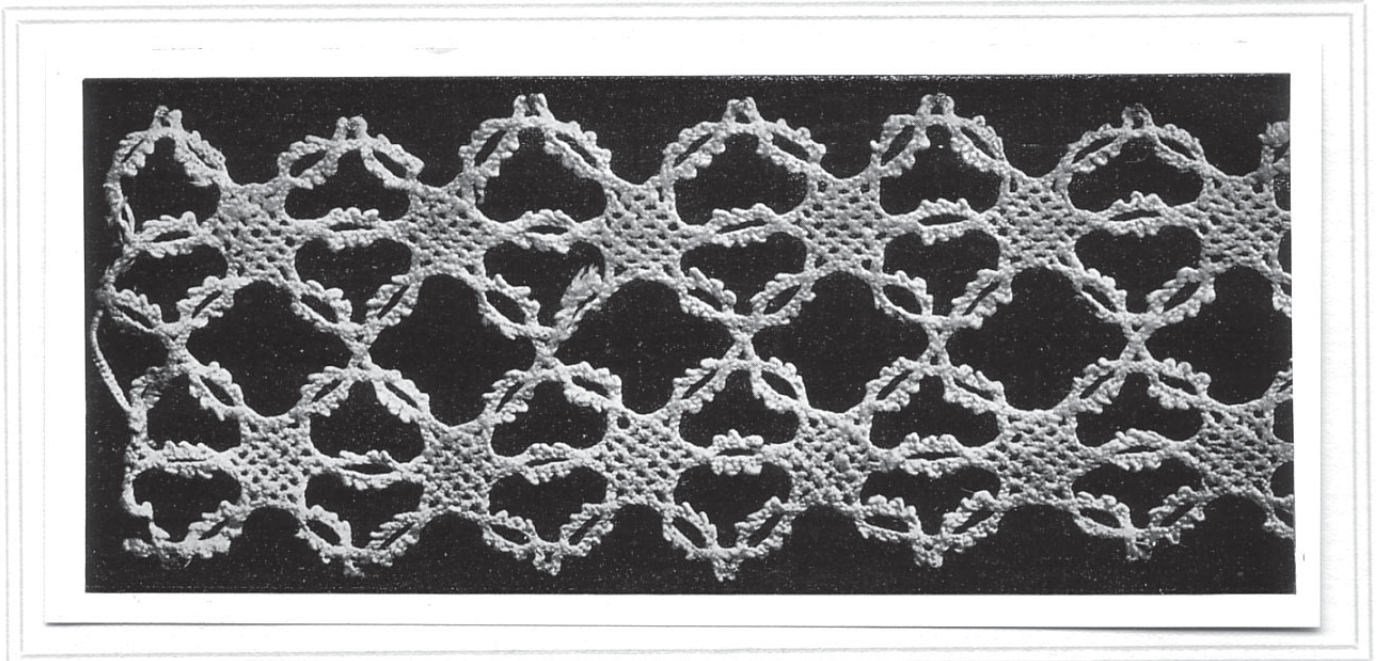


showing insertions frequently devoid of that solid selvedge necessary for sewing insertions used in the proper manner, demonstrates the gradual evolution of bobbin-made braids and trimmings of gold and silk into the true lace made with thread.

In the book of *Pomps* the designs are all for bobbin-work without any instructions whatever for working them. No mention even is made, as in the Zurich book, of the number of bobbins required, nor does the Italian author follow the example of the foreigner by making comments to elucidate the diagrams. The author of this admirable Venetian book is thoroughly master of the technical



No. 21 — Thread insertions without selvedge in the style of gold- and colour braids. The Ida Schiff Collection, Florence.

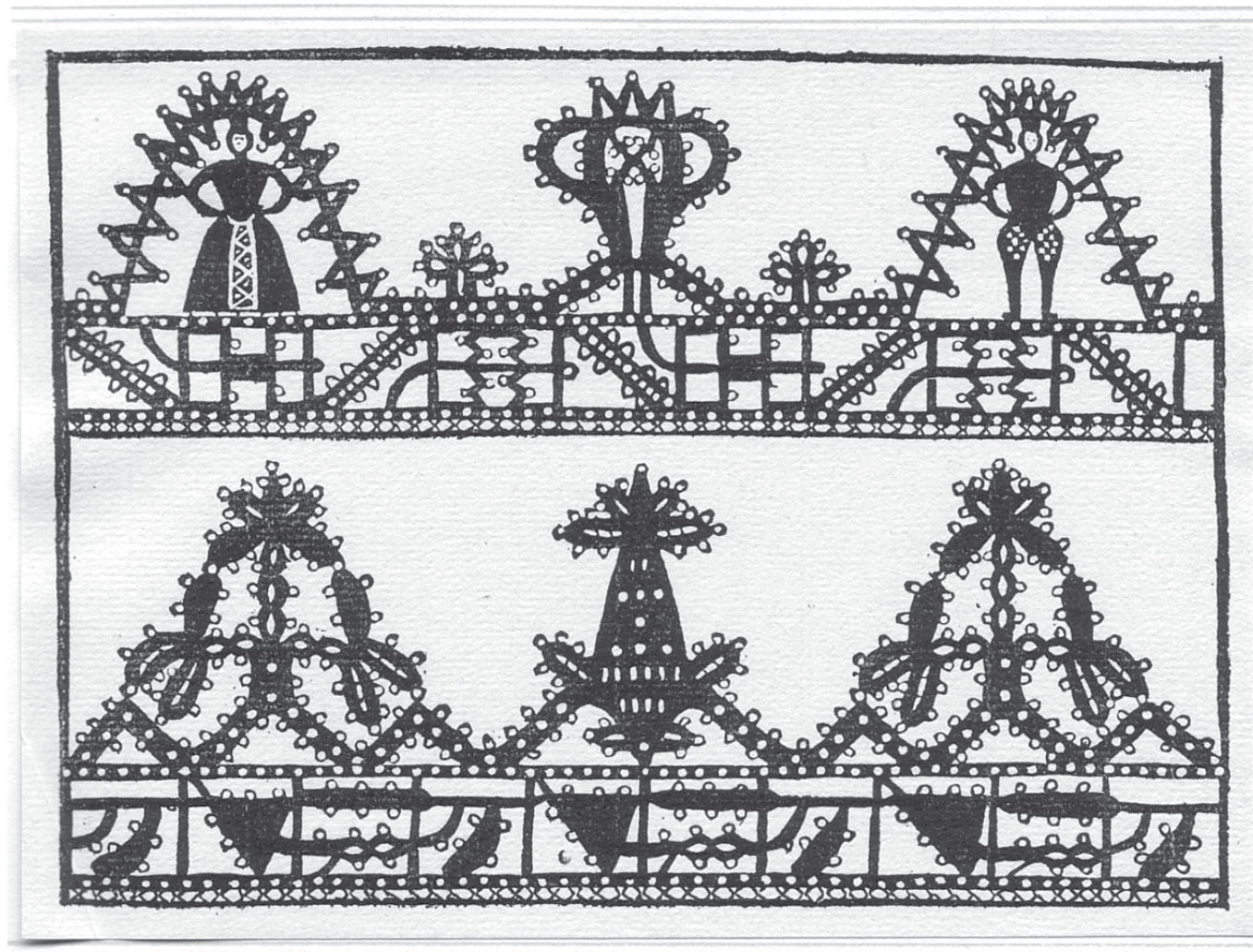
part of the art of making pillow-lace, and his designs are intended for the use of those who are practical experts. As yet means are limited: the little double braid with a scrap of *toilé*, as a touch of stronger colour. But the most marvellous art is shown in the manipulation of the few bobbins as they are made to trace out various designs; elegant vases, knots and figures vary the scheme, lighten the braid with apertures, and are united by means of a crochet-hook to the work which has been finished already.

But the crochet-hook is rarely used in Venetian laces. Very numerous are the stitches for which pins must have been unavailable, since the common use of pins belongs to a later date, though not to quite so late a period as is generally supposed, since the trousseau of Bianca Maria Sforza, who married the Emperor Maximilian I



No. 22 — Hendrik van Balen. Portrait of an Infant. Ambrosiana, Milan (1594). Venetian lace.

in 1495 was provided with a certain number of « needles with apple-heads », and other ordinary needles. But Bianca Sforza certainly did not use her pins for making bobbin-lace, nor in those days can the populace have been familiar with them, or able to procure them in the large quantities needed for their work.

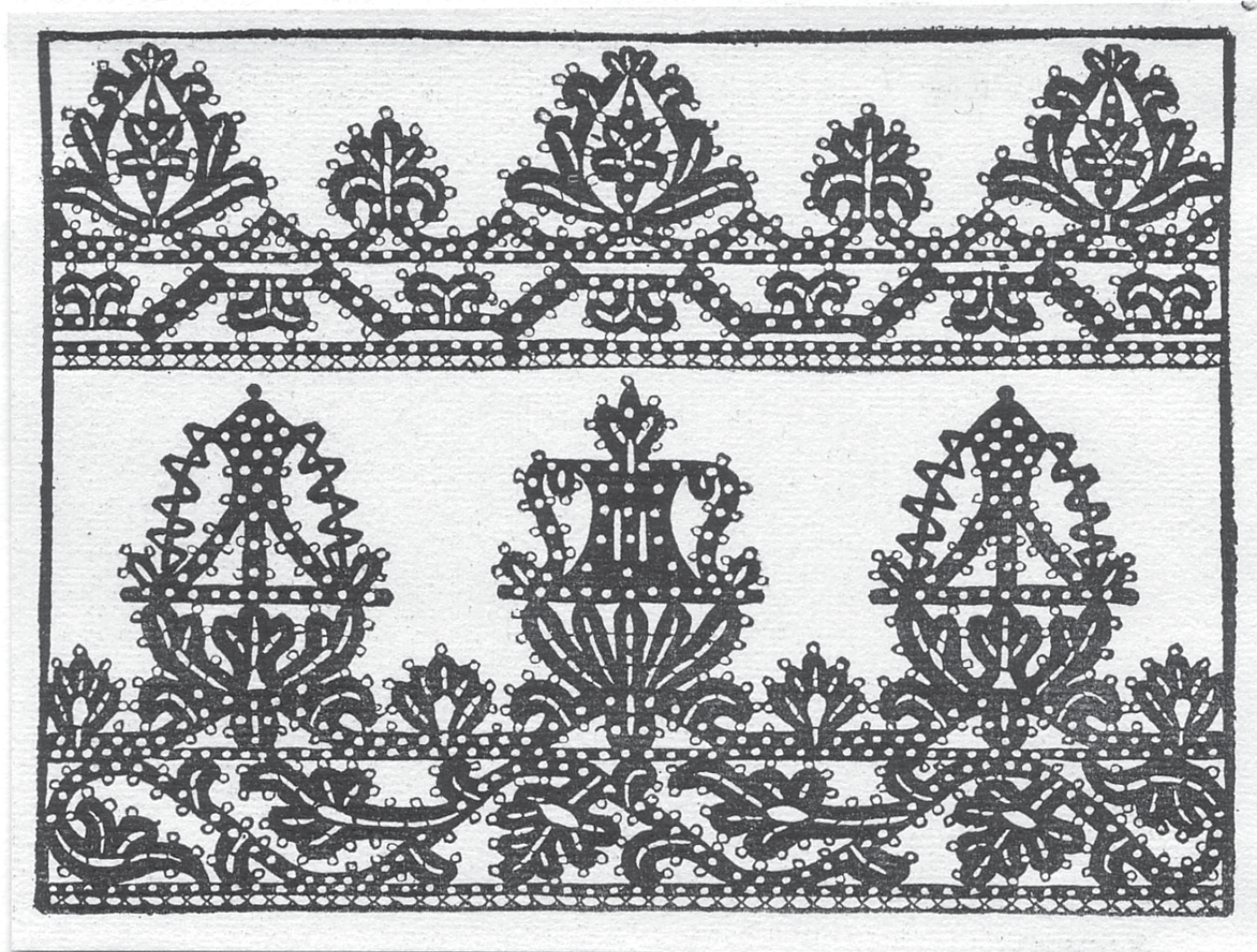


No. 23 — Points with figures from « Le Pompe », Venice, 1557.

In 1650, while eulogizing his native-made lace, a Flemish writer mentions pins: « The young girl sits at her work and moves her fingers incessantly, twirling the dancing bobbins with incredible speed. Every moment she sticks innumerable pins to form capricious designs, pricking them in and out, and earning at this child's play as much money as a man can make by the sweat of his brow. »

But what can have been used for this purpose before the invention of pins? fish-bones? thorns? little nails? Some people imagine that the first lace-workers used fish-bones to fix the thread to the cushion, supporting their contention by the fact that pillow-lace-making belongs essentially to places with a sea-coast; Venice, Genoa, Ragusa.

The little we know of lace-making in the last-named place leads us to suppose it was chiefly needle-made, in the XVII century rivalling Venice in *punto in aria*. Ragusa laces are specially named and reprobated in sumptuary laws and in the famous Colbert edict against foreign-made lace; the fullest information which has



No. 24 — Edgings from « Le Pompe », Venice, 1557.

reached us on the subject is contained in a satirical poem the *Revolt of the Trimings* in which Venice-Point jealously reviles her sister-stitch of Ragusa.

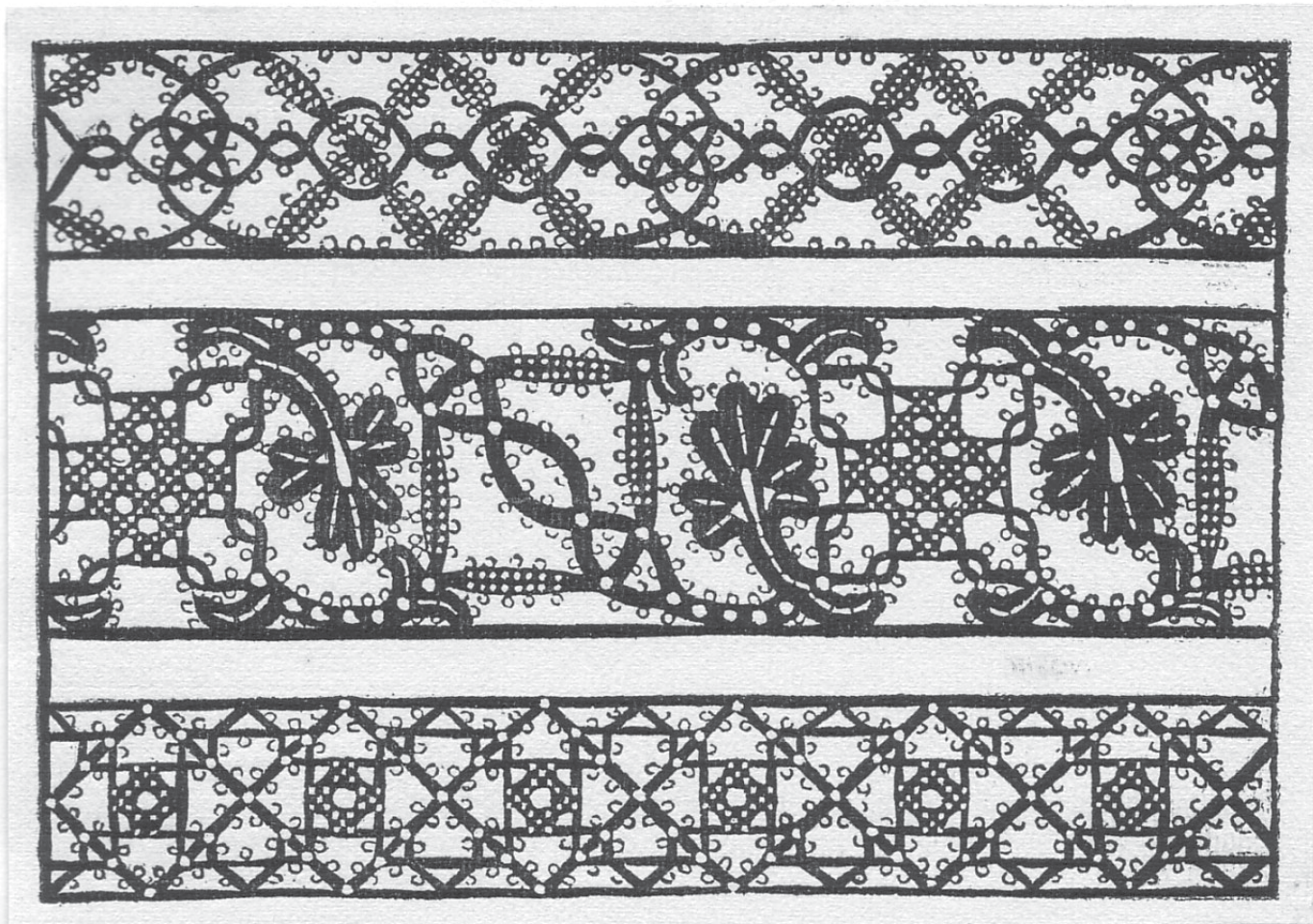
Encore pour vous, point de Raguse.
Il est bon, crainte d'attentat,
D'en vouloir purger un Estat.

Les gens aussi fins que vous estes
Ne sont bons que, comme vous faites
Pour ruiner tous les Estats.



No. 25 — Francesco del Salviati. Portrait of a Man.
Naples Museum. Collar of bobbins-lace like designs
in « Le Pompe », Venice, 1557.

In Italy, bobbin-lace could never compete with that needle-lace whose fine texture was unattainable; moreover, if Ragusa was to become famous for a work which closely resembled the best Venetian *punto in aria*, it is by no means absolutely necessary to affirm that she must have used fish-bones on her cushions. Milan and the lofty-topped Abruzzi where our lace-work flourished — if not so gloriously as



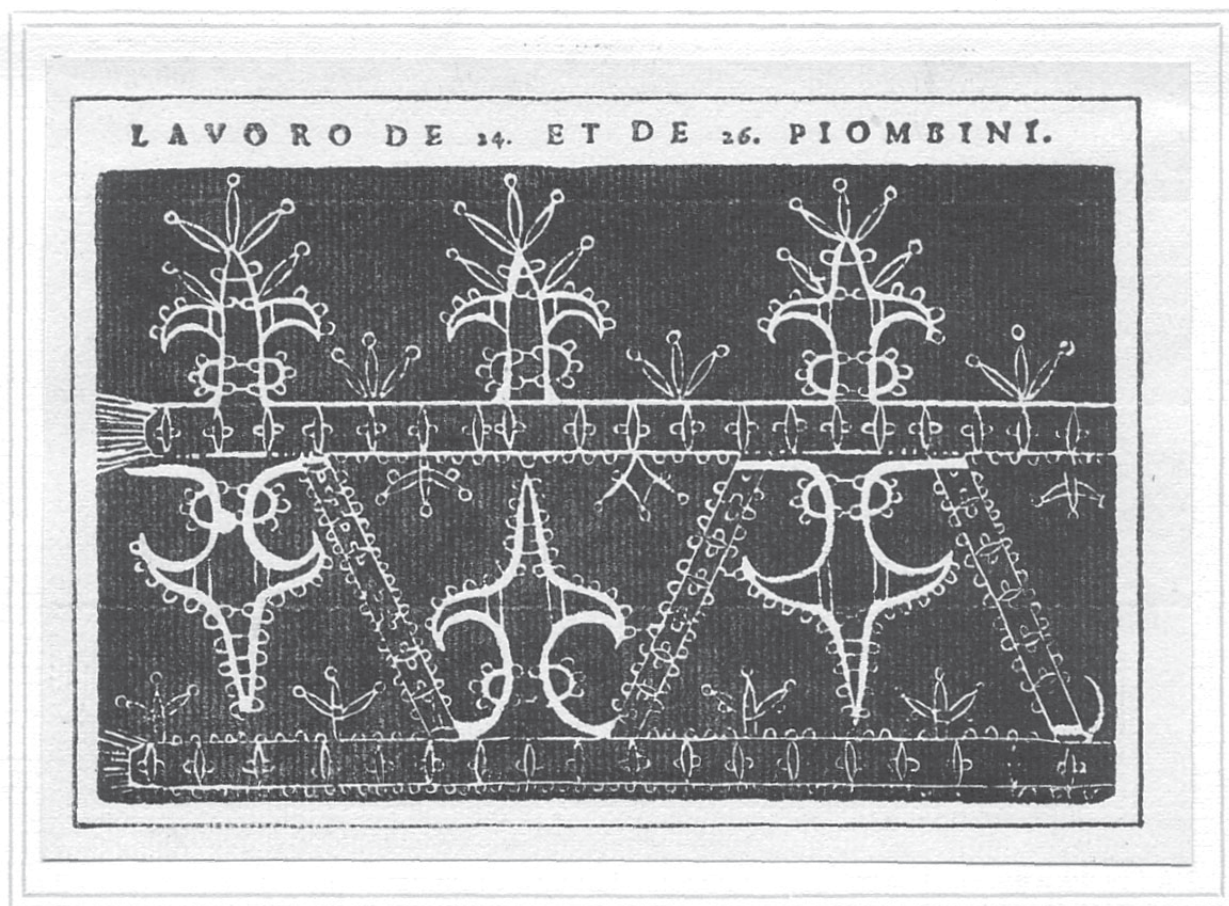
No. 26 — Insertions from « Il Monte », Venice, 1560.

at Genoa, at all events more conspicuously than in Venice — are both many miles from the sea.

Most probably nails were used before the advent of pins. An expert lace-worker anxious to copy some old sample of the type of the Parasole models, would instinctively take small nails to obtain the effect of the large apertures so frequently met with in antique designs. Nails of every sort of size and make were to be found as ornaments on the furniture, chests, and coffer of the XVI

century, therefore we know they must have been within easy reach of the working class; why should they not have served the lace-makers in default of any better instrument?

The history of bobbin-lace has a solid basis in the book of *Pomps*, where we trace its career from the first start when like its fore-runners the woven laces of gold, silver and coloured silk it took the shape of galoons and braids; in the



No. 27 — Points from the « *Gemma Pretiosa* » of Isabetta Catanea Parasole, Venice, 1597.

same style we follow it on its way through the one page of illustration given it in the *Monte*, another Venetian book of 1560, until we meet it afresh in ten pages with 74 designs in the *Teatro* of Isabetta Parasole, and in the three pages of her *Gemma Pretiosa* of 1597, when we are aware of a complete transformation. Very similar to the designs of Parasole are those of *Matbias Mignerac, the Englishman*, published in Paris in 1605; this work is remarkable as being the first in which direct mention is made of trimmings made with bobbins.

Henceforth the type of Venetian pillow-lace is fixed; a trifling span of ten years was sufficient for this gentle art to find and settle upon a form suitable to



No. 28 — Joest Sustermans. Portrait of a Child. National Gallery, Rome. (Photograph Anderson).

Ruff with bobbin-made edging like designs shown in « Le Pompe », Venice, 1557.



No. 29 — Dutch School. Portrait of a Gentleman.
Private property.
Ruff with edging similar to designs shown in « Le
Pompe », Venice, 1557.



No. 30 — Florentine School. Portrait of Emilia Spinelli. Uffizi Gallery, Florence. (Photograph Alinari).

Ruff with edging similar to those shown in the « Gemma Pretiosa », Venice, 1597.

its own peculiar needs, and divorce itself completely from those trimmings and braids to which it owes its existence.

The light and nimble bobbin is well adapted to form the slender points and

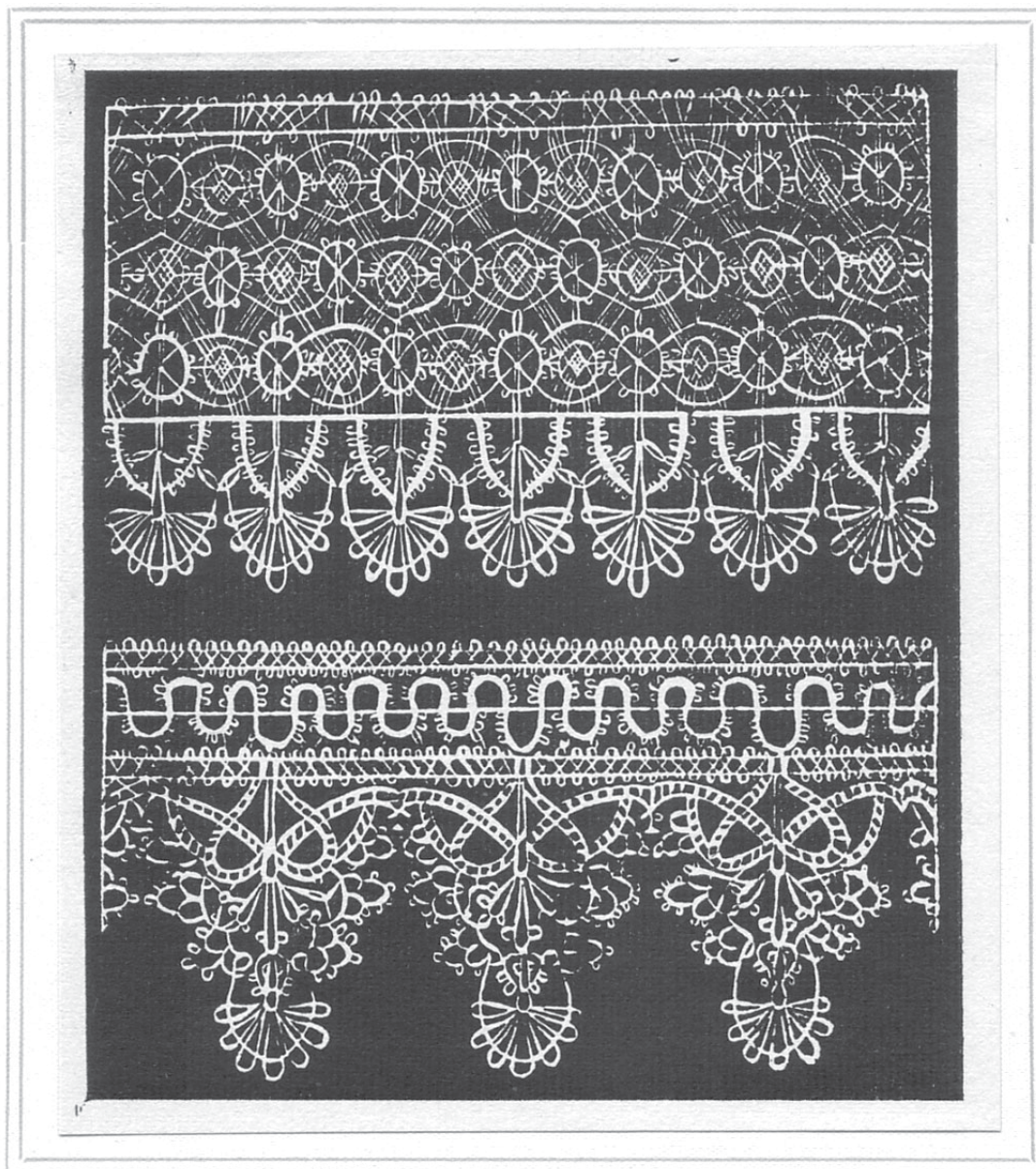


No. 31 — Design from *La pratique de l'aiguille industrielle*,
of Mathias Mignerac, Paris, 1605.

long, sharp vandykes which vaguely suggest Venetian Gothic architecture. If the light, short points of the *Pomps* were generally chosen for collars and ruffs, the more elegant models of *Parasole*, with their long, boldly-accentuated points, large and solid at the base, and tapering gradually into a sharp extremity, must have had a large and enthusiastic following, if we judge by the many fragments met with both in Italy and in other countries.

The height of the glory reached by this particular lace is enshrined in the regal magnificence of two articles of foreign manufacture.

In the Museum of Decorative Art at Brussels is preserved that counterpane



No. 32 — Lace from *La pratique de l'aiguille industrielle*,
of Mathias Mignerac, Paris, 1605.

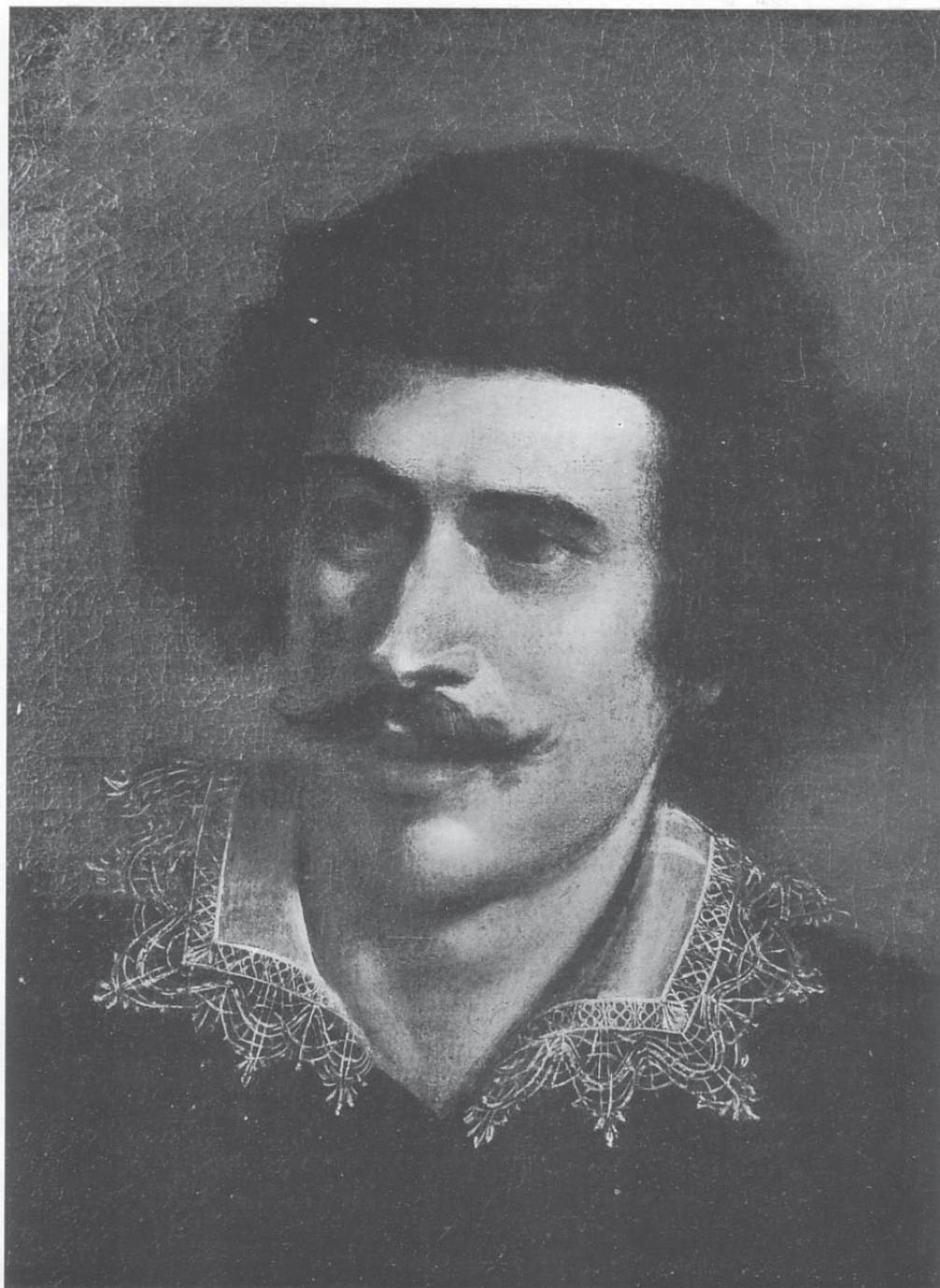
presented to Isabella and Albert of Brabant on the occasion of their taking the oath to the Low Countries, November 30, 1599.

By dint of untiring perseverance in research, the famous authority on lace, Professor Van Overloop, has been successful in finding out not merely the date and occasion for which this famous piece was manufactured, but has traced the

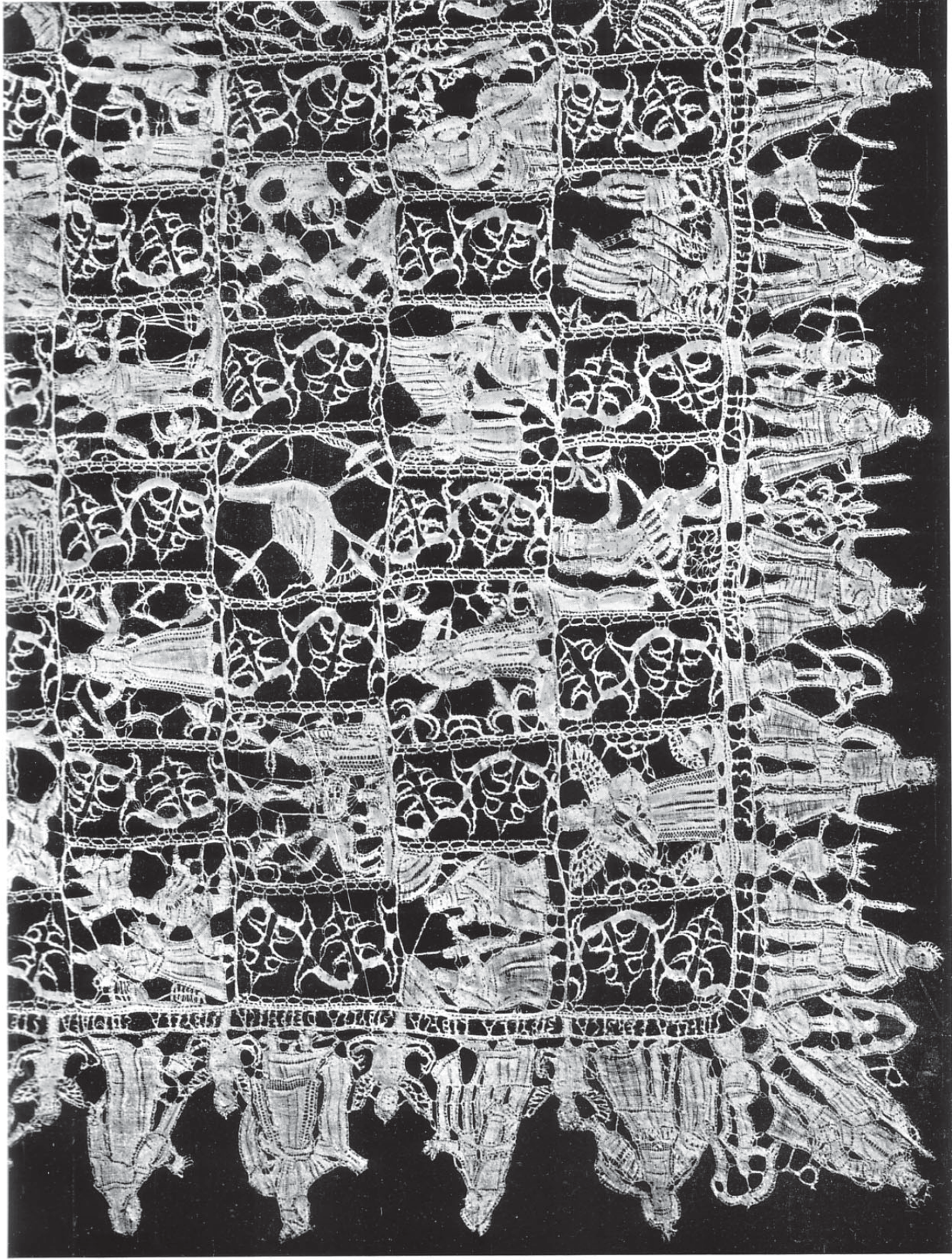


No. 33 — Juan Pantoja de la Cruz (1551-1610).
Portrait of a Child. Vienna Gallery. (Photograph Anderson).

Lace similar to the designs of Isabetta Catanea Parasole.



No. 34 — Guercino. His portrait by Himself. Uffizi Gallery, Florence. Collar with bobbin-lace similar to designs of Mignerac.

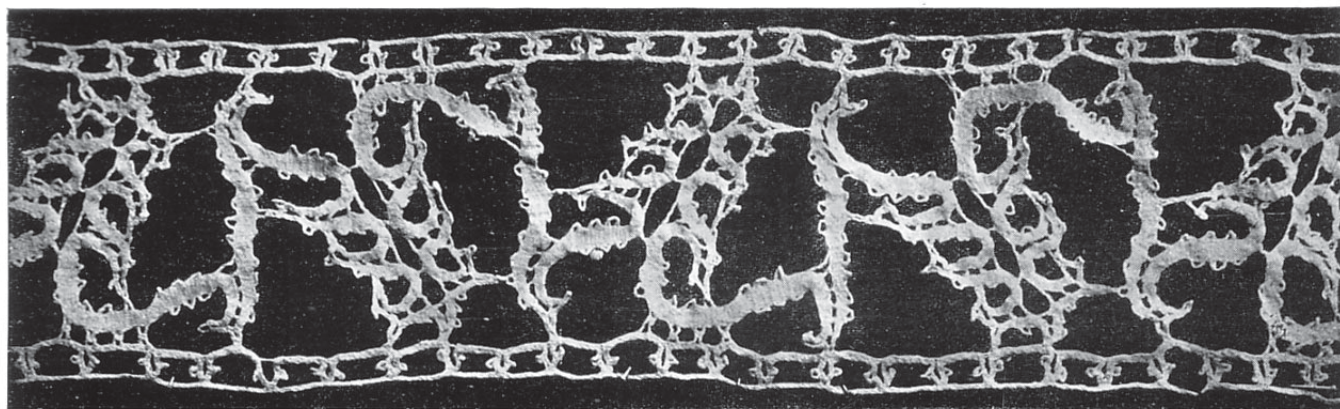


No. 35 — Flemish work of 1599. Large coverlet of bobbin-lace, illustrating an historic pageant. Museum of Decorative Art, Brussels.

meanings of the numberless figures composing the historical pageant which surrounds it as a border.

Thus we see that by the end of the XVI century Flanders had acquired matchless expression in that art which was destined to reach its culminating point of perfection within her territory.

Yet the patient and painstaking Flemish workers had not learned everything in their art, for they had not attained that extreme lightness and delicacy which was to become their proudest boast; nor is there yet much variety in their open work. In fact we soon recognise that all the resources of their art have not



No. 36 — Ancient fragment resembling the ornamental motives of the foregoing. From the Ida Schiff Collection, Florence.

been employed even in a work of such vast dimensions; on the other hand we are struck by a most noticeable trait of Flemish character, which influences all their handicraft, including lace-work; we mean a precise realism, an uncompromising sincerity which this nation feels to be a kind of conscientious necessity, though we ourselves do not recognise it as essential to Art. In the laces of our country — and not in its laces alone — we look first for harmony and true proportion; in bobbin-work especially the technique itself inspires us to clarify, to simplify, above all, to lay hold on a clear line of decoration. In the Brussels coverlet the figures are surcharged with details of posture, dress and drapery. No care has been taken to keep within the somewhat narrow limits of an art not fully developed, and the result is not far from being ridiculous and grotesque. The scenes which are here represented in lace-work defy all but the most patient scrutiny;

Van Overloop himself remarks that the designs are suitable for some very different medium of expression; for laces, perhaps, or for buratto. Indeed some similar models are to be found in the second part of the *Singuliers et nouveaux pourtraits* of Vinciolo, intended to be copied in laces.

But if the human figures are Flemish, the decorative motive which alternates with the figured squares is pure Venetian and precisely of the type dear to

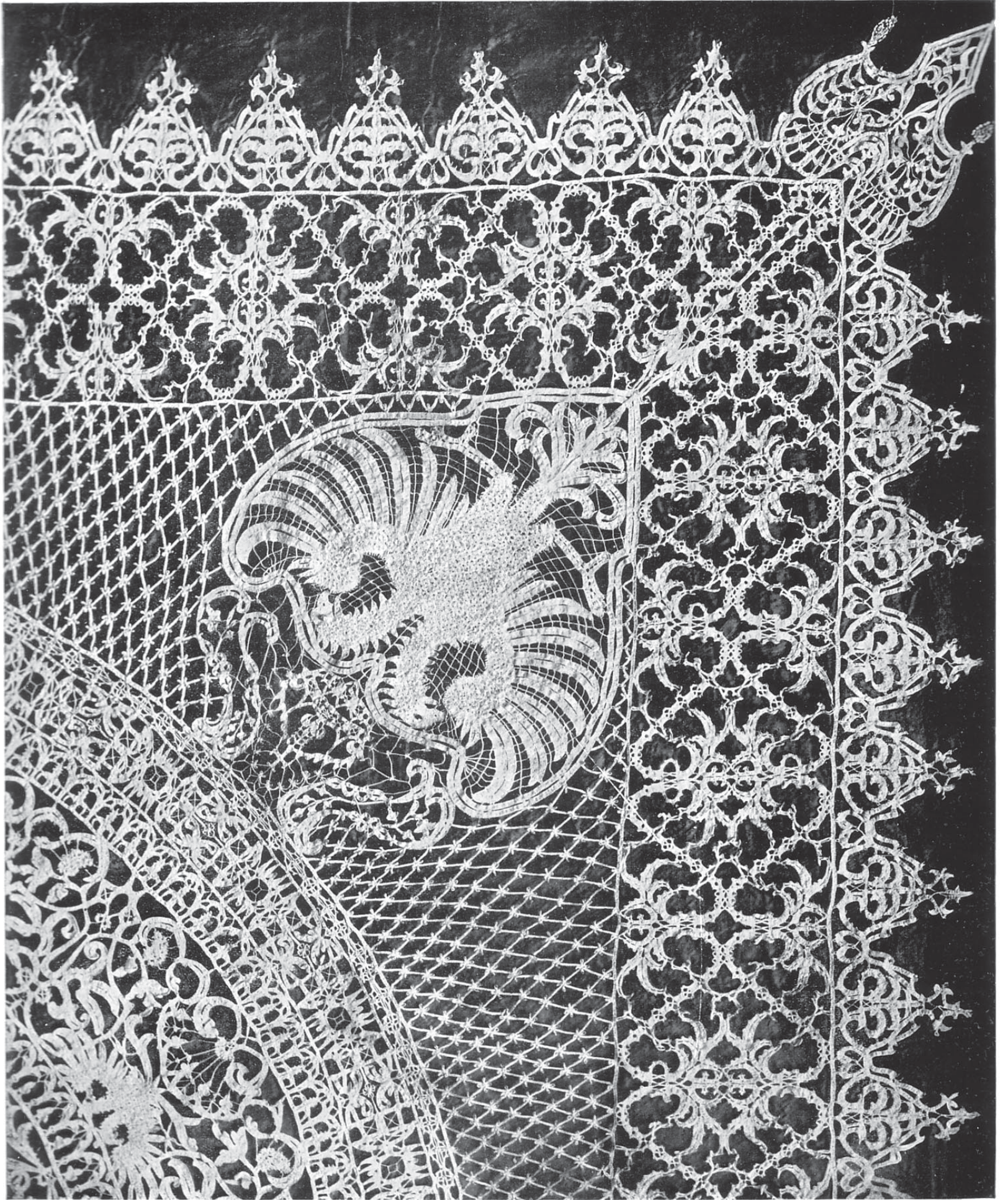


No. 37 — Coverlet of bobbin-lace in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Parasole. The points are placed alternately in two opposite directions and their extremities touch the two selvedges. In the comprehensive collection of Ida Schiff of Florence one fragment is included (see No. 36) exactly like this portion of the Brussels coverlet; the Italian insertion inspired the Flemish artist in forming a rectangular compartment dividing one figure from another; his adaptation is violent rather than ingenious.

Still we should be grateful for such indisputable evidence of the extent of the influence of Venice upon the Flanders lace of the XVI century.

The Victoria and Albert Museum in London owns another glorious example of this description of lace, which we are able to reproduce. The large border run-

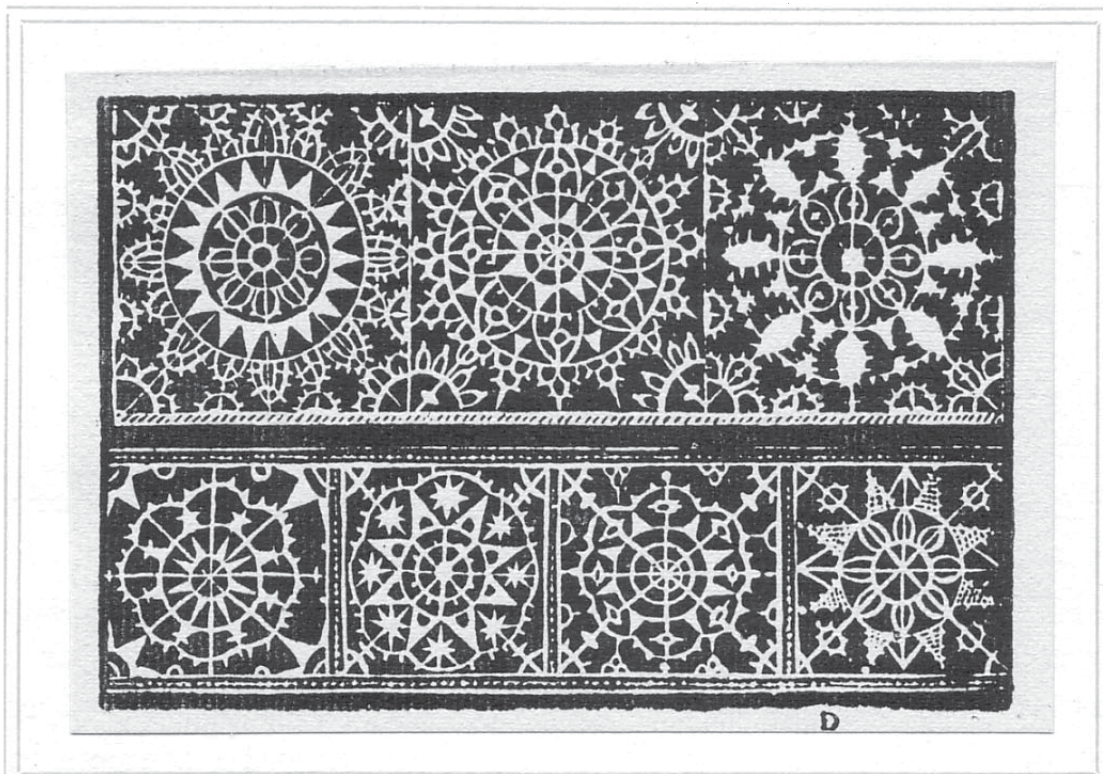


No. 38 — Detail of the foregoing.



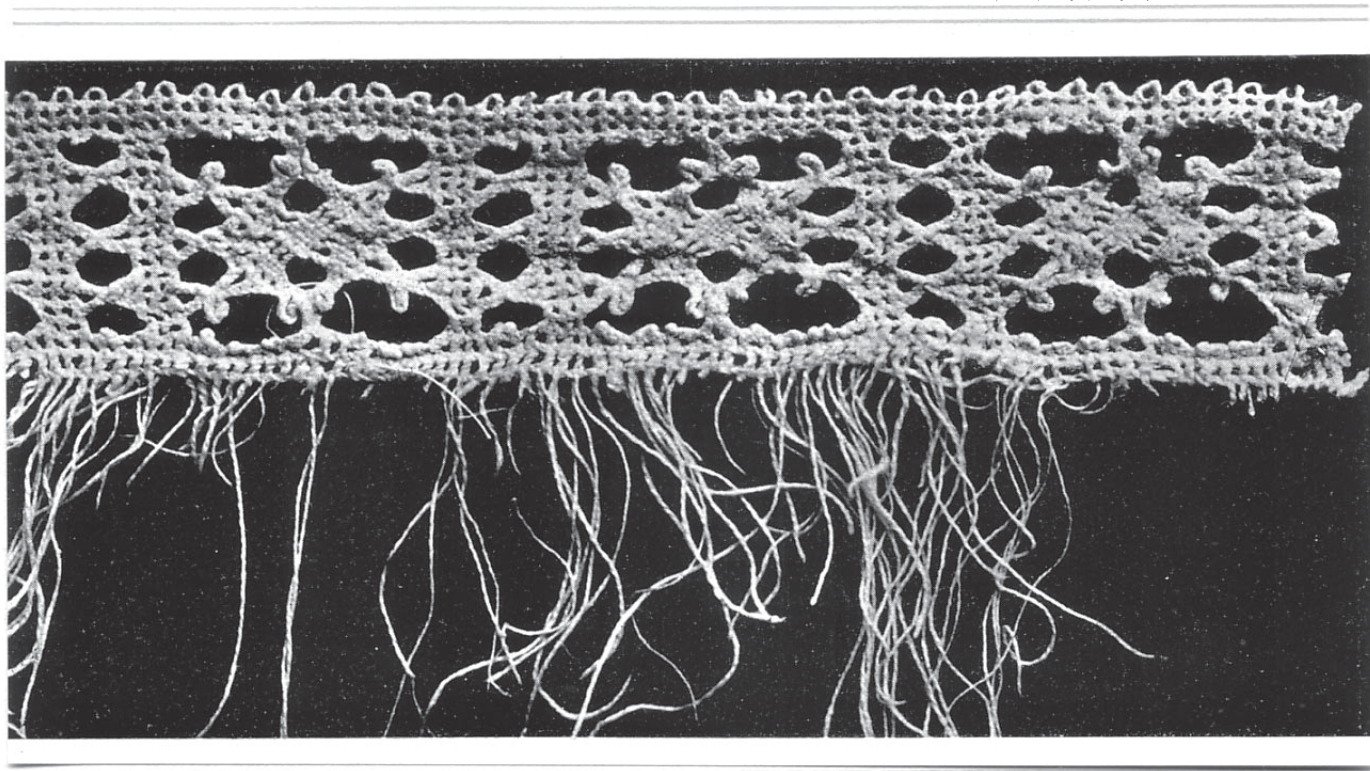
No. 39 — Bobbin-made lace imitating needle-made lace.
Romanelli Marone, Genoa.

ning round the coverlet is as distinctively Venetian as are the points, while we feel that some exotic influence has been brought to bear on such details as the



No. 40 — Design for *reticello* to be made with bobbins.
From the « Corona » of Cesare Vecellio, Venice, 1591.

great eagle and the corner-points, as well as on the whole general composition. Some people conceive this influence to have come from Flanders, others see something of Spain in its nature; most undoubtedly some sort of foreign sentiment has been responsible for the principal features of design and composition — perhaps the nuns and lace-makers of Venice allowed themselves to be influenced by some Spanish artist whilst they were employed on their coverlet? We know nothing certain on the matter, nor is it likely to be elucidated until it obtains its deserts in the



No. 41 — Bobbin-made fringe, imitating *sfilatura*. The Ida Schiff Collection, Florence.

shape of inquiry and attention from some such world-wide authority as Professor Van Overloop.

In Venice herself, strictly speaking, needle-lace triumphs over all other kinds. The bobbin-laces must have made courageous efforts to keep up with their sister's advance, for in Vecellio's *Corona* of 1591, after the enumeration of the samples prepared for noble and virtuous ladies, we read the author's remark that many of these may be carried out in bobbin-work. Now and then we come across some specimens of Venetian bobbin-work, in which we recognise attempts to imitate needle-lace; still, we believe that these were exceptional at the end of the XVI and the beginning of the XVII centuries. Later on there is no doubt that expert



No. 43 — Sassoferrato. Madonna and Child. Vatican Gallery, Rome. (Photograph Alinari). Edging and insertion of Venetian lace, similar to that shown in No. 104.

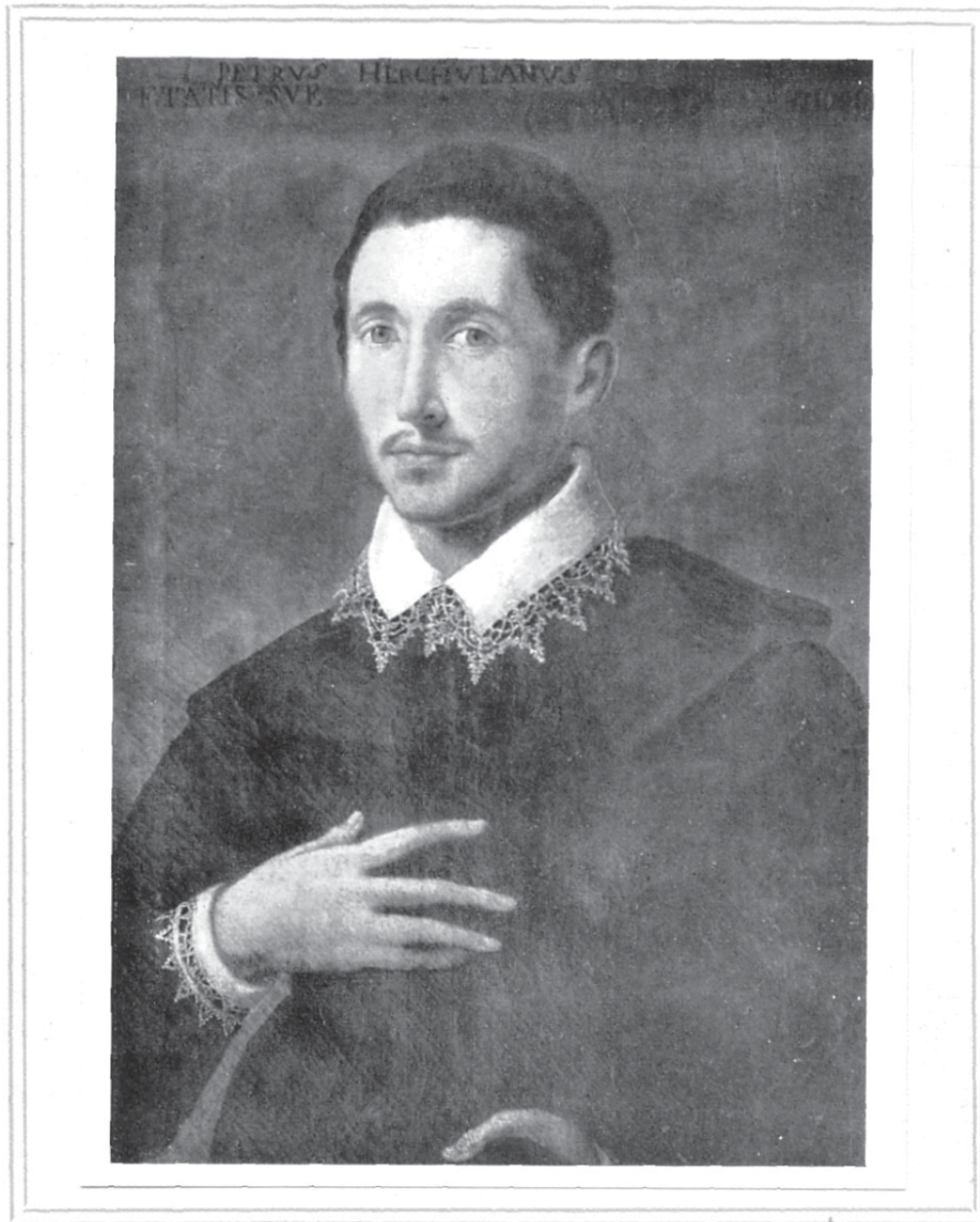


No. 44 — Salviati. Portrait of a Youth.
Poldi-Pezzoli Gallery, Milan. (Photograph Anderson).

*Collar similar to designs in « Le Pompe »,
Venice, 1557.*

bobbin-workers copied *Venetian Point* properly so-called with a strong, narrow tape (without a pierced edge), resembling needle-lace in every particular.

Nowadays exceptionally gifted bobbin-lace-workers boast of being able to copy



No. 45 — School of Bologna. Portrait of Pietro Hercolani, 1600. Forlì Gallery (Photograph Cane). Lace on collar similar to designs of Isabetta Catanea Parasole.

some designs intended for needle-lace; but each method has its limits, to which good taste the foe of all perversions advises them to adhere. When thread is led by the needle, it goes here and there in perfect freedom, the sharp, smooth steel being able to take it backwards to pierce through stitches already made, or to leap forwards suddenly; but in bobbin-work the thread has lead on its feet, forcing it to take

but one step forward at a time even in the rapid whirling of the bobbins which plait the threads or weave the « clothing », closely followed by the pins which turn and guide the thread along the design, or finish it off firmly.

These distinctions were recognised in Venice, and the prerogatives of bobbin-work so jealously guarded that no « expedient » was ever resorted to save, occasionally, the crochet-hook, which allows the bobbins to go over work they have done already; but very rarely was this instrument used.

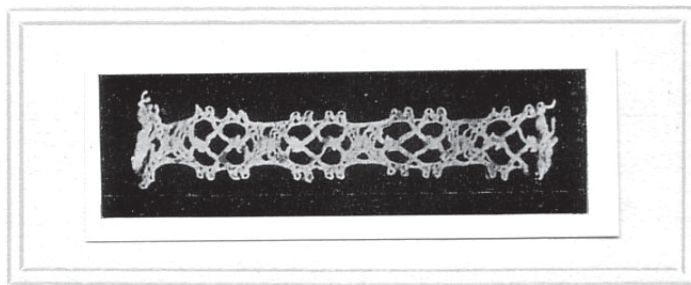
All these technical prejudices may have preserved the beauty and quality of Venetian bobbin-lace, but they hindered its evolution and progress.

When Colbert wished to introduce lace-making into France in the XVII century he chose teachers of needle-lace from Venice, but bobbin-work teachers from Flanders; and in 1735 a rescript of Pope Clement XII, permits the introduction of the *white-thread lace* of Milan, Genoa, and Flanders, and foreign countries into the Papal dominions, provided they pay duty of 20% *ad valorem*. At that time bobbin-laces were described as « White-thread lace » because the thread was more noticeable in them than in the needle-variety, and also to differentiate them from those trimmings of gold and coloured silk which were still made by bobbin-work. In this connection we notice a significant silence concerning goods from Venice which, in the field of needle-laces, had been the butt of tax-gatherers and prohibitive laws.

Even in the XVIII century when Venice was described as having « a wig all of curls and a chemise all of lace » her own ladies caused their bobbin-laces to be imported from Flanders or Spain, as is shown by the account-books of the houses of Mocenigo, Contarini, etc. while from Genoa came the wide black-silk laces, which were sewn on to the collar of the hood, that essential feature of Venetian masquerade costume.

After all, it is but natural that the more humble workers of bobbin-lace neither dared nor cared to invade ground already occupied by expert workers of the marvellous needle-laces, nor to compete with these aristocrats of their craft.

But at Genoa the bobbin-lace flourished and triumphed!



No. 46 — Bobbin-made insertion simulating *sfilatura*.

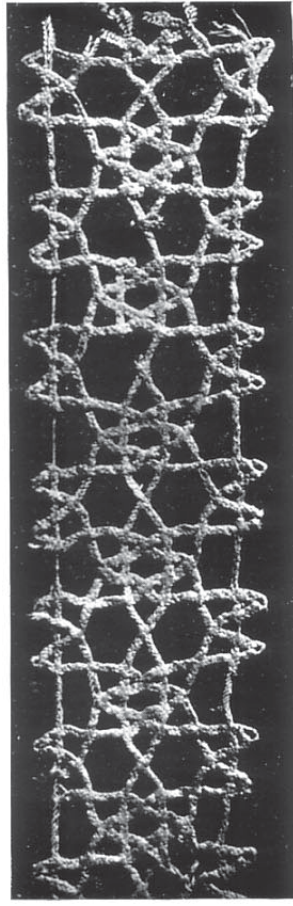
I.
VENICE

PLATES

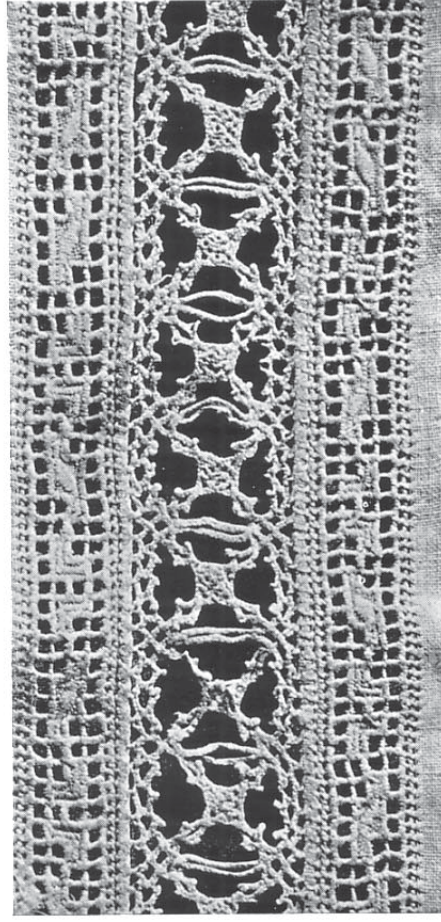
VENICE BEGINNING OF XVI CENTURY.



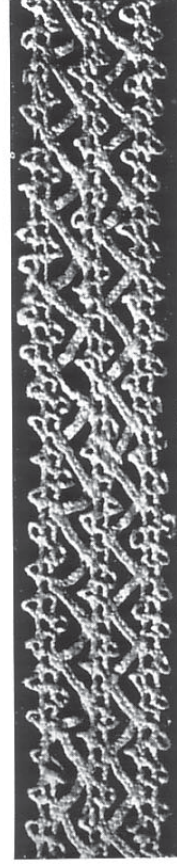
47



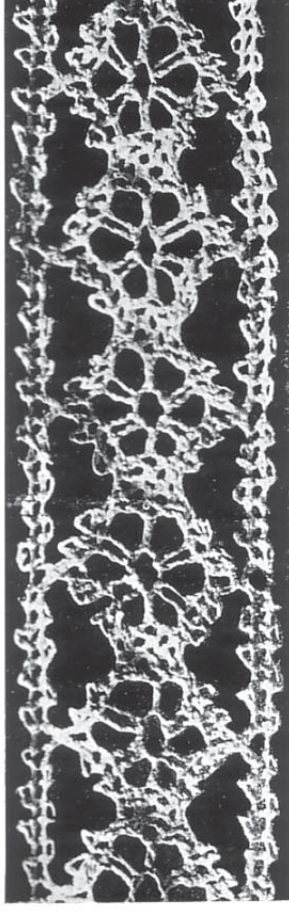
48



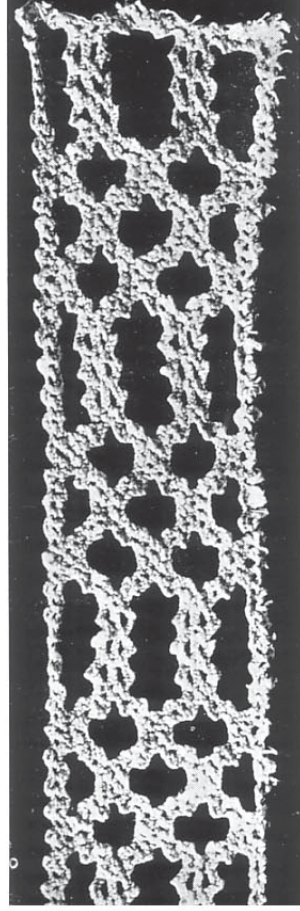
49



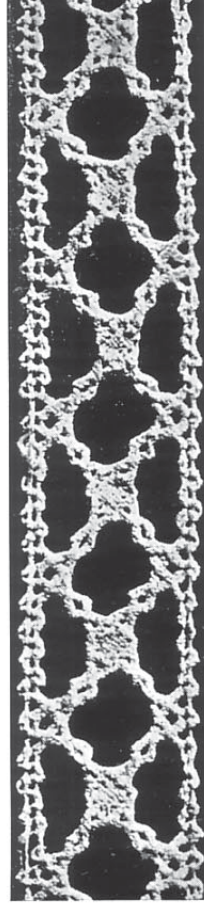
50



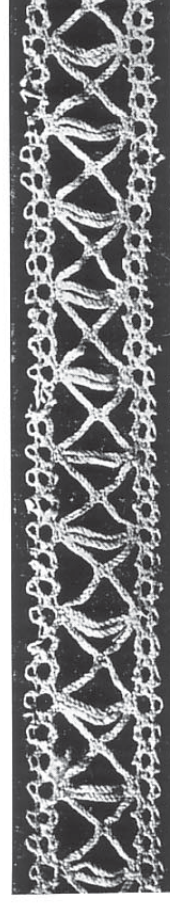
51



52



53



54

Insertions similar to the patterns in « Le Pompe », Venice, 1557.

Nos. 47, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54 — Designs similar to those used in making woven trimmings in gold silver and coloured silk. Ida Schiff Collection, Florence.
 No. 48 — Insertion without selvedges, like those coloured trimmings which were sewn directly on to the material, instead of being inserted between strips of linen, as is done with lace-insertion.
 Ida Schiff Collection, Florence.

№. 49 Original fragment in which is seen the manner in which workers in the olden times joined bobbin-made lace to embroidered linen. Property of author.