the central portion of a lappet, is of earlier make, and dates from the early eighteenth century. As an unaffected and pleasing design the earlier specimen is best. The later piece is a kind of *fantasia*, interesting, but not to be imitated as a design.

The small strip A will be readily recognized as Point de Venise à réseau (see page 6), made after a design invented, most likely, to suit the taste of the Northern Europeans who, as we have remarked, worked similar lace at Brussels.

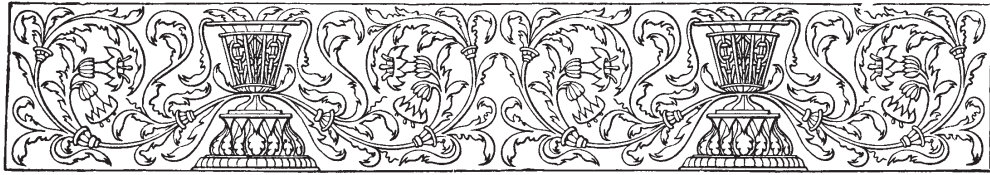




No. 11 c.
PART OF A LAPPET OF PILLOW LACE.
VALENCIENNES. EARLY 18TH CENTURY.
The property of Monsieur Dupont-Auberville.

No. 11 b.
PIECE OF PILLOW LACE.
VALENCIENNES. EARLY 19TH CENTURY.
The property of Monsieur Dupont-Auberville.

No. 11 a.
STRIP OF NEEDLEPOINT LACE.
POINT DE VENISE A RESEAU. 17TH CENTURY.
The property of Monsieur Dupont-Auberville.



(A) POINT D'ALENÇON. FRENCH. (B) MECHLIN. FLEMISH.
(c) POINT DE VENISE A RÉSEAU. ITALIAN.

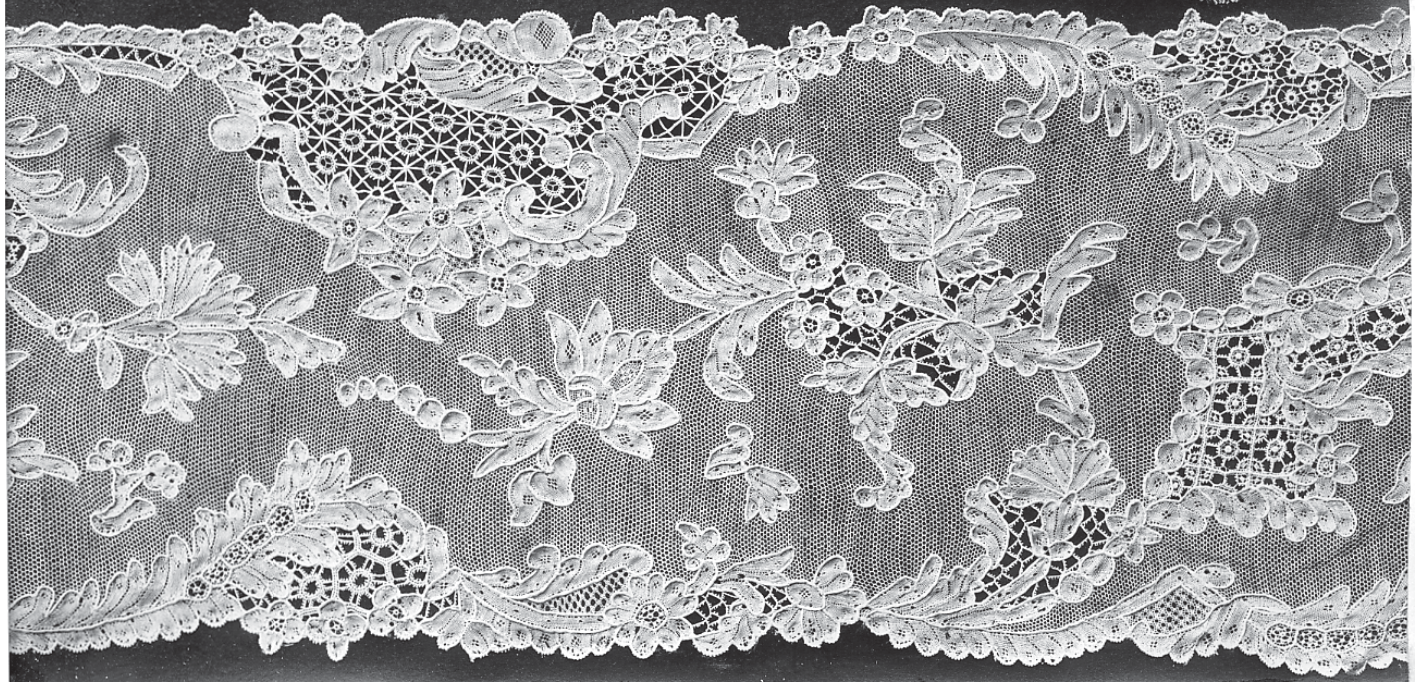
PHOTOGRAPH No. XII.



UPON this plate are represented three various kinds of lace, (A) Point d'Alençon, (B) Mechlin Lace (pillow), and (c) Point de Venise à réseau. Of the characteristics of A and C we have already spoken: see pages 6, 7, and 8. But Mechlin lace, described at page 11, may claim to have a further consideration. The use of the *cordonnnet* around the ornamental portions in the present example is well typified. The design bears strong evidences of an Italian origin, especially as respects the cupids and *modes*. Its style is of late seventeenth-century, a time prior to that when an imitation in pillow lace of Alençon devices came into vogue. Such imitations were almost as commonly wrought by the Lille pillow-lace workers as the Mechlin. A distinctive mark of the Lille pillow lace compared with Mechlin is the lightness of the *réseau*, the meshes of which are rounder. By means of a magnifying glass the horizontal sides of the Mechlin mesh will be seen to be thick, and are composed of more threads than are used in the Lille mesh. Lille may be held to be an offspring of Mechlin.

Beyond calling attention to the beauty of the other specimens, which figure one on each side of the Mechlin strip, we do not propose to say anything.





No. 12A. PART OF A LAPPET OF NEEDLEPOINT LACE.

POINT D'ALINGEN. ABOUT 1720.

The property of Mr. Henry Entolowen.



No. 12B. PIECE OF PILLOW LACE.

GENOVA. AFTER AN ITALIAN DESIGN. ABOUT 1670-80.

This specimen belongs to the South Kensington Museum.



No. 12C. PIECE OF A BORDER OF NEEDLEPOINT LACE.

POINT DE VENISE A RESEAU. LATE 17TH CENTURY.

This specimen belongs to the South Kensington Museum.



(A) POINT D'ALENÇON. FRENCH.

(B) BRUSSELS PILLOW LAPPET.

PHOTOGRAPH No. XIII.



BY the kind permission of Mrs. Beechcroft, to whom belongs the lappet of Brussels pillow lace, we have been able to produce the photograph B here given. Each portion of the design is made on the pillow—the flowers first, then the *modes* and the *réseau*. The style of the design is of the latter part of the seventeenth century, and the feature of the oblique crossings of lozenge-patterned *modes* resembles somewhat similar treatments to be observed in the Valenciennes example on Photograph X. B, and in the Mechlin lace on Photograph XII. B. Much of the Brussels lace of this period was, as we have remarked (pages 11 and 12), made to suit the English taste, and was called point d'Angleterre. The present specimen is, however, rather too rich in detail to be placed in this category. At the same time, although an interesting and well-preserved piece, it would not rank amongst the highest and most elaborate forms of Brussels lace.

Like a preceding specimen (Photograph X. A) the strip of point d'Alençon, which appears by the side of the Brussels lappet, might by some be thought to be Argentella lace. The *cordonnnet* is a thick thread connected by small stitchings over to the *edge* of the gimp, and thus differs from that in the specimen on Photograph X. A, which is button-hole stitched and worked on the gimp. The *réseau rosacé* in both cases is of the same kind of workmanship. Were it not for the interlacings of real Alençon *réseau*, one might have concluded that the main difference between point d'Alençon and Argentella lay in the kind of *cordonnnet* used and its method of application. But we find that a piece of work with the *réseau rosacé*, or Argentella ground, has the Alençon *cordonnnet*, while another piece with a single thread *cordonnnet* proclaims its origin through the marked device of Alençon *réseau*, which occurs as an interlacing ornament. We may say further, that if this ornamentally-used *réseau* had more closely resembled the *réseau* of the point de Venise à *réseau* (see Photograph VII.), there would seem to be excellent evidence for considering such work to be Italian; and, if Italian, then probably Genoese. A comparison of the Alençon *réseau* in Photograph X. c with the interlacings upon the specimen under discussion, will help to bear out what we have said. A conclusive but naturally difficult way would be to examine the identical, or similar specimens, under a strong glass, an operation which, we think, would confirm our opinion. The date of this strip of point d'Alençon is about 1680—that is, the earliest period of the point d'Alençon manufacture.