Lace. A kind of network of threads of flax, cotton, gold or silver wire, or other suitable material, forming a fabric of transparent texture. Its origin is not known, but it appears to have been used by the ladies of ancient Greece and Rome. It was early used in Northern Italy, and is said to have been introduced into France by Mary de Medici. In 1483 its importation into England was prohibited.
The systematic manufacture was introduced into England by refugees from Flanders.

Lace was anciently worked by the needle. The invention of lace knitting is attributed to Barbara, wife of Christopher Huttman, a German miner, in 1560. A manufacture was established in France by Colbert, in 1566.

Point lace was embroidered with the needle. Bone lace (temp. Charles I.) was a kind of thread lace, and received its name from the bobbins being made of bone. About 1768, a stocking-weaver of Northampton produced a machine for making lace; it was called the pin-frame, and is still employed in France for making the lace called tulle.

The method of Barbara Hutman is as follows: The lace-maker has a hard cushion in her lap on which the pattern, traced on parchment, is laid, and pins passed through the parchment into the cushion at places determined by the pattern. She has also a number of bobbins on which the threads are wound, fine thread being used for the meshes or net. The work is begun by attaching the threads in pairs to the pins. The threads are then intertwined by means of the bobbins, so as to form the required pattern.

In lace-weaving, the threads of the weft are twisted round those of the warp. The manner of twisting determines the character of the net and its name.


The classification of laces at the English exhibition of 1851 was as follows:—

1. Pillow-lace, the article or fabric being wholly made by hand (known as Valencia, Mechlin, Honiton, Buckingham); or Guipure made by the crochet-needle; and silk lace, called blonde when white, and Chantilly, Puy, Granmore, and black Buckinghamshire, when black.

2. Laces, the ground being machine-wrought, the ornamentation made on the pillow and afterwards applied to the ground (known as Brussels, Honiton, or appliqué lace).

3. Machine-made net or quilings, wholly plain, whether warp or bobbin (known as bobbin-net, tulle, blondes, Cambrai, Mechlin, Malines, Brussels, Alençon, etc.).

4. Lace, the ground being wholly made by machine, partly ornamented by machine and partly by hand, or wholly ornamented by hand, whether tamped, needle-embroidered, or darned.

5. Lace, wrought and ornamented by machinery, comprising trimming laces of every description, veils, falls, scarfs, shawls, lappets, curtains, etc.

The dates of some of the inventions connected with lace-making are as follows:—

Bobbin-lace invented by Barbara Hutman of St. Annesburg, Germany. 1560.

Pillow-lace making taught at St. Marlow, England. 1526.

Strutt's machine for making openwork stockings. 1758.

Crane's Vandyke machine. 1768.

Eise and Harvey's "pin" machine. 1710.

Frost's point-net machine. 1777.

Brown's point-net machine. 1791.

Hastings's bobbin-net machine. 1804.

Hill's plain ground net machine. 1816.

"Limerick" lace made. 1526.