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THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN
CLUB
VOLUME 5 NUMBER 2
1921

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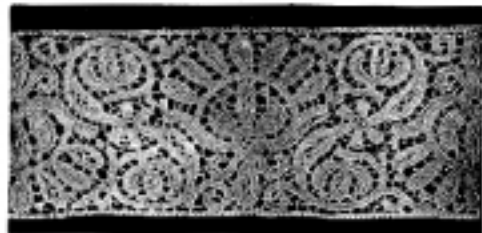
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BULLETIN OF THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB

VOLUME V

NUMBER II

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DETAIL FROM THE COVER BELONGING TO MRS. ALBERT BLUM



AN "OUVRAGE DE POINT COUPPE"

A COVER of unusually fine filet and cutwork of the sixteenth century, with many details very closely resembling patterns in the book of Frederic Vinciolo (published 1587), is shown in the accompanying illustrations. It is in the collection of Mrs. Albert Blum.

Between the squares of netting are oblong strips of linen lawn which are embroidered with cutwork and are joined at their ends by smaller squares of reticello of very fine, firm workmanship and delicate drawing. The linen is fine and both that and the embroidery suggest the work that is more often found in France than in Italy or Spain.

The thread of which the filet is made is of a finely spun and rather wiry quality, and each square is bordered by a row of large meshes in which every third thread passes around the preceding two, forming a loose cluster—a rather unusual arrangement.

The bands of linen and the reticello squares contain several devices which appear more significant than mere patterns for an embroiderer, although perhaps only one more example of the custom which was so prevalent during the Renaissance and the seventeenth century of using the symbols of political or religious allegiances as ornament in textiles and other forms of decorative art.

The fifty-nine oblong pieces of linen which separate the filet squares are in two designs; one which has for its principal characteristic a globe at each end, and the other design having a lily, like the Lily of France or the Florentine lily, in the corresponding positions. They are worked in fine cutwork, eyelet work and an outlining stitch (a whipped back-stitch). In between these devices are stars, squares and eyelet work that seem more purely for ornament.

Philip II of Spain (1527–1598) used a globe as his device. His third wife was the French princess, Elizabeth of Valois (1545–1568) whom he married in 1559. She was the daughter of Henry II of France and his wife Catherine de' Medici.

The Queen Catherine de' Medici was a great lover of needlework, and caused Frederic Vinciolo the Venetian to come to Paris in order to make designs for lace and embroidery for her; and when she died, among her belongings were found almost a thousand squares of *réseuil* similar to those shown in the second part of Vinciolo's book.

If one chose to believe that this lovely cover had been made at about the time of that marriage, it would account for such a combination of emblems: the double-headed eagle and globe for King Philip, and the fleur de lys for his French Queen, as well as the monogram of her parents. At least such surmises may be the excuse for various pleasant day-dreams.

One apparent discrepancy might be that the patterns of Vinciolo, which so closely resemble many of the designs in this cover, were not published until 1587, twenty-odd years after the time of the marriage, but then, again, the designs may have been in use for many years before being published.

The designs in the reticello squares may be divided as follows:

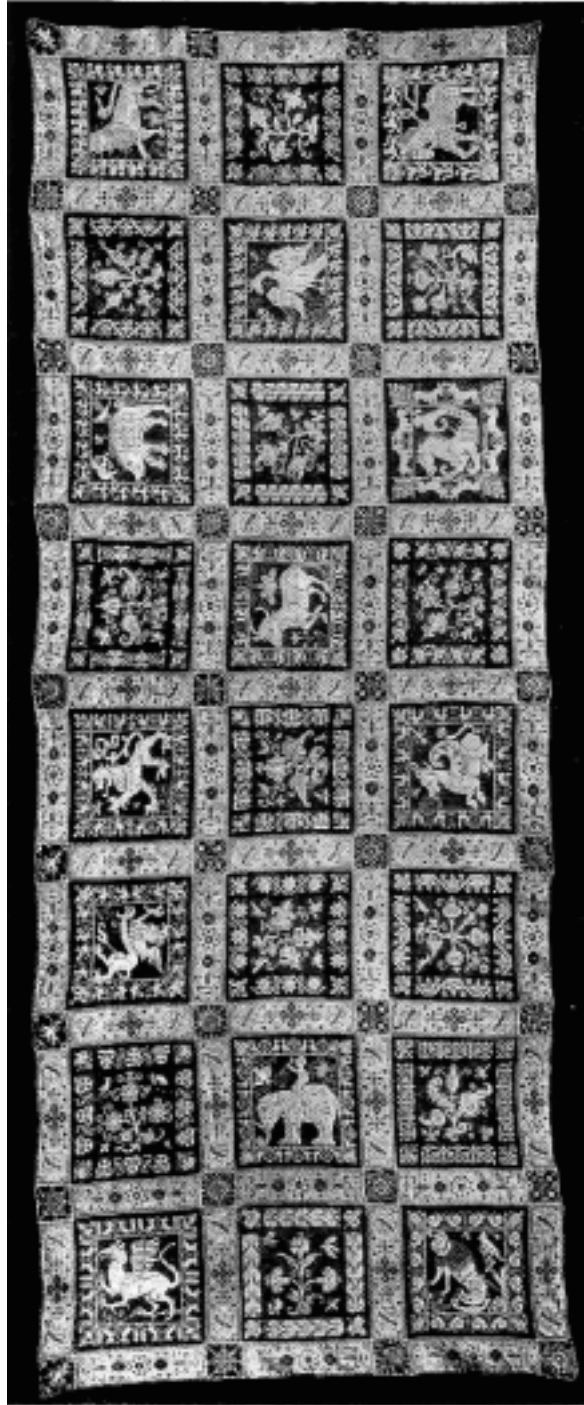
The crowned double-headed eagle of the Holy Roman Empire appears in four squares.

A square with a monogram composed of the letter H and reversed C's (such as one finds in the apartments of Henry II of France and his wife Catherine de' Medici), surrounded by fleurs de lys—eight squares.

A design composed of a six-pointed star formed by two superposed triangles (often called the seal of Solomon), surrounded by a wreath of pomegranate-like forms and with little fleurs de lys in the four corners—eight squares. A five-pointed star was used as *impresa* by Mar-



DETAIL FROM THE COVER BELONGING TO MRS. BLUM



COVER IN "RESEUIL" AND "POINT COUPPE" BELONGING TO MRS. ALBERT BLUM

guerite of Valois, sister of Elizabeth, afterward married to Henry IV of France.

A letter S as the center and four pomegranate forms in the surrounding reticello work is the design of eight squares.

The eight remaining squares are filled by a design which suggests the rays that surround a sacred monogram on a chalice veil.

As to the designs in the squares of filet—*réseuil*—only one of those in this cover appears in Vinciolo's book—the griffin with the waving tail—¹ but various others, such as the spotted boar, who seems to have been a great favorite, and the saddle-horse and the elephant, may be seen in other covers of the period.

M. H.

¹ Frontispiece.





FISHING BOATS AT BEER, DEVONSHIRE

A LACE-MAKER'S PILGRIMAGE IN DEVON

BY MABEL FOSTER BAINBRIDGE

DEVON is delightful from whatever point of view it is approached, but most fascinating of all to one on a lace pilgrimage. Our Mecca was a particular little village, off the railroad, off the beaten path, but on the sea. Jack Rabbitt drove us over from the nearest train stop, some mile and a half, and we reached our inn just at tea time.

This is a lace pilgrimage, but to slight that tea, which was repeated every day of our visit, would put you quite out of harmony with our sojourn. Bodies of lobsters perched invitingly on a large platter (each guest was expected to consume the meat of an entire shell-fish), a generous bowl of luscious strawberries, another of Devon's famous clotted cream, bread cut delightfully thin and spread with unsalted butter, our pots of steaming tea, and last, but first in importance, our charming gracious hostesses from whose every act emanated kindness and hospitality. We left the hour of supper with them, and were delightfully surprised to have it set at half after nine. They hated to have us miss the sunset and twilight, and it was still light until nearly ten!

Tea finished, we set out to inspect the town, which consists chiefly of a long street between clay cliffs. This Devon coast is very rugged, and red and gray cliffs extend straight to the water's edge, broken here and there by little beaches and harbors. On one side of this main street runs a little stream with a pump every so often where one may see women filling their pitchers with water, and one another's ears with gossip. The stream comes from a spring a short distance inland, and is the water used to drink. The street is good, bordered with the tortuous little sidewalks one so often finds in villages both English and continental, made of small cobblestones set upright, so that one walks on a sea of little points. Most of the houses are right on the street and seem to nestle close as for protection. When one leaves the village a bit there are plenty of charming thatched-roof cottages set in dainty gardens.

Two and only two industries flourish here: the men fish and eke out a very precarious living, and women make bobbin lace. The boats go out at night, and come in early in the morning, to lie, as though posing, on the beach all day, with their painted sails rigged in a queer square style that is extremely picturesque. Often the nets are spread on the sand to dry and be mended by the old men who have outlived their usefulness as active fishermen.

They make simply Honiton or Devon lace in this village, although some of the adjoining villages are copying the Italian laces, which seems a pity as not too much good Devon lace is put on the market. For those to whom bobbin lace is a mystery a description of the making will not come amiss. They use a very large round pillow solidly packed with hay, on to which they pin their pattern or pricking. The patterns were originally parchment, but at the present time a heavy paper or cardboard has been substituted for the old sheepskin. The worker is guided by lines of pin holes which indicate the pattern. The bobbins are wound, attached by pins, and the work begins. Every hole demands a pin. The bobbins, Devon "sticks," are used in pairs or Devon "couples," the couple that serve as weavers are known as "runners," and those that hang straight, and through which the runners weave as "passives."

A little maid whom I'd met in a London lace school did the honors of her native village, and we were most graciously received in the tiny homes. The industry here, and generally, is a cottage industry. After the housework, the pillow. Under Dorothy's guidance, I saw enough

workers and work to judge with whom it would be wise to cast in my lot. Several workers boasted certificates and medals won at the St. Louis Exposition. I made arrangements for lessons, and the winding of my bobbins or "sticks."

Several reels in which pegs are arranged to hold the skein of thread, and which have a little hole where one inserts the bobbin to be wound, were at my disposal. I chose to wind on the turn of a dear old lady of eighty-seven. She lived in a little house of four rooms, two above and two below, and still made a pretense of gaining her livelihood with her bobbins. On account of past favors, our kind hostesses, who owned her little cottage, gave it to her for a shilling a week, and generally sent her in a hot dinner at noon for good measure!

I wound and she told of the old days when she went to London in a sailing vessel. It took five days, which was exciting to be sure, but the thrilling part was the return trip by train coach, and the last bit in a donkey cart! The second event in her life was working on Queen Victoria's wedding gown. She was very young but any child old enough to "throw a stick" was allowed to do a stitch or two. The villagers never allow one to forget that to them belongs the honor of having made the entire gown.

Bobbins wound, I went for my lesson. My teacher, a maiden lady, lived with her very old mother in a tiny cottage. The lower floor consists of two rooms, one, kitchen, dining and living room combined, the other, a sort of work room. This living room was scrupulously clean, a tiny bit of a fire always burned in the grate over which hung and sung an iron kettle. Opposite was an old Welsh dresser with its lines of plates and cups. I regret that I never had a peep into the drawers and cupboards below. The old mother had attended lace school at six years; after she had learned her craft, she was apprenticed for a year and a half without pay. It was the custom for the girls to acquire their 3 R's as they could, but fortunately for her, the vicar's wife held evening school for the lace-makers.

Someone has written that a worker does the same pattern all her life, which statement the old workers keenly resent. One showed me in repudiation a large drawer, filled with parchments she had worked on. It is true that they almost never have a complete pattern of anything large. A berth for instance is divided into sections, which are given out to different workers, the parts being joined by the local dealer. In this

way an order is quickly executed, also the workers are kept from owning a complete pattern, so a purchaser must always buy through the dealer.

The shops of the local dealers are quaint. One sees a window filled with lace, but on entering discovers butter and cheese to be the chief commodities sold. A red-cheeked woman with a clean white apron stands knife in hand to cut your bit of cheese or butter. Tucked away in a small box under the counter is the rest of her stock of lace. Another window



STREET IN BEER, DEVONSHIRE

that portended a considerable shop, we found on entering to be built into the general living room, where we were invited to sit with the family, and look the lace over. The people are naturally very courteous, and unlike so many shops on the continent, a visitor, whether a purchaser or not, is ushered out with the same politeness.

These people of South Devon are not altogether English. Many French Huguenots escaped persecution on this hospitable shore, and some writers think it is to these people that Devon owes her lace industry. Others believe that it is to the Flemish workers who came in 1662, and that these lace makers taught the English. Both name and feature indicate also Spanish blood. In the old days, when smuggling was an

important industry, a Spanish vessel was wrecked on these shores and the crew settled in this village. Nature seems to have designed this coast for the use of smugglers. It is riddled with caves not visible at high water, but safe and dry. There still hang some of the chains by means of which the smugglers used to draw themselves and their wares into their cosy caves.

Mornings, I worked with my teacher, and what joy it was to see the figures grow under her guidance; such skill and patience! This woman who had never been in a train, had never heard more than the echo of the world outside her village, was a perfect craftsman. She disdained all the slack short cuts to completion, and did her work with the thoroughness of the true artist. Her quaint Devon dialect was fascinating. Everything abbreviated, the pillow was "pill," open work "op," and pronouns always reversed. She would ask me, "If her was goin' to bring he pill this op?" which is to say, "Did I care to come for a lesson that afternoon?" In Devon one never makes lace but is always "at he pill," pill being invariably masculine.

It is to the credit of the workers that the finished product is so clean. It is the height of bad manners for a collector to tell a worker her lace is dirty. The dealer or collector has a skein of new thread always at hand, which she lays across lace of a questionable color. "He do be colored" is sometimes reluctantly admitted, and a word to the wise is sufficient.

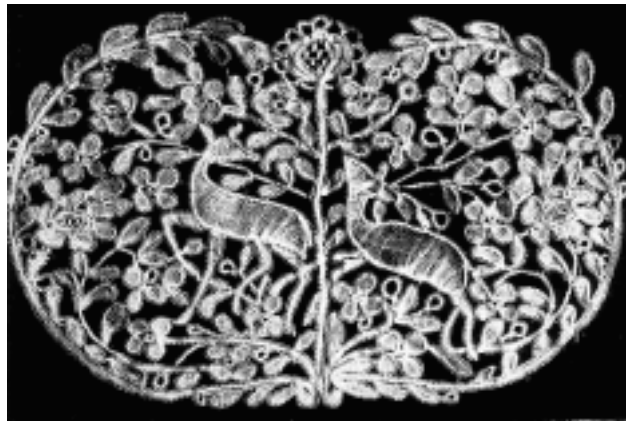
Devonshire lace is best known as Honiton, and derives its name from the dear little village of Honiton which lies deep between the hills a short distance from Exeter, the county seat. The village boasts a single broad street with a few little side lanes, and one still pays a toll to enter!

Exeter has a famous shop in the cathedral close, where are displayed several sorts of lace. Many years ago, the proprietress, a Mrs. Treadwin, wrote an excellent book (now out of print) on Devon lace. She was a very clever woman and her influence did much to elevate and keep alive the industry.

I wanted especially to have a piece of lace made by these women whom I knew and loved, but as their little shops offered nothing that I could use, they duplicated the piece that won the medal at the St. Louis Exposition. Eight women had a hand in the execution and it was some three months before I received the bertha, but it was worth waiting for—a veritable work of art and craftsmanship. The pattern is not typical, but was

drawn by an English lady with the hope of getting the workers away from their shapeless units, exquisitely executed, but miserably drawn.

Back in London after the most delightful sojourn of my life, I regretted, to a woman in a very fashionable lace school, the underpay of the Devon workers. "Why," she contended indignantly, "Miss M—— can always earn tuppence ha' penny an hour,"—and that for perfect work! With the revival of interest in crafts, conditions may change, and, after all, these women must somewhere deep down, experience a joy in reflecting the beauty and peace of their native Devon in perfect handicraft. How many of us in the New World have felt that joy?



MODERN LACE MADE IN DEVONSHIRE
AFTER A DESIGN BY MARIAN
POWYS, A MEMBER OF
THE NEEDLE AND
BOBBIN CLUB



CAP-CROWN, MECHLIN BOBBIN LACE, 18TH CENTURY
FROM THE COLLECTION OF MRS. MCDUGALL HAWKES

LACE CAPS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

IN the Lace Gallery of the Metropolitan Museum of Art is a special exhibition of lace cap-crowns and lappets dating from the end of the seventeenth through the eighteenth century, accompanied by a series of engravings covering the same period and showing ladies wearing caps of the different types fashionable during those years.

The work of the French and Flemish lace makers never came nearer to the miraculous than in the making of these exquisite accessories for women's dress. Though the style of the caps changed from time to time

the lace trimmings (the lappets, crown, etc.), seem to have kept their original form. Just what devices the ladies of the sixteen-eighties and nineties used to keep their tall starched and wired frills straight and up-standing we do not know, but among the articles on Arts and Trades published in 1771 by M. de Garsault is one on "*L'Art de la Lingère.*"

The author observes that the *Lingères* "form a most important group in the community, as they not only sell linen, hemp and cotton cloth and lace, but they also make up these materials into garments that are made both for necessity and cleanliness as well as for luxury, which clothe us from the cradle to the grave—and even after! It is the *Lingère* who decorates tables, beds, and altars. . . . "We owe our knowledge of this art to Mademoiselle Merlu, formerly forewoman of Madame du Liège, one of the most famous *Lingères* of Paris, and who is now a *Maîtresse Lingère* in the rue Taranne."

Lists are given for a trousseau, for a layette, for a church, with directions as to how the various articles should be made.

The trousseau would seem to us to consist mainly of caps, and although at the time these directions were being published, it was almost a hundred years since the furore for the lace head-dresses with the tall wired *Fon-tanges* in front, and lappets behind, still the cap with its crown and lappets flourished prodigiously.

The following list is given under the words:

"ÉTAT D'UN TROUSSEAU,
POUR LA TÊTE"

- "One dressing-table cover for town, in muslin or lace.
- One dressing-table cover for the country, in muslin.
- Six comb cases of fine dimity of Troyes.
- Six pin-cushion covers of the same.
- Forty-eight towels
- Twenty-four aprons for the toilette.
- Six peignoirs of which four should be trimmed with fine muslin and two with lace.
- Thirty-six face cloths of rough material to remove rouge.
- Thirty-six face cloths of doubled muslin to remove powder.
- One head-dress with tucker and pleated fichu trimmed with *point d'Alençon*.

A similar set of *point d'Angleterre* and one of *vraie Valenciennes*.

One head-dress of the kind called *Battant l'œil* of embroidered malines net for *négligé*.

Six simple fichus in sprigged muslin trimmed with lace for *négligé*.

Twelve fichus of muslin.

Twelve large stitched caps trimmed with narrow lace for the night.

Twelve stitched caps with two rows of ruffling in muslin and lace for the night.

Twelve handsomer ones for day time in case of indisposition.

Twelve bands of linen for wrapping the hair under a night cap.

Twelve large muslin night caps.

Six large caps of plain net for daytime.

Twelve pillow cases of which six are trimmed with muslin and six with lace.

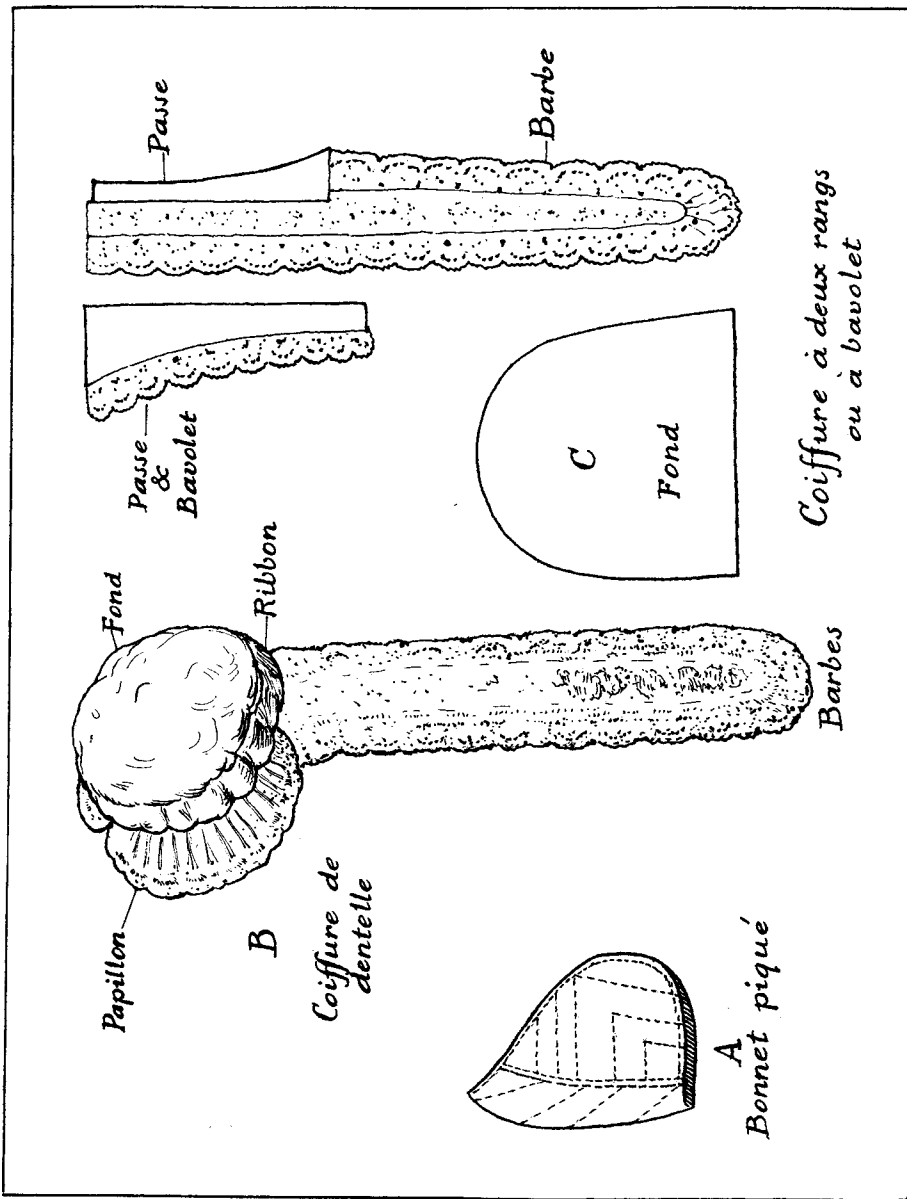
Six caps of stitched piqué of medium size."

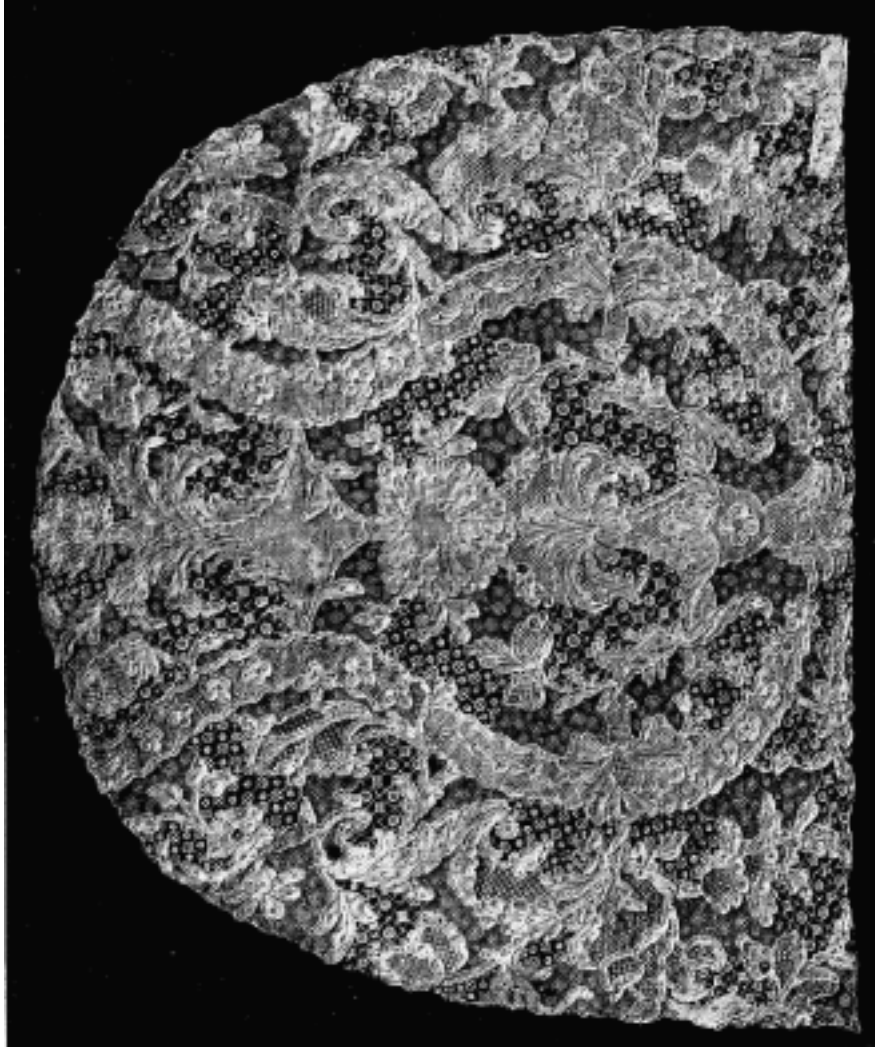
Then follow descriptions of how these caps should be made. The directions are meant to be complete but are confusing to us because they take for granted the knowledge of the very definite customs and traditions which everyone knew at the time the article was written.

We are told that the little close-fitting stitched cap should be made with linen outside, a fustian lining and cotton wadding between the two, carefully stitched and quilted, and that this cap is the foundation to which all other head-dresses are attached. Fig. A.

The "*Coëffure de dentelle*" (fig. B) has its ruffle or *papillon* (probably called that because it was made a little like two wings, wider on the sides, and narrowing to a point on top of the head) its crown surrounded by a puffing of ribbon, and its hanging lappets behind. It was to be attached to the stitched cap mentioned above, and each pleat was to be carefully laid and pinned with tiny pins, called *camions*, and wired with fine silk-covered wire. When this carefully pleated *papillon* or ruffle was all mounted, then the crown was fastened on to the *bonnet piqué*, in such a way as to cover the inside edge of the ruffles, and so as to leave none of the *bonnet piqué* exposed. A ribbon was puffed around the edge of the crown.

The name *Battant l'œil* is rather intriguing—we wonder if it means the eyes of the wearer or the beholder that were to be struck by it. But





CAP-CROWN, ALENÇON NEEDLE POINT 18TH CENTURY
FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

the only explanation given is that it is made in two parts, and that, for the under part with the lappet, an ell and a quarter will be needed, and for the upper piece, three quarters of an ell making altogether two and a half ells. At the back of the lappets one should add an ell of footing, and they should end squarely at the bottom and be three inches wide. The crown should be of net.

The article does not say whether this supply of caps was supposed to last a bride for the rest of her life, but it would seem so to us of the twentieth century when our crowded life takes us so constantly away from home.

THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS

BY LEILA MECHLIN

AS Robert Louis Stevenson said in one of his poems:
 “The world is so full of a number of things,
 I’m sure we should all be as happy as kings,”

but unluckily the multitude of interests and activities to-day, all good in themselves, seem oftentimes to bring confusion and weariment rather than joy.

With the purpose of unifying the art interests of the country and binding them together the American Federation of Arts was formed at a Convention held in Washington in 1909. As Senator Root pointed out at that time the value of team work has in these later days been so repeatedly demonstrated that it has become axiomatic. Only by pulling together can the best results be obtained. A great telephone system would be utterly useless without a central office. A national art organization was needed in order to establish connection with the various art associations throughout the United States.

Through the courtesy of the American Institute of Architects, the American Federation of Arts only a few months after it was organized was given office room in the historic Octagon, designed by Thornton, the architect of the United States Capitol, as a residence for Colonel Tayloe, built in 1800 and occupied temporarily in 1814 by President and Mrs. Madison and fortunately protected from the ruthless remodeler by friendly ghosts which were supposed to haunt the mansion. It is therefore still standing unspoiled on the corner of 18th Street and

New York Avenue, with its high-walled garden—an interesting example of Georgian architecture.

Communication was established through this office with art museums and associations in all parts of the United States. Two hundred and sixty-five of these have become affiliated and are styled chapters, including all of the art museums in the United States. These send delegates each year to a convention held, usually in Washington but sometimes elsewhere, when for three days problems concerning the development of art and the spread of its appreciation are discussed by those having expert knowledge and exceptional experience. At these meetings East meets West, North joins with South on a common footing and in a great universal cause. The little struggling museum or association on the Great Plains comes in contact with the strong successful museum or association in the great thriving cities. Both have much to give and something to learn.

Through this federation of art organizations, it has become possible to secure unified effort along any special line when need required. Occasionally some great issue touching art comes up in Congress or confronts the nation. At such time the national organization serving as a channel for widespread public opinion can effectively exert strong influence.

Soon after the American Federation of Arts was formed a request came to it from Fort Worth, Texas, for an exhibition of paintings. The request in previous years had been made to various professional art organizations, invariably without result, it being the business of none to send out traveling collections. This seemed to open a legitimate field of endeavor which should be helpful in increasing knowledge and appreciation. The exhibition was assembled and sent to Fort Worth where it was shown in an improvised gallery in the Public Library. The American Federation of Arts has sent a similar exhibition to Fort Worth every year since, and within three years a regular exhibition circuit was formed in Texas including four or five of the leading cities.

This year the American Federation of Arts has had on the road no less than forty-six traveling exhibitions, which have been shown in 130 cities and towns from New England to California, Michigan to Texas. These exhibitions are widely varied in character. The great exhibition of War Portraits assembled by the National Art Committee of New York to serve as a nucleus for a National Portrait Gallery at Washington is being

circulated under the management of the American Federation of Arts. The Metropolitan Museum and the Chicago Art Institute have both generously lent collections from their permanent possessions and the artists also have contributed. The American Water Color Society's rotary exhibition, established before the American Federation of Arts came into existence, has for some years past been sent out under the Federation's auspices. But these exhibitions are not only of paintings. There are prints, photographs, etchings, color reproductions, designs, textiles, handicraft and small bronzes. In an effort to induce persons of moderate means to take art into their homes, the American Federation of Arts has this year been circulating three exhibitions of prints, chiefly in color, reproducing paintings by the foremost artists, which are purchasable from fifty cents to twenty dollars.

The Federation has also, with this same purpose in mind, established a new service this year and is sending out portfolios to individuals remote from art centers from which selections for purchase may be made. To demonstrate the significance of art in industry it has circulated this year two collections of textiles, American-designed and made, one of printed fabrics and the other of silks and brocades. It has also circulated a Children's Exhibition made up of paintings, prints, sculpture, illustrated books and art objects of special interest to little citizens. These exhibitions are all circuited and managed from the Washington office and vary in cost to the places securing them from \$10.00 to \$300.00, according to the value of the works and hence the amount of insurance requisite.

To meet the great need of instruction on art matters, the American Federation of Arts inaugurated shortly after it was formed the illustrated typewritten lecture, which could be readily sent about by parcel post or express at a nominal sum, and be used in any place that could furnish a stereopticon, an operator and a reader. The first lectures were on American Art and were tried on Washington audiences. They proved so successful and satisfactory that others were gradually added. Miss Frances Morris of the Metropolitan Museum of Art has most generously contributed one on Lace which for several years has been constantly in demand and greatly appreciated. Mr. Bashford Dean of the Metropolitan Museum has contributed one on Armor, Mr. Bryson Burroughs one on Tendencies of the Nineteenth Century French Painting and Mr. Charles O. Cornelius one on American Decorative Arts of the XVII and XVIII

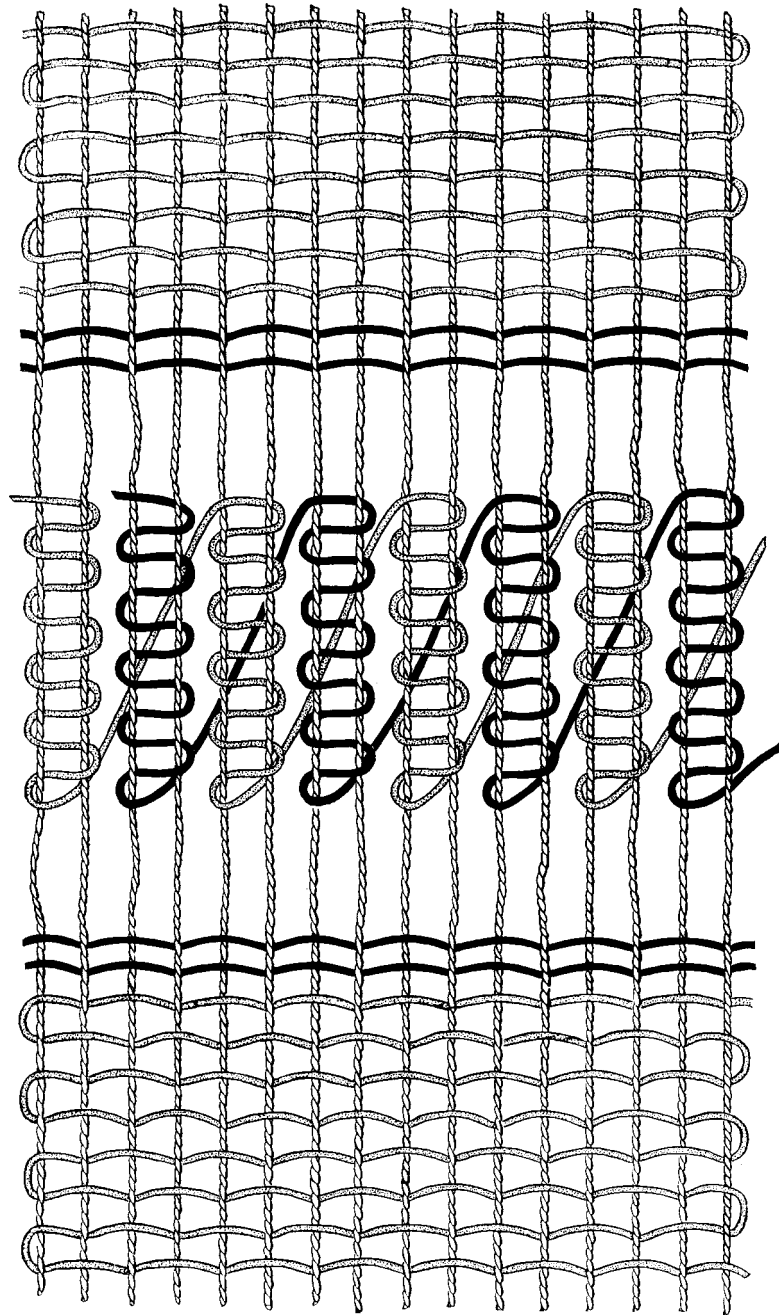
Centuries, to name but a few. The available lectures now number thirty-three, and this year one hundred and seventeen engagements were made.

With the purpose of keeping its chapters and members in touch with one another and with activities in the general field of art, *The American Magazine of Art* was established, at first under the name of *Art and Progress*, and has been published monthly since October, 1909. The endeavor has been to make it a general reader's magazine, upheld to a professional standard, to keep it simple and therefore inexpensive, to set forth those things that are most significant and to treat art within its pages invariably as a factor in every-day life as well as something very precious. Its circulation has steadily grown until it now approximates six thousand. The American Federation of Arts also publishes the *American Art Annual*, the directory of Art in America, founded by Miss Florence N. Levy.

Not least valuable of all the services rendered by the Federation is that which it is able to perform by direct contact with individuals. To the main office in Washington come innumerable letters from those seeking information in all parts of the country.

Within the last two years the American Federation has established offices in New York at the Metropolitan Museum through the courtesy of the Museum, in charge of an extension secretary, Mr. Richard F. Bach, who is also a member of the Museum staff, and a western office at the University in Lincoln, Nebraska, through the courtesy of the University, in charge of Professor Grummann, the director of the University's Art Department. These both strengthen its arm and extend its reach.

Perhaps at this time more than any other time in the history of our nation it is essential that the things of the spirit should be emphasized. Art has a distinct place in the life of the nation as well as in the life of the individual, and if we are to make permanent the civilization which we are striving to establish, we must pass on to others as widely as we can both a knowledge and a love for art, not merely as a costly product, as something rare and valuable and apart, but as discoverable in the so-called little things, through beauty of design and workmanship, in other words, a reverence for beauty and a power to extract joy from sheer loveliness, which after all goes far toward producing good citizenship, and creating freedom in the largest sense of the word.



METHOD OF MAKING A LENO STRIPE IN TAPESTRY
COURTESY OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

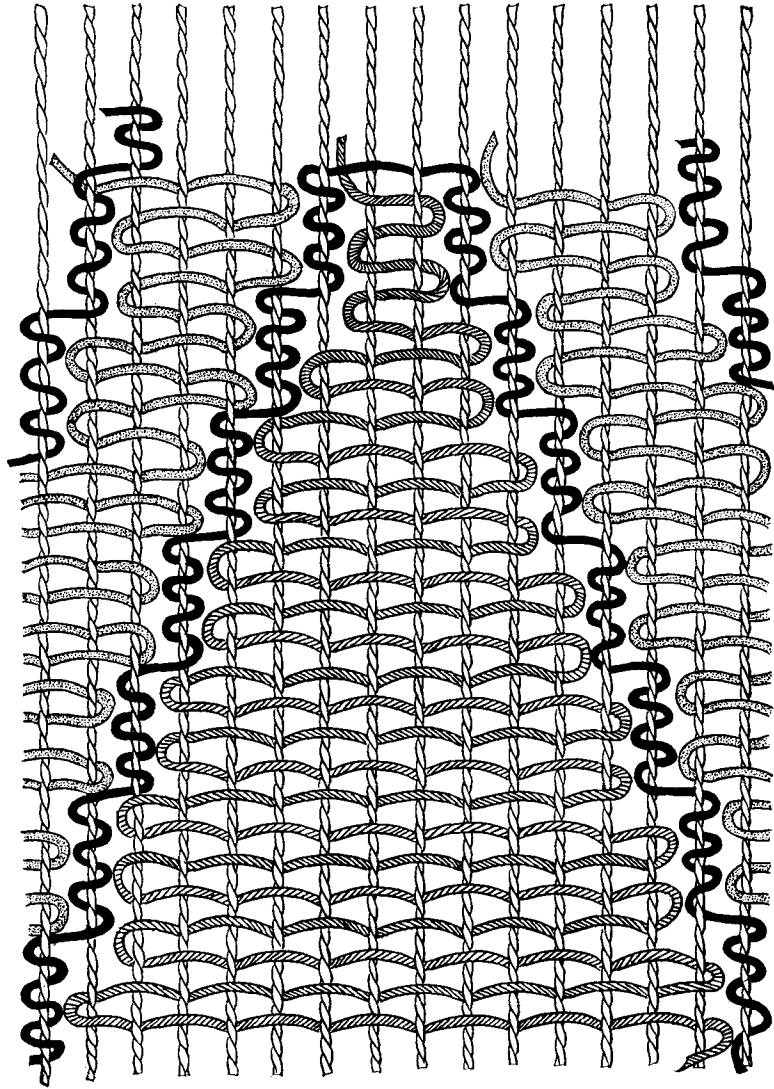


PORTION OF A TAPESTRY BELT

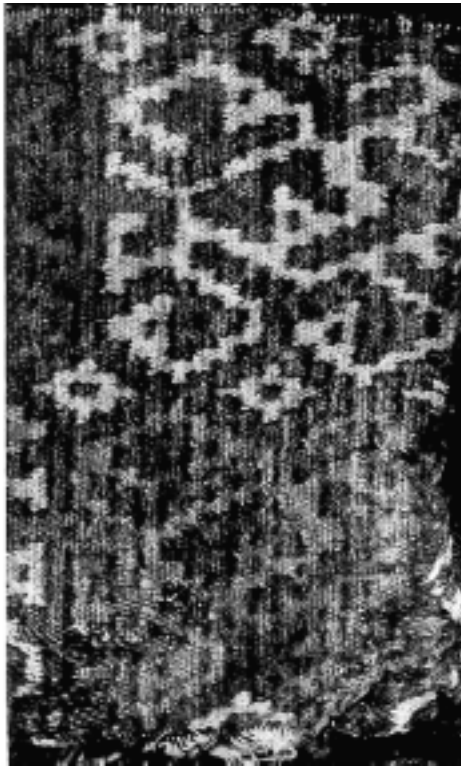
DIAGRAMS OF PERUVIAN WEAVES

THE Club is indebted to the American Museum of Natural History and to Mr. M. D. C. Crawford for the courtesy extended in permitting the reproduction of the accompanying plates from Mr. Crawford's article on Peruvian Textiles published in the Anthropological Papers of the Museum (Vol. XII, Part IV, 1916).

These diagrams will be of value to those of our members who weave, as the interlocking weft, the method of making the Leno stripe, and that of outlining motives by wrapping the warp threads with an additional color suggest interesting possibilities.



METHOD OF OUTLINING THE FIGURES WITH BLACK WEFT
WRAPPED AROUND THE WARP



TAPESTRY FROM NAZCA IN WHICH
ALL WEFTS INTERLOCK

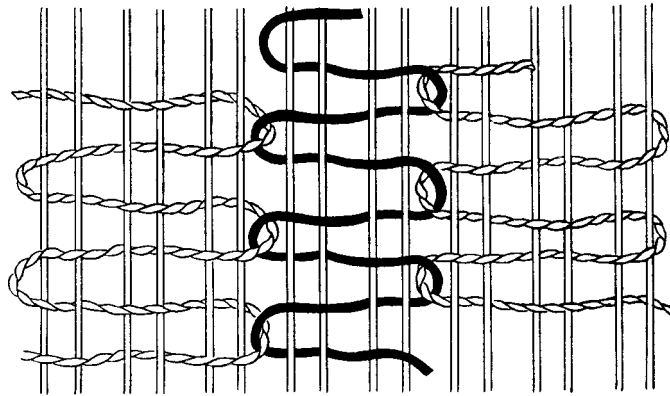


DIAGRAM SHOWING INTERLOCKING WEFT

A PEEP INTO SERICULTURE

BY GERTRUDE WHITING

WHILE we were on a holiday in Italy a few years ago, there came an unseasonable frost that set back the mulberry trees. So the silkworm raisers' children were busy day and night trying to find enough mulberry leaves to feed the seemingly insatiable worms. These creatures were kept on trays, arranged one above another, in an evenly heated room, where their guardians chatted and ate polenta, while they took turns in watching the open fire by day and night, and in removing the stems and veins of the leaves—tough parts discarded by the fastidious worms. The steady crunch of these myriads of little creatures was distinctly audible!

After a period of gorging themselves, the worms are ready to hibernate, so to speak. A number of boxes about a foot square, but without fronts, are arranged upon the shelves where the trays have been spread; and twigs are stuck into the compartments in somewhat diagonal upright positions. The silkworms attach themselves to the boughs and, working, from the outside inwards, spin themselves into cocoons. These are white, pale or orange yellow, according to whether the inhabitant be blond, auburn or brunette.

Fortune favored us, for we were able after the cocoons were complete to arrange to have our afternoon tea upon the cocoon buyer's lawn, where we could watch the peasants and their children in their sabots, clambering down the steep, tortuous little round cobble-stoned paths, with buckets, baskets, hods and wooden cases full of cocoons upon their heads. These various household containers were emptied into an outspread sheet, which was gathered up by the corners and set upon a large scale. The peasant in question was then paid by weight for his load of cocoons; whereupon he hurried off to refill his bucket or hod.

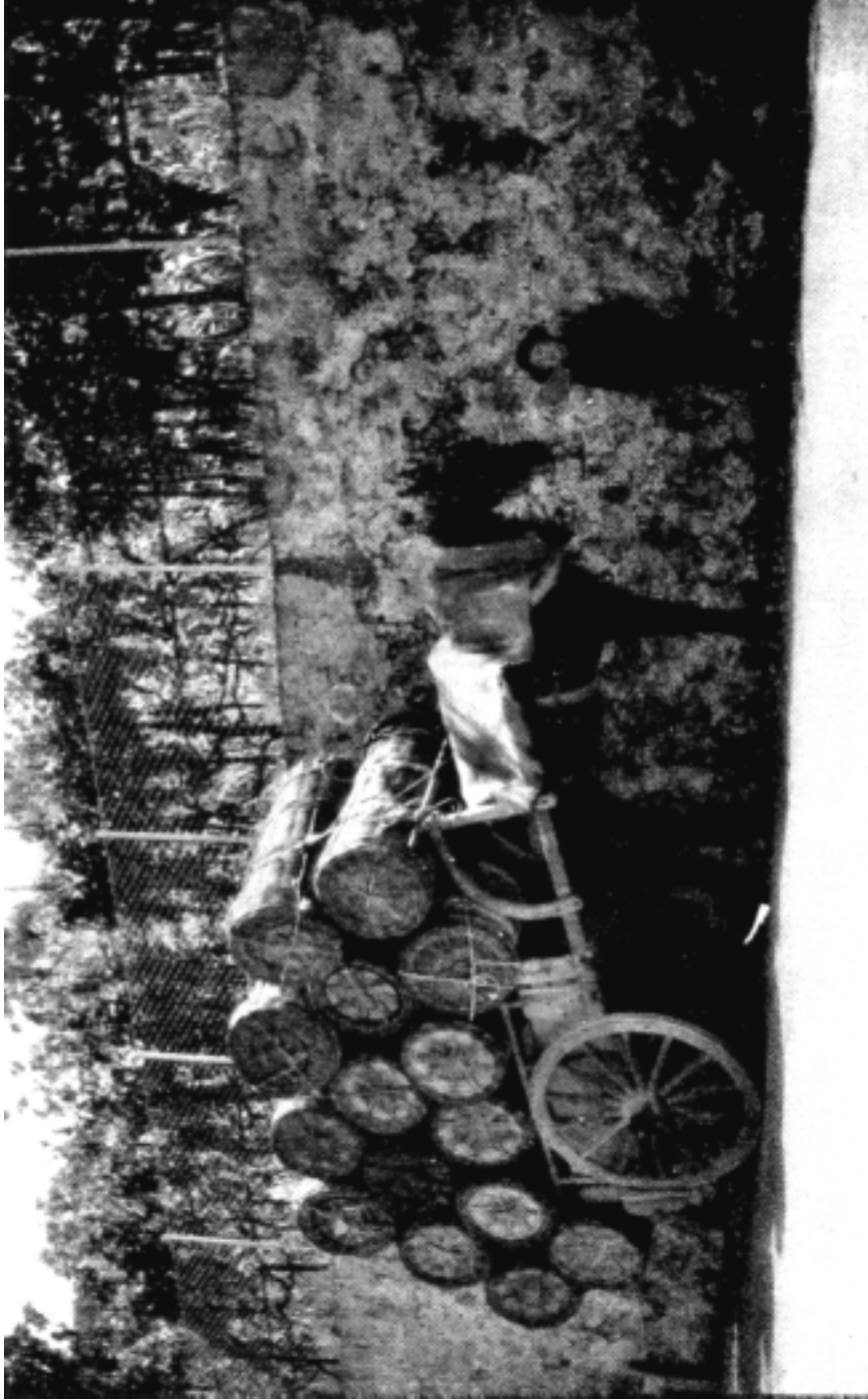
The little elongated glossy balls were next tumbled into great long cylindrical baskets, each holding, I believe, eighty pounds. These were piled mountain high, the baskets lying across from side to side, upon somewhat diminutive carts, drawn by dear dishevelled little donkeys, who in turn were led and prodded by still more diminutive and ragged urchins.

The ponderous baskets were then dumped aboard steamers that carried the unsuspecting silkworms to the executioner's to be electrocuted or cremated in ovens, so that the innocent creatures could not begin to wake up and bite their way out, thus cutting their silky covering into short strands.

At this point the cocoons are thrust into hot water, to loosen them and remove some of the gums. Girls or women with very delicate tactile sense feel for the outer end of the cocoon strand. It is almost imperceptible to the eye. The strands from nine cocoons are thrown over a little wire hook, which guides them together on to a reel, and the precious product is ready to be spun into thread.

Some cocoons are peanut-shaped, instead of being evenly elliptical. This narrow "waist" is undesirable and growers are trying to eliminate it. It is by proper feeding that the wild worm has been cultivated to give more even and less gummy fibre. The Tussah silk that we use for embroidery and lace-making comes from a large semi-wild worm of Manchuria. At Nanking students are experimenting to find the amount of silk produced per unit of food consumed by some twenty-nine different sorts of worm, the results varying from forty-two to one hundred and thirty-five grams of silk per kilogram of leaves, and the amount of silk reeled from different worms from some sixteen to about twenty-eight grams, so careful breeding is indeed important even in sericulture.

Later we had the privilege of sitting in the angle of an L-shaped establishment, where we could watch either the shop end or the manufacturing end. Peasants came to the shop counter for silk, which was weighed out to them. In time they would return with silk woven into the typical Roman blankets. Of course, we could not wait to see these same women come back: but others who had finished their blankets, brought them to our merchant host. Again the silk was weighed—this time to see that the cottage worker had not retained any of it for her own purposes or to sell on the sly. If all were well, she was paid and the blanket was brought



A CART WITH BASKETS FILLED WITH COCOONS

into the manufacturing end of the establishment, around the corner, out of sight of the counter. The blanket was tacked up to the wall and a young girl curry-combed it thoroughly to give it the requisite shaggy surface. Then the finished product was returned to the shop for its final turnover—its sale to you or me.



ALLE BELLE ET VIR-
TVDIOSE DONNE

MATTHIO PAGAN

*Vago volto, occhio schivo, & casto il petto
Arte son vera, afar le Donne belle
Io per ornar, piu la virtu di quelle,
Opre rare, scoprir, sempre affretto.
Havran l'alme fanciulle tal diletto
Dipingendo con l'Ago, quasi Apelle
Con quelle bianche, schiette mani isnelle
Ch'io non so se piu sia il nome o l'effetto.
Penelope, & Aragne nel Thelaro
Stavan sovente molto piu felice
Lucretia fu, nel fil che per li amori.
Simil di voi, ne vi sera mancato
Tesser girlande ch'or tesser vi lice
Ne giamai sia Giardin c'habbia tal fiori.*

*In Venetia per Matthio Pagan, in Frezaria all' Insegna
della Fede MDLIIII.*

—Giardineto Novo di Punto Tagliati



THE GUILD OF THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CRAFTS AT "AMERICA'S MAKING"

BY MRS. ROBERT COLEMAN TAYLOR

THE Guild was gratified to be asked to take part in the great Pageant and Exhibition, "America's Making," and the Committee in charge of the Guild exhibition made every effort to have their room attractive and instructive. The space allotted was small, about 12 by 22 feet. In view of this limited space it was decided to show the work now being done by our foreign-born citizens in the various Community Centres, with some of the older pieces worked there, and with a few still older "inspiration" pieces worked abroad, but to give as much space as was available to work now being done.

Letters were sent out and beautiful work came from Dennison House and Lincoln House, of Boston; Federal Hill House of Providence, the Aquidneck Cottage Industries of Newport; also from the Ukrainian Needlework Guild, Lenox Hill House, Russian Refugee Work Shop, Hamilton House and the Scuola d'Industrie Italiane, of New York City. The Allanstand Cottage Industries sent representative pieces from North Carolina. A few charming towels came from the public-school children of Buffalo. The Flambeau Weavers, the Tawido Looms and the Home-craft Studio of New York City were well represented, while Mrs. John P. Bainbridge sent dainty Colonial embroideries. The work of these groups was a revelation to many of our visitors.

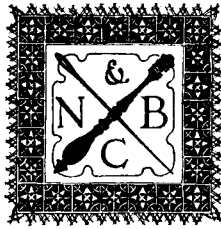
Our method was to exhibit the old pieces attached to the new work, so that the source of inspiration could be seen at a glance. This also demonstrated that the new work maintained the old standards which it was

the design of the Guild to show. This seemed to be appreciated by the thousands who daily passed through the room.

Cases lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art held the smaller pieces. The larger pieces, both old and new, loaned by the coöperating groups or by collectors of rare needlework and textiles, were hung on the walls. The Brooklyn Museum of Art sent valuable embroideries—a Greek wedding costume, a Magyar costume in black and white, charming caps and dolls in peasant costumes. The Brooklyn Museum also lent photographs which were placed with the older embroideries and showed these embroideries as they were worn by the peasants. This gave an added interest to the blouses and bags made by our newest citizens.

In "America's Making" each day was devoted to a racial group. Our Committee decided to follow this program, and had, when possible, workers in the costume of each day's group. The Ukrainian Needlework Guild, the Italian "Scuola" and the Lenox Hill House sent workers in their national costumes. Upon Scotland's day Mr. William Lord Lyall of Passaic and Mr. Constantine, Director of the Textile School of Passaic, sent a loom with a boy in plaids to weave. Miss de Neergaard was at her loom in costume on Sweden's day, and her assistant in costume used an old spinning wheel. Upon the day devoted to the School Districts, school children worked at their own designs. Upon Armistice Day a Red Cross worker, wearing her service medal, knitted socks, and brought back to memory the times when women's hands dropped weaving and embroidery to aid our men in Army and Navy.

We are grateful to every one who contributed time and treasures to make the Guild's exhibition a success. The interest shown by young and old proved that it was a success. One day a colored woman came into our room. She was much impressed and spent a long time looking at the work. Before leaving she gave a last glance around the room and said to me: "My, my. Just see what a needle and thread can do, besides holding you together."



CLUB NOTES

THE Club library is now at the office of Miss Cora McDowell, the Executive Director of the Guild of the Needle and Bobbin Crafts, at 70 Fifth Avenue, where the books may be borrowed by Club members as before—namely for one month free of charge; two cents a day rental thereafter; express charges to be paid by the borrower.

Recent accessions:—

TEXTIL SAMMLUNG IKLÉ, KATALOG, Museum of St. Gallen, Switzerland, 1908. Gift of Mrs. DeWitt Clinton Cohen.

CAUSERIES SUR L'HISTOIRE DE LA DENTELLE, Mme. M. Kéfer-Mali, Brussels, 1913. Gift of the Author.

DENTELLES À FIL CONTINU, First part of LA DENTELLE AUX FUSEAUX, by Mme. L. Paulis. Published by Les Amies de la Dentelle, Brussels, 1921. Gift of the Author.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BOOKS AND REFERENCES ON LACE IN THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM. Gift of the Brooklyn Museum.

LES DENTELLES DE LA SALLE AMÉLIE PIOT MUSÉE D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE DE LA VILLE DE GENÈVE. Par Mlle. Emilie Cherbuliez. Gift of Mrs. DeWitt Clinton Cohen.

PEASANT ART IN ITALY. Special number of the *Studio*, 1913. Gift of Mrs. DeWitt Clinton Cohen.

THE TRAVELING COLLECTION

THE Club's traveling lace collection was shown at the Pennsylvania Museum at Fairmount Park, Philadelphia, during October and part of November. It has recently been enlarged by about twenty cards holding about thirty-five bits of lace, and has been sent to Vassar College—its first stop on a new itinerary.

FIELD NOTES

THE past year has seen a marked increase of interest in lace among our smaller museums. In November the Portland Art Association announced the opening of a new lace room and as well a loan exhibition of laces and textiles with a series of four informal talks on lace by Mrs. Lucy Dodd Ramberg, an enterprise in which one of our members, Mrs. Frederick B. Pratt, was actively interested. This Museum has also recently added to its library a number of standard works on lace.

At Minneapolis the Institute of Arts has received an important gift of Italian laces from the Countess Elizabeth Woodbridge Phelps-Reese who was a close friend of Mrs. Hungerford Pollen the author of "Seven Centuries of Lace," through whose aid the collection was assembled. An illustrated article on this gift was published in the June number of the Minneapolis Museum Bulletin (Vol. X, No. 6).

The Cleveland Museum is showing an interesting loan, the Wade Collection of lace in which there are many beautiful examples of the art. This museum also added to its permanent collection of laces by the purchase of one third of the Ida Schiff Collection.

The National Museum at Washington, which has a representative exhibit, recently received the Emily G. Storrow collection of laces which includes some fine Venetian needlepoint.

The October number of the bulletin published by the Worcester Art Museum has an interesting illustrated article on Peruvian textiles and also one on lace.

BOOK NOTES

RECENT PUBLICATIONS:

CALICO PAINTING AND PRINTING IN THE EAST INDIES IN THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES, by George P. Baker. Published by Edward Arnold, London. 37 Plates in color with Text in Portfolio. Large Folio size. \$200.00.

LA TAPISSERIE GOTHIQUE. Preface de Salomon Reinach. Introduction and Notices par G. J. Demotte, 27 Rue de Berri, Paris. 200 plates, in color. Folio. Frs. 3,600.

Both the above publications are works of the first importance, and may be studied in the Library of the Metropolitan Museum of Art as well as at the shops of dealers in Art books.

BOOK OF OLD EMBROIDERY, with articles by A. F. Kendrick (Curator of Textile Fabrics, at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London). Special Studio Number, with numerous illustrations. 8 vo. 2.50.

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, DEPARTMENT OF TEXTILES. Brief Guide to the Chinese Embroideries, London, 1921.

GUIDE TO THE JAPANESE TEXTILES.

Part I. Textile Fabrics, by A. D. Howell Smith.

Part II. Costume. Each, 3/6 net. London, 1919.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMBROIDERY IN AMERICA, by Candace Wheeler. Harper and Brothers. \$5.00.

Mrs. Wheeler may be said to be one of the pioneers in the interest in artistic needlework in America, and her book will be of especial interest to those who remember the early days of the "Associated Artists" and The New York Society of Decorative Art.

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Produced under the auspices of The Needle and Bobbin Club

TEXT BY
FRANCES MORRIS

AND
MARIAN HAGUE

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