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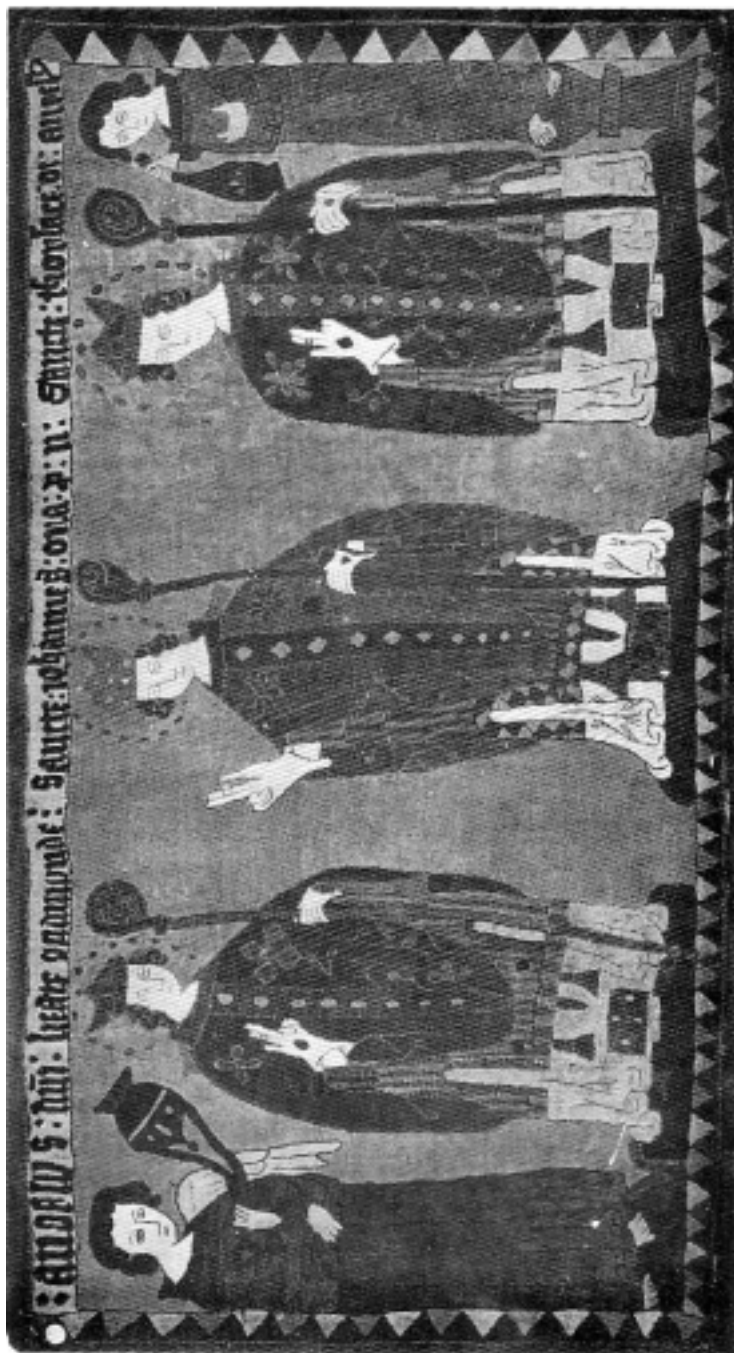


Plate I Frontal, laid and couched work. 15th century? National Museum of Iceland, No. 4380b.
Photo: Gíslí Gestsson.

TRADITIONAL ICELANDIC EMBROIDERY

By

Elsa E. Guðjónsson

Iceland was settled largely from Norway in the period from A.D. 874 to about 930. A few settlers came from other parts, mainly the Scottish Isles and Ireland. In 930, the first republic was established, and it lasted until 1262 when the Icelanders submitted to the King of Norway. Iceland remained under Norwegian rule until about 1380 when, together with Norway, it became subject to the Danish Crown. Partial autonomy was acquired in 1918, but it was not until 1944 that Iceland gained complete independence from Denmark with the establishment of the second republic.

Christianity was adopted as a state religion in Iceland in the year 1000. In 1056, a bishopric was established in Skálholt in southern Iceland; a second see for northern Iceland was founded at Hólar in 1106. Iceland remained Catholic until the middle of the sixteenth century, but since 1550, when the last Catholic bishop, Jón Arason of Hólar, was executed, the state church has been Lutheran. This date, 1550, marks the end of the middle ages in Iceland.

The collections of the National Museum of Iceland in Reykjavík, containing objects of cultural and historical significance from all periods of the country's history, include the group of domestically produced embroideries to be discussed here. A thorough examination is not possible within the limits of a short article; in addition, detailed studies of many of the embroideries have yet to be undertaken. An attempt will be made, however, to describe the most typical work wrought during the past centuries by Icelandic needlewomen, who, apparently taking great delight in their craft, produced embroideries intended to enhance not only the churches, but also their homes and dress as well.

Only church embroideries are known to have survived from mediaeval times, and the oldest of those produced in the country date back to the fourteenth or perhaps the thirteenth century. From the time after the Reformation, both ecclesiastical and secular work exists. Among the church embroideries are frontals, altar cloths, chasubles, chalice veils and burses, while secular examples consist mainly of coverlets, bed-valances, saddle cloths and cushion covers, besides such various items

of costume as women's jackets, skirts, collars, kerchiefs, caps and mittens.

Traditional Icelandic embroidery design is dominated by circles, hexagons and octagons enclosing various motifs such as scenes from the Bible and from lives of saints, human figures, plants and animals. This design feature dates back to the Byzantine silks, and was widely used in northern Europe during the middle ages. Developing in ways peculiar to Iceland, it there enjoyed a special popularity that lasted into the nineteenth century.

It is of interest to note the close relationship of mediaeval embroidery design with contemporary Icelandic illuminations. Illuminated manuscripts may well have served as pattern books, and most likely artists of the day undertook to draw embroidery patterns. This is at least strongly indicated by an artist's sketchbook of the early fifteenth century, as a number of the drawings in it appear to have been intended as embroidery designs; some even closely resemble extant mediaeval needlework.

From extant embroideries of more recent times, it is clear that Icelandic needlewomen had access to designs from the printed pattern books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. No such book has survived in Iceland, but the National Museum possesses four manuscript books of local production dating from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries. These books contain a variety of geometric, floral and animal borders, all-over designs, and separate flower and animal motifs. Most of these are intended for counted thread work, and some are almost exact copies of designs in the printed pattern books.

The greater part of Icelandic needlework is executed in woollen handspun yarn, either natural, or dyed with vegetable dyes. Occasional use is made of linen, silk and metal thread. The grounds used for the embroideries are mostly domestic woollen and imported linen fabrics, the more costly imports such as silks and velvets being employed infrequently. The linens are plain tabby; the woollens are either a loosely woven tabby or an extended tabby (basket weave) for counted thread work, or closely woven tabby or twill for free embroidery.

The embroideries are worked in a variety of techniques. It might be mentioned at this point that several problems in connection with the

Icelandic terminology of embroidery stitches are still unsolved, even though research into written sources, such as church inventories and estate accounts, followed by a comparison of the findings with extant pieces has proved helpful in clearing up some of these difficulties. In this way, a few forgotten terms have been recovered, while the meaning of others has been defined more clearly. Much remains to be done before the nomenclature of old Icelandic stitches can be worked out satisfactorily.

Five embroidery techniques, together with the materials and designs employed, may be said to lend special character to old Icelandic needlework. These are laid and couched work, darning stitch, long-legged cross stitch, eye stitch, and split stitch; other stitches such as stem, chain, cross, Florentine, double running, satin, and surface satin were used in varying degrees, as well as gold and silver embroidery and some types of white work, mainly drawn work and laces.

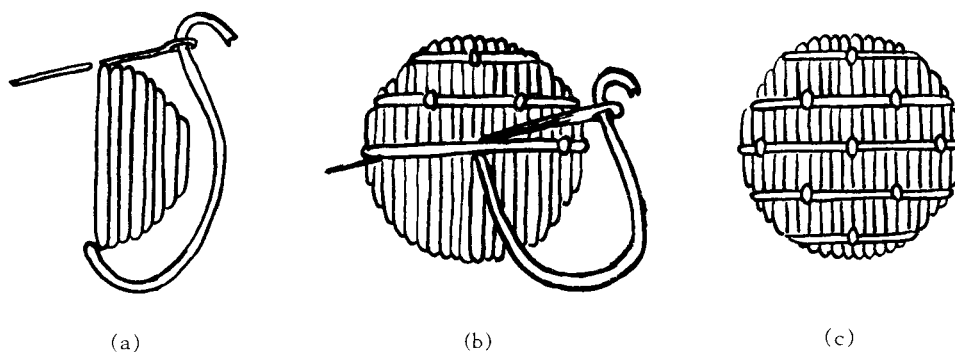


Figure 1 Laid and couched work: (a) laying ground threads; (b) couching of threads holding ground; (c) finished work.

Laid and couched work, *refilsaumur*, is worked in the manner shown in Figure 1. It is essentially a surface treatment. The main threads, often coarse and loosely spun, are laid close together from one side of the design area to the other (a), and across them finer, more tightly twisted threads are laid and fastened down at intervals with small, somewhat irregularly spaced stitches (b, c). The term *refilsaumur* is first encountered in written sources from 1550, the year which terminates the mediaeval period in Iceland, but the technique is best known from a group of altar frontals from the later middle ages. In the museum, there are five frontals¹ and a frontlet worked in this way, while three frontals²

and a long, horizontal wall hanging, a so-called *refill*,³ remain in the Danish National Museum, Copenhagen. Two other frontals exist, one in the Musée Cluny in Paris,⁴ the other in the Rijksmuseum Twenthe, in Enschede, Holland.⁵

The work is executed mainly in polychrome woollen yarns, with some blue or white linen yarn found on most pieces. Occasionally metal thread is introduced to highlight important details. One frontal in the museum is worked entirely in silk and metal thread.⁶ The ground used is most often a linen tabby; in three cases the embroidery has been worked on a woollen basket-weave ground. The technique and materials of the embroideries are much the same as those found on the Bayeux Tapestry, but in contrast to the tapestry, where some parts of the design as well as the background are left void, the Icelandic laid and couched embroideries – with three exceptions – are completely covered with stitchery. Small fragments of three Norwegian laid and couched embroideries also exist, as well as a Swedish frontlet from about 1600.

The antependium from the cathedral church at Hólar (Plate I) is the largest of the embroideries in this group, its maximum height being 99 cm, its maximum width 182.5 cm. As indicated by the inscription, it depicts three Icelandic bishops, the beatified Gudmundur Arason (1160-1237), and the sainted Jón Ögmundsson (1052-1121) and Thorlákur Thórhallsson (1133-1193), standing between two censuring angels.⁷ Almost the whole surface of the frontal is embroidered; three small details are not worked and may originally have held jewels. The ground is an unbleached linen tabby and, in addition to gilt thread to emphasize a few outlines, and a little white and blue linen thread, eight colors of woollen yarn are used: two browns, green-blue, yellow-green, yellow, white, red, and red purple. It should be noted that, due to fading and ageing, white appears as light tan, yellow as tan, red-purple as greyed red, and yellow-green as blue.

Plate II shows a laid and couched frontal from the parish church of Draflastadir in northern Iceland.⁸ On it are depicted – framed in barbed quatrefoils – the Virgin and Child, saints and bishops, perhaps sainted. Its maximum height is 109 cm, and it is 117 cm wide; the ground is an unbleached linen tabby completely covered with embroidery. A little blue and white linen thread has been used, but otherwise it is entirely worked in woollen yarns similar in color range to those on the Hólar frontal. As in the latter, the background color is yellow faded to tan,

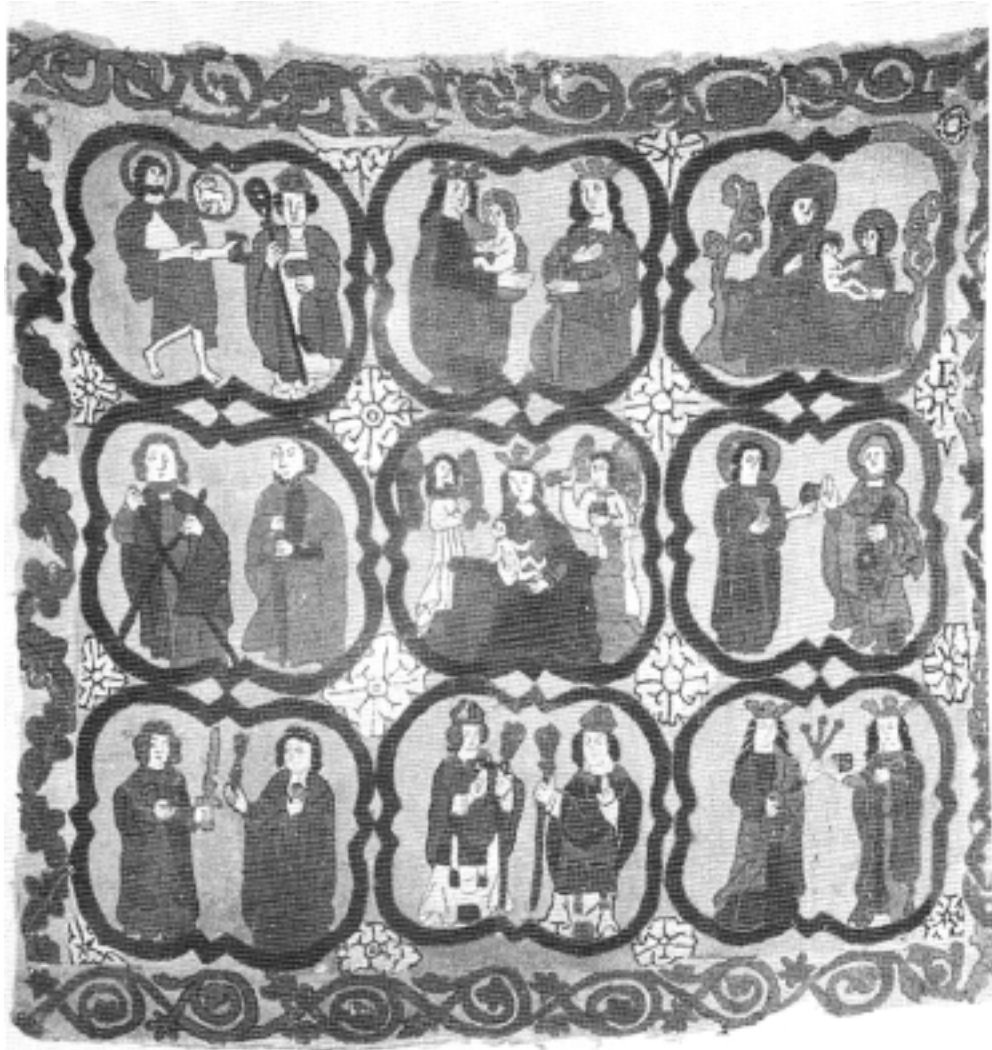


Plate II Frontal, laid and couched work. 15th century? National Museum of
Iceland, No. 3924.
Photo: Gisli Gestsson.



Plate III Frontal, appliqué. 16th century, 1st half? National Museum of
Iceland, No. 4797.
Photo: Gisli Gestsson.

a shade apparently popular as a ground in old Icelandic needlework. The outlines, all in wool, are mostly chain stitch; a few are couched.

Very few pieces of appliqué work have been preserved in Iceland, although eighteenth century documents indicate that a number of pieces worked in this technique, mostly church textiles, were then in existence. The earliest certain reference to appliqué that has been found, a frontlet of "cut-out cloth", dates from 1693, but from mediaeval times, more exactly the late fourteenth to late fifteenth centuries, church textiles are mentioned in inventories worked in *skorningur*, a term that may mean appliqué work.

The appliquéd frontal from the church at Reykir in northern Iceland (Plate III) very likely dates from the close of the middle ages.⁹ The ground of the panel is a dark blue, closely woven, wool tabby, 96 cm high and 82 cm wide. The two bands on either side, 8 cm wide, are linen. The pattern on the panel is made up of pieces of gilt leather, and many-colored woollen, linen and silk materials, with narrow gilt leather strips for the framework, all fastened down with white linen thread. The faces of the figures are padded; details, such as the scattered stars, are worked in silk thread. Work of similar nature was produced in other European countries, in Germany, for instance, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and in Sweden in the sixteenth century.

Another church embroidery from the very end of the mediaeval period is a frontal from Skard in north western Iceland (Plate IV). It is worked in polychrome wools on linen, the embroidery being solely in stem stitch, a technique often combined with other stitches but rarely used alone.¹⁰ The stitching is rather crude and uneven, as if produced by an unskilled worker. The frontal apparently is the one listed in the 1675 inventory of the Skard church as an altar frontal with *varpsaumur*; this is the earliest certain reference found to the technique, but most likely the word *varp*, found in inventories as early as 1523, was often synonymous with *varpsaumur*.

On the frontal, which measures 114 cm by 75 cm, are depicted six saints enclosed in square frames. The name of each saint is inscribed below his picture, while the following inscription is placed above the two uppermost figures: *abbadis: solve [ig rafns]: dotter:i: reynenese*. Sólveig Rafnsdóttir was the last Mother Superior (from 1508-1551) of

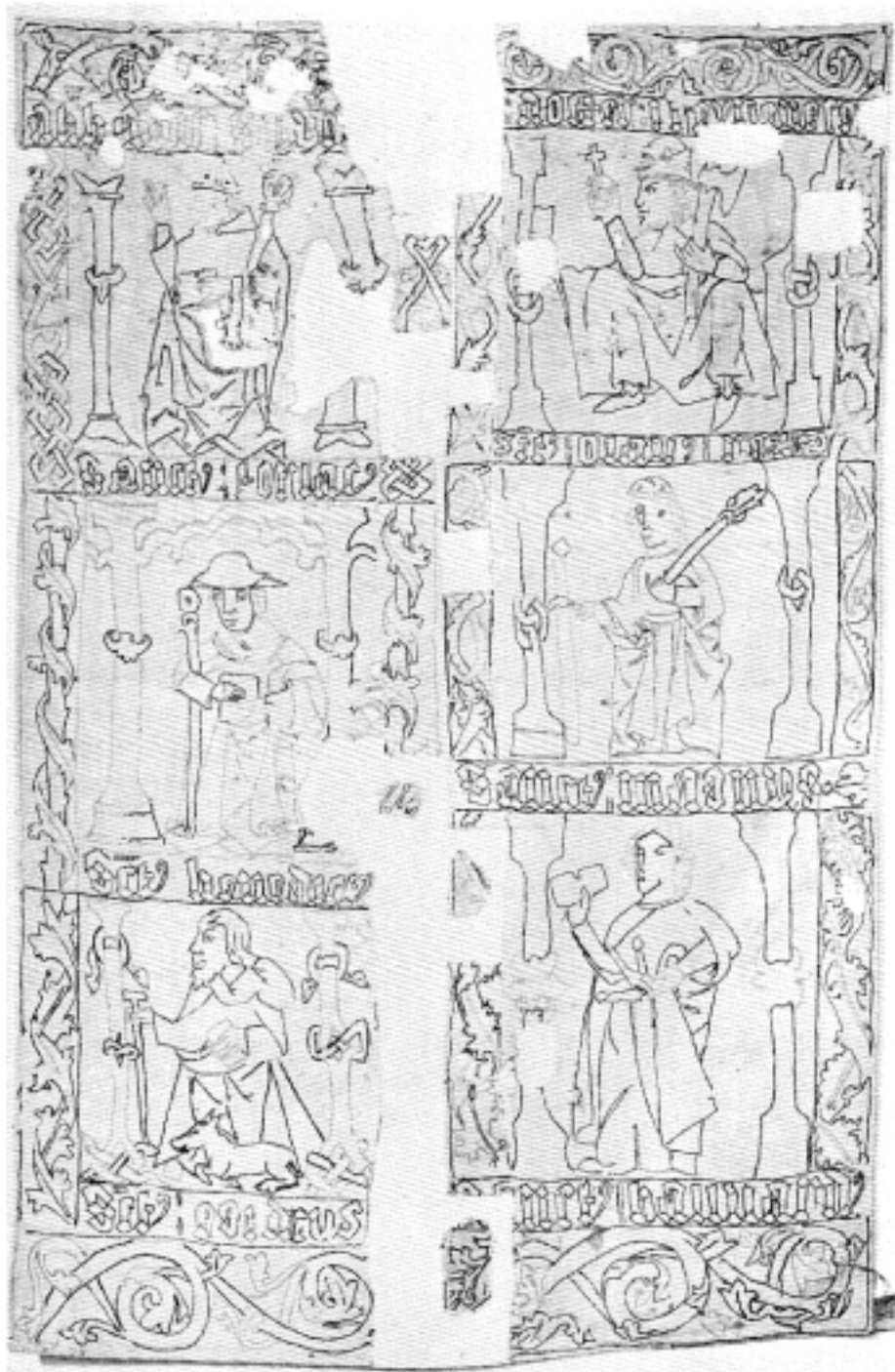


Plate IV Frontal, stem stitch. 16th century, 1st half. National Museum of Iceland, No. 2028.

Photo: Gísli Gestsson.

the convent at Stadur in Reynines – one of the two convents in Iceland – but no explanation has been found as to why an embroidery bearing her name came to be preserved as a frontal in the rather distant church at Skard.

Noteworthy among Icelandic needlework from Post-Reformation times are long linen bed-valances. Those still extant are dated from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and, for the most part, are embroidered in woollen yarns of many colors in a straight darning stitch called *glitsaumur*, i.e. *glit* embroidery, which produces the same effect as Swedish *dukagång* weaving (Figure 2a). The earliest reference found for the term *glitsaumur* dates from about 1540, but as early as the first part of the fourteenth century textiles with *glit* are mentioned. Exactly when these terms took on the meaning they have today is not known; the first certain reference to *glitsaumur* as the type of darned embroidery still associated with the word dates from the beginning of the eighteenth century. In early times, *glit* and *glitsaumur* may have meant either glittering or colored textiles, or textiles embroidered with glittering or colored threads.

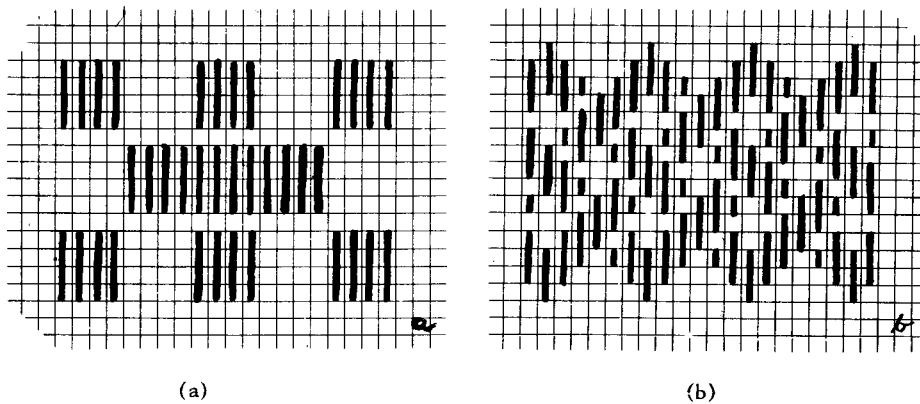


Figure 2 Darning stitches: (a) position of pattern threads in *glitsaumur*, straight darning stitch; (b) position of pattern threads in *skakkaglit*, slanting darning stitch, known as pattern darning or weave stitch.

The valances usually measure about 350 to 400 cm in length, and 50 to 60 cm in width. The three examples shown in Plate V, all from northern Iceland, date from the eighteenth century. The design in each case consists of the traditional round or polygonal frames enclosing

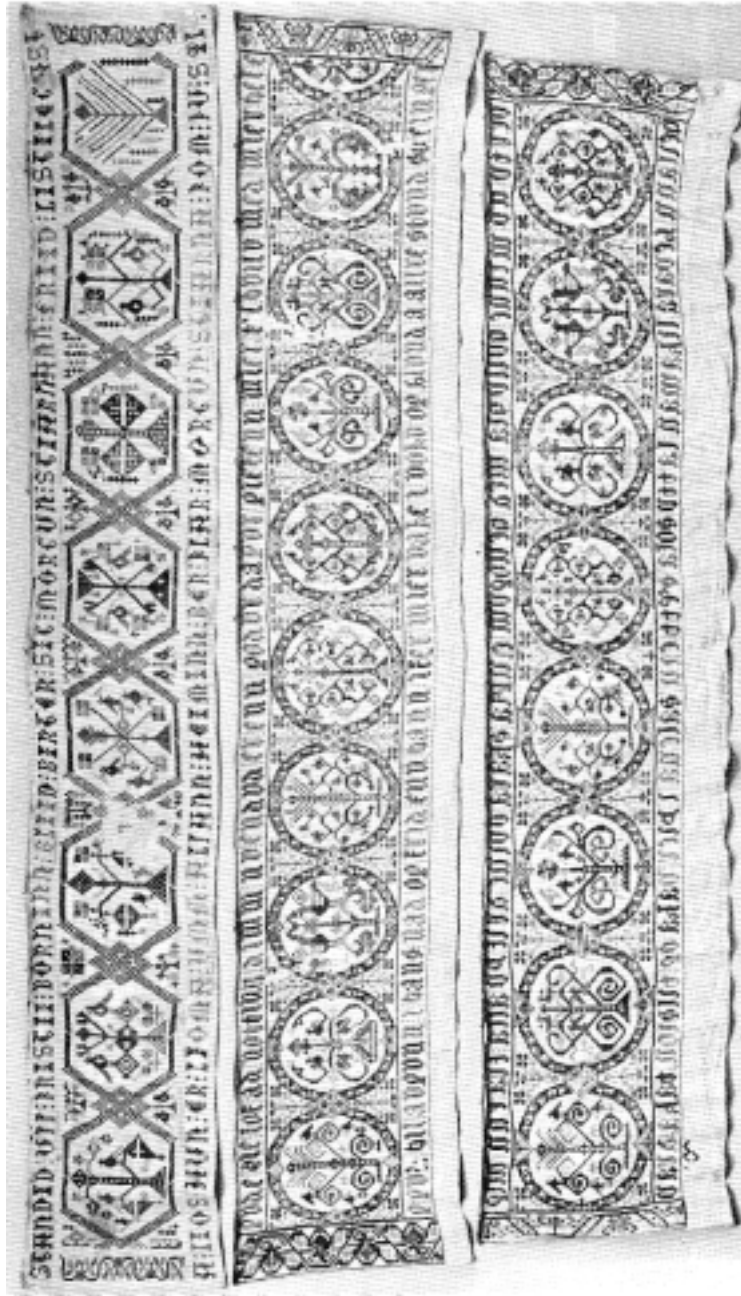


Plate V Bed-valances, darned stitch. 18th century. National Museum of Iceland, Nos. 160, 161, 615.
Photo: Gísli Gestsson.

flower and bird (tree of life) motifs. The inscriptions are parts of evening hymns. Biblical scenes, human figures and various animals are also frequently depicted within the design frames of valances. A detail of another eighteenth century example, from eastern Iceland (Plate VI), shows, for instance, two warriors or hunters, and a crowned lion.¹¹ In the left circle, the inscription “*tirpinn biskup*” indicates that the figure is meant to represent Bishop Turpin, one of Charlemagne’s paladins.

A variation of the *glit* embroidery is the so-called *skakkaglit* or slanting *glit* embroidery, sometimes called pattern darning. In this the darning stitch gives the impression of the Swedish *krabbasnår* weaving. Swedish needlework of this kind is called *vävsöm*, or weave stitch (Figure 2b). Like the ordinary *glit* work, the slanting *glit* is worked with polychrome woollen yarns on a linen ground. The term *skakkaglit* does not seem to appear in written sources earlier than 1675, but perhaps the technique is identical with what, about 1500, was referred to as *veanda-saumur*, a term that may be interpreted as weave stitch. *Skakkaglit* is found, for instance, on frontals from both mediaeval¹² and more recent times, and some bed-valances are also executed in this manner.

Plate VII shows a frontal with an all-over design worked in *skakkaglit*, with lettering in ordinary *glit* and Florentine stitch. With a maximum height of 98 cm and a maximum width of 124 cm, this embroidery from the Laufás church in northern Iceland carries the date 1694, and a long inscription relating that RAGNEIDUR IONSDOTTER presented it to the church in payment for the burial place of her mother. According to church inventories and other sources, Ragnheidur Jónsdóttir, twice married to bishops of the see of Hólar, was a frequent donor of church embroideries; she is also known to have been active in teaching needlework to young girls of her family, and the oldest of the pattern books in the museum may have belonged to her.

Also characteristic of Icelandic Post-Reformation needlework is a group of coverlets completely covered with long-legged cross stitch worked horizontally. The technique, formerly known as *krossaumur* or cross stitch, is today known as *fléttusaumur*, literally braid stitch. It appears as a supporting stitch on a few late mediaeval frontals; in written sources, it is first found mentioned in 1550. The coverlets, measuring about 150 to 175 cm in length and 100 to 125 cm in width, are



Plate VI Detail of bed-valance, darning stitch. 18th century. National Museum of Iceland, No. 1808.

Photo: Gisli Gestsson.

Plate VII Frontal, pattern darning. Dated 1694. National Museum of Iceland, No. 404.

Photo: Gisli Gestsson.

embroidered with multicolored woollen yarns on a tabby, or more often, an extended tabby or basket weave ground.¹³

The coverlet shown in Plate VIII, believed to date from the seventeenth century, was at one time part of the furnishings at the bishop's seat at Hólar. The main design consists of decorative frames encircling biblical scenes: the Nativity, the Baptism, the Crucifixion, and the Burial of Christ, while in the half-circles may be seen Noah's Ark, and a tree-of-life motif.¹⁴ The surrounding inscription contains part of an evening prayer. The letters, as well as some details in the spandrels, are worked in eye stitch. Another seventeenth century coverlet (Plate IX) is popularly known to museum visitors as *Riddarateppid*, the Coverlet of the Knights. It is of unknown provenance. The main design consists of twelve octagonal frames, six of which show gentlemen seated at tables, or knights or mounted horsemen in sixteenth century dress.¹⁵ In the other six are deer entangled in flowering trees. The color scheme of both these pieces is somewhat similar, although the colors of the latter are less faded: a somewhat greyed or golden yellow ground with the figures worked in blue, green, red, brown and white.¹⁶

Long-legged cross stitch was also commonly used on various ecclesiastical embroideries and on such items as cushion covers, one of the former being a frontal from the church at Háls in northern Iceland (Plate X). This piece, which measures 98 cm by 88 cm, is rather coarse both in material and execution. A few details are worked in double running and stem stitches. It is of interest to note that this frontal is the oldest known piece of Icelandic embroidery, still extant, to have carried a date as well as a name, the latter most likely that of the embroideress. Some letters: *Brett*, and parts of others [*efaT?*] may still be made out at the mutilated lower edge of the frontal, while inventories reveal that it carried the date 1617 and was presented to the church in 1631 by the minister, Tómas Ólafsson. The name of one of his daughters was Brettefa, an uncommon name in Iceland by the way, and it was undoubtedly she who embroidered it. The date of Brettefa Tómasdóttir's birth is uncertain, but in 1617 she was evidently quite a young girl; this might explain the rather crude execution of the work.

As already mentioned, some details on the cross-stitch coverlets were sometimes worked in eye stitch, a technique that was called *augnsaumur*, or rather *augnasaumur*, which literally means eye stitch. When

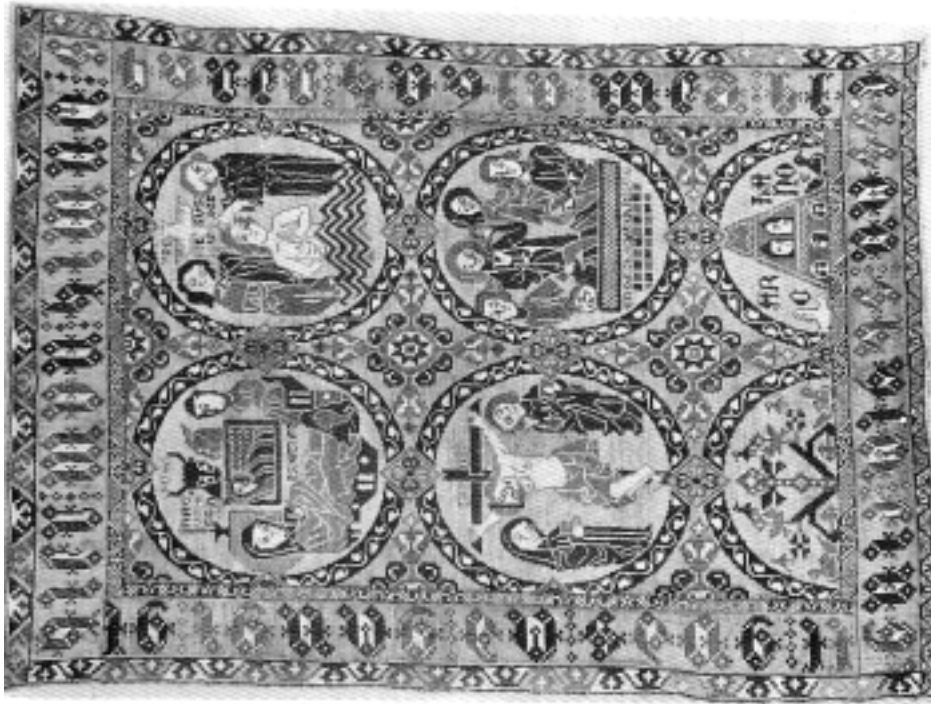


Plate VIII Coverlet, long-legged cross stitch and eye stitch.
17th century. National Museum of Iceland, No. 1065.
Photo: Gísli Gestsson.

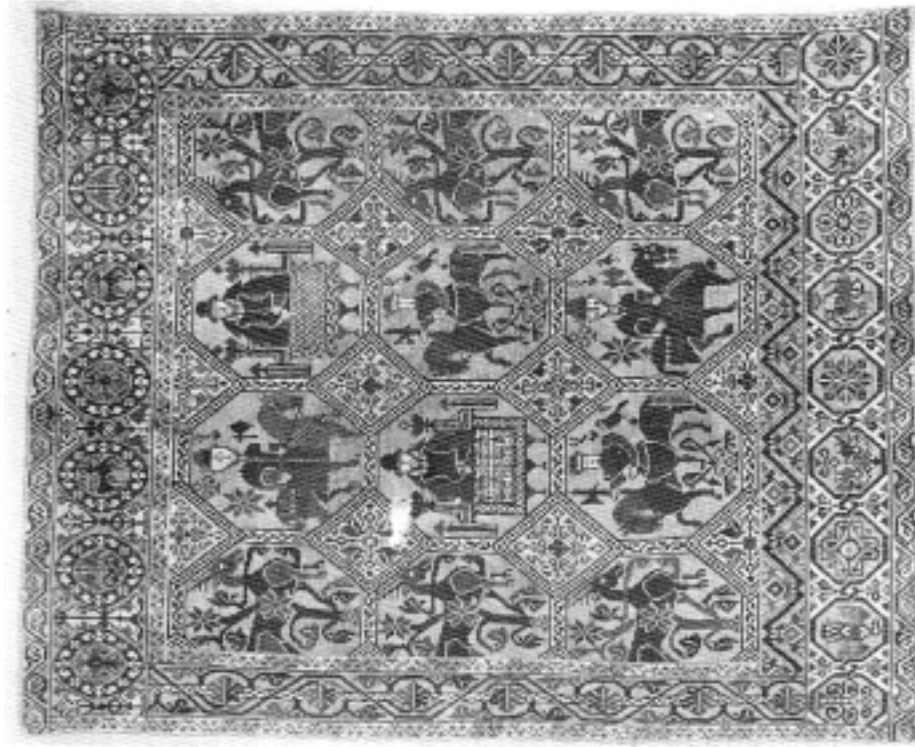


Plate IX Coverlet, long-legged cross stitch. 17th century.
National Museum of Iceland, No. 800.
Photo: Gísli Gestsson.

used in Iceland, this is never outlined with back stitch. *Augnasaumur* is found mentioned in inventories as early as 1659, and it is believed that the terms *borusaumur* and *gataumur*, first listed in the years 1550 and 1657 respectively, refer to the same technique. The bulk of extant eye-stitch embroideries in the National Museum, however, date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These pieces, executed in a manner apparently unique for Iceland and evidently produced in a limited number only, consist of coverlets and cushion covers completely covered in eye stitch worked in colored yarns on a woollen ground woven either in tabby or extended tabby.

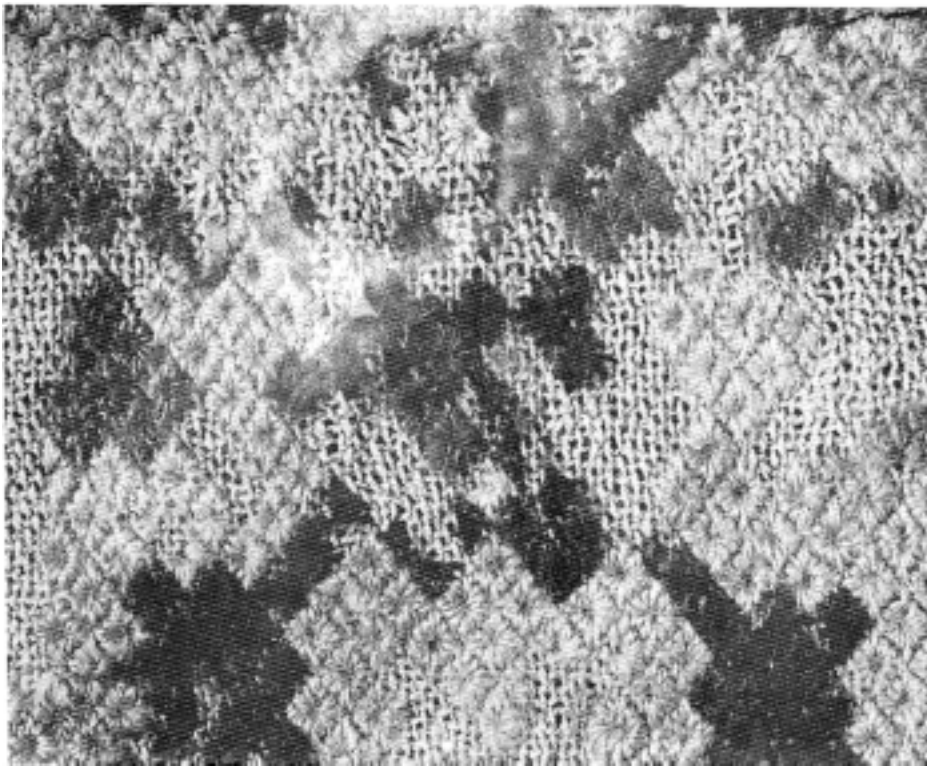


Figure 3 Detail of cushion cover, showing lozenge eye stitch or “diamond daisy” on woollen tabby ground. Actual size. National Museum of Iceland, No. 12423.

Photo: Gísli Gestsson.

The largest of this group is the coverlet shown in Plate XI which is about equal in size to the largest of the cross-stitch examples. As indicated by an inscription across one end, this coverlet was worked or completed in 1751, the owner and perhaps the worker being Dómhildur Eiríksdóttir, wife of a minister at Hrafnagil in northern Iceland. The all-over pattern consists of linked octagonal frames, each enclosing a vase with flowers or an eight-pointed star surrounded by small floral motifs, while the spandrels are filled with geometric knot patterns. The work is executed in polychrome wools, now very faded, on a coarse woollen tabby.

A rare variety of eye stitch has been observed in only two Icelandic embroideries: a coverlet of about 1700 also worked in long-legged cross stitch now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London,¹⁷ and a cushion cover of the second half of the eighteenth century in the Museum in Reykjavík (Figure 3). The eyes are worked diagonally, appearing as a lozenge rather than a square; each eye consists of only twelve stitches rather than the sixteen found in ordinary eye stitch. If this stitch ever had a name of its own in Iceland, it is now unknown. Judging from pictures, it seems to have been used on the morse of a Swedish cope of about 1500, and on a number of English samplers of the seventeenth century. It does not seem to be referred to or described anywhere except in *Elementary Embroidery* by Mary Symonds where it is depicted under the name "diamond daisy", while eye stitch is called "square daisy".

One of the puzzles of the nomenclature of Icelandic textiles is presented by the word *sprang*.¹⁸ Church cloths with *sprang* are mentioned in inventories as early as 1318. In later sources, the earliest dating from 1327, textiles with *sprang* and *glit* are sometimes mentioned together, leaving the impression that *sprang* and *glit* were two different, perhaps contrasting, ways of adorning textiles. References in seventeenth century inventories to embroideries that still exist show that *sprang* was then used synonymously with what today is called lacis or darned netting. The word *ridsprang* was also used at times, probably to further qualify the term. Although it cannot be ascertained at present, *ridsprang* might be regarded as referring especially to darned netting, with *sprang* being a more inclusive term for open or white work techniques such as drawn work, cut work, and lacis.



Plate X Frontal, long-legged cross, double running, and stem stitches. Dated 1617. National Museum of Iceland, No. 10940.
Photo: Gísli Gestsson.

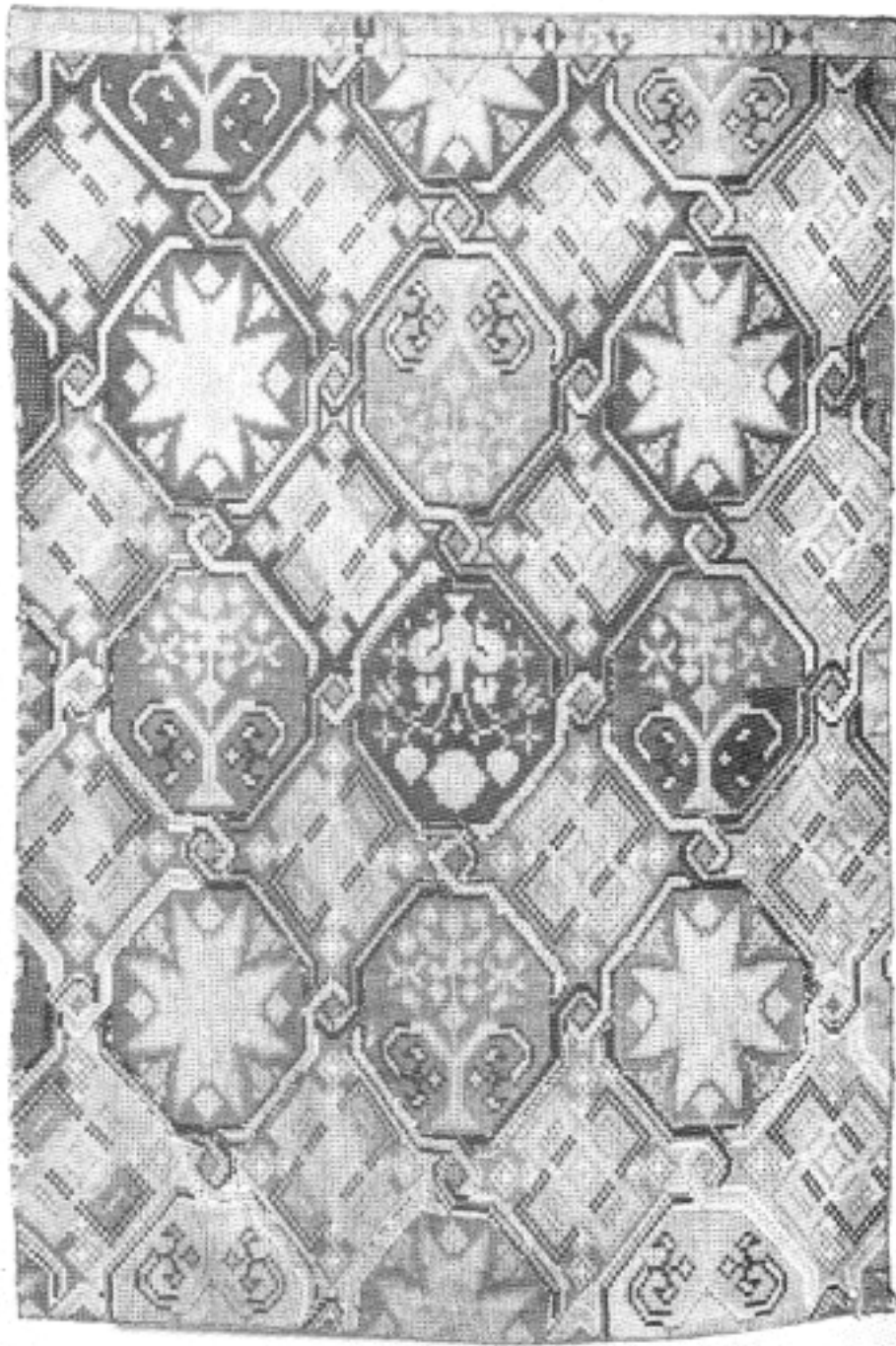


Plate XI Coverlet, eye stitch. Dated 1751. National Museum of Iceland,
No. 270.
Photo: Gisli Gestsson.

Icelandic embroideries executed in white work are comparatively few. One of the most striking examples is that from Höfdabrekka church in southern Iceland shown in Plate XII. According to the inscription, it was intended as a hanging for use around a baptismal font. In layout, the design is similar to the darned bed-valances, the four round frames enclosing an eagle, a griffin, a pair of dragons and a pair of lions. The embroidery, which measures 80 cm by 170 cm, is worked entirely in linen. The technique is drawn work: threads are drawn out at regular intervals, and those remaining are wrapped to form a mesh into which the design is afterwards worked. The date of the font cloth is somewhat uncertain, but in view of the close relationship of the design with that of the bed-valances, it might perhaps be tentatively dated to about 1700.¹⁹

Very different in character from the various types of counted thread work is the free style of floral embroidery known as *blómstursaumur* which came into vogue during the seventeenth century. The term is first encountered in written sources of 1715, but earlier work exists, such as the frontal shown in Plate XIII which carries the date 1683, and reached the museum from the church at Bær in south western Iceland. Measuring about 96 cm by 92 cm, it is executed in polychrome wools on a coarse blue woollen twill. The stitches used consist mainly of split, stem and long-and-short stitches, as well as French knots.²⁰

Blómstursaumur continued in fashion into the nineteenth century with split stitch becoming an ever more dominant feature of the work, so much so that today *blómstursaumur* has come to mean embroidery worked in split stitch. The technique found many uses, both ecclesiastical and secular. Cushion covers in *blómstursaumur*, for instance, became very popular, and some fine women's skirts of the eighteenth century were decorated at the hemline with wide bands of this work (Plate XIV).²¹

At that time, and right up to the present, silver and gold embroidery, *baldýring*, was also used to adorn parts of women's festive costume, such as jackets, bodices and collars (Plate XIV).²² How far back this custom dates has not been established, but all through the centuries some gold and silver embroidery was most certainly produced in Iceland for secular as well as for church use. In early sources terms such as

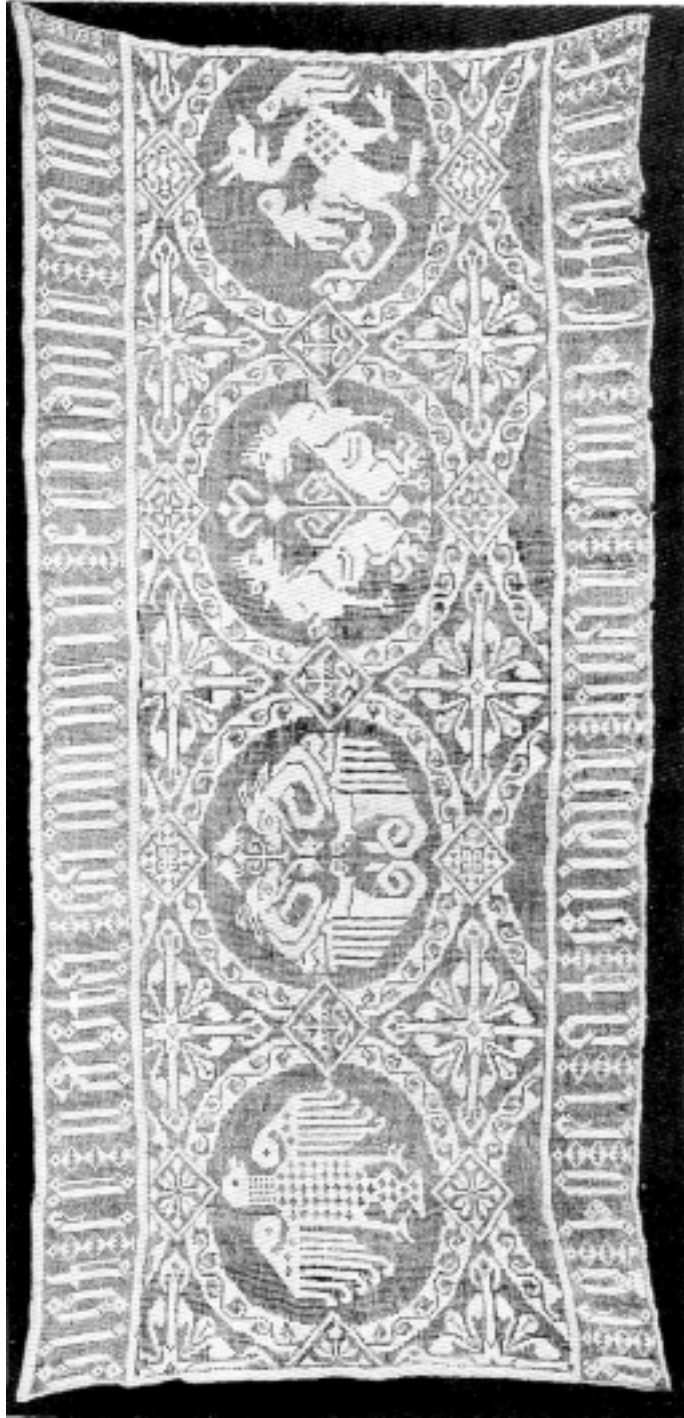


Plate XII Font cloth, drawn work. ca. 1700? National Museum of Iceland,
No. 1924.
Photo: Gísli Gestsson.

gullsaumur, gold embroidery, are found. The term *baldyring*, not found in written sources until 1659, seems to have been used at first as a general term for embroidery; not until 1750 is it found used in connection with gold work.

With the exception of one specimen from 1779, the few samplers in the museum are nineteenth century pieces. All completely lack national characteristics in design and execution, except for the lettering of an alphabet on one of them. A much more interesting "sampler", from 1795, has been preserved in the form of a chalice veil from the church at Brekka in eastern Iceland (Plate XV). Although intended for church use from the start, as is evident from the inscription around the edges, the veil is nevertheless worked in the manner of a sampler. The design is executed, quite successfully, in a great variety of stitches, some common, others rare in Icelandic embroidery. It measures 20.5 cm by 19.5 cm, and is worked in colored silk on linen, and backed and bound with silk. The silks, both threads and fabric, are very much faded, and now appear in various shades of tan and brown. The following stitches were used: cross, long-legged cross, darning, double running, Florentine, stem, satin, counted satin, and buttonhole stitches.

As has been seen above, it is possible to point to a few instances where the embroideress, owner or donor of an embroidery can be identified, but on the whole, little is known about the women who planned, supervised and executed the work. That is especially true of the mediaeval period. None of the extant embroideries from that time carries date or signature, except for the frontal mentioned above with the name of Sólveig Rafnsdóttir; it is considered extremely unlikely, however, that the abbess herself executed the work. On the other hand, written sources reveal that in 1725 the cathedral church at Hólar possessed two riddells, now lost, which carried an inscription stating that Thóra Tumasdóttir had embroidered them to the glory of the Virgin Mary. The embroideress, who has been identified as a granddaughter of the mistress of Bishop Jón Arason, probably worked the riddells towards the middle of the sixteenth century.

Little is known, too, about the places where the embroideries of the period were executed, but work such as the group of laid and couched frontals certainly gives the impression of being produced at needlecraft centres or schools. It is to be believed that the art of the needle was



Plate XIII Frontal, split, stem, long-and-short stitches and French knots.
Dated 1683, National Museum of Iceland, No. 3942.
Photo: Gísli Gestsson.



Plate XIV Woman's festive costume. ca. 1800. Skirt, split stitch; bodice, jacket and collar, silver embroidery; handkerchief, drawn work. National Museum of Iceland, Nos. 2868, 4179, 2159, 9205, 11527. Photo: Gísli Gestsson.



Plate XV Chalice veil, various stitches. Dated 1779. National Museum of Iceland, No. 7177.

Photo: Gísli Gestsson.

practised in the two convents in Iceland with no less diligence than in convents in other countries, but documentary evidence of this is very meagre. No doubt ecclesiastical embroideries were also produced from the earliest days at the bishops' seats, and an episode in the story of Jón Ögmundsson, first bishop of Hólar, testifies to this.

As already stated, extant embroideries with inscribed dates and names are more common from later times; also more common and much more detailed are sources giving information about embroideries, some still existing and others now lost. Most of these were made by or for women of comparative wealth, position and leisure, such as the wives and daughters of bishops, ministers, sheriffs and magistrates. To some extent this may be explained by the fact that the finer and larger pieces of needlework, whether ecclesiastical or secular, were better cared for and deemed more worthy of mention in records than lesser, ordinary objects. The main reason, however, would seem to be that the well-to-do women were in a better position to order or to produce costly and demanding embroideries, while the women of the common people would of necessity be restricted in their output of fancy work.

After the Reformation, when the convents were dissolved, the bishops' seats and the homes of other high officials most probably became the main centres of artistic needlework. The study of embroidery was a necessary part of the upbringing of young girls; one bishop, it is said, even sent for a teacher from England in order that his only daughter might receive the best possible education in the feminine arts.²³ As already mentioned, the wife of another bishop taught needlecraft to the young girls in her immediate family.

The study of old Icelandic embroideries is still in its early stages; numerous questions remain to be answered. The solution of many of them may never be found in spite of future research, but even if the majority of Icelandic needlewomen of past centuries must for ever remain anonymous, and the dating of their work inaccurate, the beauty of the embroideries they have left to posterity is by no means lessened, nor is our admiration of the unknown women decreased. These were the women who through the centuries added stitch to stitch creating some of the country's finest works of art.

- ¹One of these, not illustrated here, is shown in Gertie Wandel, "To Broderede Billedtæpper og Deres Islandske Oprindelse", *Fra Nationalmuseets Arbejdsmark*, 71-82, 1941, Figure 6; another may be seen in Kristján Eldjárn, *Ancient Art* (Reykjavík: 1957), Plate 45 (or in the revised edition, Kristján Eldjárn, *Icelandic Art* (New York: [1961?], Plate 45) as well as in E.J. Kalf, "Een Interessant Borduussel in het Rijksmuseum Twenthe," *Textilhistorische Bijdragen*, 1: 50-70, 1959, Figure 8.
- ²Two of these are shown in Wandel, *op. cit.*, Figures 1 and 2; the former may also be seen in Sigfús Blöndal and Sigurdur Sigtryggsson, *Alt-Island im Bilde* (Jena: 1930), Figure 75, and the latter in Helen Engelstad, *Refil, Bunad, Tjeld; Middelalderens Billedtæpper i Norge* (Oslo: 1952), Figure 60.
- ³Details of this hanging are shown in Eldjárn, *op. cit.*, Plate 44, Kalf, *op. cit.*, Figure 9, Blöndal and Sigtryggsson, *op. cit.*, Figure p. IX, and Engelstad, *op. cit.*, Figure 6.
- ⁴Cf. Wandel, *op. cit.*, Figure 4; Kalf, *op. cit.*, Figures 5, 6 and 7; Louis de Farcy, *La Broderie du XIe Siècle jusqu'à nos Jours* (Angers: 1890) II, Plate 24; and Elsa E. Gudjónsson, "Íslenzkur Dýrgripur í Hollenzku Safni," *Andvari*, 4: 127-138, 1962, Figure p. 136.
- ⁵Cf. Kalf, *op. cit.*, Figure 1; Gudjónsson, *op. cit.*, Figure p. 128.
- ⁶Shown in color in Eldjárn, *op. cit.*, Plate 5.
- ⁷*Ibid.*, Plate 67, a detail in color showing Saint Thorlákur and an angel.
- ⁸A detail in color is shown in *ibid.*, Plate 56.
- ⁹A detail in color is shown in *ibid.*, Plate 43.
- ¹⁰A detail of another piece of embroidery, a long, horizontal hanging, worked predominantly in stem stitch is shown in *ibid.*, Plate 47.
- ¹¹This valance, as well as two others, one of which is in the Danish National Museum, Copenhagen, are shown in Blöndal and Sigtryggsson, *op. cit.*, Figure 19.
- ¹²A mediaeval antependium worked partly in *skakkaglit* is shown in Engelstad, *op. cit.*, Figure 49.
- ¹³A detail of a long horizontal wall hanging, worked in long-legged cross stitch, now in the Danish National Museum, Copenhagen, is shown in Blöndal and Sigtryggsson, *op. cit.*, Figure p. XI.
- ¹⁴The four circles are shown in Eldjárn, *op. cit.*, Plate 50.

- ¹⁵ A detail, one of the horsemen, is shown in *ibid.*, Plate 53.
- ¹⁶ A detail in color of still another coverlet worked in long-legged cross stitch is shown in *ibid.*, Plate 46, while two more coverlets may be seen in Blöndal and Sigtryggsson, *op. cit.*, Figures 22 and 23.
- ¹⁷ Shown in *ibid.*, Figure 20. The upper part of this coverlet is shown in Mary Symonds Antrobus and Louisa Preece, *Needlework Through the Ages* (London: 1928), Plate XXVI, 3.
- ¹⁸ The use of the word *sprang* for a form of plait-work will not be considered here, since, as far as is known, no tradition of this work has existed in Iceland.
- ¹⁹ A detail of a panel of a riddell worked in darned netting (*lakis*), dated 1650, is shown in Eldjárn, *op. cit.*, Plate 49.
- ²⁰ A seventeenth (?) century coverlet worked in this manner is shown in Blöndal and Sigtryggsson, *op. cit.*, Figure 21.
- ²¹ A skirt with a decorative border worked predominantly in surface satin stitch is shown in *ibid.*, Figure 56.
- ²² Cf. *loc. cit.*
- ²³ An embroidered portrait of the bishop worked by his daughter is shown in color in Eldjárn, *op. cit.*, Plate 63. It is worked mainly in laid and couched work, long-and

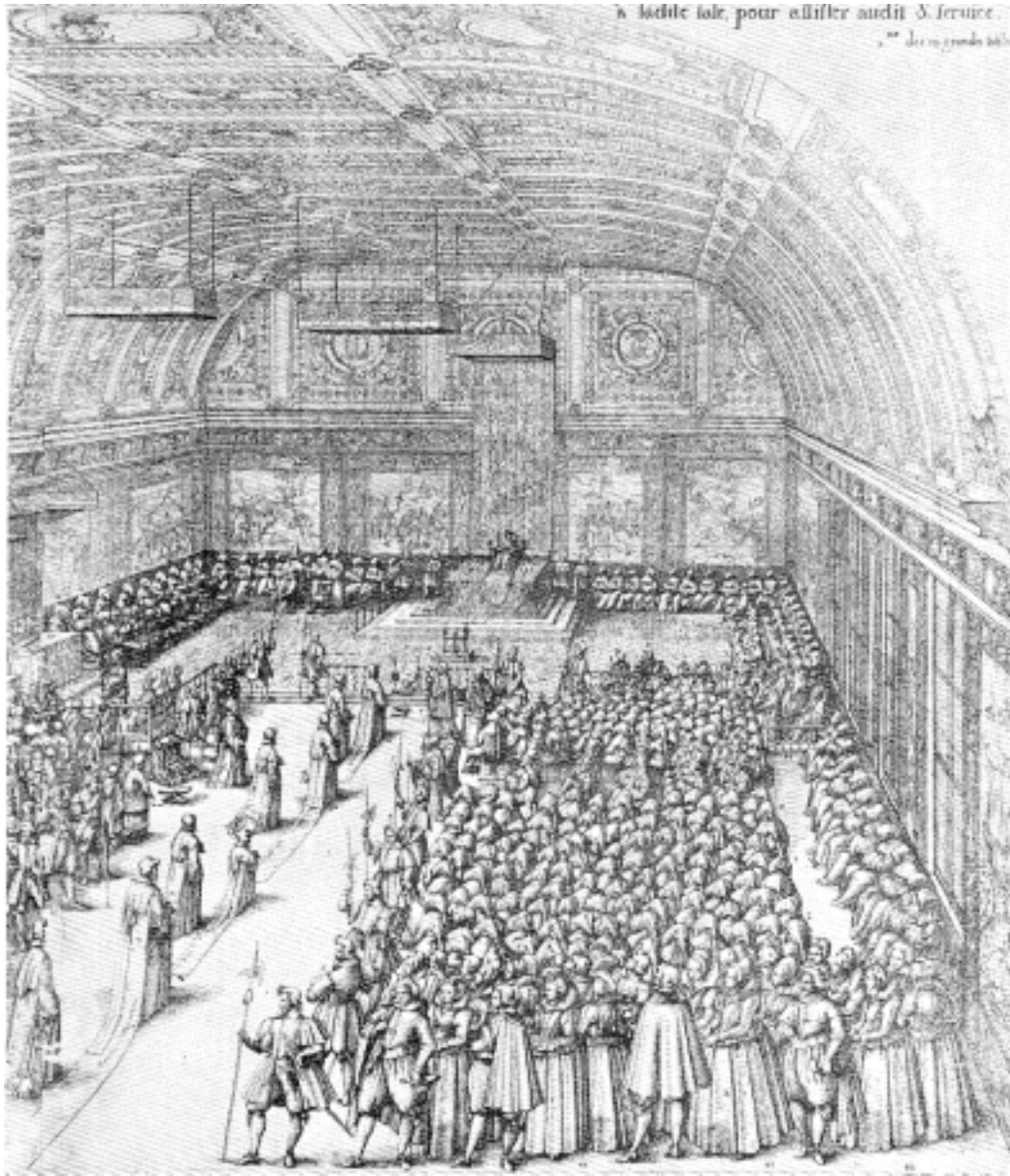


Plate I Friedrich Brentel. Engraving of the *Salle d'Honneur* at the *Pompe Funèbre* of Duke Charles III of Lorraine, detail, right half. Strasburg, about 1610. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whittelsey Fund, 1959.

A NOTE ON THE TAPESTRIES AT THE
POMPE FUNEBRE OF CHARLES III OF LORRAINE

By

Nancy Graves Cabot

In 16th-century Lorraine it was said that the three most magnificent ceremonies to be seen in Europe were the crowning of an Emperor at Frankfort, the anointing of a King of France at Rheims, and the burial of a Duke of Lorraine at Nancy. And it is true that in Lorraine, from René II down through the century, the established ceremonial of each successive ducal "Pompe Funèbre" had increased in splendor, until the sumptuous obsequies for Charles the Great surpassed all that had gone before.

Charles III, Duke of Lorraine, died in his palace at Nancy on the 14th of May, 1608, deeply mourned, for he had been a benevolent ruler, ever solicitous for his people, devoted to the wise administration of his duchy and the preservation of its integrity in a hostile and aggressive world.

His was a distinguished lineage, allying him with every court in Europe. A direct descendant of René I, Duke of Anjou, he was the son of Francis I, Duke of Lorraine, and Christine of Denmark, daughter of King Christian of Denmark and Queen Isabella, sister of the Emperor Charles V.

By the sudden death of his father in 1545 he became heir to the dukedom at the tender age of two. His mother, Christine, assumed the regency and undertook his education with the help of his uncle the Bishop of Metz, but King Henry II of France, concerned to thwart the influence his great uncle, Charles V, might bring to bear on a bewildered and leaderless duchy, moved swiftly to invade Lorraine in 1552. He banished Christine to Flanders and, on leaving Lorraine, carried off the child duke to the French court where he was brought up, and in 1599 married to the Princess Claude of France, second daughter of the King and Catherine de Médicis. A year later, on the death of King Henry and the accession of Francis II, the young duke, with his wife the Princess Claude, returned to Lorraine as Duc Charles III and began his long reign of enlightened and compassionate government that earned him the title of "the Great."

Fortunately, the magnificence of the burial of a Duke of Lorraine is preserved in a set of ten large engravings in the Musée Historique Lorrain at Nancy and the Metropolitan Museum that graphically portray the sequence of funeral rites of Charles III's "Pompe Funèbre," from his death on May 14th, 1608, until his final interment on the 19th of the following July. The engravings of each event in the obsequies are all entitled "Pourtraicts," as in Plate II, "Pourtraict de la Sale-d'honneur, préparée à Nancy en l'Hostel Ducal, pour le Corps de feue son Altesse de Lorraine, Monseigneur le Duc Charles 3me. de ce Nom..." (Pl. I), and so on down to Plate X, the "Pourtraict" of the heir Henry II's return to the ducal Palace following his proclamation as duke.

Each plate carries the inscription: "Claudius de La Ruelle, inventor, Fridericus Brentel fecit, Perspectiva per Ioann la Hiere, Herman de Loye excudit," a fortunate combination of designer, engraver, draughtsman, and publisher collaborating to produce an extremely detailed pictorial record of the court of Lorraine's greatest spectacle.

Claude de La Ruelle, the designer, "secretaire des Commandements" to his late Highness as well as to Duc Henry II, had served the court of Lorraine in many posts with a distinction that Duc Charles rewarded by ennoblement in 1570, naming him "gentilhomme de sa maison." Little is known of Friedrich Brentel, the engraver, save that he was born in 1580 in Germany and was established as engraver and miniaturist in Strasburg in 1601, where he died in 1651. His principal work, and that of Jean la Hière, his assistant in the technique of perspective, seems to have been this famous set of illustrations of Charles III's "Pompe Funèbre." Herman de Loye, also of Strasburg, issued the prints about 1610.

Immediately following Duc Charles' death, Henri, his son, appointed Claude de La Ruelle Master of Ceremonies for the funeral arrangements, requiring that they be worthy of his father's wide prestige. In La Ruelle's own words: "Commandant que toutes choses fussent faites en la plus grande splendeur, dignité, honneur, somptuosité, magnificence, & pompe que faire se pourroit & devoit."

The brilliance and grandeur that La Ruelle achieved so impressed the large assemblage of noble mourners that he was importuned to write down a full account of the ceremonies, that all who desired might have

the record. "Son Altesse me commanda alors de rediger le tout par escrit; ce que me fut une grande charge..." However arduous the "grande charge," Jean Savine, in 1609, at Nancy, published La Ruelle's detailed description in a small octavo volume entitled: "Discours Des Ceremonies Honneurs et Pompe funebre faits a l'enterrement du Tres-Hault, Tres-Puissant & Serenissime Prince Charles 3. du Nom..." (Pl. II).

The "Discours" and the engravings correspond very closely. The account of each phase of the "Pompe Funèbre" is faithfully illustrated. Thereby, as designer and author, Claude de La Ruelle contributed invaluable documents of a famous event in the social history of Lorraine.

It took from May 15th to the 9th of June to complete the preparations of the *salle d'honneur* for the reception of the effigy that would lie in state there for the divine services, to be held day and night until the 14th of July. It was needful time for the construction of the effigy and its regal vestments, and for the merchants of Nancy to amass sufficient quantity of fabrics, "sarges de Fleurence, sarges de Gennes & autres draperies qu'il falloit pour un si grand deuil," to clothe, at Duc Henri's expense, the more than six hundred mourners of the blood.

A stage with steps mounting to the "Lict d'honneur" was built at the end of the great hall, the whole carpeted "de riches tapiz de Turquie," and the sacred area partitioned from the concourse of mourners by a balustrade painted crimson and sown with allerions in silver. Large decorative panels covered the coffered ceiling enclosing designs of the double C. crowned, for Charles and Claude, the Cross of Lorraine painted in gold on a field of azure, and others with allerions in gold on a field of gules. Above the "Lict d'honneur" a great canopy was raised of cloth of gold bordered with crimson velvet richly embroidered in gold and silver threads.

La Ruelle, in his "Discours" tells us that around the walls two sets of tapestries were hung, "tres-riches & tres-excellentes tappisseries rehaussées d'or d'argent & de soye, l'une figurée de l'histoire de Moyse & l'autre de celle de S. Paul." In three of the Brentel engravings of the *salle d'honneur* the set of the life of Moses can be clearly recognized, beginning with the scene of his rescue from the bulrushes by Pharaoh's daughter, which was hung on the wall of an improvised sacristy.

Following around the *salle d'honneur* from the sacristy to the opposite wall, in at least twelve of the tapestries, events in Moses' life are identifiable, their scenes enclosed in borders filled with decorative allegorical figures, and rectangular cartouches with descriptive legends in Latin are above each subject. Coats of arms in oval cartouches fill the upper corners of the borders of each tapestry, not all recognizable in detail, for the artist was limited by his medium and the very small scale to a sketchy representation. Where they can be distinguished, the arms of Lorraine are in the upper left hand corner and those of Claude of France in the right.

It would seem that tapestries so faithfully depicted in scenes of historical importance, or at least remnants of them, might still be in existence, though a hopeful search through the illustrated records of Flemish and French 16th-century tapestries has not been fruitful.

In the Austrian National Collection at Vienna, however, there are 16th-century tapestries depicting events in the lives of Moses, of Abraham, and of St. Paul, that formerly did belong to the Dukes of Lorraine. They became part of the Austrian *garde-meuble* in 1745 on the accession of Francis, Duke of Lorraine, as Emperor Francis I, husband of Maria Theresa. And there are inventories preserved in the Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, Department of Manuscripts, dated May 17, 1575, and January 22, 1606, that list these same tapestries as part of the household furnishings of the ducal palace at Nancy and other residences of the Dukes of Lorraine.

We are concerned here only with the Moses series, and fortunately, for the purpose of comparison with the hangings in the engravings, lists and illustrations of the nine Moses tapestries preserved at Vienna were published by Ernst Ritter von Birk in the *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, t. I & II, Vienna 1883-1885, and again by Ludwig von Baldass in *Die Wiener Gobelins-Sammlungen*, Vol. II, Vienna, 1920.

In comparing the scene of Moses with his rod turned into a serpent in the Vienna tapestry (Pl. III) with the same scene in the Brentel engraving (Pl. IV) one sees at a glance that the figures in both are different in character and gesture. Nevertheless the two tapestries do have significant points in common. The narrow borders that edge the wide borders with allegorical figures, described in one of the old inventories

as a "torty de feuillage et de fleurette," are definitely identical in both. The same stiff lines of twining foliage and flowerets, with masks at each crossing, serve to define and enclose the same compartments for scenes and decorative figures. The rectangular cartouches with descriptive legends in Latin above the scenes occupy the same positions in the Brentel engravings as in the Vienna versions, although the designs of the cartouches are somewhat dissimilar and the legends not identical. The arms in both are placed in the upper corners of the borders. Those in the Vienna tapestries are on shields and include those of Duke Francis of Lorraine and his wife Christine of Denmark, as well as those of their son Duc Charles and Claude of France.

There can be little doubt that the nine Moses tapestries at Vienna, authenticated by inventory and provenience, are survivals of the original set that belonged to the Dukes of Lorraine and decorated the walls of the *salle d'honneur* at Charles the Great's "Pompe Funèbre." At the same time one is reluctant to dismiss Brentel's tapestry designs as pure fantasy when other details of the obsequies correspond so faithfully with the "Discours" and the engravings.

A convincing explanation of the unexpected disparity is to be found in a work entitled *Recherches sur les Pompes Funèbres des Ducs de Lorraine* by Pierre Marot, Conservateur au Musée Historique Lorrain, published at Nancy in 1935. Monsieur Marot came to the conclusion that the plates of the "Pompe Funèbre" were engraved by Brentel, not from nature, but in his own studio, away from the ducal palace where the confusion of preparations, the gathering of mourners, and the hourly services for the deceased, made access for a prolonged copying of the tapestries virtually impossible. He is persuaded that Claude de La Ruelle, whose name on the plates as "Inventor" acknowledges such direction, supplied Brentel with the general scheme, modeled on the Vienna tapestries, for the framework of the designs and that Brentel then had recourse to one of the innumerable collections of 16th-century engravings of Old Testament subjects for his portrayal of events in Moses' life. Monsieur Marot, however, did not pursue the subject of pattern source further.

It is probable that La Ruelle supplied Brentel, also, with a copy of the *Quadrins Historiques de la Bible*, a small octavo volume, first published by Jean de Tournes at Lyons in 1553, and illustrated with

charming little woodcuts by Bernard Salomon in which we can identify the pattern source of Brentel's tapestries (Pl. V).

Bernard Salomon, a native of Lyons, called "le petit Bernard" (ca. 1508-1561), was the foremost artist in the de Tournes publishing house. He illustrated their lovely books, both secular and scriptural, with great distinction, from 1546 until his death. His style was of the Fontainebleau school, his scenes and figures filled with elongated grace and refined animation. So popular were the *Quadrins de la Bible* that they went into many editions and were translated into Spanish, English, German, Italian, Flemish, and Latin by 1558. Brentel must have availed himself of one of these, or possibly the *Biblia Sacra*, in Latin, published by de Tournes in 1556 with the same illustrations.

The woodcut by "le petit Bernard" of Moses with his rod turned into a serpent is from the Latin version of the *Quadrins de la Bible* published in 1558. The scene is in reverse, not uncommon when a design has been traced and then printed. All twelve of the Moses tapestries in Brentel's engravings, that can be deciphered, derive from these woodcuts by Salomon.

There is mounting evidence of the popularity in the 16th and 17th centuries of Bernard Salomon's designs as sources of pattern in many branches of the decorative arts. They have been recognized in needlework, Limoges enamels, wood carvings, Elizabethan silver, and other metalwork. It has been claimed that he also drew cartoons for tapestries, though no examples of these are known. If so, it was a very apt choice for La Ruelle or Brentel to choose his woodcut series of Moses' life for the tapestries in the engravings of the "Pompe Funèbre."

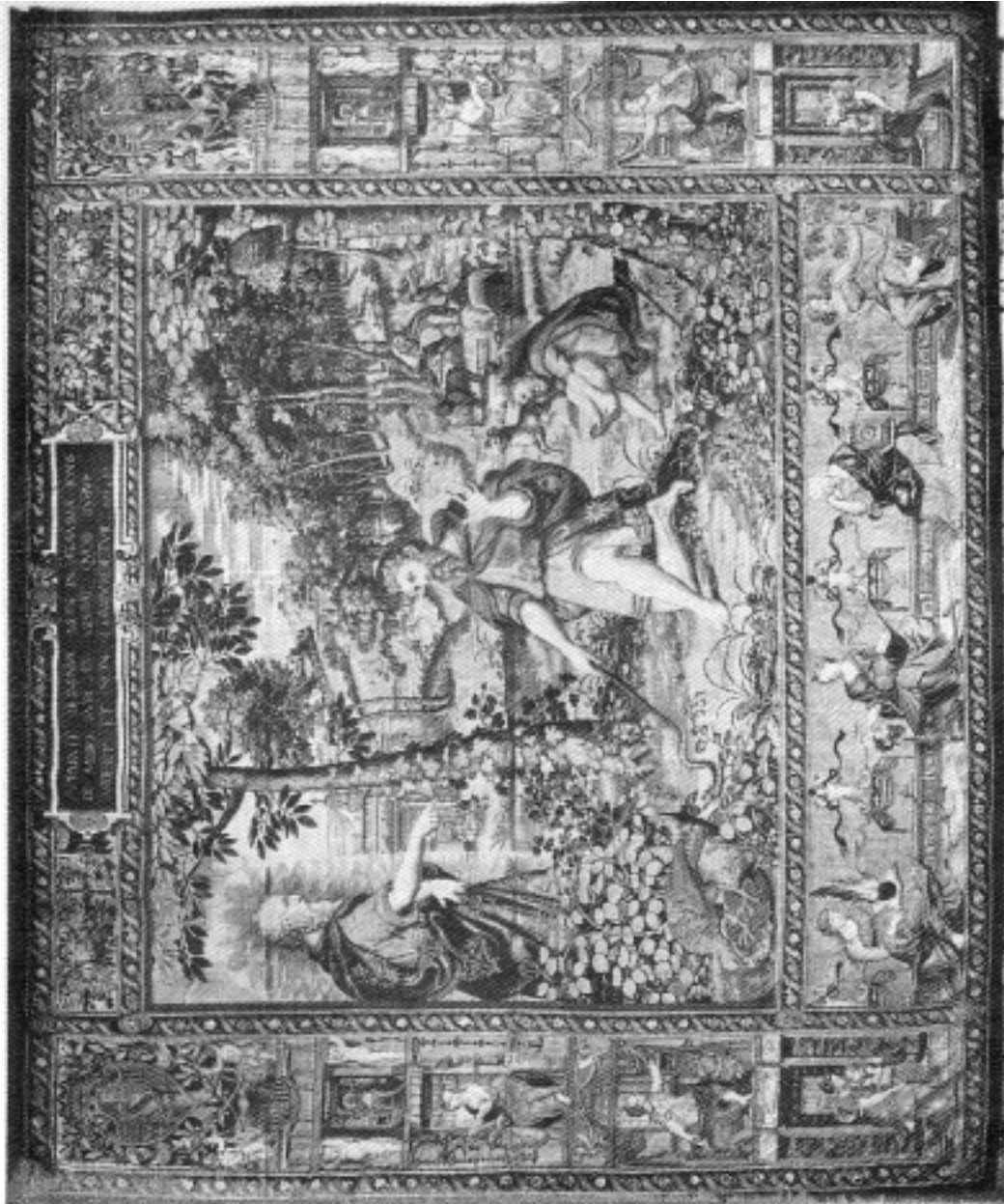


Plate III *Moses' rod changed to a serpent.* Tapestry. Nancy, about 1565.
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Tapisseriensammlung.

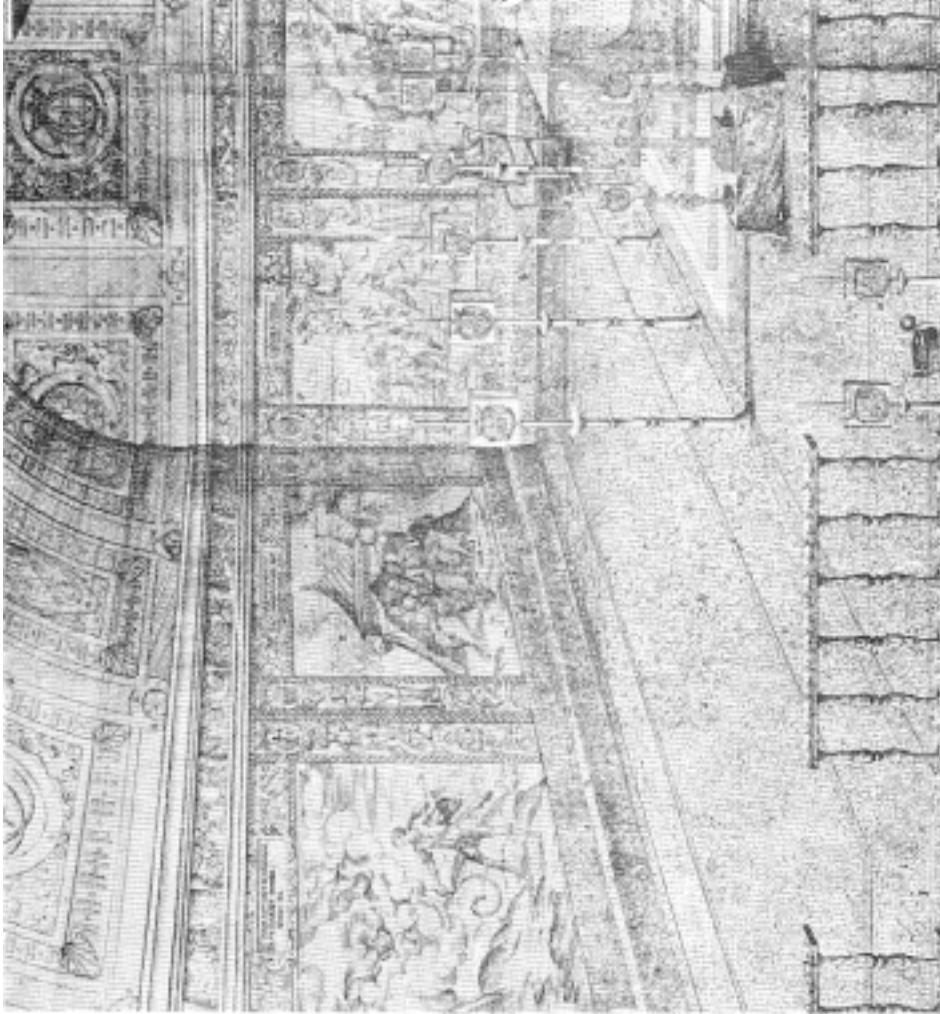


Plate IV Same as Pl. I, left half.



Plate I The first pieces were small doilies done in indigo linen threads. Roumanian stitch was used for the edge and is combined in this pattern with stem and feather stitch. (Property of Miss Elizabeth Childs)

DEERFIELD BLUE AND WHITE NEEDLEWORK

By

Margery B. Howe

In 1896, almost seventy-five years before the present extraordinary interest in early American embroidery, two young women living in the little western Massachusetts town of Deerfield organized the Society of Blue and White Needlework in order to revive a craft that they realized had been lost. They trained women in the village to do the fine embroidery and for thirty years they carried on what is thought to be one of the earliest successful village industries in the country. Because their work was so much a part of the village life, and in a way was an outgrowth of that life, it is interesting to see just what went on in a small New England town at the end of the 19th century. There are still older people in Deerfield with keen memories of that time and the early town reports are mines of information. Seventy-five years is not a long period in history but it covers an astonishing change in our way of living. Someone has said that in a time of anxiety women turn to fine needlework for solace. That may have been true of Mary Queen of Scots sewing her way drearily through years of imprisonment. It most decidedly was not true of the women who did the fine embroidery in Deerfield under the direction of Miss Margaret Whiting and Miss Ellen Miller.

In 1890 Deerfield was a prosperous and beautiful small town. The houses looked very much as they do to-day along the mile of street, although there were barns behind more of them. In the spring the wide strip of grass between the sidewalk and the road was blue with violets and in the fall it was tall with golden rod and asters. The street was deep in mud in the spring, dusty in summer, and in the winter the snow lay unbroken after a storm until the men could get out their teams and break a way through. If the snow was light, they fastened bundles of corn stalks to the runners of their pungs and used them as brooms, but for a heavy snow they chained on their iron plowshares and prepared for battle. At dusk in winter the kerosene lamps were lit in the houses and the yellow glow of lanterns shone from open barn doors as the last chores of the day were done. The lamplighter made his rounds to light the few street lamps and that was a signal for children to go home from coasting. It was ten years before the Town Meeting voted \$350 to bring electric power to the village. A few families were beginning to think about hot

air furnaces, but most houses were heated by stoves. Bedrooms had no heat except what might rise through a hole in the floor from the room below. Children who slept in the room over the kitchen waked to the smell of a wood fire being kindled, the sound of coffee being ground, and all the bustle of a new day. If the family had no well in the yard, they joined neighbors in sharing one of the springs on the mountain. Water came down in lead pipes to the houses and the pump in the kitchen was the only plumbing.

Deerfield men, almost all hereditary Republicans, have always been interested in politics, but in 1890 there was little cause for concern beyond local affairs which, with care, could always be stirred up to result in pleasantly fiery Town Meetings. Aside from chronic British colonial border disputes, there was no war anywhere on earth, and in Washington things were safe in the hands of Benjamin Harrison. In the Town Reports of that time the names of families paying a dog tax are listed and also the names of the dogs. Along with the Rovers and Skips and Sheps a dog appeared in 1889 named Benjamin Harrison, so even the dogs in Deerfield were comfortably Republican. A few years later Grover Cleveland appeared in the lists, but he was short lived, while Benjamin trotted on through the years until the custom of naming the dogs was discontinued.

The nearest shopping center was three miles away and had to be reached by driving the family horse. If that was difficult, one could always hang a tag of red cloth outside the door and "Express" Williams, like his father before him, would stop with his wagon for shopping instructions or to pick up a passenger on his daily trip to Greenfield.

A woman's life in 1890 was bounded by her family, her neighbors, and the church. The routine of her days was well-established; she washed on Monday, ironed on Tuesday, baked on Wednesday, and swept on Friday. Sometimes a hired girl helped her. There may have been a few slack-twisted women who failed to get their washing out until Thursday but they were to be pitied. They had probably not been brought up in Deerfield. However, boundaries and routines brought contentment and something else that we have almost lost — leisure. When the noon dinner was cleared away and the kitchen floor swept, the housewife changed her dress, put on a white apron instead of the checked gingham of the morning, tidied her hair, and was free to sit down with her sewing,

her braided rug, or her knitting for the afternoon. Amusement was home-grown, and choir practice, prayer meetings, and church sociables drew the village together, while in the house reading out loud was the favorite entertainment. There was never a time when minds were more active. People remember a joke of that day about the ladies of a neighboring town, "who were stylish and loved pretty hats, but the ladies of Deerfield cared more for what was under the hats." In those days a college education was not a prerequisite of culture. There were lyceums in the summer and many distinguished people came from Boston, Springfield, and New York to talk at the meetings.

It was into this atmosphere of lively tranquility that two families moved about 1890, the Whitings from Holyoke and the Millers from Hatfield, both nearby towns. In each family there was a widowed mother and two unmarried daughters. In each family, also, one daughter had received formal and excellent training in art. Ellen Miller had studied in Springfield and Margaret Whiting at the New York Academy of Design. They were both about thirty years old, highly intelligent, eager, humorous, and already friends of long standing. They could hardly, however, have been more different in temperament. Ellen was shy, gentle, and not easily articulate. Margaret had an astringent wit, an amused understanding, if not always tolerance, for her fellow man, and no one who spent five minutes with her could accuse her of being inarticulate. The Miller and Whiting houses faced each other across the street near the center of town. The kitchen and great chimney of the Miller house had survived the fire during the Deerfield massacre of 1704 and the rest of the house was rebuilt in 1710 with low rooms and many fireplaces. The Whiting house came later when ceilings were high and rooms spacious.

Just how the two young women became interested in 18th-century needlework is a question, but a newspaper clipping of the time suggests that as they drove around the countryside making their excellent landscape sketches in pencil or watercolor, they came to know the people up and down the valley and were invited into the old houses, perhaps for a drink of spring water, and were shown old family pieces of needlework that had been put away in chests or in an attic. They soon realized that they had stumbled on an art that had been lost for a hundred years. 18th-century American embroideries were part of the social inheritance brought from England by the colonists, and like all healthy seedlings,

had increased in vigor with transplanting. However, as Miss Margaret once said, "The early needlewomen later sold their birthright for a mess of sewing machines", and the beautiful work was forgotten. A desire to study the designs and stitchery grew, and Margaret and Ellen began a collection of the old patterns, sometimes buying early pieces, but more often paying for the privilege of tracing the patterns from family coverlets, bed hangings, fragments of embroidered petticoat bands, or pockets. In the local museum which had recently been opened by the village antiquarian, George Sheldon, there were also fine pieces that they were allowed to study. Slowly a portfolio of drawings grew and its value as a record became important. A need to study the origins of the designs and the varied stitchery increased with the collection. It is simple now to go to the nearest library and in a few minutes find the history of crewel embroidery, as well as directions for the old stitches. How Margaret and Ellen accomplished their research seventy-five years ago is a mystery, but we have Margaret's manuscript notes. She made mistakes in a very few instances, and always on points that have been clarified since her time. She thought, for instance, that all the linen used for embroideries was woven in this country, not knowing that much of it was imported from England very early, nor did she know that all patterns were not drawn by the needlewoman herself, but could be purchased from shops if one lived near a city like Boston. In a small frontier town like Deerfield she was probably right in thinking that designs were original. She understood the transition from the heavy, robust embroideries of England to the thread- and time-saving methods of the colonial woman, and she carefully listed the stitches commonly found in New England work. "There were many variants in feather stitches and herringbone stitches, in square and diagonal lattices, in knots and crosses, in buttonhole, outline and chain stitches, but the early craftswoman placed her main dependence upon a 'laid stitch'¹ which was both durable and economical of thread, two excellent qualities for use in work that must bear frequent washings and when the thread was all self-produced".

Margaret and Ellen also painstakingly worked out the method of making the various stitches, sometimes carefully ripping a bit of hope-

¹ Now usually called Roumanian stitch, but always known as New England laid stitch in Deerfield.

lessly worn fragment to find what they needed. In a talk given at Flushing, New York, in 1898, Margaret said "At first it was our intention simply to make one replica of each of the pieces of embroidery in the collection of the Deerfield Museum. The wools had been badly moth-eaten and many of the pieces were threadbare but the designs showed true New England directness, often with a vigor and perception of decorative need which were remarkable. Rub Oriental art through a Puritan sieve and how odd is the result; how charming, and how individual. Presently the idea came that it might be possible to adapt Ruskin's theory to the Deerfield effort and establish a village industry which should be at once unique and in entire sympathy with its environment". The two young artists were quite familiar with the cherished schemes of Mr. Ruskin, but they viewed him with typical caution. To quote Margaret again: "Village industries are menaced by the danger of confusing social reform with craftsmanship. In 'industries' Benevolence sees her chance to benefit others. Well-intentioned social reformers and philanthropists defeat their own ends. It is not charity but art which founds and maintains a craft. If art is served, honesty remembered, and utility not forgotten, a craft needs no more help nor encouragement than it ought to find in the open market where it may squarely meet and demand public recognition for its inborn merits". Otherwise Ruskin's cart might end up before his horse.

As it happened, the right setting for a revival of handwork was provided. The "pre-Raphaelite movement" in England with William Morris and his Merton Abbey establishment had little effect on American taste beyond the introduction of a few fabrics and wall-papers, but by 1890 there was a growing distaste for the poor design of machine-made materials. The pendulum was swinging back from the "mess of sewing machines" and a strong interest in handcrafts was developing. So the time was ripe for the founding of the Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework, a rather clumsy name chosen because linen threads were used instead of the perishable crewels, and blue was a favored color in old work. For five years Margaret and Ellen had studied 18th-century embroideries and during that period they had also found time to write, illustrate, and publish a botany¹ of wildflowers of the region. In 1896

² Ellen Miller and Margaret C. Whiting, *Wild Flowers of the Northeastern States*, G. P. Putnam Sons, 1895.

they began to train a few skilled needlewomen of the village in the old stitches. A very small amount of money was invested in materials, but the start was made almost without capital. Yet from that day the enterprise grew steadily, although it is difficult to tell exactly how the impetus was gained. From the beginning the Society had a definite plan "to avoid the doubtful value of advertising beyond the intrinsic worth or its output; to demand and get a return which should make the effort profitable; to produce the best possible work, and to spare neither time nor labor nor study to realize that standard".¹

The necessary time, labor, and study involved Margaret and Ellen in unexpected problems at once. It was impossible to find good linen material made in this country, although for a short period a hand-woven product of Berea College was used. Probably through McCutcheon's in New York, linen finally came from Russia and white linen threads from Scotland. Vegetable dyes were hard to find even in those days, but sample lots of the best Bengal indigo might still be obtained from dealers in synthetic dyes, who, not so long before, had supplied indigo for army and navy uniforms during the Civil War. These three and four inch lumps of indigo were put through something like a large meat grinder and then pounded to a fine powder. "Old rules of thumb used in their kitchens by great-grandmothers were too vague and irregular to be helpful in learning the difficult and laborious art of vegetable dyeing, especially as applied to flax. This fibre was described by an old chemist as of 'a cold and deadly nature', a trait which made it fight against absorbing color, but had its compensations in the quality of tone when it finally capitulated to the dye vats. Several chemists in the early days wrote little treatises on the art, with formulas for domestic dyeing, and from these books, a century old or older, help was gratefully received, constantly corrected or reinforced by the monumental English work on the subject by Sir William Crookes.² That eminent chemist took the trouble to gather the formulas for vegetable dyeing used by the large factories of the Continent and England just before the coal-tar products were adopted, and his comprehensive book became a foundation of absolute knowledge, though to reduce his huge proportions to ounces and quarts

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are from Margaret Whiting's notes.

² Sir William Crookes, 1832-1919, English chemist and physicist, author of *A practical handbook of dyeing and calico printing*, 1874.

was an arithmetical excursion in itself." This is a dramatic understatement when one remembers that neither Margaret nor Ellen were trained in arithmetic or chemistry. Years later Margaret made a characteristic remark when she said, "Not for nothing was I born on the 4th of July". After long and patient experimenting, she produced the beautiful soft shades of blue of colonial days. She also acquired almost permanently blue hands.

In those days it was necessary to keep the Whiting house free of confusion because of an older invalid sister, but such restrictions seem to have been unnecessary in the smaller Miller home, where most of the work was done in the summer, as the dye crocks were kept on the vine-sheltered side porch. A young relative remembers that "anything which required boiling had to be done on the old kitchen range with a coal fire. When dyeing was going on, it sometimes made cooking for the family around it a bit complicated. Water was pumped from the well south of the house but a rain barrel was also used to collect softer water."

Meanwhile the work of gathering and adapting designs went on in the Whiting house. "This intimate, working acquaintance with the designs invented and wrought by the women of long ago brought to the student an increased admiration and respect for the innate sense of the art of textile decoration they revealed, a promising and clearly defined style, the first that may be claimed for the history of American decorative art. Because it might lead to a closer understanding of the society which produced it, as much information as possible about the individual designers was collected". They read the diaries of "Aunt Bek" Dickinson, born in Hatfield in 1738, who later embroidered the beautiful coverlet and bed hangings in indigo wools, still owned by her descendants, and included in her design of vines, flowers, and ship, the carefully arranged but apparently meaningless letters, a puzzle no one has yet solved. In Dorset, Vermont, they found Keturah Baldwin's full set of bed furnishings. "Keturah had imagination instead of culture and her craftsmanship was worthy of a place among the best examples of colonial work". Margaret and Ellen were allowed to copy the design exactly, which was fortunate, since the original pieces were burned the following year. They were quite familiar with the beautiful Coleman coverlets, now in the Metropolitan Museum, which they found in Sag Harbor, Long Island, and photographed. Valuable finds came about in unexpected ways. A wonderful

bedspread executed by a New England woman, Betsy Clark, was found in a junk shop. Her descendants had cared little for it, and it had finally been sold with some rags. It became one of the chief treasures of the Blue and White Society and is now in the Dwight-Barnard House in Deerfield.

The first embroideries made by the Society were small doilies, but with practice Margaret and Ellen moved on to coverlets, bed-hangings, curtains, and all sorts of table linens. As outside interest and demand grew, more needlewomen were trained until by the turn of the century thirty people were working for the young "manager-designers". A satisfactory method had been developed for payment of labor. "The full price of each piece is divided into ten parts; five parts go to the embroiderer; two parts to the designer; two parts to the 'fund' which is used to pay running expenses of the Society; and the one remaining part covers the expense of materials used. It will be seen that the proportion of the payment for the work and the design is reckoned on the common basis of the labor involved. This proportion is founded on a belief that the hand and brain work are interdependent and should receive equal money returns. We asked prices that would allow us to pay twenty cents an hour for skilled labor and we produced only pieces that our foremothers would have approved". Out of the 'fund' very small salaries were paid to Margaret and Ellen for executive work and to a younger sister, Margaret Miller, who acted as secretary, and who also did a great deal of the tedious work of preparing finished pieces for sale, "ironing them wet". Time studies were methodically kept and there is a notebook in which rough sketches of patterns are drawn with the note "Mrs. Cadwell's time, 2 hrs. 50 minutes", or "E.M. snail trail, 56 inches, 25 minutes". Mrs. Cadwell and Ellen apparently worked at what was considered to be an average speed. There is a financial statement for 1901, scribbled in pencil, which lists the thirty-one workers and gives the receipts of the Society for that year, \$2,126.76. The highest amount paid a single worker was \$139.

Patterns were drawn on linen, the number of necessary dyed threads counted out, colors and stitches indicated on a small working drawing, and the bundle delivered to the worker. Patterns were never duplicated, although the same outlines were sometimes developed in different filling stitches, resulting in completely different effects. Often several women worked at once on a coverlet, sitting under the elms in the beautiful

Whiting garden, and, if someone proved more skillful in a certain stitch, she was given that part to do. A trade mark had been designed, a small flax wheel enclosing the letter D, and it was always the last thing embroidered on a piece to indicate that the work met the strict requirements of Ellen and Margaret, who later said, "The New England conscience is a valuable substratum on which to build".

Indigo dyes remained Margaret's province, but it was not long before Ellen began to experiment with other colors, madder from Mesopotamia, the tawny shades of cutch (the bark of the South American acacia), fustic, which gave such a beautiful yellow, and finally all the warm grays and browns of local tree barks, walnut, butternut, maple, and sumac. There are notebooks with small swatches of linens and all the notes on mordants, mixtures, time of exposure to sun, and so on. Embroideries were no longer done in indigo alone, but in all the subtle and rich colors finally available. Margaret and Ellen proved to their own satisfaction that the 18th century embroideries, which had faded with many years of use, could have been done originally in colors that were strong, clear, and very beautiful in their infinite variety.

A small front parlor in the Miller house was made into a permanent show room. The Blue and White Needlework, as it was still called, had acquired astonishing fame. There are favorable notices from papers in Boston, New York, and Chicago. Art Institutes were being organized all over the country and the Society was invited to exhibit work. A silver medal was won at the Paris Exposition for design and color. Collectors were beginning to be interested in the work and more orders came in than could be comfortably filled. A set of table linen was made for a Washington hostess, who wanted it to match heirloom china. Bed furnishings for another customer are listed as selling for \$1,250, and when we remember that the Society was still operating on its original plan, this gives some idea of the hours of labor involved. In the summer of 1899 the first of many annual exhibits and sales took place in Deerfield. Lasting less than a week, it brought many visitors to the Millers' side door where an old flax wheel had been hung.

Looking back now it is interesting to see how the work of two young women changed the life of a village. Not long after the founding of the Blue and White Society, neighbors became interested in reviving other early skills. Hand-looms that had been relegated to the attic for two

generations were brought down and strung. A woman, who remembered how palmleaf hats had been made in the Deerfield of her childhood, practiced until she could do the intricate braiding again, and trained a group to make palmleaf baskets. Another group made raffia baskets, using vegetable dyes to color strands in the designs. The blacksmith found that he could make hinges, lamps, and fire tools. Rugs were braided, but were planned more carefully than the earlier hit-and-miss variety. The quality of all the work was excellent, and Margaret helped matters by giving a series of talks on simple theories of good design and color as applied to the making of baskets, rugs, and so on. Fine copper and silver work was added to the growing list of industries and there were always the exquisite camera studies by Mary and Frances Allen, artists themselves, and warm friends of Margaret and Ellen. The summer exhibit was enlarged to include work by all the craftsmen and it was shown in eight houses, which were opened to the public, as well as in the Village Room. The coming of the trolley helped to swell the number of summer visitors, as groups from nearby towns would charter a trolley car as a bus is chartered to-day. Carriages lined the street and there were a sufficient number of automobiles to merit notice in the local press. One newspaper reports in 1907 that "six thousand people registered at the Museum during the summer and many more than that have visited Deerfield". It was estimated in that year that the combined industries brought between ten and fifteen thousand dollars to the village, a substantial amount for a town that was just one mile of street long. Mortgages were paid off and Mr. Ruskin would have been pleased. As usual, fame had its drawbacks and a reporter for the *New York Sun* wrote "Living in a tourist center is not entirely joyous, and for the sweep of Goths and Vandals the crafts, quite as much as the quaint old Colonial houses and the Indian massacre traditions are responsible. Visitors flatten their noses on living room windows; they even enter and prowl about...[One householder] remarking upon a bevy of craft-hunters, observed that all Deerfield needs is one more good massacre. Upon a tree in front of an historic home was erected at the time of the July exhibit this sign:

Nothing on exhibition.

Nothing on sale.

This is not a commercial house.

Touched at the vital point by this imputation of commercialism, an avenging craftswoman tore down the notice, only to see it erected out of reach by aid of a ladder where it remained all summer''.

In 1910 Margaret and Ellen, perhaps thinking of Browning's line, "I often am much wearier than you think'', went to England and Scotland. Each filled a sketch book with fine small watercolors and it is as easy to follow their tour with the little labeled landscapes as it would be with a Baedeker. Everywhere they looked at old embroideries and they brought back legends and designs for cross-stitched samplers, which became another product of the group, but never an important one.

The Society continued all through World War I, although Red Cross work absorbed a good deal of time in the village. But national taste was changing; Art Nouveau was rampant and interest in 18th century design and house furnishings was waning. Orders for large wall hangings replaced the earlier ones for coverlets and table linens. For a time Margaret and Ellen tried to meet the demand. Although the stitchery on the large pieces was still excellent, it became of necessity coarser, and the design lost the beauty of the colonial inheritance. Many years earlier Margaret had been interested in the work of a Belgian decorative artist, Mme. de Rudder, wife of a sculptor, whose great embroidered panels were commissioned for the Municipal Building in Brussels and the Province House of Ghent. Mme. de Rudder had experimented with appliqué of one fabric on another, embroidering over the whole panel, and producing a richly covered pattern reminiscent of early Flemish tapestries. Margaret began her own experiments with appliqué on large curtains, but her espaliered rose trees and an allegorical unicorn by a forest pool lacked conviction. Long after the Society ended, on the rare occasions when she showed the embroideries that she had stored in the old highboy, it was the earlier pieces that she looked at with delight.

In 1926 the Society was disbanded after thirty years, and there were several reasons for its ending. Margaret experimented with different forms of the paragraph announcing that ending before she was satisfied. "For reasons strictly personal to Ellen Miller and the writer, they set away their dye pots and shut the old portfolio. Having weathered the Great War and outlasted most of its early contemporaries, this revival of a distinctive form of art with its long pedigree came to a close, quite as complete, it would seem, as that which befell it a hundred years before."

The "personal reasons" were the failing health of Ellen, who died soon after, and Margaret's own dimming eyesight, two griefs which she resolutely failed to acknowledge. For nearly twenty years she went on "waving the flag of freedom" and her zest for living and interest in the village never failed. She stood firmly behind the Academy in the first years of its own revival and, as a neighbor once said, "I never made any important decision without talking it over with Miss Margaret. I didn't always agree with her, but I always came away knowing exactly what I thought myself". When she could no longer see to read, friends did it for her, and everything from the reports of the Royal Archaeological Society to national politics was grist for her mill.

Now Margaret and Ellen are both gone, but one may still see their work in the Deerfield Museum, where the integrity of their designs and the richness of their colors have taken their own place as part of the New England heritage.

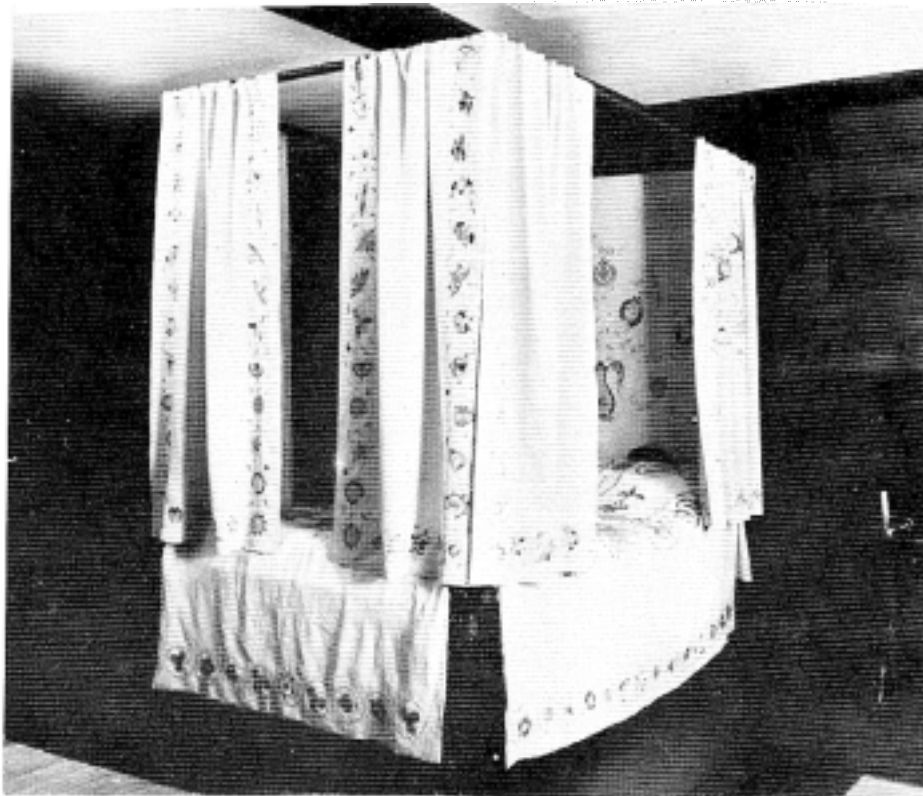


Plate II Later the Society embroidered many sets of bed furnishings. This one, done in shades of indigo, is an exact reproduction of an 18th century design, but was interpreted with a more imaginative use of stitches. The original was felt to be monotonous. (Property of Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association and shown in the Frary House, Deerfield.)

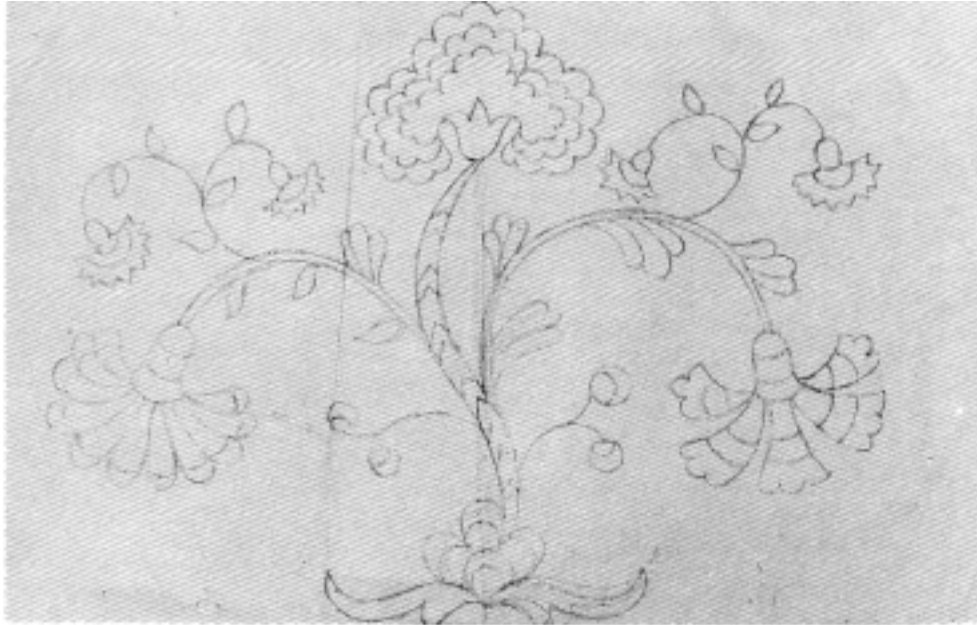


Plate III The patterns were drawn carefully on heavy brown paper. Often paper bags were cut open and used.

Plate IV A pattern on white paper was given out with each piece of work. Colors, stitches, and weight of thread were indicated. This piece was planned for three shades of indigo and was to be done in Roumanian (N.E.), stem, feather, cross stitch, and couched herring bone. "Rope" was a heavier thread used for contrast with the finer ones.

A BESTIARY IN LACE

By
Marian Powys

In the old lace designs, strange animals are often introduced. Sometimes these are so cleverly set among the foliage that they are hard to find; often they make a grand central motif, facing each other or back to back on either side of the Tree of Life.

In the earliest laces may be found many human and animal forms and well-drawn, natural flowers. They come in the cut and drawn work that preceded the *Punto in Aria*, and they are found in all the 16th-century pattern books. In lacis, both knotted filet and buratto, they are moving about, prancing and springing, quarreling and making love, devotedly following mankind or fiercely on the attack.

In the later laces, quiet domestic animals have their place.

All through the story of lace, birds dominate many a pattern; peacocks with tail spread or proudly trailing behind, doves gently cooing, and eagles proud and fierce, but most of all the falcon in hunting scenes. Parrots, flamingoes and tropical birds all have their place in lace, as do many little fluttering singing birds – robins, wrens and thrushes.

In the *Corona delle nobili e virtuose donne*, a book of designs by the Venetian, Cesare Vecellio, first published in 1591, birds and beasts play their part – a lion baited by fierce birds, the figure of a monkey-man and “Madonna Volpe,” the Fox Lady; “che fatte voi?” “What are you doing?” is written under her picture, in some editions. The book ends with a pattern composed exclusively of grotesque beasts, twenty creatures within bars, as if in a travelling circus or zoo – elephant, rabbit, fox, camel, dragon, lion, leopard and different kinds of dogs (Pl. I).

Illustrated from a Spanish filet panel of the 16th century is the King of Dogs, so proud and masterful, leaping on high, watched by his little friend, who might have been painted by Velasquez (Pl. II).

From an early Italian buratto cover is a hunting scene with a handsome hunter wearing a feathered hat and long strong boots; his hound seems reluctant to chase a Unicorn, remembering perhaps the tradition of this creature’s invulnerability, but in this forest there is good sport

anyway, with wolves and wild deer, boars, eagles, hares and rabbits. This is an original cover of the time, with buratto panels inserted in hand-woven linen, and finished with an edging of pillow lace in gold (Pl. III).

From Russia comes a quaint hanging in drawn thread, formerly in the collection of the Countess Pushkin, and now in the Brooklyn Museum. Cows, sheep and goats are quietly grazing in the park surrounding the stately houses of their owners, while shepherd and herdsman with bow and arrow defend them from lion, tiger and stag. At the bottom is attached a Russian pillow-made border in the manner of Milanese lace (Pl. IV).

Lions and eagles add interest to a beautiful *volant*, or flounce, of *Point de Venise à Rose* of the 17th century in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The eagles poised on the highly decorated branches and the lions prowling about are so well treated by the lace designer that they in no way interfere with the beauty of line, which is so essential in lace (Pl. V).

The Lion Rampant in the right hand corner of the illustration is enlarged (Pl. VI), so that all the stitches are clearly seen and any able needlewoman could follow them. But, even so, the King of Beasts shows all his stately grace and dominating power. First a low, reverberating growl, then a tremendous roar, making tremble all living things.

The King of Beasts comes again in a lighter mood in a grand Milanese flounce of the 18th century. This lace, fourteen inches wide and a great length, is crowded with life-sized birds and wild beasts and some huntsmen, moving quietly through the forest. As many as thirty living creatures can be found in one repeat. The foliated scroll pattern and typical Milanese ground make a rich setting for this woodland scene (Pl. VII).

In the fine Flemish pillow lace known as *Point d'Angleterre* is the scene of Abraham prevented by an angel from sacrificing his son. The angel points out the ram caught in a thicket, ready to give his life for Isaac. The ram is worked in relief, showing his woolly coat, with a background of the finest and most difficult stitch in all lace, the *Vrai Droschel*, every tiny mesh composed of four threads braided and then twisted on either side. Below are different fillings or modes; the dominant one is that called the "Swing Cutwork" in English Devon pillow lace of this kind (Pl. VIII).

The littlest hunting scene is to be found in a narrow border of *Fausse Valenciennes* or *Binche* only two inches wide, the rider guided and protected by a guardian angel flying above (Pl. IX).

In a veil of *Point d'Alençon*, said to have been made for Marie Antoinette, are gardening tools and exotic birds perched among the vines in the *Petit Trianon*. The laces of this period are often dotted with little sprays, "semé de larmes," sown with tears. But there is no weeping or tears in this happy place of tranquility and calm combined with an impression of gaiety. The ground is the needlepoint *Réseau ordinaire* with the *Petit réseau* in places. There are many different fillings or stitches occurring in the wings of the birds, in the vases and in the very roots of the climbing plants: "à nez en queue," "à nez en chaînettes," "écailles," "mosaïques," all skillfully balanced and worked out in a masterly manner (Pl. X).

A rich and rare jungle scene in hand-knitted lace, "Merlino," from Sicily, has beautiful living birds, parrots and peacocks enjoying the fruit and flowers among shapely palms. There is a delightful order in this wild forest life. Passion-flowers and roses, tulips and anemones, bleeding-heart and jessamine are all delicately poised in place (Pl. XI).

In the First World War, when some lace centers were submerged under water, the lace-makers worked out designs of the unshapely creatures that came with the sea – crawling things – a record of those disastrous times (Pl. XII). These laces were presented in gratitude to Queen Elizabeth and to the wife of Brand Whitlock from Toledo, Ohio, who was American Ambassador at that time. These distinguished people, with some others, helped the lace industries through the war. Lace suffered much more in the Second World War. But a thing of such beauty will surely survive and the pleasure of making lace, such delicate intricate work, will fascinate many in time to come.



Plate I Plate from Cesare Vecellio, *Corona delle nobili e virtuose donne*, Venice, 1601. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1918.

Plate III Lacis, buratto cover. Italian, XVI century. Collection: Marian Powys. Photo: Fred Burrell.

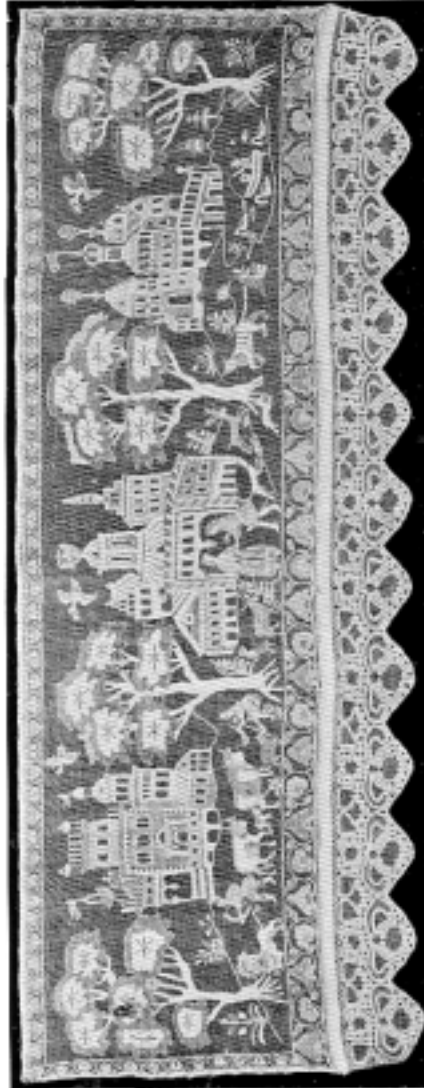
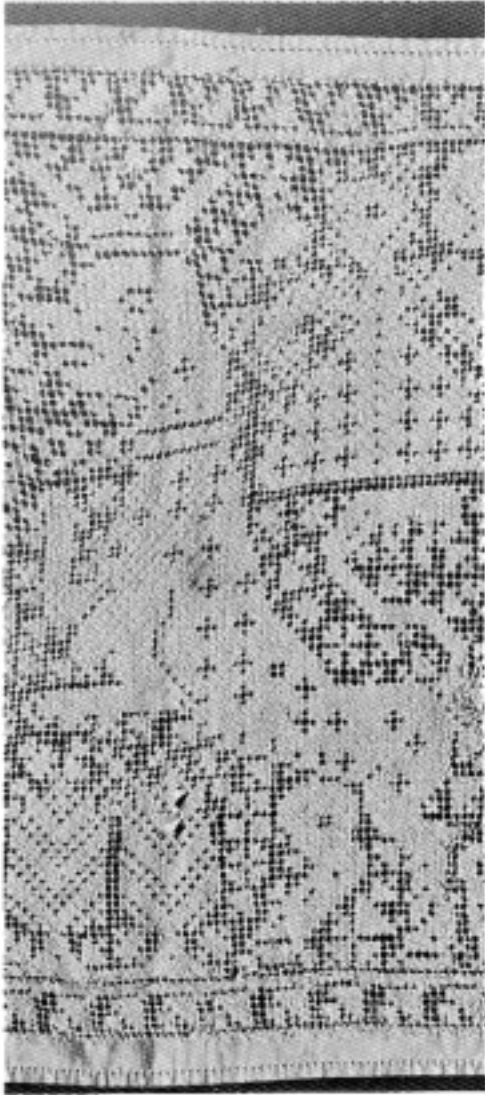


Plate II Lacis, knotted filet. Spanish, XVII century. Collection: Marian Powys.
Photo: Fred Burrell.

Plate IV Border, drawn thread work. Russian, XVIII century. Courtesy of the
Brooklyn Museum.

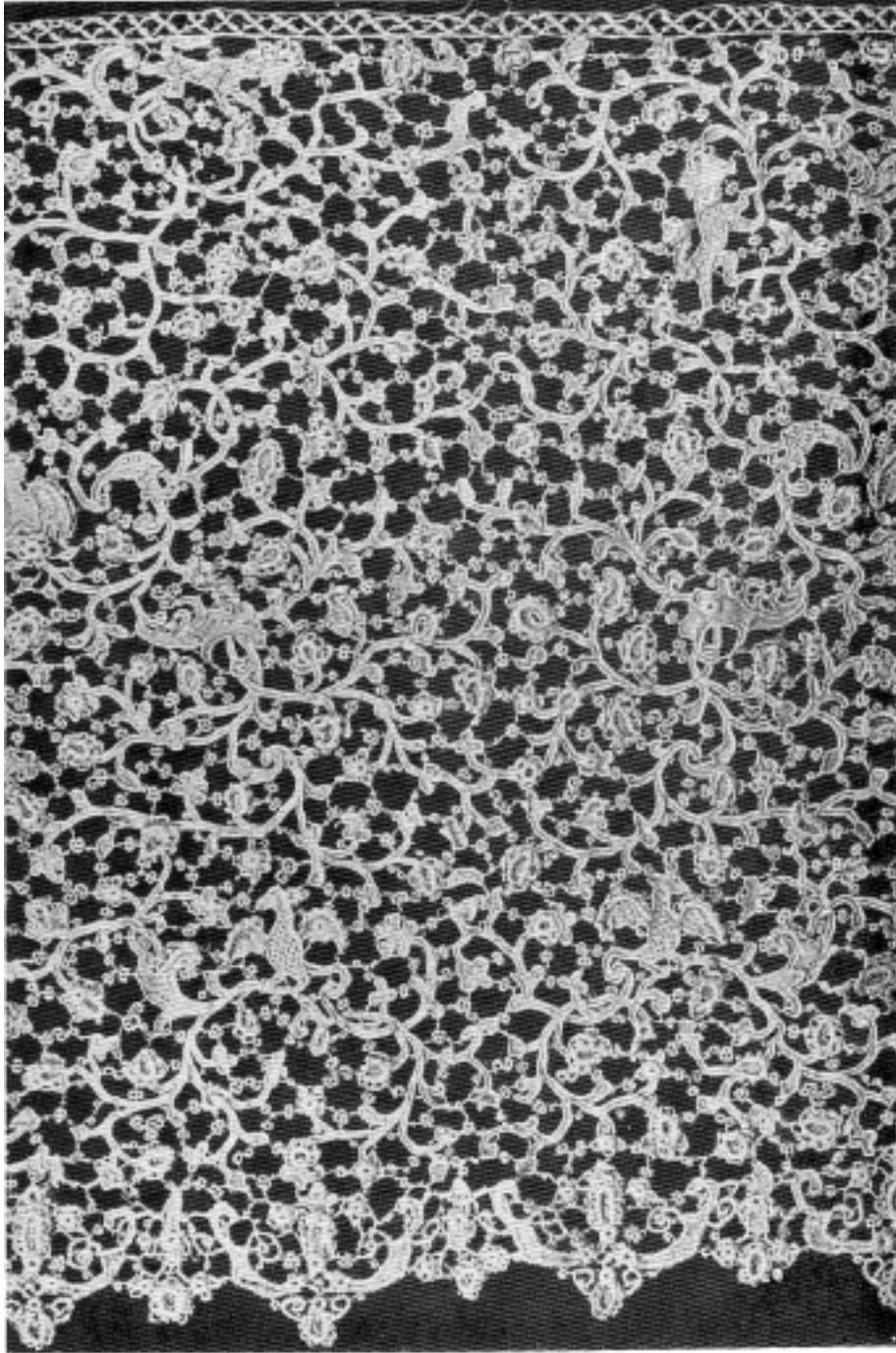


Plate V Flounce, *Point de Venise à Rose*. Venetian, XVII century. Detail. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Mabel Metcalf Fahnestock Collection, the gift of Ruth Fahnestock Schermerhorn and Faith Fahnestock, 1933. Photo: Michael Braun.

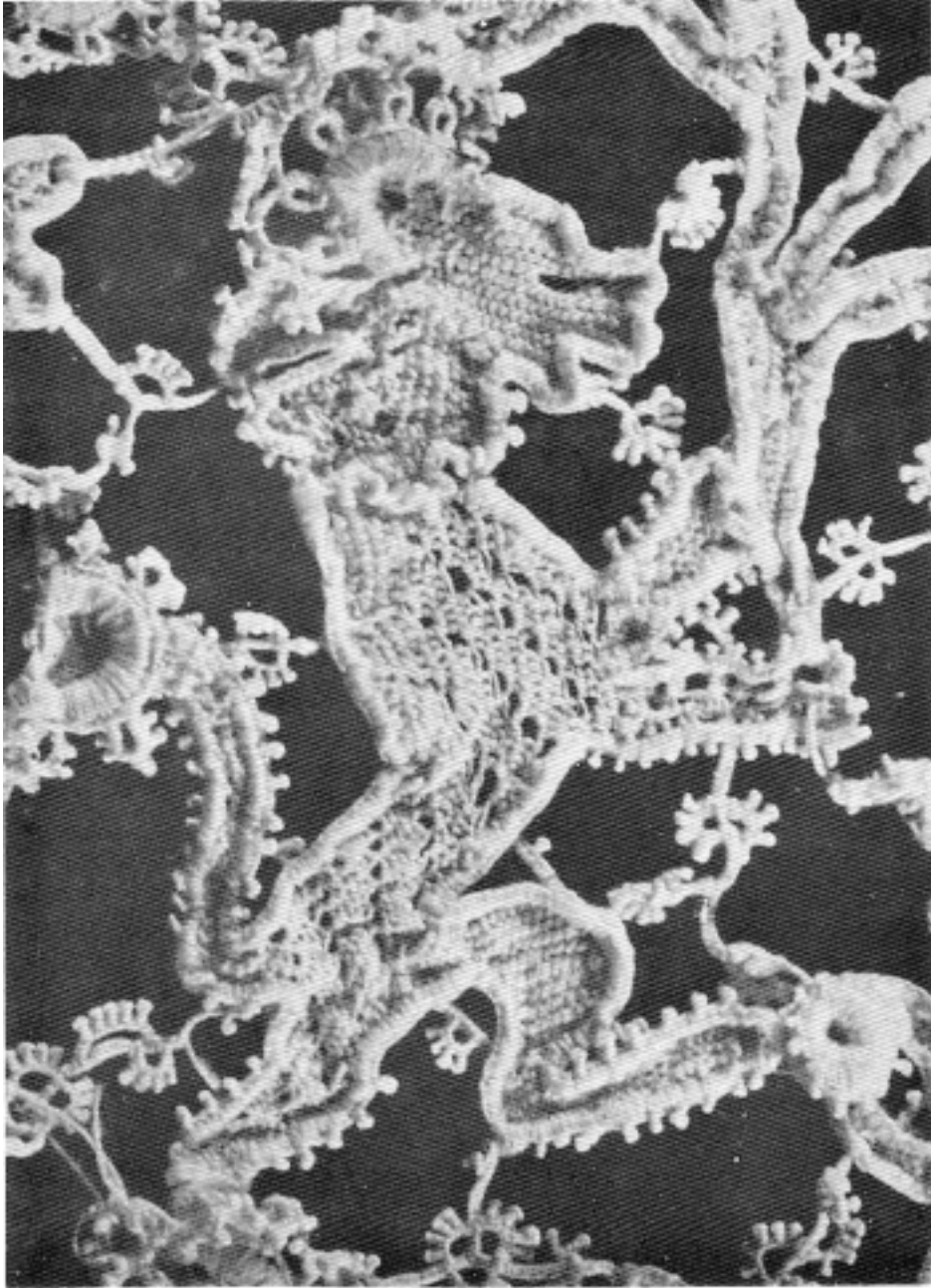


Plate VI *Point de Venise à Rose*. Lion rampant, enlarged, detail of Plate V.

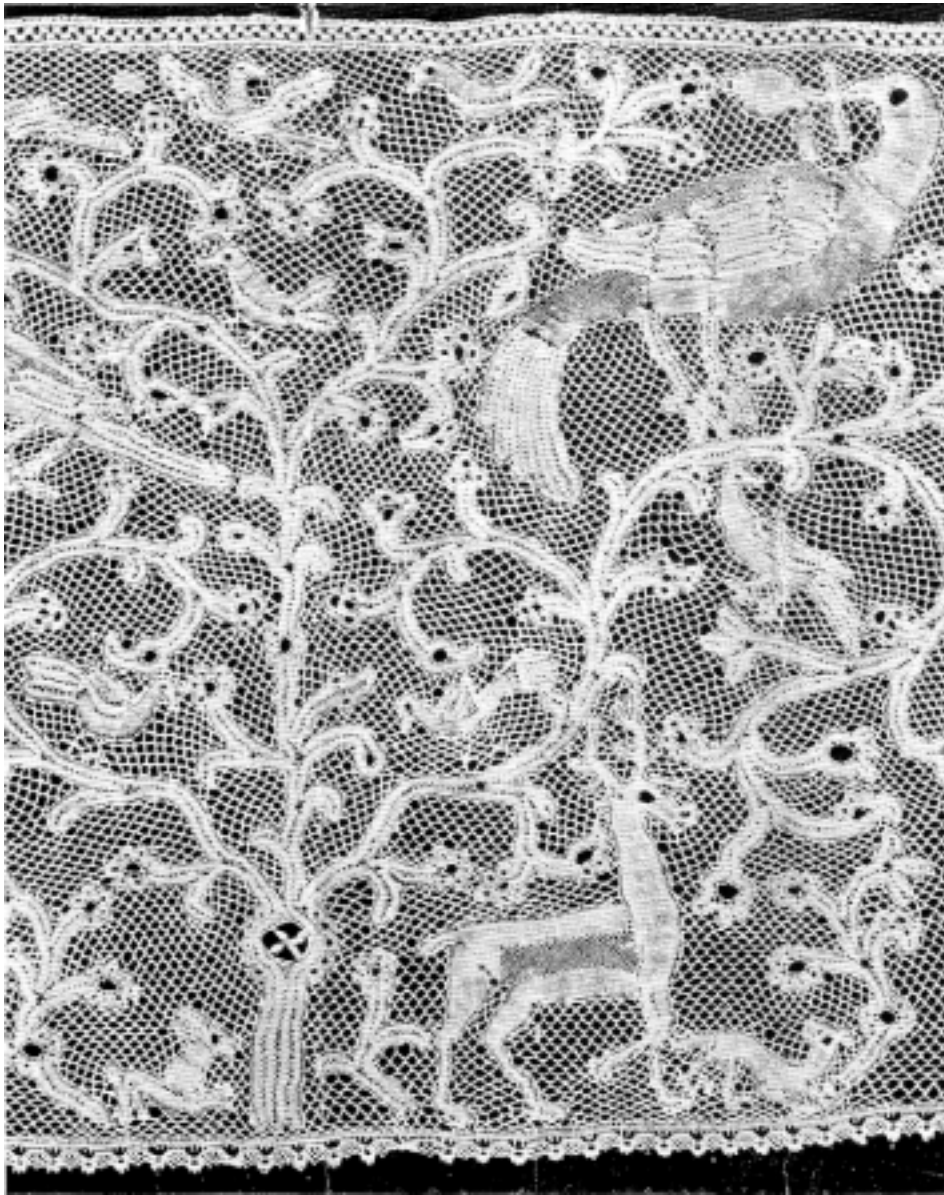


Plate VII Flounce, pillow lace. Milanese, XVIII century. Formerly in the Collection of Dr. Wiener.

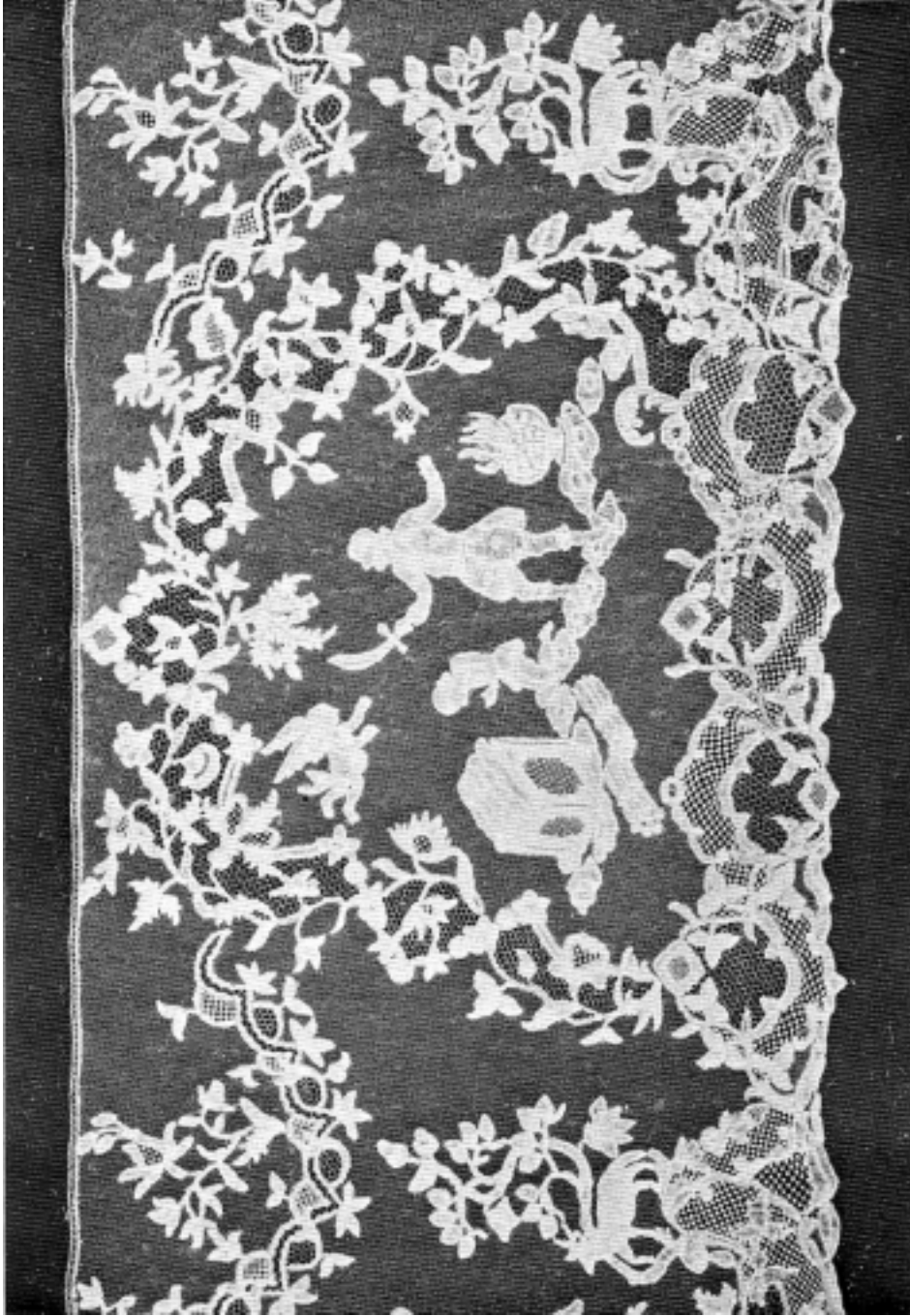


Plate VIII Flounce for ecclesiastical use, pillow lace, *Point d'Angleterre*. Flemish, XVIII century. Formerly in the Collection of Mrs. William Bliss. Photo: Frances Pellegrini.

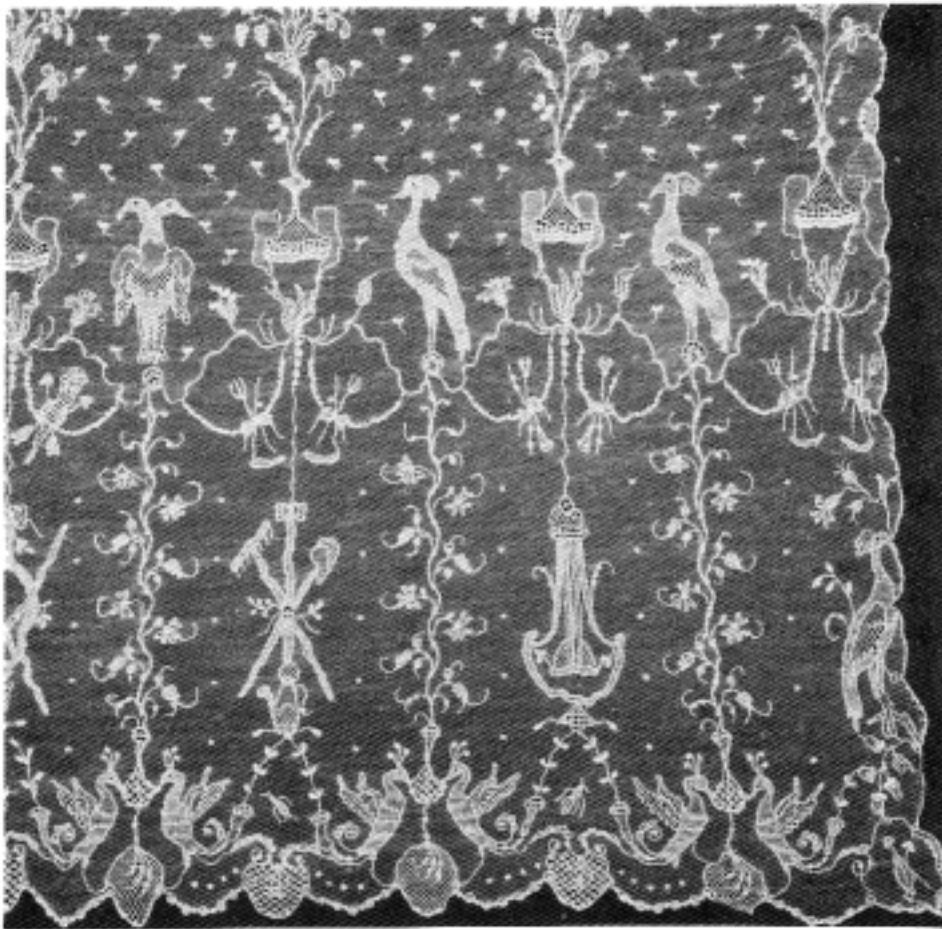
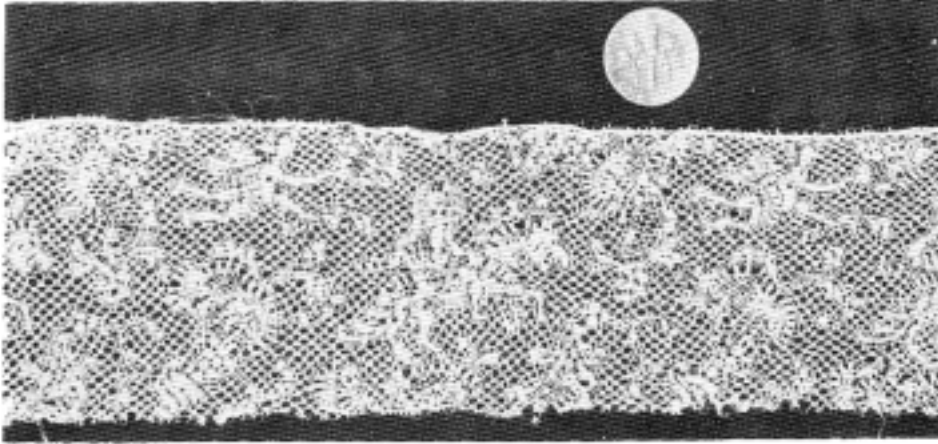


Plate IX Border, *Fausse Valenciennes* or Binche. Flemish, early XVIII century. Collection: Marian Powys. Photo: Fred Burrell.

Plate X Veil or Panel, *Point d'Alençon*. French, late XVIII century. Collection: Marian Powys. Photo: Frances Pellegrini.

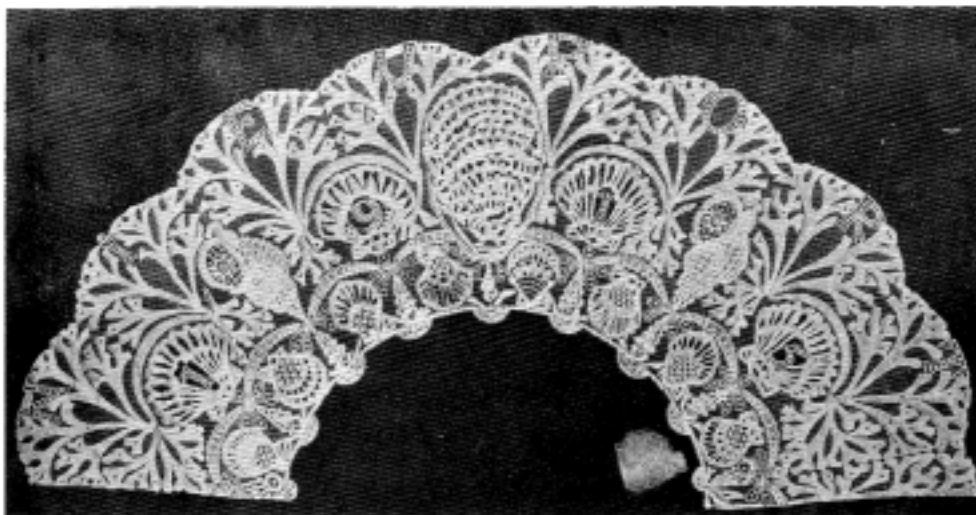
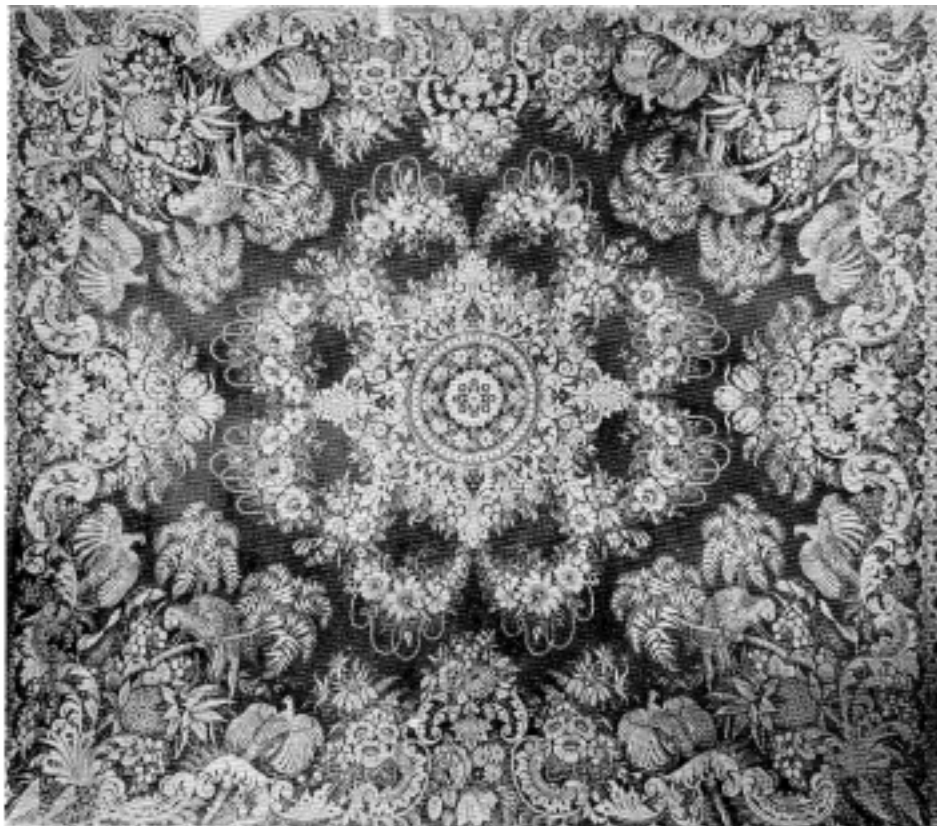


Plate XI Cover of knitted lace, "Merlino." Sicilian, XIX century. Location unknown.

Plate XII Fan of Brussels needlepoint, *Point de Gaze*, designed by M. De Rudder. Belgian (Nieuport), dated 1915. Photo: Paul Becker.

CLUB NOTES

1963 was a truly international year for members of the Needle & Bobbin Club. Lecturers took them to Ceylon, Persia, and Tibet, as well as to several more frequently visited countries of Europe, and introduced them to a wide range of beautiful and unusual textiles. The intellectual and visual pleasures of the Club's meetings were, as usual, enhanced by the hospitality of many hosts and hostesses, whose unfailing generosity always adds so much to the enjoyment of these occasions.

The first meeting of the year was held at the Lotus Club on January 16th. Members will be glad to remember that Mr. Chauncey J. Hamlin and Mrs. Hamlin were co-hosts with Mr. and Mrs. Norris W. Harkness, since this was unfortunately the last time they were to greet Mr. Hamlin in this capacity. A memorial tribute to Mr. Hamlin, who died in September, will be found following these Notes. The speaker was Mrs. Oliver Wierasinghi and her subject the arts and crafts of Ceylon, which she displayed in all their vividness of color and design. The contrast between this sunny land and a wintry New York made the talk particularly appropriate and both it and the hosts' delicious tea were greatly enjoyed.

Mrs. Archibald C. Barrow and Mrs. Robert D. Sterling provided welcome refreshments at the Colony Club for the meeting of February 18th. The lecture was entitled "Early American Bed and Window Hangings" and was given by Mr. Abbott L. Cummings, Assistant Director of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. Mr. Cummings, the author of the authoritative book in this field, *Bed Hangings*, published by the Society in 1961, gave a sparkling performance that was received with admiration and interest.

Another outstanding scholar addressed the Club on March 27th at the Headquarters of the National Society of Colonial Dames in the State of New York. This was Dr. Maurice S. Dimand, Curator Emeritus of Near Eastern Art of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, who spoke on masterpieces of Persian rugs in the Museum. The colors and designs of these gorgeous objects, some of the most famous of their kind in the world, made an overwhelming impression, which was increased by Dr. Dimand's profound knowledge. His eagerly awaited book on the Museum's rugs is in course of preparation. The hostess for this meeting was Mrs. Rudolph Fluegge, who was heartily thanked both for the delightful tea and the opportunity she provided for members to visit the historic mansion, so superbly rehabilitated by the Colonial Dames.

Three hostesses, Mrs. Robert McCurdy Marsh, Mrs. J. Harper Skillin, and Mrs. Malcolm E. Smith, kindly invited members to the Lotus Club on April 10th to listen to Mr. Hugh Honour and to have tea after his lecture. Mr. Honour has recently published a fascinating book, *Chinoiserie: the Vision of Cathay*. He spoke on the influence of the Chinoiserie style on textile design, and his charming illustrations and witty and learned commentary drew great applause.

Club members were introduced to a little-known aspect of textile history at the meeting of October 10th. Mr. John L. Nevinson showed slides of early fashion plates, almost all dating from before 1800, and discussed them with remarkable understanding and brilliance. Mrs. E. Farrar Bateson and Mrs. Kenneth Boardman were the hostesses at the Colony Club for tea on this occasion and were warmly thanked by all present.

After hearing about fashion design in October, members had an opportunity to see early costumes in the following month, for Mrs. Samuel Cabot and Miss Gertrude Townsend extended an invitation to the Club to lunch in the Trustees' Room at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts, on November 6th. The purpose of the visit was to see the magnificent exhibition, "She Walks in Splendor." Braving atrocious weather, thirteen members flew to Boston; they were met at the airport by limousines, taken to the Museum, given a delicious meal, and conducted through the galleries by the hostesses and Mr. Adolph S. Cavallo, Curator of Textiles. It was indeed a memorable outing, and all the participants were loud in their praise of the exhibition and their gratitude to the thoughtful and gracious Bostonians who did so much to make it agreeable.

Mrs. A. Benson Cannon, Miss Louise S. Gilder, Mrs. John Williams Morgan, and Mrs. Raymond T. von Palmenberg welcomed the Club on November 21st. The meeting was held at the Lotus Club and the talk was given by Miss Eleanor Olson, Curator of Oriental Collections of the Newark Museum. The splendid costumes and embroideries of Tibet were illustrated and discussed by Miss Olson in a lucid and fascinating talk, opening the eyes of many to the rich collections of this material in Newark and New York. The kind hostesses provided an excellent tea to follow.

A lecture that had been planned, as usual, for December, unfortunately had to be cancelled. The prospective gap in the Club's monthly activities, however, was filled, in characteristic fashion, by the generosity of the President, Mrs. Norris W. Harkness, and Mr. Harkness. With splendid magnanimity, they invited members, with husbands or escorts, to a Needle & Bobbin Christmas cocktail-tea party on December 17th at their home. The attractive Harkness apartment, charmingly decorated, was, of course, filled to capacity; many husbands and escorts seized the opportunity to find out why their wives and friends enjoyed this Club so much. The congenial company, good fare, and warm welcome made the party a truly festive occasion and a fitting climax to the year's activities.

IN MEMORIAM

The death of Mr. Chauncey J. Hamlin on September 23rd, 1963, was a sad loss to the Needle & Bobbin Club. Members will recall the delightful occasions on which he and Mrs. Hamlin were host and hostess, in 1956 at the York Club, when the famous Iklé collection of lace, now in the Buffalo Museum, was shown; in 1958 at the Colony Club, and as recently as January, 1963, at the Lotus Club. Mr. Hamlin was President of the Council of the American Association of Museums from 1920 until 1948 and was active in numerous other cultural and civic organizations, such as the New York State Council of Parks, the National Conference on Outdoor Recreation, the Buffalo Chamber Music Society, and many others.

The Club lost two other much loved members in Mrs. Margaret Van Rensselaer Voislowsky, a former president of the National Society of Colonial Dames in the State of New York, and Mrs. Julius Workum, who was co-hostess for the Annual Meeting of the Club in March, 1957.

THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB

Officers and Directors
1963

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Published by the Massachusetts Society of the Colonial
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MISS MARIAN POWYS, 54 West 57th Street
announces the arrival from Europe of a collection of
old Laces which she will have on exhibition and sale
during the month of April.

THERE will be a sale of Italian, Ukrainian and Bohemian
embroideries from the various folk handicraft
centers at the house of Mrs. Leonard B. Scofield,
47 West 86th Street, on Tuesday, April 12th, from
two to half-past five.

AUCTION SALES OF ANTIQUE FABRICS, Chinese velvets,
embroideries, etc. Lai Yuan collection at the Anderson
Galleries, Park Avenue and 59th Street, April 7th, 8th
and 9th.

Italian and French fabrics, tapestries, laces, etc.
Cattadori collection, American Art Galleries, Madison
Square, S., April 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th.

Spanish and Portuguese silks, linens and printed
cottons, Ruiz collection, Clarke's Galleries,
42 East 58th Street, April 4th to April 14th.