LACE AS WORN IN ENGLAND UNTIL THE ACCESSION OF JAMES I

SURVEY of various documents would, at first sight, lead to the supposition that the use of lace was as old as that of ribands; the term lace, however, in all cases before the reign of Henry VIII, and frequently after, was used to denote a tape, or tie with a tag (or ferret) for lacing up parts of a garment; and in this sense its use is as early as Edward IV's well-known Act of 1463, in which the entry into England of 'laces, corsets, ribans' is prohibited. The use of lace in France, in the same sense, is even earlier.

In the reign of Henry VII, who adopted various measures to promote the interests of the merchant navy, and materially reduced his import duties on the goods of Venice and other Italian cities, Italy sent to England gold and thread 'laces' as an article of commerce. An Act was then passed to prevent the buyers of such commodities from selling for a pound weight 'a packet which does not contain twelve ounces, and the inside of the said gold, silver and thread lace was to be of equal greatness of thread and goodness of colour as the outside thereof' (4 Hen. VII, 1488-9). Such lace, however, was 'passement' of gold, silver or silk, to 'gard' the garment decorated.

In the early part of Henry VIII's reign, 'laced' linen is first mentioned in the inventory of Sir Thomas L'Estrange of Hunstanton, 1519, and among the privy purse expenses in 1520, eight pieces of 'yelowe lace' are bought for the king's grace.

The increase of Italian imports was tremendous towards the close of this reign. In 1549, a writer upon the troubles of England, of that date, declares that 'twenty years ago there were none of these (Italian) haberdashers; not a dozen in all London; and now from the tower to Westminster every street is full of them, their shops glittering and shining with glasses and other tryffles from beyond the sea,' such as 'cardes, toothpeckers, pynnes and poyntes.' To this influx of Italian wares is to be attributed the increase in the use of 'lace,' and the expenditure for the king's wardrobe.

Passaumane lace appears as early as 1554 in an inventory of apparel lent by the duchess of Suffolk to her sons, the duke of Suffolk and Lord Charles Brandon, and bought by her: to the duke was lent a black velvet gown guarded with 'passaumane lace,' which came in his chest from Cambridge; and in the interesting inventory of the effects of John, Viscount Lisle and earl of Warwick, 1545-50, 'a friscadow coat edged with a parement (passement) lace of black silk and goold' is entered as given in 1545 to Mr. Gilford Duddeley (Guildford, the fourth son of Lord Lisle, and afterwards the husband of Lady Jane Grey). Five years later, a ' jerkin of frise leather with a lace of black silke and goold' is given to James Foteman at Westminster.

At the burial of Edward VI, fifty yards of gold passement lace are entered by Sir Edward Walsgrave in his account for garnishing the pillars of the church, and in 1553 in the account of the keepers of the palace at Westminster is noted 'Five pipes of Venice gold, and rolls of passamayne of Venice gold.' In 1554, Stowe describes Sir Thomas Wyatt's wearing at his execution 'a faire hat of velvet, with broad bone-work lace about it.' The roll of New Year's gifts accessible in the various volumes of Nichol's Royal Progresses is an invaluable index to the varying fashions in lace, which now seems to be called indifferently purle, passamayn, or bone-work.

'Lace,' in the majority of instances, appears to have been coloured green, blue, tawny or black; or of two contrasting colours; or of gold or silver; or of gold and silver combined with silk of various colours and used as a braid laid upon the seams or edges of a garment. The falling collar, the precursor of the Elizabethan ruff, which was worn in the early part of the sixteenth century, was, however, frequently edged with narrow white thread lace of a geometric design.

1 E.g., 'a newe yoleete dode coloured frasoado jerkin gathered in plaides upon the backe, and the sleeves cutte downe all alonge the overseide of the arme, tyed with a silke lace.' MSS. of Lord Kenyon. Hist. MSS. Comm. Fourteenth Report, Appendix Part IV.
2 'Silk riband woven o serum braide.' (Halliwell.)

* In the 13th century, in describing his entire stock-in-trade a chapman of the middle ages declares: 'J'ai lace o lacer lor manges,' 'I have laces for lacing their sleeves.' (Fabulaux inédits du Manuscrit 1 de la Bibliothèque du Roi, No. 1870 or 1239.)

* Mrs. Palliser: History of Lace.


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PORTAIT OF THE COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, DATED 1564. SHOWS VERY FINE BOBBIN-MADE GEOMETRICAL LACE (PROBABLY ITALIAN) ON CAP AND CUFFS. SEVERAL WIDTHS OF INSERTION ARE JOINED TO A DENTATED EDGE TO GIVE WIDTH. THE GOWN IS TRIMMED WITH "PASEMENT" OF GOLD THREAD AND BLACK SILK.

LACE AS WORK IN ENGLAND UNTIL THE ACCEDENCE OF JAMES I. PLATE I.
FROM A FULL-LENGTH PORTRAIT OF QUEEN ELIZABETH IN THE ROYAL GALLERY OF
CHIPSHEM, STOCKHOLM, SHOES SMALL RUFF AND CUFFS OF CUT WORK AND
EMBROIDERED LINEN. THE GLOVES, RICHLY EMBROIDERED, HAVE A NARROW EDGING
OF TWISTED AND PLAITED METAL THREAD.

PORTRAIT OF QUEEN ELIZABETH IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY. SHE WORE
AND CUFFS OF GEOMETRICAL X-FRONT LACE. THE LACE CONSISTS OF 'BANDE' AND
'PASSEMENT,' i.e., INSERTION AND DENTATED EDGING, JOINED

LACE AS WORN IN ENGLAND UNTIL
THE ADESION OF JAMES I. PLATE II
Lace before the time of James I

With the accession of Elizabeth, the privy expenses, and the inventories of New Year's gifts overflow with notices of passement and purle, network, crown lace, bone-lace, cheyne lace, byas patchment, and billament lace, compas lace, and Venice gold and silver, laid upon smocks, sleeves, ruffs, cushion cloths, petticoats, kirtles and handkerchiefs.

"Purlse seems to be applied to a narrow edging lace whether of gold or thread. One of the earliest instances is an entry among the marriage clothes of Mary Neville, who was married to George Clifton, in 1536, of 'A neyge of perle, a purse.' Among the New Year's gifts, of the Ladie St. Lawrence, is 'one peire of sleeves of fine cameryke, and a piece of purle upon a paper to edge them.' The term is also used for embroidery, in the sense of twists of gold or silver, as in the entry of a 'gowne of crimson satten, embrodiered all with purlse.' Among the royal inventories, appears to have been a general term for all gimps, braids and laces, as is instanced by its use in the Scottish 'Pasement Bond,' which differentiates between passements which are plain and which are open-worked.

The word pasement continued to be in use until the middle of the seventeenth century, and appears to have been applied to lace with a straight edge.

In 1574-5, 'a favre pasemayne lace of dasmaske golde and dasmaske silke' is given at the New Year by the earl of Leicester, and among the New Year's gifts of 1577-8, the Lord Cobham presents a 'petticote of yellow satten layed all over with a passement of silver and tawyne sylke.' The royal dress must have been stiff with gold and embroidery, to judge by the description of a pettole, which was 'leyed al over with pasman lace of golde and sylver, and flowres, with eight yards of pasmane of golde and silver rownde abowe it.'

In the inventory of the queen's wardrobe in 1600, appears a French kirtle, edged with a passamaine lace of gold, and a cap of maintenance, 'striped downwright, with a passamaine lace of gold to the same.'

At Ashridge, Bucks, the seat of Lord Brownlow, is an interesting relic of Queen Elizabeth—a piece

William Cruttal is described as using 'the craft of making billament lace,' and Rich. Thomas, Dutch as 'a worker of Billament lace.'

Byas is most probably lace worked in crooked or sloping lines, as in the more detailed description of a 'lace of Venice gold and syler, with a jagge (i.e., jagged) wrought byas:' that is, a lace with a jagged waving edge.

Choyne lace appears in the New Year's gifts of 1558-9, when the countess of Lincoln offers to the queen a 'long cloake of mury velvet, with a border rounde aboute of small cheyne lace of Venis silver.'

The term Compas lace refers, no doubt, to a circular pattern:

'Item, one loose gwnwe of blacke taphata with compas lace of blacke silke, silke and silver.'

Pasement, or Pasemaine, although almost always applied to metal laces, or laces of metal and silk in the royal inventories, appears to have been a general term for all gimps, braids and laces, as is instanced by its use in the Scottish 'Pasement Bond,' which differentiates between passements which are plain and which are open-worked.

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Mrs. Paliiser. History of Lace. In 1573, Elizabeth Sedgwick, of Walrapp, widow, bequeaths to her daughter Lassels, 'an edge of perle for a remembrance desiring her to give it to one of her daughters.' (Ibid.)


Purl (t) Border; hem; fringe; stitch-work; a twist of gold or silver. (Halliwell)

Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth.

In the New Year's Gifts of 1577-8, there is 'a kyrteall of white satten embawdered with purlse of golde like cloudes.' Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elisabeth.

1571. 'Lace of crowne purle' occurs among 'Provisions of Sunday kyndes' (including Hobby Horses, Bodies of men in timber, dishes for devell's eyes, rushes and gilding) in the Accounts of the Revels at Court.

Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elisabeth.

Colgrave, in v. Dureaux, Duroit.
Lace before the time of James I

of gold lace that once belonged to her. It is, however, impossible to photograph it, as it cannot be removed from the frame in which it is preserved.

From the reign of Mary onwards, frequent mention is made of *parchment lace* (a term generally applied to metal laces) for needle-point worked upon a parchment pattern.

The earliest entry of this is found in the privy purse expenses of the Princess Mary, where she gives to Lady Calthorpe a pair of sleeves of gold fringed with parchment lace. *Parchment lace of Watchett and Sylver at vij. vijd.* The ounce appears among the 'emptions' in June, in the records at court; and in the list of Protestant refugees to England among their trades, it is stated that some live by making matches of hempen stalkes and parchment lace.

**Bone-lace** is of frequent occurrence in the wardrobe accounts, and the term refers to pillow-lace. Lace was made on the pillow in the Low Countries by the middle of the sixteenth century, and by the influx of Protestant refugees, exiled by the Alba persecution of 1568-77, it was not doubt introduced into England. Fuller attributes a similar date to the growth of the lace industry in this country, and declares the use of lace to be modern 'not exceeding the middle of the reign of Queen Elizabeth.' He desires that it should not be condemned for a superfluous wearing, because it doth neither hide nor heat, seeing it doth adorn, and claims that it stands the State in nothing, and that it is 'not expensive of bullion like other lace, costing nothing save a little thread descanted on by art and industry. Not to say that it saveth some thousands of pounds yearly, formerly sent over to fetch lace from Flanders.'

Bone-lace is also applied to [bobbin-made] metal laces. Among the New Year gifts of 1577-8, a kytell of white satten (presented by the marquess of Northampton), is 'layed rounde about with a bone lace of Venice golde' and six handkerchiefs are edged with a bone lace of black and white. In the New Year gifts of the following year, the Lady Mary Sydney gives 'a smocke and two pillow byers of cameryk, ... edged with a brode bone lace of black sylke.'

Metal bone-lace appears to have been set with jewels, spangles and bugles, for among the 'emptions' of June, 1572, occurs an entry to the silkwoman 'Mrs. Mowntagne' for 'Bone lace wroughte with sylver and spangells,' and in 1573 is an entry of 'perles set upon silver bone lace for the Ladys Maskers head.' Finally in the inventory of the queen's wardrobe, in 1600, is a mantle of 'black stitched cloth, edged with a bone lace of small pearle and bugle' (i.e., bugles).

An account of the furniture of the bedroom prepared for the famous visit of the queen to Kenilworth in 1584, gives a curious instance of the cumbersome magnificence of the day, of barbaric spangles, plumes and gold. 'Fyve plumes of cooldered feathers garnished with bone lace and spangells of golde and of silver standing in cups, knit all over with golde, silver and crysmon silk' adorn the bedstead, of which the five curtains are 'striped down with a bone lace of gold and silver.'

Laces of crysmon, Spanish lace, and 'white heare laycing' are mentioned in the account of the revolutions at court; the latter being lace made of white hair, and by no means an unusual entry in Queen Elizabeth's reign. Spanish work is also mentioned among the New Year's gifts of 1577-8, when 'Fowke Grevel' presents the queen with a 'smoke of cameryk wrought abowe the collar and sleeves of Spynslye works of roses and tresses.'

**Cut-work**, with *drawn-work*—geometrical lace—is of frequent occurrence among the New Year's gifts.

In addition to the already enumerated laces of Queen Elizabeth, there are the *bride laces of blue*, of which Coventry, according to Pennant, had a vast manufacture, which was lost before the year 1581. So famous was its dye that 'true as Coventry blue' became proverbial.

In 1574, the minster, as described by Laneham, as appearing when Elizabeth was on progress to Killingworth castle, shows from 'his bozome daurne fouoth a lappet of his napkin, edged with blue lace and marked with a true love,' a hart, and a D, for Damian, far he was but a bachelor yet. The lace was probably a coarse, effective trimming, within the reach of the lower classes, by whom it was worn and given to guests at weddings.

These laces continued in fashion until the Coventry plays were put down by the Puritans.

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**1576-84. History of Lace. Mrs. Palliser.**
**1 'Watchett or ski-coloured cloth.' (Hailey.)**
**2 Extracts from the Accounts of the Revels at Court.**
**3 State Papers. Vol. 82. P.R.O.**
**4 Fuller's Worthies. Vol. I. Devon, page 397.**
**5 Nichol's Progresses of Queen Elizabeth.**
**6 Extracts from the Accounts of the Revels at Court.**

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