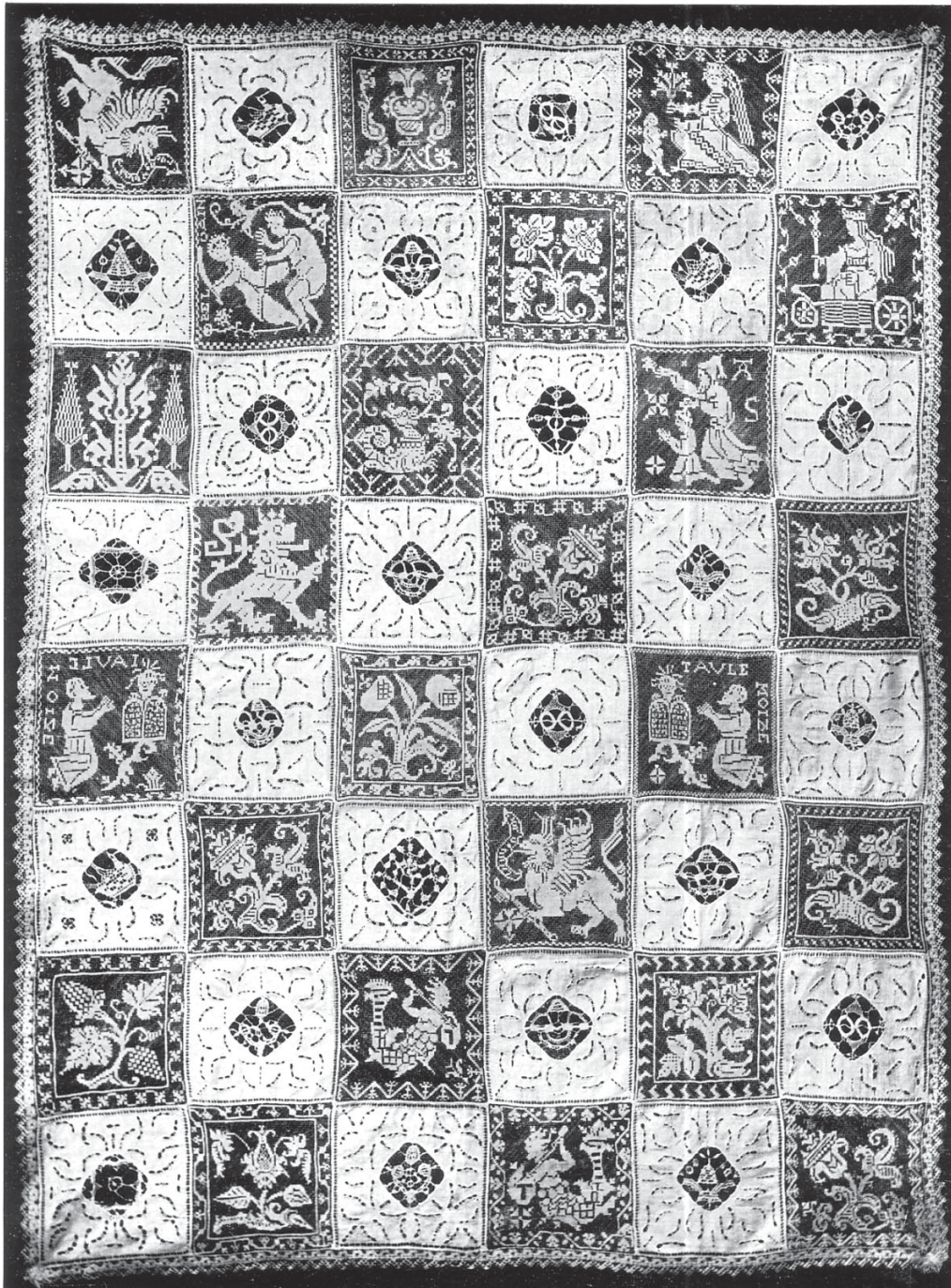


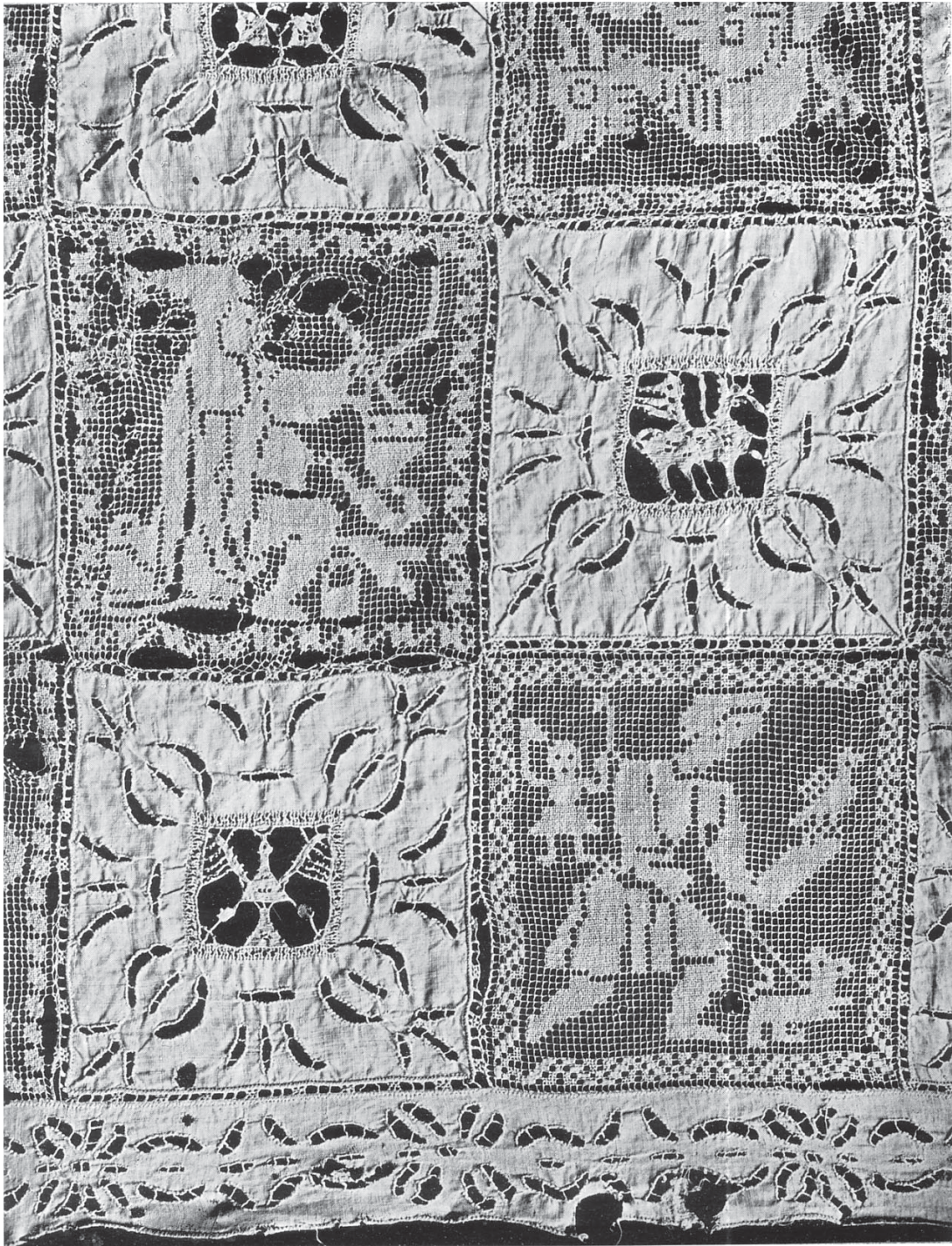
RETICELLO — XVI-XVII CENTURY.



No 227 — Tablecover in laces squares with figures, heraldic designs, and flowers, alternating with squares of pierced linen and *reticello*. Very fine linen. Original composition.

Errera, Venice.

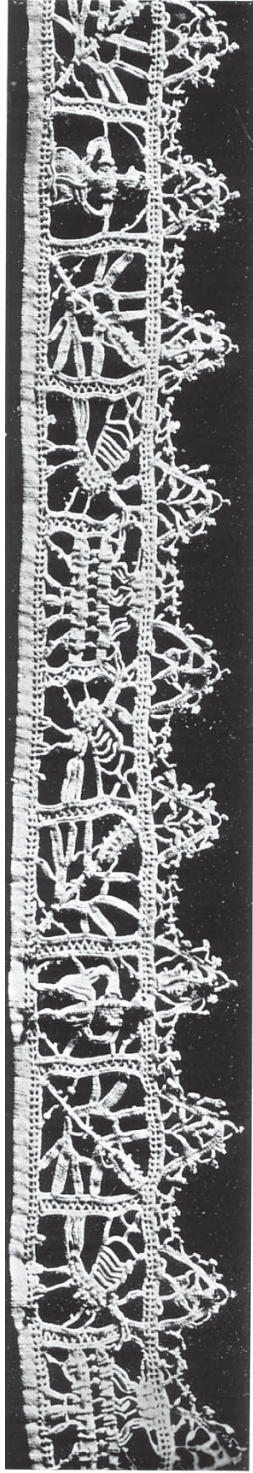
RETICELLO — XVI-XVII CENTURY.



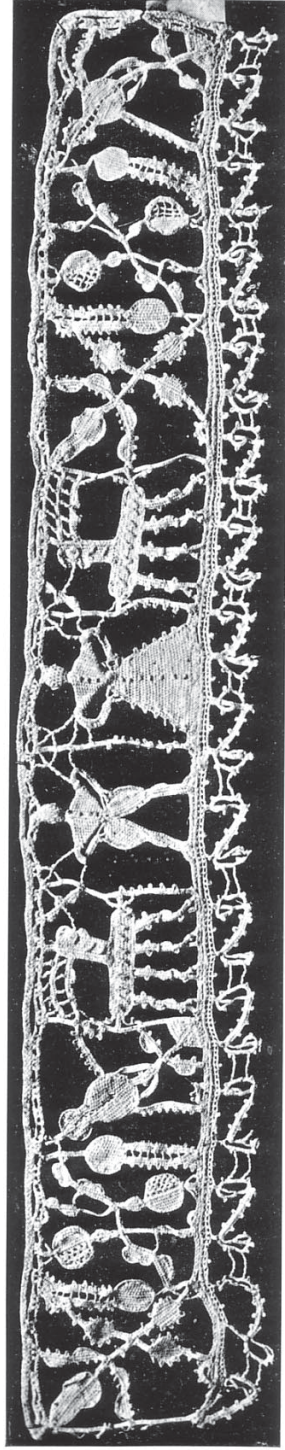
No. 228 — Detail of a coverlet of squares of pierced linen and *reticello*, alternating with squares of figured lacis: an alchemist, a falconer. In the *reticello*, an eagle, a winged lion.

Amari, Florence.

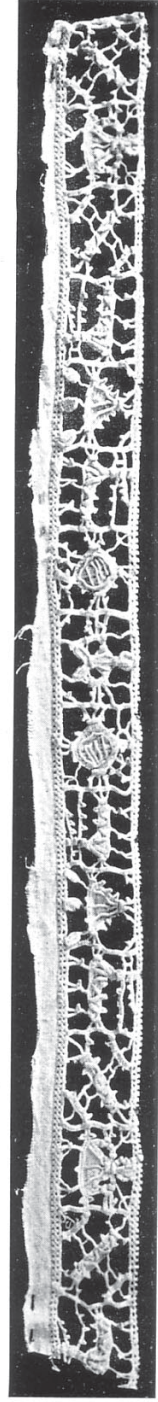
RETICELLO — XVI-XVII CENTURY.



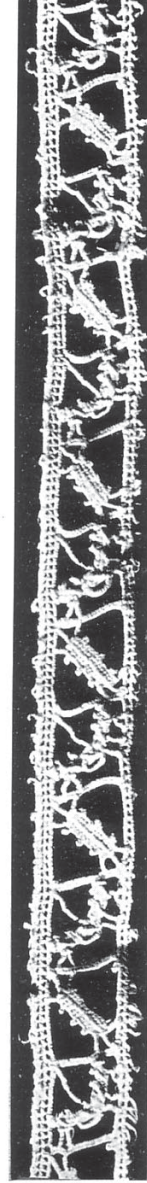
229



230



231

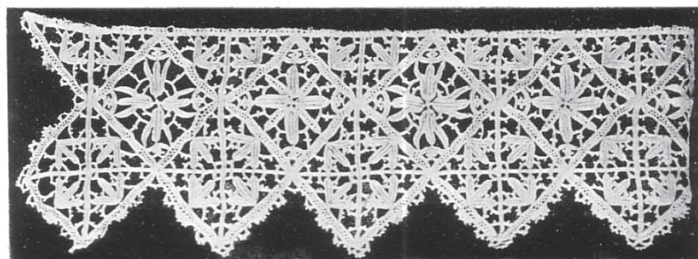
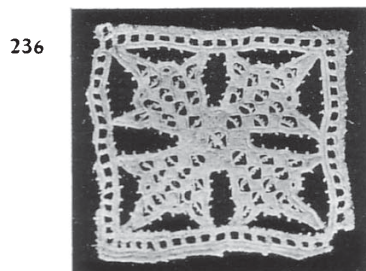
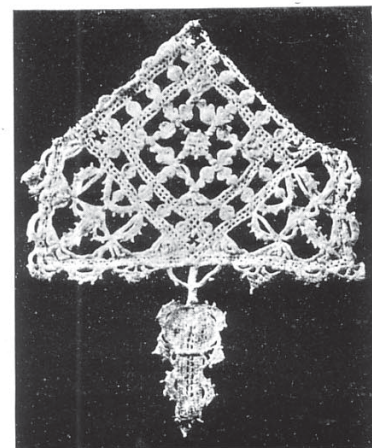
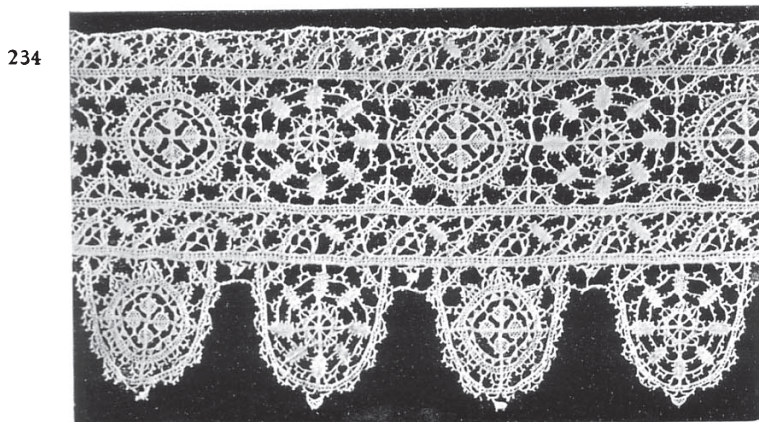
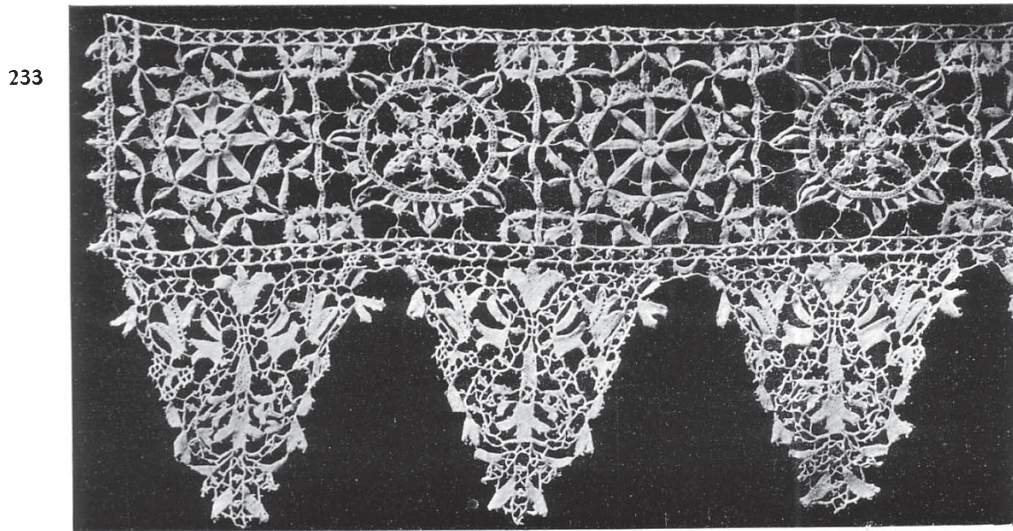


232

Four insertions in figured *reticello*.

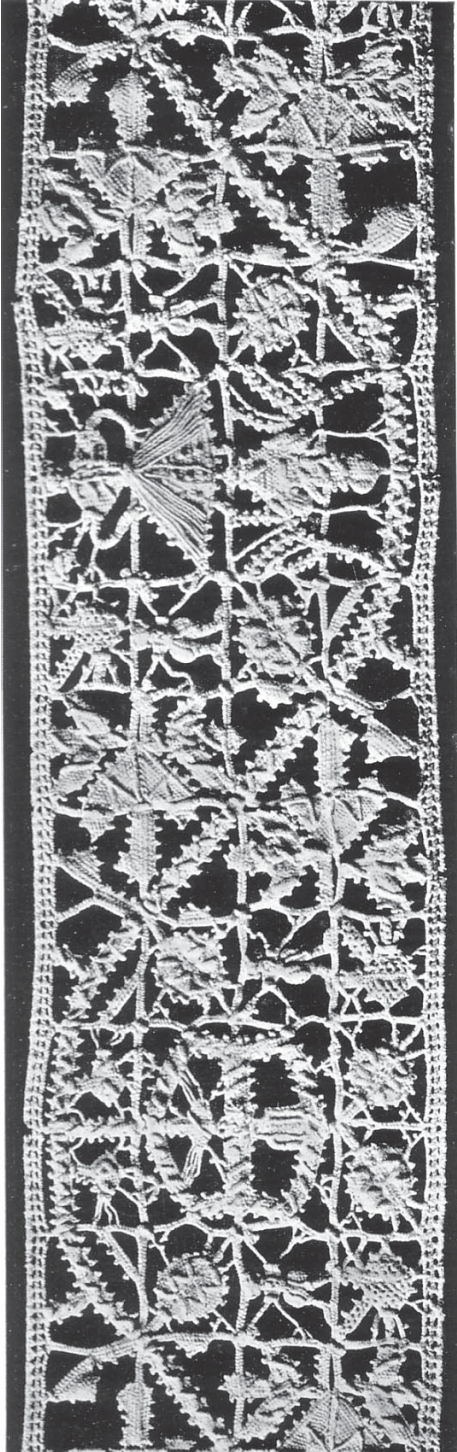
No. 229 — A woman, a bre, a man, Sermoneta, Florence. No. 230 — A pomegranate, a stag, a lady, a knight, South Kensington Museum, London.  
No. 231 — A woman, a stag, a man, Rucellai, Florence. No. 232 — Little birds, Prop. of author.

RETICELLO — XVI-XVII CENTURY.

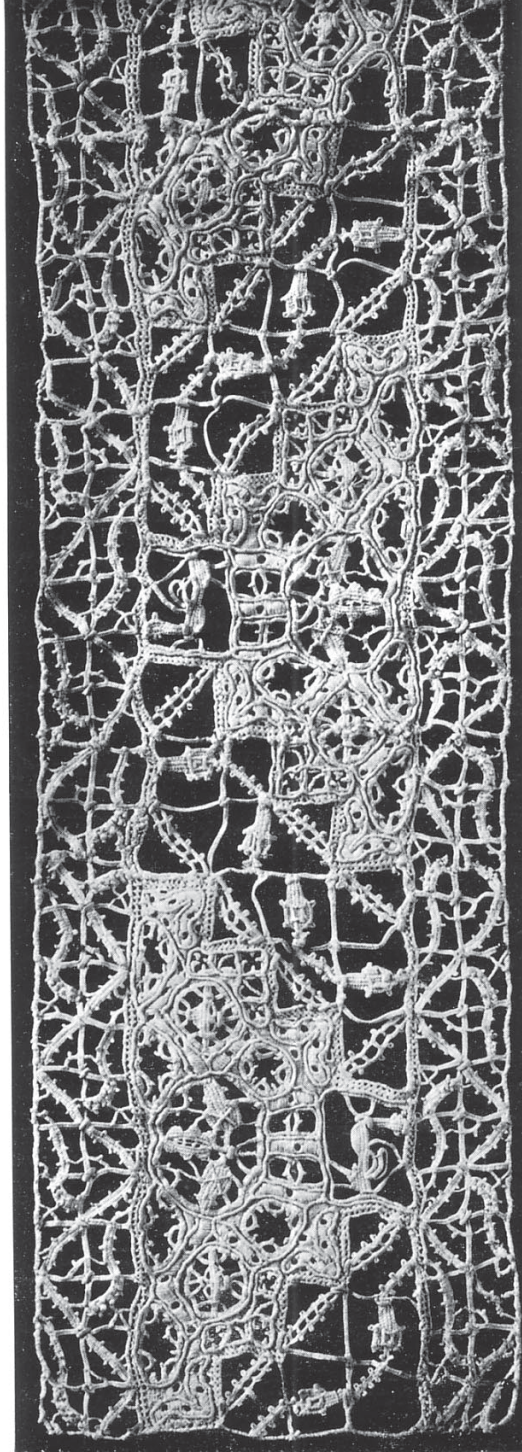


- No. 233 — *Reticello* insertion and edging of *punto in aria*. Civic Museum, Venice.  
No. 234 — *Reticello* insertion and edging. Amari, Florence.  
No. 235 — Fragment of *reticello* with needle-made tassel. Civic Museum, Venice.  
No. 236 — Another fragment in *reticello* and cut linen. Rucellai, Florence.  
No. 237 — *Reticello* edging. Carretto, Turin.

RETICELLO — XVI-XVII CENTURY.



238



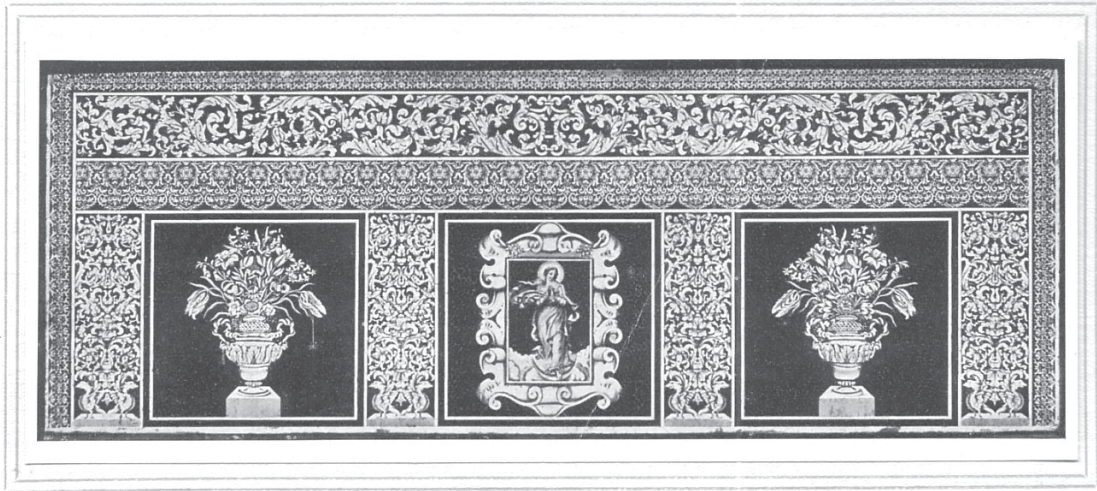
239

Two insertions (Transition from *reticello* to *punto in aria*).

No. 238 — On the network of the *reticello* is a design in *punto in aria*: a lady, little knights, Doria Pamphili arms with the three hills and a dove. Serrmoneta, Florence.  
No. 239 — *Reticello*, and (on that portion of the linen which is not cut) embroidery in satin and cut stitch. Supino, Bologna.

III.

PUNTO IN ARIA.



No. 240 — Inlaid Altar-front by G. Fassi, imitating Venetian Rose-Point, 1633. Church of San Niccolò, Carpi.

## PUNTO IN ARIA.



*TITCH in the air*: there is a touch of the extravagance characteristic of the period in the term, even though, when it first made its appearance in 1528 in Tagliento's long list of the stitches in which his designs should be carried out, the thing corresponded to the name. The writer was evidently referring to a *punto in aria* for embroidery; that is to say, a design held to the linen by its two extremities only, and rather woven « in the air » than embroidered on the linen. Some few instances of this stitch, from which is derived the name of the most beautiful and characteristic form of Italian lace, are found in ancient pieces of embroidery (Nos. 241, 242). In the lace, on the other hand, thread is woven something like a little cord over the design traced on parchment, accentuating the outline firmly and precisely: when this is finished, the design is filled in with button-holing and various mesh-stitches; then over the web resulting from this (resting upon nothing, *in aria*) a close, fine button-hole stitch is sometimes used to emphasise the design still further. The work is detached by passing a thin knife-blade between the parchment and the linen

with which the parchment is lined, and severing the basting stitches, which have served their purpose.

The wonderful and unsurpassable designs for embroidery published in Paganino's *Burato* of 1530, with their griffins, vases, scrolls, flowers, and knots (or *entrelacs*, in which the first sampler-books abound), all the finest XVI century motives, reappear in the drawings of Mathio Pagan, intended for reproduction in *punto in*

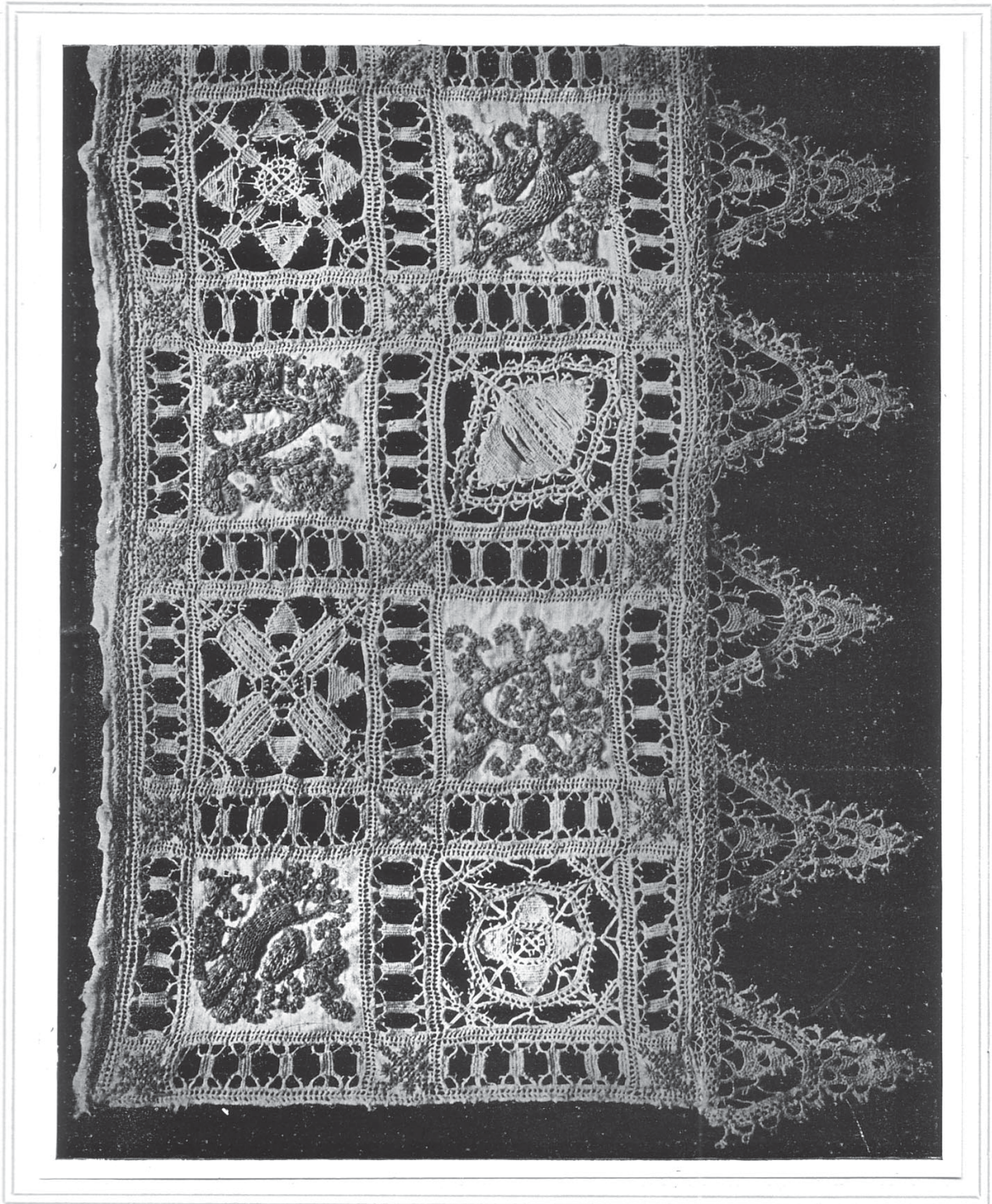


Nos. 241, 242 — Design for embroidery taken from Book IV of the *Burato* of A. Paganino.

Reproduced by Ist. It. d'Arti Grafiche, Bergamo.

*aria*. As in the manuals of Passerotti, Somasco, and Ostaus, so in Pagan's pages the *punto in aria* designs are laid upon a wide-meshed net-work not unlike the groundwork of *punto tagliato* and *reticello* (No. 244). We have discovered some few samples executed in this way, and reproduce them in Nos. 362, 363, 364. But in his Preface to the *wise and virtuous readers* of his *True Perfection of Design*, Ostaus points out that although the illustrations are on one scale only, they may easily be enlarged or reduced according to the taste of the embroidress. Vecellio gives the same indication with the diagram here reproduced (No. 245). Whence we may conclude that although anybody might reconstruct the design on squares of different dimensions, such a method was not obligatory, but merely a matter of personal

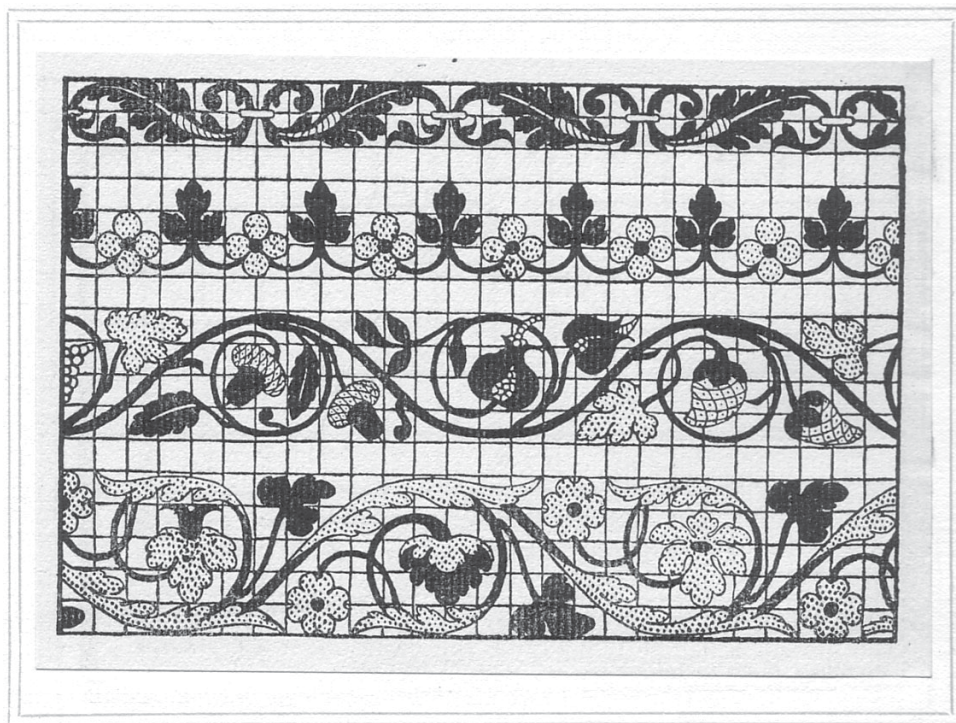




No. 243 — XVI century. Embroidery in *punto in aria* and *reticello*.  
(The embroidery in reddish thread is executed without being carried through to the back, except in the case of the first stitches on which the matting-stitch is afterwards executed). Squares and insertion of *reticello*. The edging is in *punto in aria*. Cantoni, Milan.

taste; the designer left full liberty to the worker; she was free to select her stitches and alter the dimensions of the pattern; as Vecellio himself says in his fourth book, she might compose her own design, « taking an ornament from here, or a rose from there » or follow the advice of Parasole: « if anything be lacking in these patterns, add it for yourselves with your needles ».

During the XVI century the needle demanded its part in the free and joyous



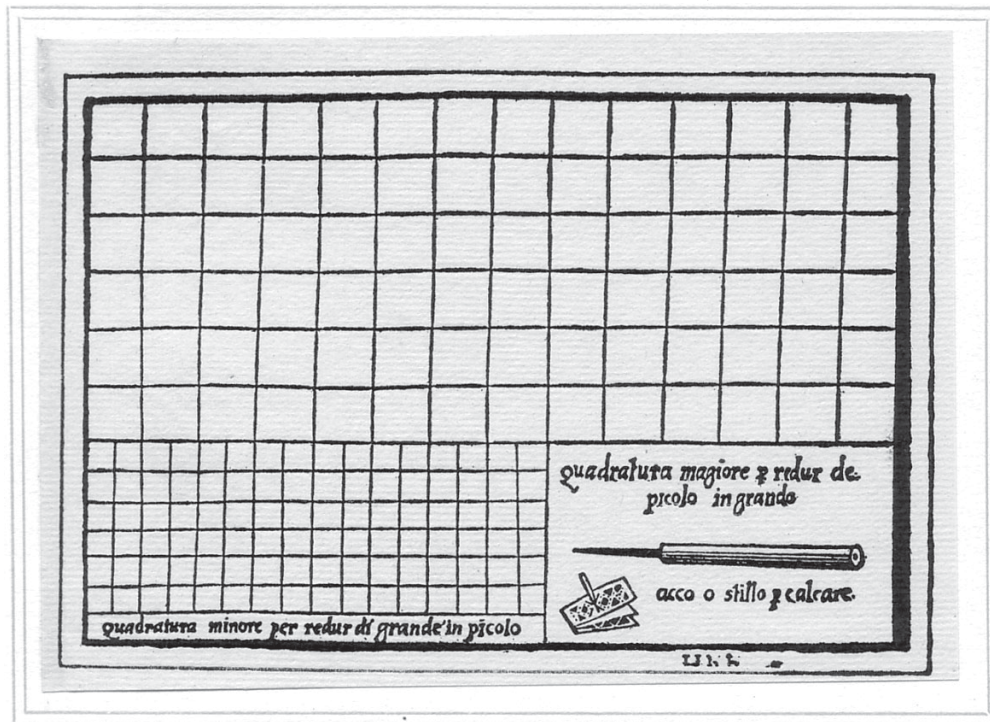
No. 244 — Design for *punto in aria* or cut work, taken from the *Vera Perfezzione* of Ostaus. Venice, 1561. Reproduced by Ist. It. d'Arti Grafiche, Bergamo.

production of beauty, and nothing is more difficult than to find a piece of old lace copied accurately from the pattern, or two pieces exactly similar in execution. On one occasion we came across some lace of the greatest perfection enclosed in a glass case, and judged it to be of inestimable age and value: comparing a photograph of it with one of Vecellio's designs, we found to our amazement that it was identical in every detail; this raised doubts as to its authenticity; in the sequel it was found to be the work of a very clever lace-maker of the XIX century.



From the second half of the XV century, *punto in aria* appears in documents and pictures as well as in pattern-books.

In the inventory of goods belonging to G. B. Valier, Bishop of Belluno, in 1598, mention is made of « five pieces of bed-furniture in *punto in aria*.... ancient



No 245 — Design wherein is shown how to enlarge or reduce any pattern. From the *Corona* of Vecellio. Venice, 1595.

work, and pillows of the same work and ten table-cloth-trimmings.... ». And in 1616 the overseers of Poms deemed it prudent to prohibit *punto in aria* under a penalty of 200 ducats for each transgression. So rapidly did it attain popularity and become an item in the incredible luxury of the Venetian nobles!

Pictures tell the same tale. Fine workmanship and purity of design are conspicuous in the lace painted by artists of the late XVI century in portraits both of ladies and gentlemen (No. 246). It is unnecessary to give dates and authorities for such multitudinous examples; lace had become one of those superfluities which are



No. 246 — Large collar of *punto in aria*.  
From the Portrait of an unknown Woman by Pourbus.  
Modena Gallery. Photo. Anderson.



No. 247 — Collar of embroidered linen with edging of *punto in aria*.  
Portrait of Bianca Cappello. 1575.  
Uffizi, Florence. Photo. Alinari.



No. 248 — High wired collar in *punto in aria*.  
Portrait of Maria de' Medici by Scipio Pulzone.  
1610. Pitti Gallery, Florence.



No. 249 — Another high wired collar in *punto in aria*.  
Portrait of Maria de' Medici. Uffizi, Florence.  
Photo. Alinari.

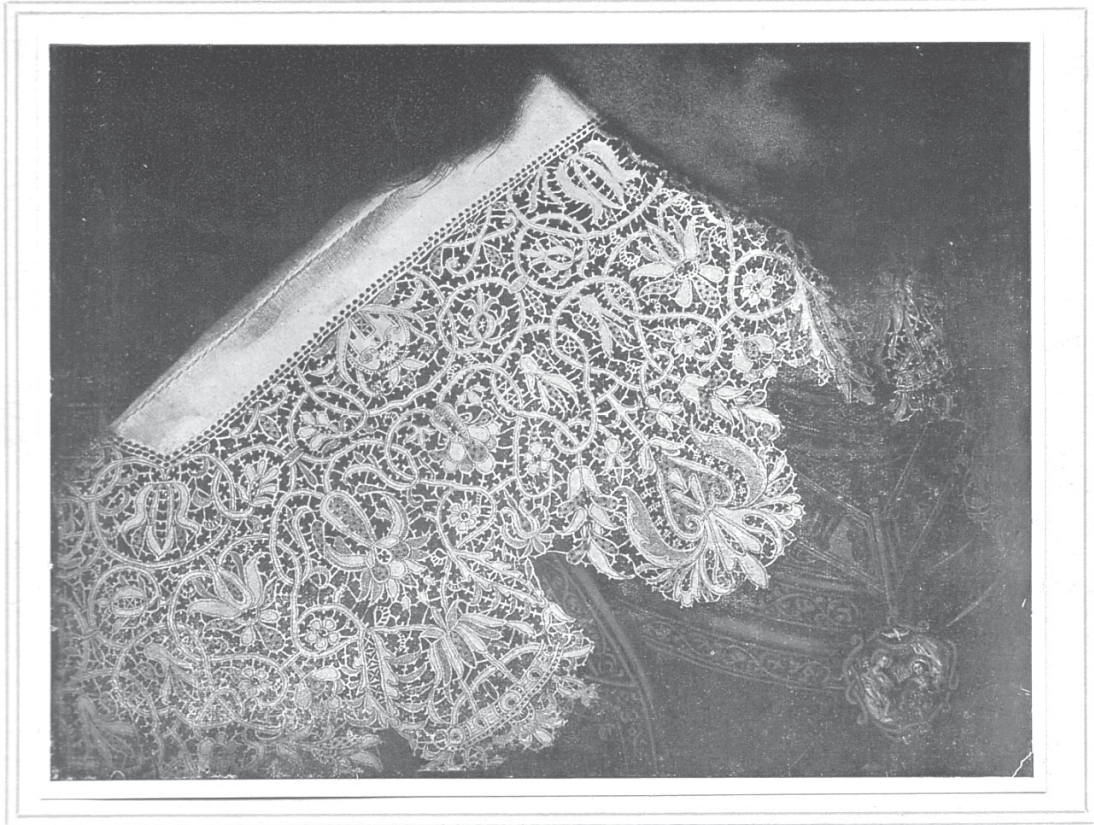


No. 250 — Ruff and bodice trimming of *punto in aria*.

Portrait of Anne of Austria. 1610. Uffizi, Florence. Photo. Alinari.



necessaries to the privileged classes, and took its place with pearls, ermine, brocade, embroidery, and examples of the goldsmith's art. Marie de' Medici seems to be prouder of her lace than of any other ornament she wears (Nos. 248, 249).



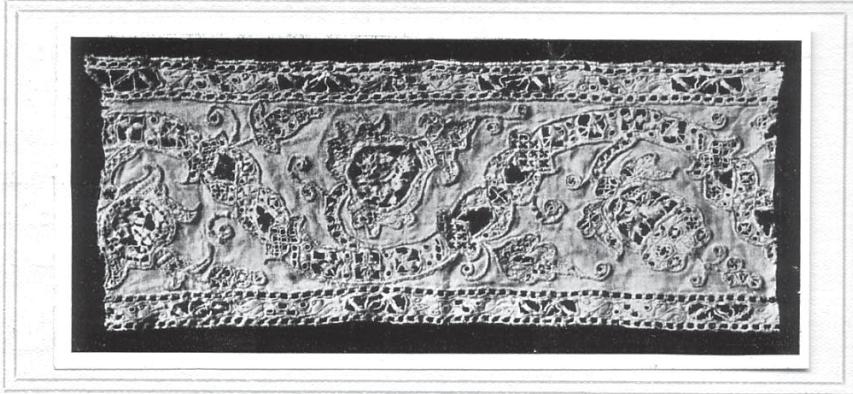
No. 251 — Collar of *punto in aria*.  
Detail of portrait of Carlo Emanuele, Duke of Savoy (middle of XVI  
century), by G. Garzoni. Uffizi, Florence.



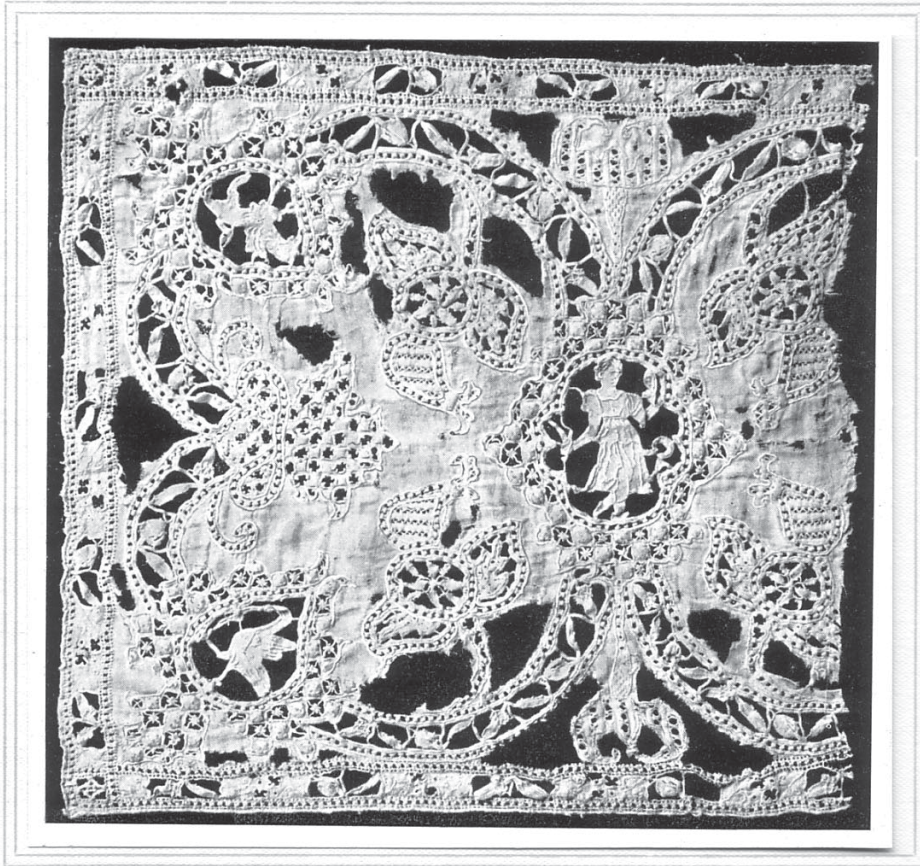
The new work may have been inspired by those admirable white embroideries in which we find insertions of medallions, ornaments, coats of arms, flowers and figures in *punto in aria*. One Venetian family possesses a table-cloth adorned with diagonal strips and a wide border which seems to me the most perfect and sumptuous work of this description I have ever seen (No. 252). Satin-stitch outlined with a little cord alternates with curl-stitch and *reticello* in the graceful roses which enframe the strips; in the larger voids of the cut linen is a beautiful design of *punto in*



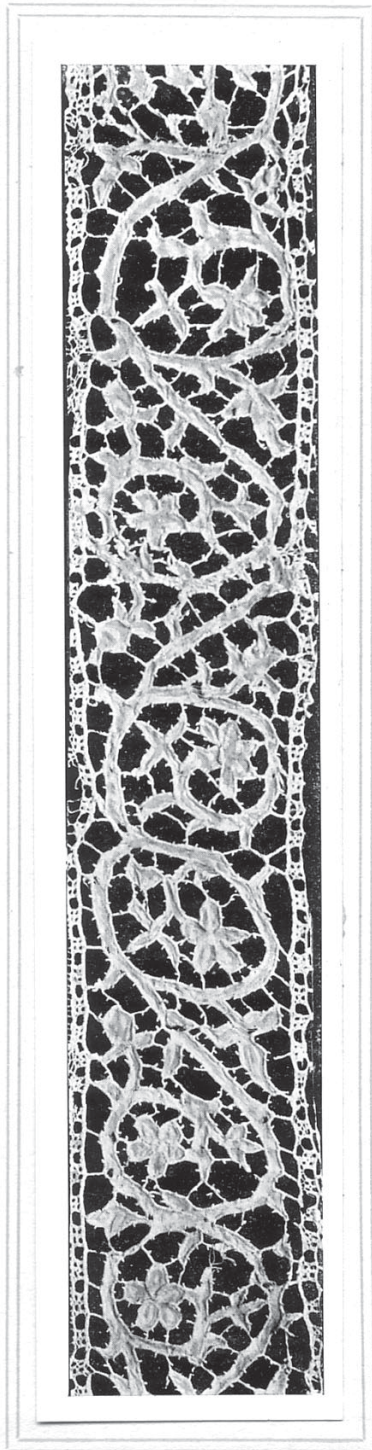
No. 252 -- XVI century. Table-cover of ivory-tinted linen, with diagonal strips and border embroidered in curl and satin stitches combined with *reticello* and *punto in aria*. Edged with macramé fringe with figures. Errera, Venice.



No. 253 — XVI century. Border with embroidery, *reticello*, and *punto in aria*. Rucellai, Florence.



No. 254 — XVI-XVII century. Fragment of embroidery, *reticello*, and *punto in aria*. The complete design showed a quadrilobe of linen (outlined by the *reticello* insertion) with figure of dancing-girl in centre, leaves, flowers, and other devices in *punto in aria*, *lasis*, and little cords. Here and there the linen is too much worn to show the design clearly. Guggenheim, Venice.



No. 255 — Cut linen embroidery from a design for *punto in aria*. Church of S. Pantaleone, Venice.

*aria*; numerous perforations and open-work stitches give lightness to the rich composition: round the edge runs a fine macramé fringe with little figures here and there. The table cloth is of white linen, and the embroidery in a very fine warm ivory thread, but neither description nor reproduction can give any idea of the harmonious beauty of this most marvellous piece of work.

Other examples of this sort of embroidery (Nos. 252, 253) are found not infrequently with figures, flowers, animals, and ornaments executed in *punto in aria*, to give lightness to rich embroidery on white linen. Perhaps Vecellio intended his fifth book as a guide to this special sort of work, for he offers it to the usual « most virtuous ladies » for *punto in aria*, *punto tagliato* or *reticello* done on cambric or Rheims linen or on any other kind of linen »<sup>(1)</sup>.

The latter half of the XVI century saw the invasion of design by a fanciful spirit, which sought inspiration in all the beautiful objects by which Venetian women were surrounded. Aided sometimes by embroidery, lace was made to reproduce the pomegranates and artichokes proper to brocades and cut-velvets, the friezes of carved or painted chests, filigree, wrought-iron, and carved ivories. With unerring precision, the needle traces designs which, repudiating geometric conventions, delight in scrolls, branches, leaves, flowers, fruits, little birds and human figures. Sometimes our lace-makers found inspiration in such things as intricate branches of coral and seaweed, and the spirals of shells and other marine objects, though they did not fall into

(1) *Corona delle nobili et virtuose donne*. Libro quinto. (Venetia, appresso Cesare Vecellio. Reproduction Ongania, 1891). *Rensa* was the linen made at Rheims. It was so fine and so highly esteemed that when Amedeo VI of Savoy visited Paris in 1376, the Queen of France gave him some sheets of Rheims linen, and the robes of the Doges of Venice were made of *rensa*.