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THE · NEEDLE · AND · BOBBIN  
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# THE BULLETIN OF THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB

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FRONTISPIECE

Portrait by Mierevelt (1567-1641) in the MUSÉE DU LOUVRE, Paris, showing laces similar to those on Plate IV. The design in the border of the embroidered stomacher shows a close relation to lace.

## COMPARISONS IN LACE DESIGN

*By* MARIAN HAGUE

**I**N REARRANGING, recently, some of the lace at the Museum for the Arts of Decoration at The Cooper Union, a plan was adopted to exhibit what we called "Similar Designs in Varying Techniques." This consisted mostly in the juxtaposition of needle-made and bobbin-made laces of like pattern, with the idea of comparing the effect of the techniques on design. A few examples were also shown in which representations of lace had been worked in embroidery or woven in brocaded silk. We did not get as far as paper lace, but we did show an 18th century example of pricked muslin to which starch or dressing had given almost the consistency of paper so that it should retain the pricking with exactness (Plate XV). If we had had such specimens, some of the exquisite cut papers of the 18th century would have been worthy of inclusion in our little show.

\* \* \* \*

The flowering of the Sumptuary Arts in the early 16th century, which resulted in the development of lace, brought a great rise of luxury and splendor in daily life; if one may judge from the testimony of art, the new fashions must have spread over Europe like wildfire. Paintings showing lace in costume before the middle of the 16th century are extremely rare, but after that time they increase in number with amazing rapidity. There is hardly a portrait of either man or woman in the 17th and 18th centuries that does not show lace in some form. There were periods when sumptuary laws tried to hold the fashion in check, without, however, stemming the tide for very long. Occasional portraits show respect for these edicts by representing their subjects in rich costumes but without lace, while many engravings, as well as the famous satirical poem

of the "Révolte des Passements" (1661), hold these ordinances up to ridicule.

Of the two principal forms of lace—that made with a needle, which developed from drawn-thread and open-work embroidery on linen, and bobbin lace, derived from the silk and metal thread passementeries used so lavishly on garments for both men and women of this period—the needle-made forms seem to have been the earliest to develop and to have set a pattern of design suited to the rather primitive degree of technical skill achieved by the workers of that day, one requiring simple geometrical forms. The early bobbin lace workers also produced white lace, in designs inherited from their passementerie crafts, which had formerly been used for gold, silver, and colored silks; but in many instances the craftsmen seem to have been content to braid and twist their threads into lines that were not only similar to, but that frankly imitated, the minutest detail of the sister art. If we look at Plate I, we see this very clearly illustrated. Plate II shows the imitation of lace design in woven silk. Plate III shows the gradual development of simple floral forms in the lace techniques and the imitation of those forms in embroidery.

Thus we see that the lace design of the 16th century was completely controlled by the exigencies of the techniques and had no derivation from forms of design in the other textile arts. But, by the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century, there had been great progress in technical skill; indeed, although the forms were conventionalized and the patterns not of great width, laces were increasingly filled with floral and scrolling forms. They still partook of the characteristics of passementerie, were frequently spoken of as "passements," and were used flat, both when laid on as bands or applied as edgings (Plates IV, V, and VI).

By the third quarter of the 17th century a change in design had been developed by the French lace workers. The sweeping curves of the Italian laces, such as we see in Plates V and VI, have given way to the French fashion, in which forms are smaller and more distributed, and a perpendicular arrangement known as the *Candelabre* pattern appears. This is shown clearly in a piece of *Point de France* in Plate VII. Such a

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\* The illustrations are all chosen from laces shown at the Cooper Union Museum, mostly from its own collection; the others are from the collections of two members of the Advisory Council of the Museum, the late Mrs. Robert B. Noyes and the writer. The letters "C.U." indicate the Museum of the Arts of Decoration, and "M.H." the collection of Miss Hague. The writer would like to thank Miss Elizabeth Haynes, Assistant in Charge of Laces and Embroideries at the Museum, for her able and interested cooperation in this project.

type of design, coupled with the use of the finer threads of France and the Low Countries, made possible the fashion of gathering, or setting on with fullness, for both French and Flemish laces. Since France by this time had superseded Venice as the originator of fashion, we see the Venetian rose points and *rosellines* abandoning their own tradition and adopting the French designs (Plates VIII and IX).

By the last half of the 17th century lace techniques had acquired such great skill that the workers were free to produce ornament forms as they appeared in other fabrics, woven or embroidered; and the fashion, or custom, in other textile design could now influence the forms to be worked in lace. This influence is particularly exemplified in the laces adaptable to large surfaces, such as the wide flounces which do not appear before the last half of the 17th century. These flounces were used on ladies' dresses and even as valances for dressing tables, if we may judge from paintings. The albs of church dignitaries were also decorated with these wide flounces, of which in the early 18th century the *Point de Sedan* (a type of *Point de France*) in needle-made lace and the lovely flounces of the fine Flemish laces, such as Brussels or, more rarely, Mechlin, in bobbin lace were the most outstanding examples. Plates X, XI, and XII show exquisite specimens of these wonders of the lace-makers' art. The characteristic design of these laces of the period of the French Regency (1715-1723) is shown in the large foliated and floral forms which cover the ground very closely, leaving almost no background visible between the forms.

To conclude our series of technical comparisons we come back to some of the narrower laces of the 18th century. Plate XIV shows the juxtaposition of a needle and a bobbin lace of the first quarter of the century, both representatives of distinguished types of lace.

Plate XV, No. 1, on the contrary, shows a lace distinctly plebian, being as much an "imitation" as was possible before the invention of machine-made imitations. It is a pricked muslin—one might almost say paper. No. 2 pictures an exquisitely embroidered muslin, used as a substitute for lace. If the purpose of making an imitation is primarily economy, there can have been comparatively little to choose between in the economy of time and skill required to produce a fabric such as this compared to the cost of production of the same design in laces such as Mechlin, Binche, or the needlepoints. This has, however, the added advantage of greater durability.

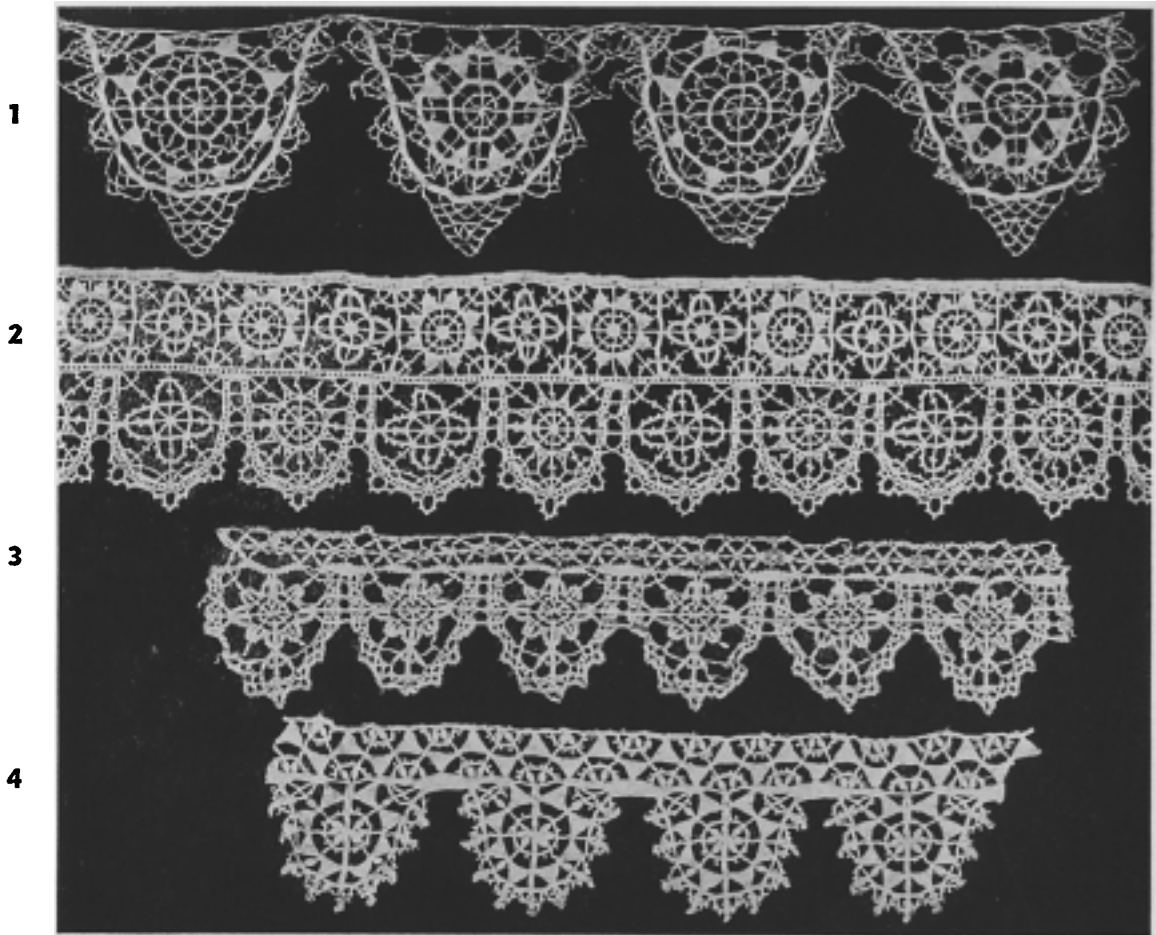


PLATE I

No. 1—Border of points, needle-made, of *reticello*, or geometrical type, such as was made in Italy and also in France and the Low Countries in the second half of the 16th century. (M.H.) No. 2—A strip of lace consisting of two parts; a band of insertion, which is needle-made, of *reticello*; the points forming the lower half of the lace, bobbin-made, following the *reticello* design with great exactness; even the same thread seems to have been used. A careful look is needed to see that the two halves of the lace are of different technique. (C.U.) No. 3 and No. 4—Both 3 and 4 are of bobbin make, still clinging to the designs natural to needle-made lace in its primitive form. (Both M.H.) All are in the late 16th or early 17th century. No. 1 might have been made in the Low countries, to judge by the thread; 2, 3, and 4 are Italian. The scale is slightly below life size.

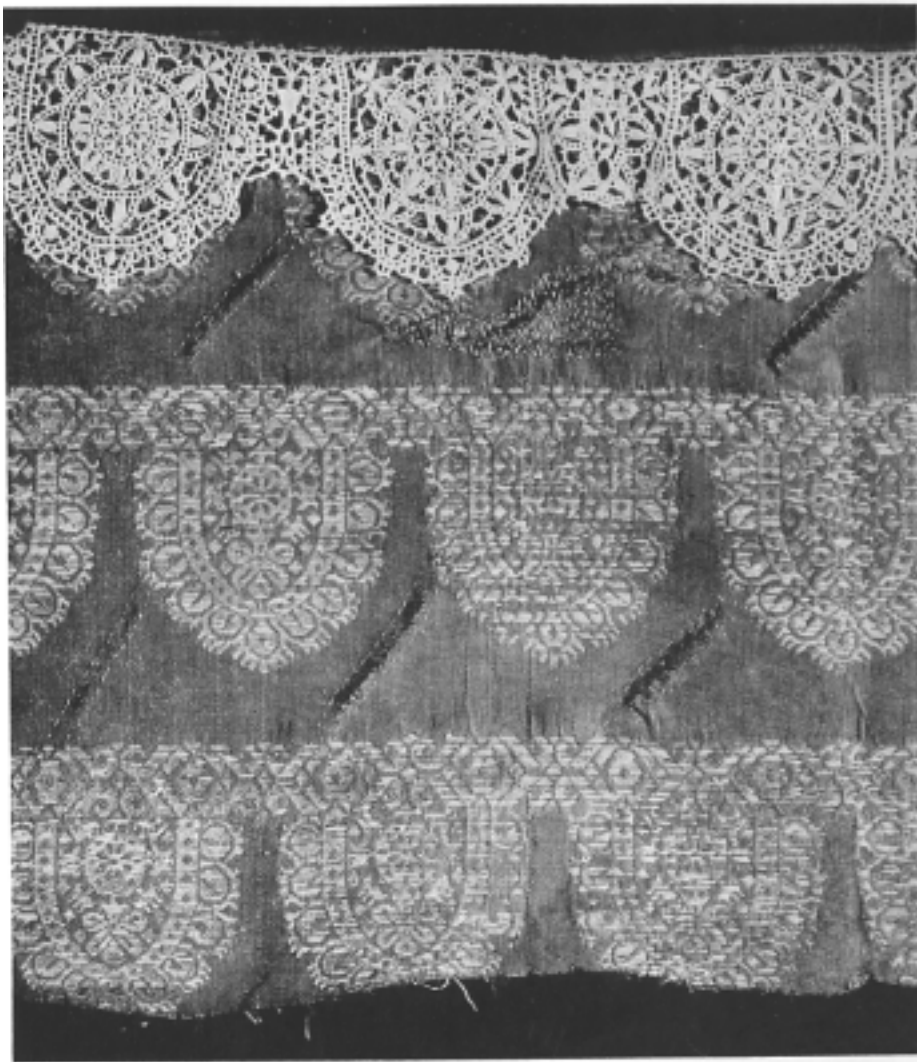


PLATE II

A piece of brown silk of the early 17th century, probably Spanish, brocaded with rows of deep scallops representing lace such as was used in costume at that time. The small diagonal slashes showing in the silk were a fashion often used in men's clothes at this period, a mode which had its origin in the cult for prowess in swordsmanship. Above is shown a border of needle-made scallops of similar form and period. The scale is slightly below life size. (C.U.) The use of lace as a design for a woven silk is indicative of the preoccupation over lace at that time, when to own and wear lace was so much *de rigueur* that it is said that sometimes even a house might be mortgaged to provide funds for its purchase.



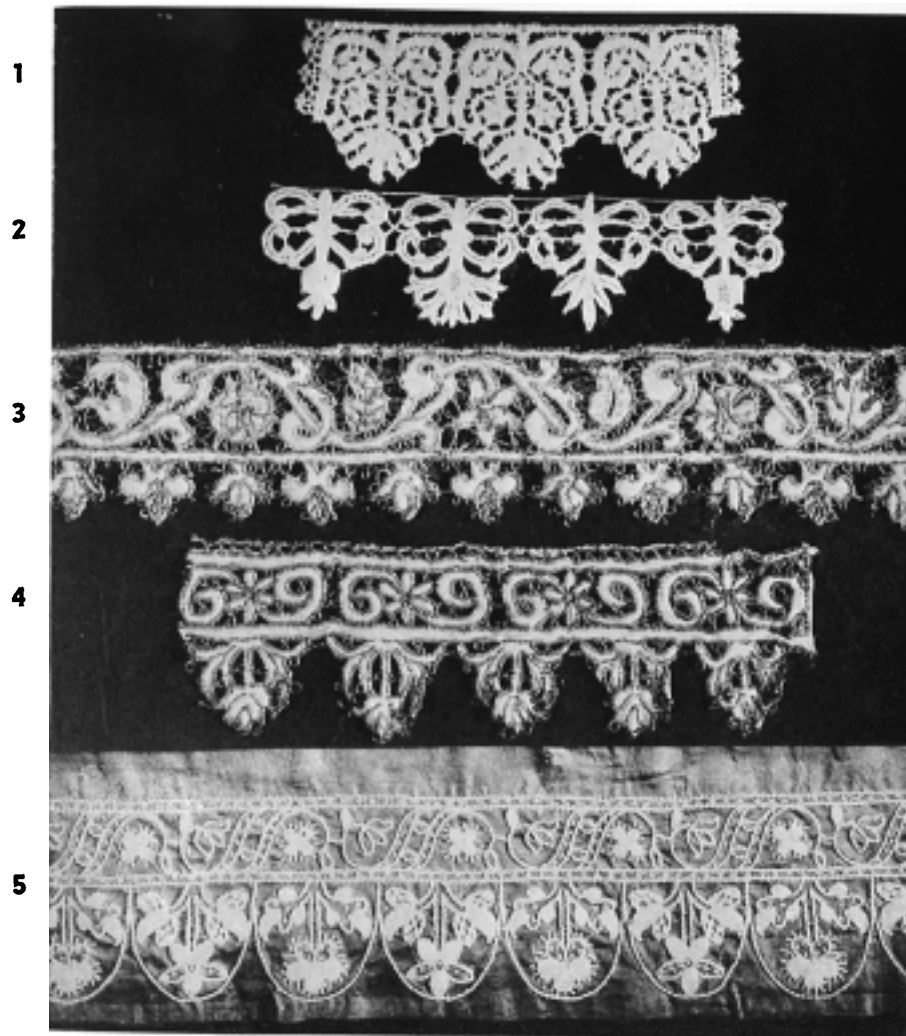


PLATE III

This plate is another example of lace design pervading other techniques. No. 1 and No. 2 are laces of similar pattern, but No. 1 is bobbin made and No. 2 of needlework. No. 3 and No. 4 are cut linen with edging and picots of gold thread sewed on with red silk. No. 5 is embroidery in white silk thread on a crimson silk scarf, with the evident intention of producing the effect of a lace border. All five pieces are probably Italian (although No. 3 and No. 4 are called in Italian *Punto di Spagna falso*, and all are of the late 16th or early 17th century. The scale is below life size. (M.H.)

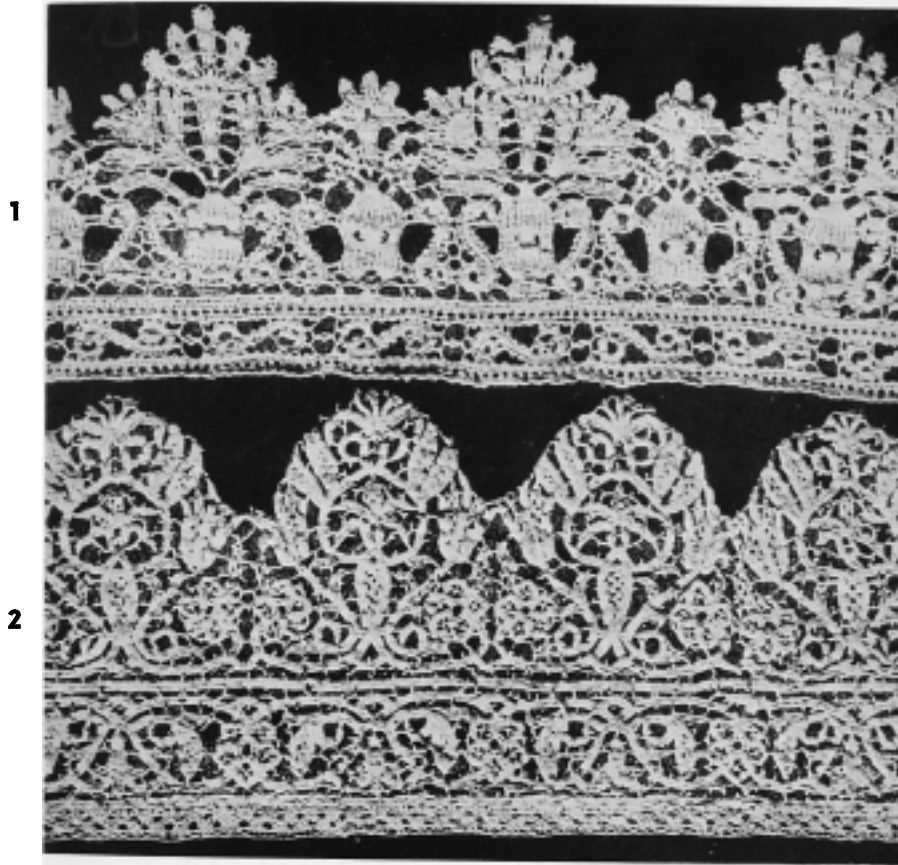


PLATE IV

Two laces of the first half of the 17th century. No. 1 is a bobbin lace, probably Italian, intended to be used with the points upwards, as for cuffs, judging by the familiar flower vase pattern. Portraits by Mierevelt and others show laces such as these in the wide cuffs and elaborate collars of both men and women. Width is  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches. No. 2 is needle made of similar design and origin. Width is  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Compare the laces on this plate with those shown on the costume in the frontispiece. (M.H.)

1

2

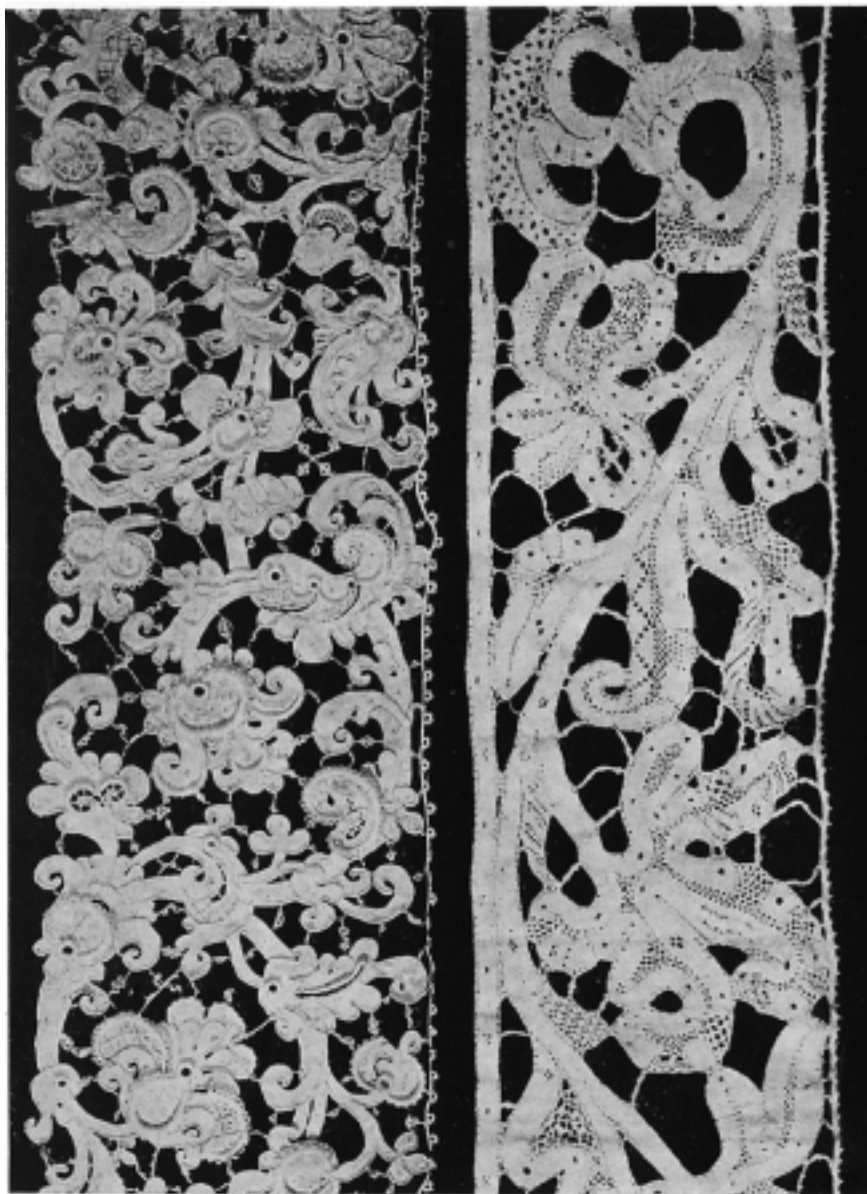


PLATE V

Two typically Italian laces showing the scrolling forms which were suited to use as flat bands. No. 1 is Venetian needlepoint, No. 2 is Milanese bobbin lace. Both are of the first half of the 17th century. Width of No. 1 is 4 inches. (C.U.) Width of No. 2 is  $3\frac{7}{8}$  inches. (M.H.)

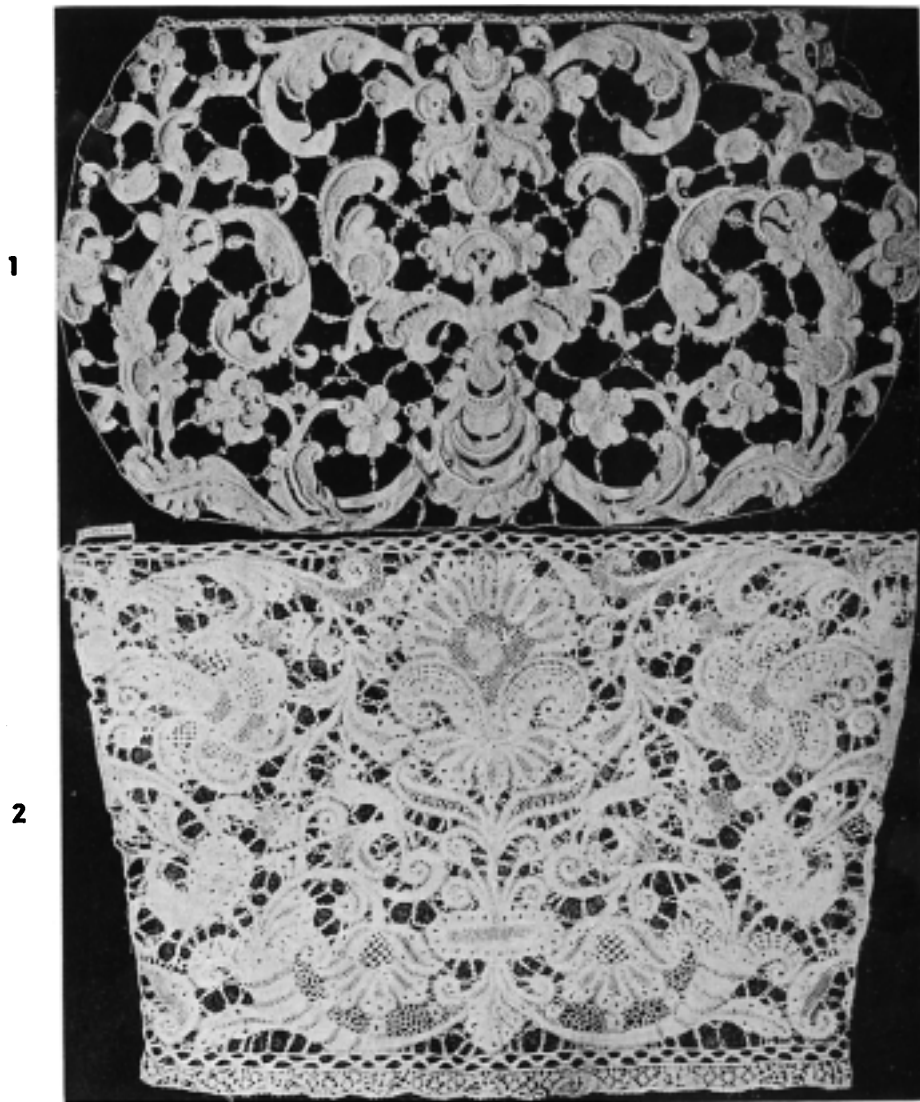


PLATE VI

No. 1—Venetian needlepoint of the most perfect execution, called *Gros Point de Venise*, or *Rose Point*, with typical Italian design of classic tradition. No. 2—Milanese bobbin lace of period and tradition similar to the one above, probably made as a cuff for an alb. These two specimens have been placed in juxtaposition because they illustrate so clearly the difference that technique makes in a line structure that is very similar. The firm and sculptured texture characteristic of the Italian needlepoint contrasts with the softer "linen stitch" of the bobbin lace, with its gentler, though delicately firm, outlines.

No. 1 is  $8\frac{3}{4}$  by  $14\frac{3}{4}$  inches. No. 2 is  $14\frac{1}{2}$  by  $9\frac{1}{2}$  inches. (C.U.)

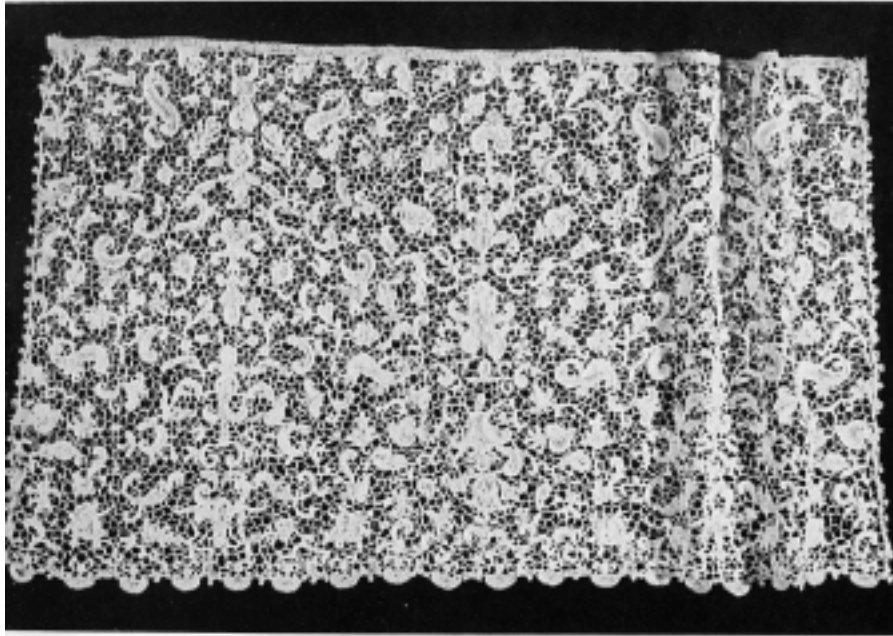


PLATE VII

*Point de France*, of the last half of the 17th century, needle made. The right hand side of this specimen has been laid in folds to show the greater adaptability of this form of design to the use of fullness. Width is  $9\frac{1}{4}$  inches. (M.H.)

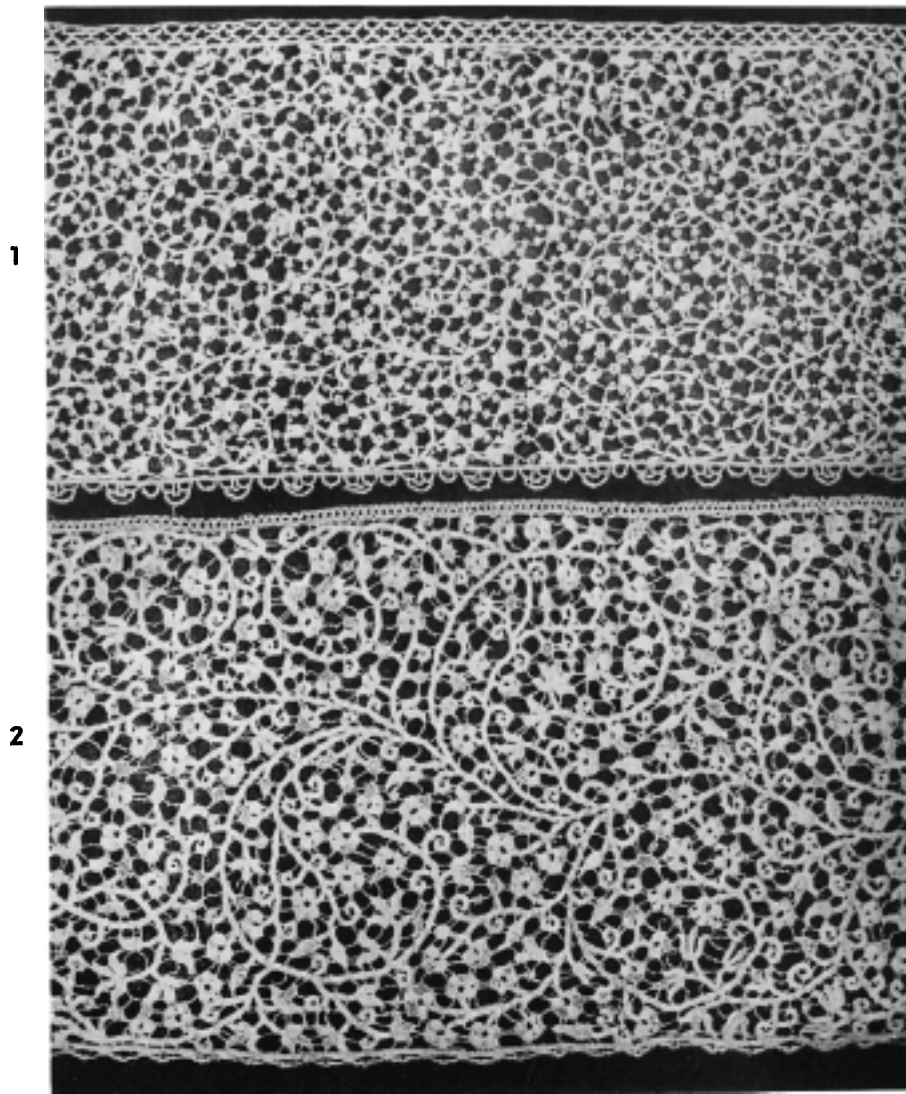


PLATE VIII

No. 1 is Venetian, a flat needlepoint of the late 17th century. No. 2 is a fine Venetian bobbin lace of similar design and period. The designs of these two Venetian laces illustrate the French influence in the distribution of the pattern, though these specimens do not include the perpendicular accent of the *candelabre* form, frequently appearing in the Venetian laces of this period. The scale is below life size. No. 1 is 6 inches in width. (M.H.) No. 2 is  $7\frac{1}{4}$  by 11 inches. (C.U.)

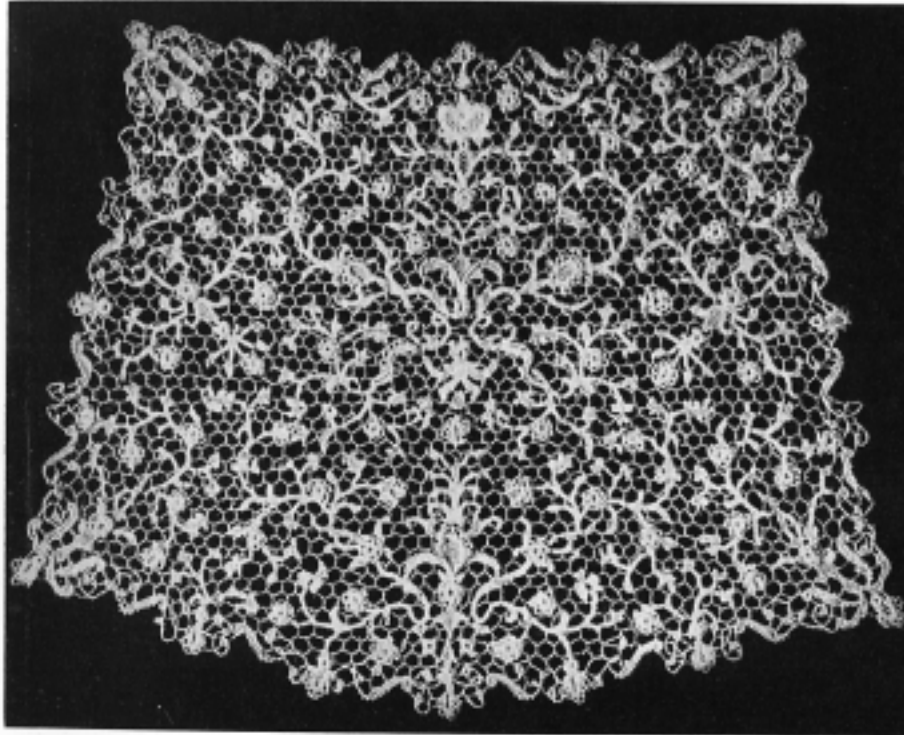


PLATE IX

This cuff of Venetian needlepoint lace of the middle of the 17th century shows in its *candelabre* pattern the influence of French design. The cuff is 11 by 8 inches. (C.U.)



PLATE X

Detail from a wide founce of *Point de Sedan* showing the type of floral forms and their arrangement developed in the first quarter of the 18th century. The detail shown in the photograph measures 15 inches in width by 19 inches in height. The total width of the founce is 25½ inches. (C.U.)





PLATE XI

Detail from a wide flounce of Mechlin bobbin lace of similar design as Plate IX. The detail shown in the photograph measures  $15\frac{1}{2}$  inches in width by 20 inches in height. The total width of the flounce is  $23\frac{3}{4}$  inches. (C.U.) To make a flounce, such as this, in the Mechlin technique is a real *tour de force* involving many hundreds of bobbins on the pillow at once and even so, must have been worked in perpendicular strips, afterwards joined on the pillow in the manner used for joining the *drochel* of the Brussels lace.



PLATE XII

Brussels bobbin lace of the same type of design as the laces on Plate X and Plate XI. The detail shown in the photograph measures 14 inches in width by 18 inches in height. The total width of the flounce is 24 inches. From the collection of the late Mrs. Robert B. Noyes.



PLATE XIII

A silk brocade, French, of the early 18th century, showing a design very similar both in arrangement and forms, to that of the three laces on Plate X, Plate XI and Plate XII. (C.U.)

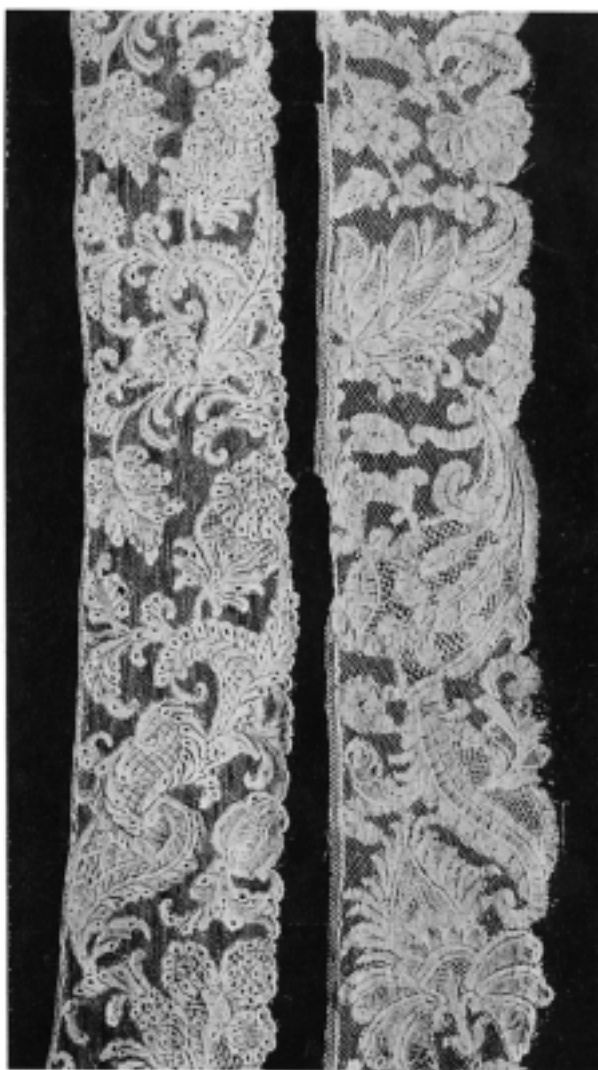


PLATE XIV

Two laces of the first quarter of the 18th century. No. 1 is the fine needlepoint known as *Point de Venise à réseau*, or grounded Venetian. Similar needlepoint was made in Brussels and the fact that the Venetian work was often made with the Flemish thread which was much finer than the Italian, adds to the difficulty of attribution. Width,  $2\frac{1}{8}$  inches. (M.H.) No. 2 is the most exquisite quality of Brussels bobbin lace, the design reflecting French influence of the period of the Regency. The designs of these two laces show great similarity. Actual width,  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches. (C.U.) (See the article *Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Needle Laces of the Low Countries*, by Mme. L. Paulis. BULLETIN OF THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB, Vol. XIII, Nos. 1 & 2, pp. 3-13. See also Plate VI.)



PLATE XV

No. 1 is a strip of fine muslin, probably French, late 18th century, treated with some starch, or dressing, which permitted pricking with bodkins of different sizes, giving an illusion of lace meshes. The unpricked parts are touched with white paint to represent the more solid portions of the design. (M.H.) No. 2, a more legitimate relative of lace, is usually called *fils tirés*, though embroidery would be more exact. It is worked on a very sheer, fine linen, or muslin, by the same type of stitches used in hemstitching, giving the impression of drawnwork. By using a coarse needle and very fine thread, an effect of openwork meshes is produced though threads of the fabric itself have not been withdrawn. Its date would be about the middle of the 18th century. This work was often used like lace for sleeve ruffles, caps, etc., in France and other European countries. It is sometimes called *point de Saxe*, or *point de Dresde*, because much was made there.

The dimensions are just below life size. (C.U.)

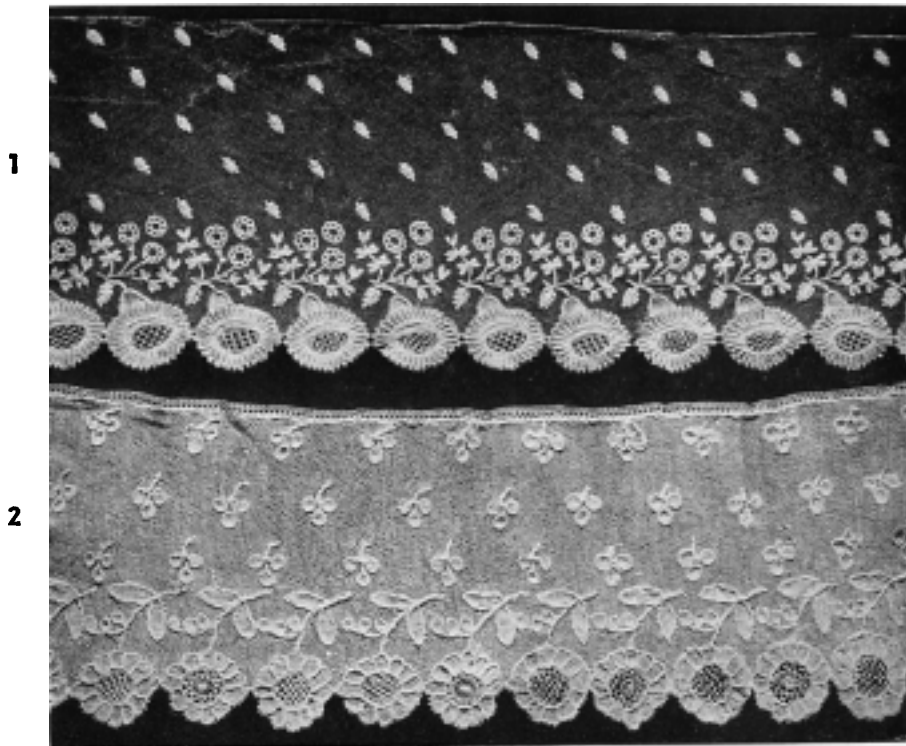


PLATE XVI

No. 1 is a very delicate Brussels bobbin lace in which the floral forms are applied on the *vrai réseau*, or *drochel* ground. By looking closely one can recognize the little strips, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches wide, in which the exquisitely fine net of the ground was made. These were afterwards joined to make the larger surfaces needed for the rather sparse patterns which became the fashion at the very end of the 18th century and are often associated with Queen Marie Antoinette. The term *semé de larmes* is sometimes applied when the ground is sprinkled with dots, as in these specimens. (M.H.) (See the article, *Le Drochel*, by Mme. L. Paulis, BULLETIN OF THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB, Vol. VII, No. 2, pp. 3-13.) No. 2 is a needlepoint of similar design but probably much later workmanship, reproducing the patterns of the time of No. 1 and made in Burano, Italy, in the early 20th century. Width of No. 1,  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches. Width of No. 2, 4 inches. (M.H.)

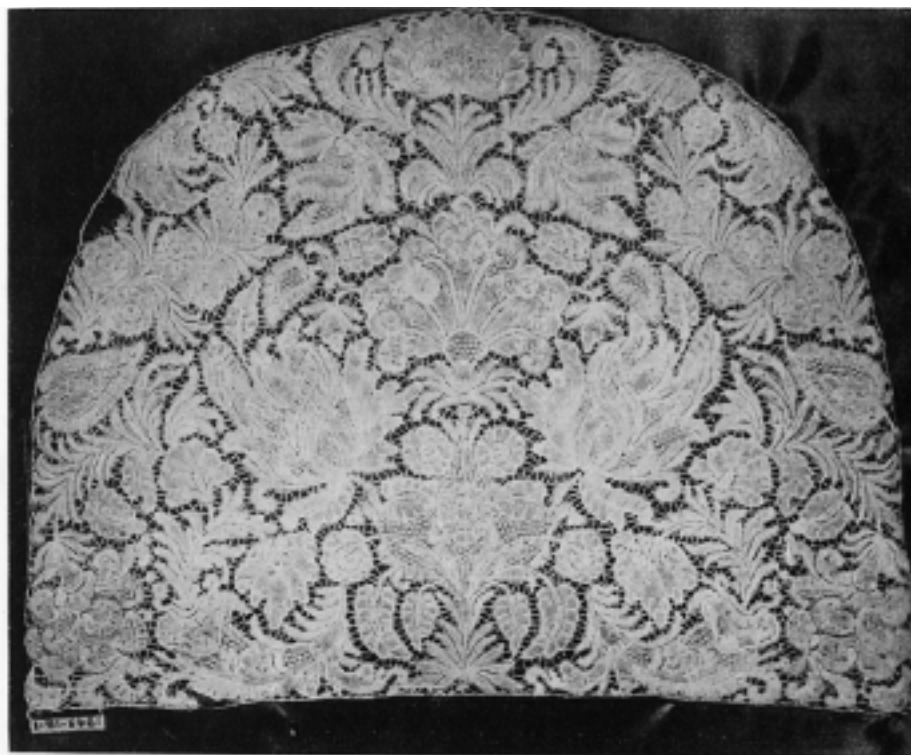


PLATE XVII

A cap crown, bobbin made, Flemish, Brussels, first quarter of the 18th century, of the type often called *Point d'Angleterre*. From the collection of the late Mrs. Robert B. Noyes.



PLATE XVIII

A rabat, or necktie-end, bobbin made, Brussels, middle of the 18th century. The hunter who appears in the center of our plate might be wearing just such a rabat. From the collection of the late Mrs. Robert B. Noyes.



A review of the foregoing pages suggests the observation that, during the first hundred and fifty years of the making of lace in Europe, the supremacy for sheer beauty goes to the needlepoints of Italy and France with their perfection of line and richness of detail (Plate VI, No. 1). But toward the last years of the 17th century the fine Flemish bobbin laces had acquired such delicacy both in texture and surface that during the 18th century the Mechlins, Valenciennes, Binches, and especially the marvelous laces of Brussels seem to surpass anything yet made, to be miracles of skill both in the sensitiveness of line and in the ethereal, almost flower-like quality of surface (Plates XVII and XVIII). It is in this aspect that they seem to outshine their sisters, the needle laces, although such examples as the *Point de Sedan* in Plate X and many of the laces of Argentan and Alençon, as shown in Plate XIX, carry on with great perfection the standard set for them in the earlier types.

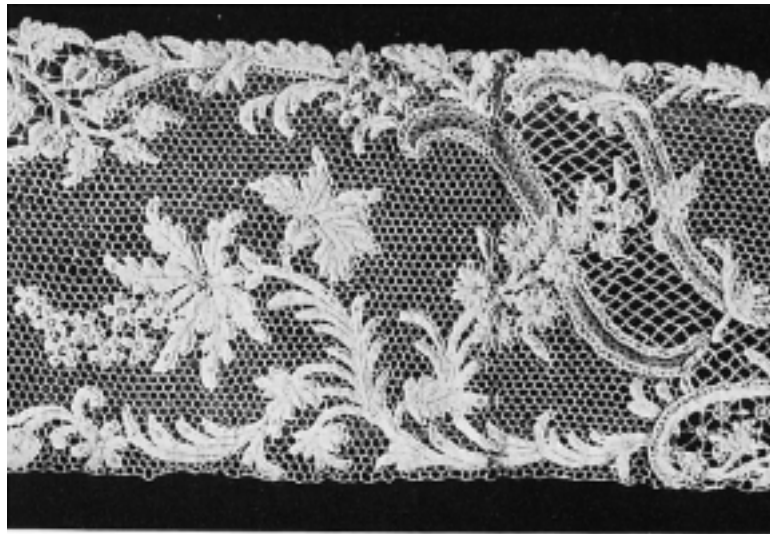


PLATE XIX

Needlepoint, French, middle of the 18th century. (M.H.)



ELIZABETH, QUEEN OF ENGLAND

English, 16th century, National Portrait Gallery, London.

## ENGLISH DOMESTIC EMBROIDERY AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

*by*

FRANCES MORRIS

THE exhibition of English Domestic Embroidery held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art last November has been discussed already in various publications, but inasmuch as certain members of the Needle and Bobbin Club were actively interested in the success attained by this historic event, a few additional notes may be welcome.

Documentary evidence of needlework produced in England during the Middle Ages survives today in ecclesiastical vestments preserved in church treasuries and museums; but secular work of that period may be said to be non-existent, unless the Bayeux Tapestry may be classed as such.

In approaching the subject of English embroidery one's mind involuntarily turns to this piece which, though closely associated with English history, has for many years been claimed by French scholars to be a work produced in Normandy. Recently, however, untiring research on the part of English archæologists has again brought this discussion to the fore; and the evidence accumulated seems to lend weight to the theory that this embroidery was designed and worked in the south of England rather than in the north of France.<sup>1</sup>

Centuries prior to the Norman Conquest English women had been renowned for their skill in needlework; and that some had apparently attained almost professional standing is indicated by the record that Deubart, Bishop of Durham (c. 800) granted the lease of a farm for life to the embroideress Eanswitha in return for which she was to repair and renew the embroidered vestments of the clergy. But aside from the

<sup>1</sup> Maclagan, C. B. E., *Eric: The Bayeux Tapestry*. London and New York, 1943.

fact that English needlewomen of that age were undoubtedly capable of having embroidered this historic piece, the draughtsmanship of its pattern is distinctively English as also are many of its details. What is more there are English words in the inscription that most certainly would not have been employed by a Norman.

Another work of this period similar to the Bayeux Tapestry in the character of its subject is a piece said to have been given to the church at Ely by AElfreda, a high-born Saxon lady of the tenth century who had portrayed on an embroidered curtain the daring deeds of her husband who had been slain by the Danes.<sup>2</sup> Universal interest in needlework seems to have prevailed throughout this era; the inmates of monasteries and convents turned their pious attention to the embellishment of church vestments that were designed and in some instances worked by churchmen who, like the Archbishop Dunstan (925-988) not only were versed in church history but likewise skilled in draughtsmanship and handicraft. In the realm of court circles, where queens and noblewomen employed themselves with secular work, there were some like Edith, queen of Edward the Confessor, who embroidered the robes of their liege lords, while others, religious devotees, applied their skill to ecclesiastical embroidery for presentation to the church.

. An interesting reference to secular work of this period, one of the few instances where embroidery is mentioned in connection with costume, is found in the will of Matilda—queen of Edward the Conqueror—to whom for many years was accredited the embroidery of the Bayeux Tapestry, wherein it is stated that this queen bequeathed to the abbey of the Holy Trinity at Caen, an abbey which she herself had founded, an embroidered tunic “worked at Winchester by Alderet’s wife.”<sup>3</sup> That a piece of English embroidery should have been so honored by a Norman queen attests how highly it was esteemed.

At the time of the Norman Conquest, however, England’s ecclesiastical embroidery had not yet arrived at its great period (1270-1330) when popes and prelates of continental Europe coveted a gift of *opus Anglicanum* from Britain’s rulers, where well-filled coffers furnished the rich materials used in these sumptuous church vestments. English court life at this time was gradually becoming more luxurious due in part to the

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<sup>2</sup> Palliser, Mrs. F. B., in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Ninth Edition, Vol. VIII, *Embroidery*, p. 149. Philadelphia, 1878.

<sup>3</sup> Kendrick, A. F., *English Embroidery*. London, n.d., p. 13.

alliance of Edward I (1272-1307) with Eleanor of Castile whose *avant couriers*, Spanish grandees, introduced elaborate furnishings for the adornment of their apartments. This in turn was followed by the marriage of Edward II (1307-1327) with Isabella of France whose sumptuous wardrobe of "dresses of gold and silver stuffs" reflected the same extravagant mode of life.

The decline of the great period of English embroidery came toward the close of this reign at a time when court life was honeycombed with conspiracy. With the death of the deposed king the crown passed to his son, Edward III (1327-1377), whose claim to the French crown through his mother led to the outbreak of the Hundred Years War between France and England; and to these troublous times were added the horrors of the Black Death which ravaged England from 1349 through 1369.

Nevertheless it was in these years of unrest that the groundwork of England's later economic life was being laid. By the twelfth century London had already attracted trade from all parts of the world. Italian merchants traveling to the Far East obtained silk for its markets, and England's ships returned to port laden with every variety of rich merchandise; for the great period of English embroidery was an age of chivalrous knighthood that demanded sumptuous habiliments for the luxurious taste of its kings and nobles.

During the reign of Edward III Britain began to turn her attention to the development of her own industries and it was in the year 1335 that one John Kempe of Flanders emigrated to England with a group of weavers, dyers and fullers and established a cloth weaving center at Norwich under the patronage of Philippa of Hainault, the Flemish queen of Edward. A century later Margaret of Anjou, the French queen of Henry VI, who had experienced the desolation of war, tried to interest the English in the manufacture of wool and silk; but the temper of the times was not attuned to peaceful occupation for an adventurous spirit was abroad in the land where prince and peasant alike preferred the hazards of war with its chance of plunder to legitimate sport and lucrative industry.

Such were the conditions prevailing in England during the last quarter of the fourteenth century that closed with the reign of Richard II (1377-1399). The years that followed showed little betterment when religious and secular unrest developed and insurgency, resulting in the execution of conspirators, was the order of the day. Nor was this situa-

tion improved by the results of the disastrous war that deprived England of all of her French possessions save only the port of Calais, to which was added the increasing antagonism prevailing between the houses of York and Lancaster that finally led to the War of the Roses which lasted from 1455 until 1485.

Throughout these tumultuous years, however, the art of illumination that reached a high level in the Psalter of Queen Eleanor (1284) wife of Edward I, continued to flourish; and it is in the borders of foliated scroll design in manuscripts dating from the reign of Richard II that one finds prototypes of sixteenth century embroidery patterns. This point is demonstrated in the beautiful embroidered hood (Pl. I) lent by the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Untoward conditions in a war-ridden country would inevitably tend to disrupt orderly routine in the life of its people and result in a situation readily accountable for a lapse in the continuity of accurate historical data. Unfortunately such a lapse occurs in the history of English embroidery and while its exact cause is still undetermined, the fact remains that the art of needlecraft that attained such unexcelled beauty in mediæval days lay dormant from the middle of the fourteenth century until its revival in the domestic embroidery of the Elizabethan era. During the lapse of these two centuries England had passed through varying phases of internal strife dealing with the religious and political life of its people; but in court circles, here as on the continent, the education of the younger generations followed the same general trend of its established order. Thus, in Elizabeth's girlhood while much attention was given to her intellectual development, certain hours of each day were devoted to domestic interests among which was needlework. The same was true of her ill-fated cousin in the French court where Mary Stuart, married to Francis II, became skilled in needlecraft under the tutelage of the queen mother, Catherine de' Medici, herself an adept in the art. During the reign of Elizabeth there were three women in the royal circle noted for their proficiency with the needle: the Queen herself, Mary Queen of Scots, and her hostess-jailer Elizabeth Countess of Shrewsbury known to history as "Bess of Hardwick."

At the time of the death of Henry VIII Elizabeth was a girl of fourteen, an impressionable age on which the kaleidoscopic marital life of her father could not but have left a disturbing imprint. That such an atmosphere had created a sobering effect on her youthful mind is suggested by



PLATE I. WOMAN'S HOOD.

Late 16th century. Worked in black silk on linen edged with bobbin lace. From the Victoria and Albert Museum.



PLATE II. PILLOW COVER (Detail).

Black silk on linen. Second half of the 16th century. From the collection of Sir John Carew Pole at Antony House, Torpoint, Cornwall.



a manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. This little volume, "The Mirror or Glasse of the Synneful Soul," copied in her own handwriting by the young princess, is dedicated "From Assherige, the last day of the yeare of our Lord God 1544" when Elizabeth was but eleven years of age. The embroidered binding of this volume and also that of another manuscript in the British Museum, said to have been written by Elizabeth in 1545, are reputed to have been worked by her. Both of these books were apparently intended as gifts for Katharine Parr, her father's sixth queen, as the initials K.P. appear in the embroidery.<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth as queen had a wardrobe numbering hundreds of costumes, but of these none has survived. The faded funeral effigy of this once brilliant personage, preserved in Westminster, is said to have been costumed originally in authentic apparel of the queen. Today, however, the pathetic figure suggests little of the regal splendor of the original. A piece in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and illustrated by Kendrick, is a bodice in black work presented to the Viscountess Falkland, wife of the tenth Viscount by William IV.<sup>5</sup> A half-length portrait of Elizabeth at Hampton Court shows her wearing a similar jacket.

This black work as is recorded in many portraits was much in vogue in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Formerly it was considered to be of Spanish origin and a type introduced into England by Catherine of Aragon, the first queen of Henry VIII; but according to Professor A. J. B. Wace<sup>6</sup> black silk embroidery existed in England before the close of the fifteenth century. He also states that black embroidered shirts were worn by Henry VIII and his son, Edward VI, and that, as contemporary portraits disclose, the same fashion prevailed at the French court. A beautiful pillow cover of this work was lent to the Metropolitan exhibit by Sir John Carew Pole, Bt. (Pl. II).

Of the work of Mary, Queen of Scots (Pl. III), the most celebrated needleworker of her day, more remains.<sup>7</sup> Among the embroideries at Hardwick Hall dating from the years when she was under the custody of the Earl of Shrewsbury, probably a large number are the work of this unfortunate queen, and the same may be said of the hangings at Lochleven and Linlithgow castles. During the years of her imprisonment in

<sup>4</sup> Kendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, p. 78, Pl. XXXV.

<sup>6</sup> Wace, A. J. B., in *Bulletin of the Needle and Bobbin Club*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1933, p. 13 ff.

<sup>7</sup> cf., Francis de Zulueta: *Embroideries by Mary Stuart and Elizabeth Talbot at Oxburgh Hall, Norfolk*. Oxford, 1923.



PLATE III. MARY STUART.

Portrait by P. Oudry. Original in the Collection of the Duke of Devonshire at Hardwick Hall. Inscription: Maria. D. G. Scotiae Piissima Regina Franciae Doweria. Anno Aetatis Regni 36, Anglicae Captivae 10 S.H. 1578.

England when the Scottish queen was lodged in the various houses of the Shrewsbury estate—Tutbury, Wingfield, Sheffield, Chatsworth and Hardwick Hall, her letters hold many references to needlework. While still at Lochleven in 1567, she petitioned the Lords of the Council for five servants one of whom was to be “an imbroderer to drawe forthe such worke as she would be occupied about.”<sup>8</sup> Writing from Tutbury, which apparently was an abode far from comfortable, she refers to her apartment as “of two little rooms so excessively cold especially at night, that, but for the ramparts and entrenchments of curtains and tapestry which I have had made, it would not be possible for me to stay in them in the daytime.” Needlework is also referred to in one of the Earl’s letters to Elizabeth in which he describes his prisoner’s day as follows: “The Queen continueth daily to resort to my wife’s chamber, where, with Lady Levison and Mrs. Seaton, she useth to sit working with the needle, in which she delighteth.” Through all of these tragic years memories of her youthful days at the French court, where she had become so skilled in embroidery, must have brought solace to many a weary hour.

While the Scottish queen has been described as the most celebrated needlewoman of her time, Elizabeth Countess of Shrewsbury (Pl. IV), her daily companion, would seem to have been equally expert in the art. The three splendid pieces lent to the exhibit from the collection at Hardwick Hall by the Duke of Devonshire, are said to be, in all probability, the work of her hand. Of these pieces the two cushion covers “The Sacrifice of Isaac” and “The Judgment of Solomon” are beautiful examples of Elizabethan work, but not so original as the Heraldic Hanging<sup>9</sup> (Pl. V) which is more distinctively personal in character. In this the armorial bearings would seem to reflect the proud arrogance of this intriguing lady who took for her fourth husband, George Talbot, sixth Earl of Shrewsbury and assured the solvency of the family by marrying two of her children to a son and daughter of the Talbot household<sup>10</sup> (Pl. VI).

Outstanding among the important pieces lent for the exhibit was the famous Calthorpe Purse, dated about 1540 (Pl. VII). One of the gems

<sup>8</sup> Rawson, Maud Stepney: *Bess of Hardwick and Her Circle*, p. 63 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Kendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 84, Pl. XLVI.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth (“Bess of Hardwick”) was married successively to John Barlow, Sir William Cavendish, Sir William St. Loe and George Talbot, sixth Earl of Shrewsbury. At the time of her marriage to Talbot she had six children; her daughter, Mary Cavendish, became the wife of Gilbert Talbot and her son, Henry Cavendish, married Lady Grace Talbot. cf., Rawson, p. 6; Kendrick, p. 82.



PLATE IV. ELIZABETH HARDWICK, COUNTESS OF SHREWSBURY.  
Flemish, second half of the 16th century. National Portrait Gallery, London.



PLATE V. HERALDIC HANGING WITH THE ARMS OF GEORGE TALBOT,  
SIXTH EARL OF SHREWSBURY.

Silk and gold thread on canvas. This hanging dates from the period (1568-1587) when Mary Stuart was in the custody of the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury. The piece is still a part of the furnishings of Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire. It was lent to the Metropolitan Museum for the exhibit of English needlework by the Duke of Devonshire who is a descendant of this famous Countess of Shrewsbury, "Bess of Hardwick."



PLATE VI. PORTRAIT OF A LADY.

Dated 1590. Fitzwilliams Museum, Cambridge, England. The features of this unknown lady bear a strong resemblance to those in the portrait of Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury, whose daughter, Mary Cavendish, married Gilbert Talbot and whose son, Henry Cavendish, married Lady Grace Talbot. Either of these ladies would have been privileged to use the heraldic device, the Talbot dog, that appears in the upper left-hand corner and in the embroidered bodice of the lady in the painting.

of the Victoria and Albert collection, this purse has 1,250 stitches to the square inch and is the earliest example of tent stitch in the collection. It is worked in polychrome silk on linen. The piece is designed with four shield-shaped sides which bear the following coats of arms: 1. Sir John Calthorpe and Anne Wythe (early fifteenth century). Inscribed: "JHN C. . . . HEIR JHIS WYTHER." 2. John Calthorpe and Elizabeth Wentworth (late fifteenth century). Inscribed: "CALT AND WENTWORTH." 3. John Crane and Agnes Calthorpe (early sixteenth century). Inscribed: "IOHN CRANE AGNES CALTH." 4. Sir Henry Parker (d. 1553) and Elizabeth Calthorpe.<sup>11</sup> Of especial interest among the pieces sent over from England was a set of four pillow covers from the collection of the same museum.<sup>12</sup> These fine panels, worked in dark blue and dull crimson silk with details in silver gilt on linen, portray sixteen scenes from biblical history: The Creation of Adam, The Creation of Eve, The Fall, The Expulsion from Eden, Adam Delving and Eve Spinning, Sacrifices of Cain and Abel, Murder of Abel, Noah Building the Ark, Animals Entering the Ark, The Flood (Pl. VIII), Noah's Sacrifice, Noah's Drunkenness, Building of the Tower of Babel, Expulsion of Hagar, Sacrifice of Isaac, and Jacob's Dream. It may be that most of the patterns for these covers were derived from contemporary Bibles; the water detail in the Creation of Adam panel, however, corresponds closely in drawing to a woodcut from "A Choice of Emblemes, and other Devises," illustrated by Kendrick.<sup>13</sup>

Two important signed pieces from the Victoria and Albert collection were featured in the Exhibit. One, the Mary Hulton Cushion Cover shows in the center the crowned arms of England on a shield with the initials I.R. and the name of the worker in the lower corners (Pl. IX). The caterpillar and the snail motifs, so popular in Stuart embroidery, appear here among the branching floral scrolls.

The other signed piece, formerly in Corby Castle, is the work of Edmund Harrison, a famous master of needlecraft in the employ of Charles I, and one of the most important members of the Broderers' Guild. The subject is "The Adoration of the Shepherds" and on the back of the canvas is the inscription: "Edmund Harrison, Imbroderer to King

<sup>11</sup> Nevison, John L.: *Catalogue of English Domestic Embroidery*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1938, pp. 98-99.

<sup>12</sup> *Idem*, p. 20, Pl. XIV-XV.

<sup>13</sup> Kendrick, *op. cit.*, Pl. XXXVI.



PLATE VII. THE CALTHORPE PURSE.

Polychrome silk on linen. Worked in tent stitch, 1,250 stitches to the square inch.  
About 1540. From the Victoria and Albert Museum.



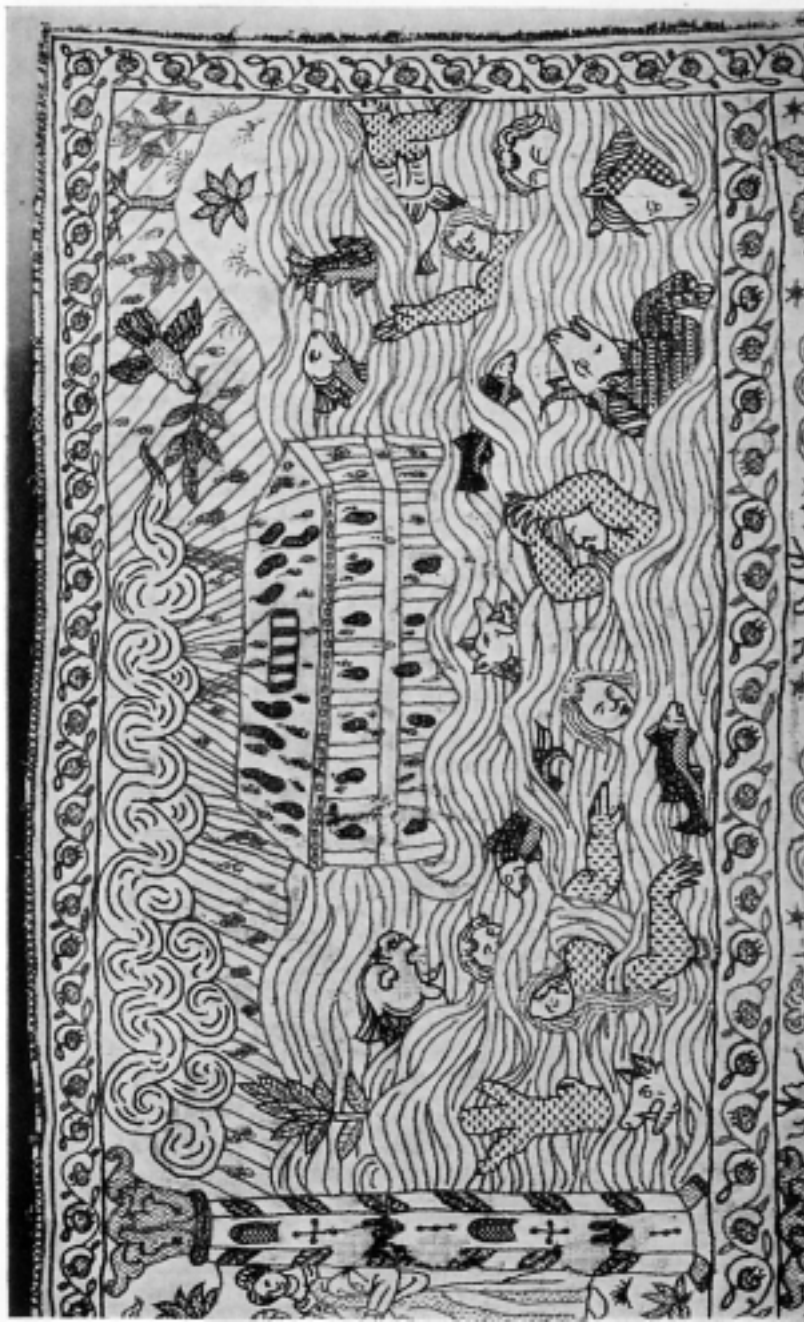


PLATE VIII. PILLOW COVER. "The Flood."

Early 17th century. One of a set of sixteen scenes from biblical history. Worked in silk and silver-gilt thread on linen. From Rycote House, Oxfordshire, the seat of the Earl of Abingdon. The Victoria and Albert Museum.



PLATE IX. CUSHION COVER WITH ARMS OF JAMES I.  
Silk, silver-gilt thread and wool on linen. Signed by Mary Hulton. First quarter of  
the 18th century. From the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Charles made theis Anno Doni. 1637." In this piece the figures are worked separately in silk and metal thread on linen and applied without padding and the faces are worked in very fine split stitch (Pl. X).

To Her Majesty, Queen Mary, the Metropolitan Museum was exceptionally indebted for the loan of an eighteenth century quilt beautifully worked in a variety of lace and embroidery stitches. A rare example of skilful needlecraft (Pl. XI).

Another piece distinguished by its technique and color, was the quilt (Pl. XII), lent by the Victoria and Albert Museum, which was an heirloom in the Dolben family. This lovely example of eighteenth century work is designed with a floral border and a central motif worked in polychrome silks and silver-gilt thread on white satin. It was given as a wedding present to the Rev. Sir John Dolben, Bt. of Finedon Hall, Northamptonshire, and his bride, Elizabeth, daughter of Baron Digby of Geashill, on the occasion of their marriage at Sherbourne Castle, Dorset, on July 28, 1720.

To Judge Irwin Untermyer, outstanding among collectors of Elizabethan embroidery and for many years a member of the Needle and Bobbin Club, the Museum was indebted for the loan of over a hundred pieces. Of these it was difficult to select one that might be of greater interest than another; but the handsome mirror (Pl. XIII) from this collection possesses great distinction as a piece in perfect preservation and of exceptional decorative quality; it is only one of many treasures in Judge Untermyer's superb collection.

Exquisite taste characterizes the collections of Mr. and Mrs. DeWitt Clinton Cohen. Mrs. Cohen, who has been a member of the Board of Directors of the Needle and Bobbin Club from the early years of the organization, has centered her attention in the field of needlework; and in no American collection is there a more beautiful variety of embroideries and the delicate accessories of the art than those which have been so carefully selected by these discriminating enthusiasts. One of the choice pieces in their collection is the book illustrated on Plate XIV.

From the group lent by Mrs. Myron Taylor, who is also a member of the Club, the beautifully worked picture portraying "The Judgment of Solomon" (Pl. XV) represents the phase of Stuart embroidery that preceded the exaggerated type of stump work familiar in needlework of the period. The piece shows a great variety of stitches, other than the fine



PLATE X. THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS.

Signed by Edmund Harrison, embroiderer to Charles I, and dated 1637. The figures are worked in silk and in metal threads laid horizontally and couched in the manner of *or nué*. The foundation of the piece is linen. From the Victoria and Albert Museum.

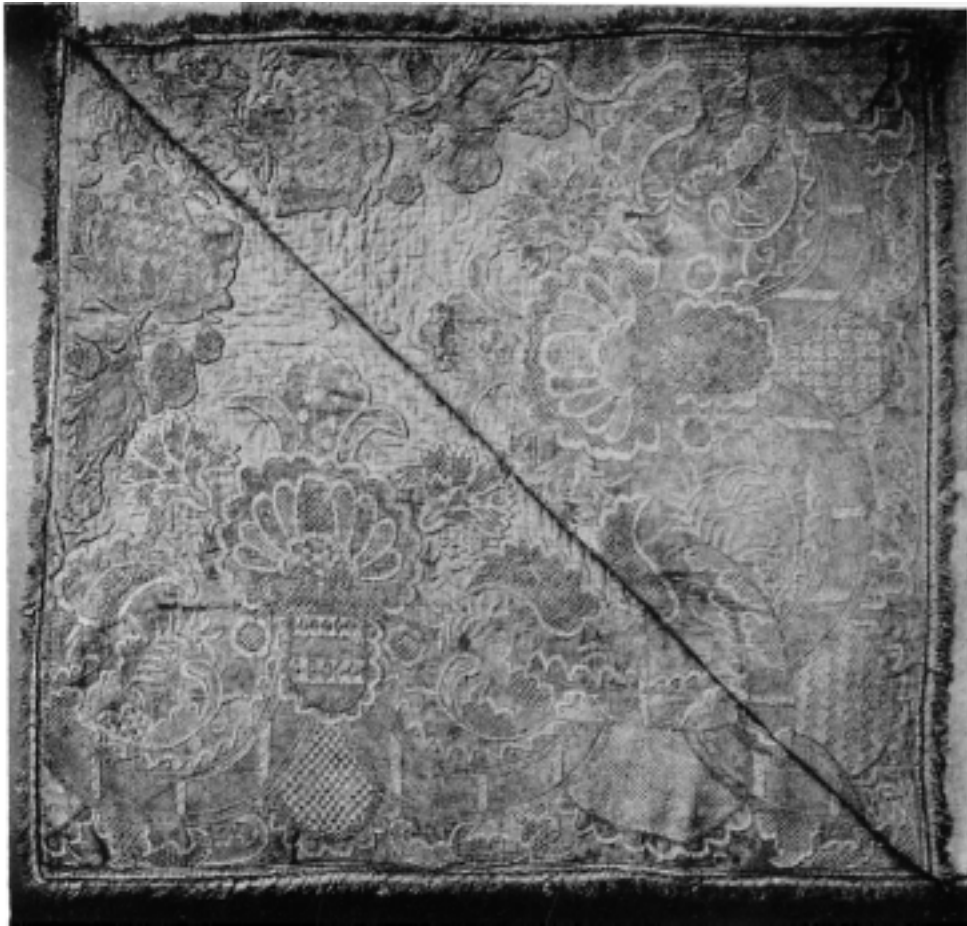


PLATE XI. QUILTED COVERLET (Detail).

With details in embroidery and lace stitches. Middle of the 18th century. From the collection of Her Majesty Queen Mary.



PLATE XII. CENTRAL MOTIF OF THE DOLBEN QUILT.

A satin coverlet embroidered in polychrome silk and silver-gilt thread, presented to the Rev. Sir John Dolben, Bart. and his bride, Elizabeth, daughter of the fifth Baron Digby of Geashill, on the occasion of their marriage at Sherborne Castle, Dorset, on July 28, 1720. The Victoria and Albert Museum.



PLATE XIII. MIRROR.

Frame of carved and gilded wood with insets of embroidered panels worked in colored silks and pearls on white satin. Third quarter of the 17th century. From the collection of Judge Irwin Untermyer.



PLATE XIV. BIBLE WITH EMBROIDERED COVER.

Printed in 1614. White satin binding worked in silver thread and bullion enriched with seed pearls. From the collection of Mr. and Mrs. DeWitt Clinton Cohen.





PLATE XV. THE JUDGEMENT OF SOLOMON.

Needlework picture worked in polychrome silk, silver thread, bullion and purl on canvas. Middle of the 17th century. From the collection of Mrs. Myron Taylor.



PLATE XVI. MINIATURE PORTRAIT OF CHARLES I.  
Second half of the 17th century. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



PLATE XVII. GLOVE WITH EMBROIDERED GAUNTLET.

The gauntlet of white satin is embroidered in silk, silver and silver-gilt thread and bullion, enriched with seed pearls, gold lace and spangles. Late 16th or early 17th century. Collection of the Metropolitan Museum.

tent stitch, and has details in silver thread, bullion and purl. Charles I, as Solomon, is, of course, the central figure.

The pieces from the collection of the Metropolitan Museum record two distinct phases of the art: the exquisitely worked miniature of Charles I (Pl. XVI), and, in the costume class, a pair of seventeenth century gloves (Pl. XVII) presented to the museum by Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, a member of long standing in the Needle and Bobbin Club. These gloves are of unusual interest in the design of the embroidered gauntlets which shows as one of the motifs, a weeping eye. While the eye motif is not unusual—it appears in another instance in the embroidered gown of Elizabeth in the Zuccaro portrait at Hatfield House—the exact symbolism of the weeping eye as here shown, is yet to be determined.<sup>14</sup>

That this historic display of English Domestic Embroidery held a strong appeal for the American public is evidenced by the throngs that filled the galleries during the short period of its duration. It opened on the afternoon of November fifth, with a preview for the members of the Needle and Bobbin Club, and continued until December second, during which time 26,621 visitors paid homage to the skill of Britain's needlecraft. The Club is honored to have had a part in so distinguished an occasion.

Museums and private collectors cooperating with the Metropolitan in the exhibition were as follows:

#### ENGLISH LENDERS

Her Majesty Queen Mary  
The Duke of Devonshire  
The Marquess of Salisbury  
The Viscountess Esher

The Lord Sackville  
Sir John Carew Pole, Bt.  
Ernest L. Franklin  
The Victoria and Albert Museum

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<sup>14</sup> Morris, Frances: *Bulletin* of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, 1929, p. 46.

## AMERICAN LENDERS

J. P. Argenti	Mrs. Brooks Howe
Mme. Jacques Balsan	Mrs. Lytle Hull
James W. Barney	Mrs. Myron Taylor
Mrs. J. Insley Blair	Judge Irwin Untermyer
Mr. and Mrs. DeWitt Clinton Cohen	Mr. and Mrs. George D. Widener
Mrs. Edsel B. Ford	The Folger Shakespeare Library
Mrs. Edgar J. Hesslein	The Pierpont Morgan Library



## CLUB NOTES, 1945

*The twenty-ninth annual meeting* of the Needle and Bobbin Club was held at the apartment of the president, Mrs. Frank B. Rowell, 1040 Fifth Avenue, on Wednesday afternoon, February 28, at three o'clock. Reports were read by the officers of the Club, after which Mrs. Lawrence Jacob, the chairman of the nominating committee, announced the election of the ballot. Mrs. Eric Kebbon as treasurer of the club succeeded Mrs. Robert Coleman Taylor, who was appointed second vice-president to fill out the unexpired term of the late Mrs. Robert Monks. The speaker of the afternoon was Dr. Ludlow Bull, Associate Curator of Egyptian Art of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, whose topic was *The Way of Life in Ancient Egypt*.

*On March twenty-second* at three o'clock, the last meeting of the season was held at the apartment of Miss Frances Morris, 39 East 79th Street. At this meeting Mr. John Goldsmith Phillips, Associate Curator of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, spoke on the subject, *The Royal Art of Tapestry*.

*On May twenty-third* members of the Club were invited by The British War Relief Society, Incorporated, of the United States, to an exhibition and sale of rare laces donated by the royal family and prominent individuals of Great Britain. The exhibition was shown through the courtesy of Miss Emma A. Maloof, 404 Madison Avenue.

*On November fifth* the regular monthly meetings of the Needle and Bobbin Club were preceded, through the invitation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, by an advance view of the Museum's exhibition of English Domestic Needlework of the XVI, XVII and XVIII Centuries; this is described in an article in this number of the Bulletin.

*On November twenty-first* the members of the Club were invited to the apartment of Mrs. Frank B. Rowell, 1040 Fifth Avenue, for the first meeting of the autumn. At three o'clock Mrs. Laurance P. Roberts, Acting, and later, Director of the Brooklyn Museum of Arts and Sciences in the absence of Mr. Roberts with the Armed Forces, spoke on Contemporary Methods of Textile Production in Japan. Mrs. Roberts, who with her husband, was a member of a committee visiting Japan before the war in the interest of cultural relations, told of the different branches of textile manufacturing in that country, silk weaving carried on generally to furnish materials for Japanese shrines, and a synthetic silk industry which operated on a much larger scale.

*On December fifth* the Bring and Buy Christmas sale, which in past years has been so successful, was organized again and held for the third time at the apartment of Miss Frances Morris, 39 East 79th Street. The results this year surpassed all expectations for in the hours from twelve to six the Club took in more than two thousand dollars, destined for the Friends' Service to aid this organization in carrying on their widespread services in devastated Europe.

*On December tenth* the Museum of the City of New York generously lent its galleries to the Club for a talk by M. Henri Seyrig, former Director of Antiquities in the French Mandate of Syria, who spoke to a deeply interested audience of excavations in Palmyra, the rich distributing center in its day of objects of luxury brought from China, and particularly of the contents of the tombs which line the road outside the city.

# THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB

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