



LACE MAKING IN SPAIN AND
PORTUGAL PART I.
BY M. JOURDAIN

IN Spain the tradition of magnificence was set by sumptuary laws which gave little encouragement to the play of fashion, and, as M. Lacroix remarks, dress in Spain always partook of the massive heaviness peculiar to Germany, either because the Gothic element still prevailed there, or that Walloon fashions had an especial attraction to her, owing to associations and general usage.

"Point d'Espagne," in the usual sense of the word signifies that gold or silver lace, sometimes embroidered in colours, so largely consumed in France during the earlier years of the reign of Louis XIV. Characteristic geometric patterns were twisted and plaited with gold and silver threads about the end of the sixteenth century, and the demand and consequent success of the Point d'Espagne seems to have reached its height towards the end of the seventeenth century. At that

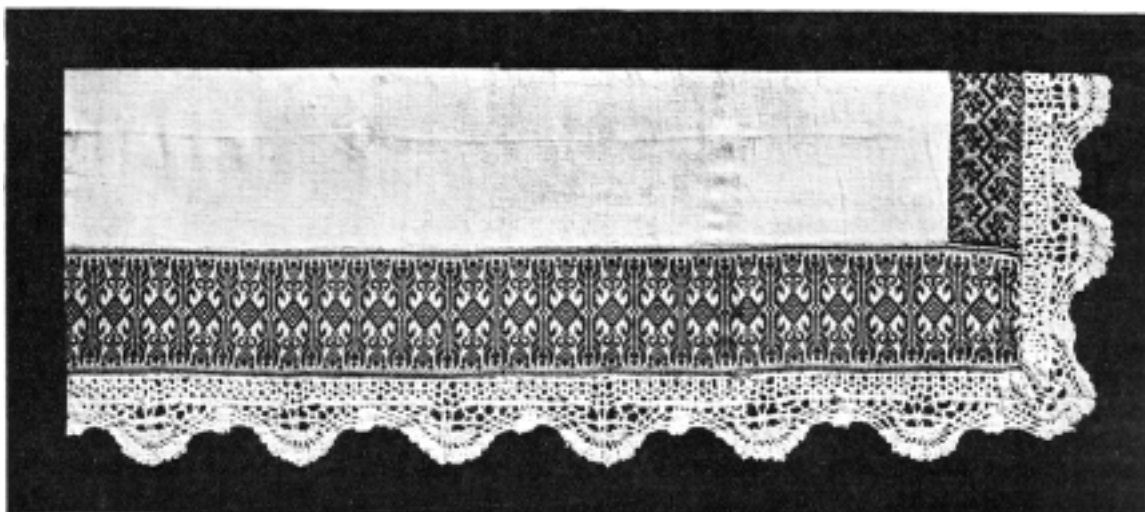
date Narciso Felin, author of a work published in Barcelona, 1683 (quoted by M. Aubry), writes that "edgings of all sorts, of gold, silver, silk, thread, and also fibres are made at Barcelona with greater perfection than in Flanders."* The manufacture is said to have been carried on chiefly by Jews, and indeed, two years after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, in 1492, the most catholic kings found an edict necessary restricting the importation of gold lace from Lucca and Florence.

The curious authentic hand-painted engravings in the Victoria and Albert Museum, † representing ladies in costumes of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, show the patterns and type of the gold lace of the period more exactly than contemporary paintings.

The gold laces there shown are of two kinds, the

* *Fenix de Cataluña, compendio desus Antiguas Grandezas y Medio para Renovarlas*, Barcelona, 1683, p. 75.

† Nos. 1197-'75 and 1196-'75.



NAPKIN EDGED WITH SCALLOPED BORDER OF PILLOW-MADE LACE PROBABLY OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY SPANISH

Lace Making in Spain and Portugal



BORDER OF LINEN EMBROIDERED IN RED SILK ALONG THE BOTTOM IS AN EDGING OF TWISTED AND PLAITED
RED SILK THREAD ITALIAN OR SPANISH SIXTEENTH CENTURY

first "a small bordering lace of little fan-shaped *motifs* through the edge of which a twisted double thread passes; the other a broader sort of lace with a pattern traced in thick double lines of gold and silver gimp, passing through the meshes of a réseau group, with close work here and there of twisting and close lying double threads." M. Seguin attributes the use of the réseau in gold threads to the time of Louis XV.

We have constant mention of gold and silver* lace at the French court in the seventeenth century. The Queen, on the occasion of the marriage of

Mademoiselle and the King of Spain (1697), wore "une mante de point d'Espagne d'or neuf aunes de long." A year later the "Galérie de l'ancienne Cour" mentions the young Duchesse de Bourgogne as wearing "un petit tablier de point d'Espagne de mille pistoles."

In 1751, at the fête at Versailles on the birth of the Duc de Bourgogne, the coats of the gens de cour, were "en étoffes d'or de grand prix ou en velours de tout couleurs, brodés d'or,* ou garnis de point d'Espagne d'or."

Point d'Espagne was also much fabricated for Spanish consumption. When describing a visit to Donna Teresa de Toledo, who received in bed, the

* Gold and silver lace is part of the national Spanish peasant's dress. "The muleteers of *Catalonia* wear their hair in a net, their broad silver-laced hat squeezed quite flat hangs on one side of the head" (*Fairholt*). In *Andalucia* a youth wears "a short blue jacket, braided almost all over with silver lace" (*Residence in Portugal*, Mrs. Quillinan).

* *Journal de Barbier*, 1718-62. "On met de la dentelle brodée de couleur de points d'Espagne aux jupes," *Mercurie Galant*.



COVER OF LINEN WITH A BORDER EMBROIDERED IN RED SILK THERE IS A VANDYKE EDGING OF RED SILK
AND LINEN THREAD ITALIAN SIXTEENTH CENTURY

The Connoisseur

author of *Letters of a Lady's Travels in Spain* writes : "She had 'lasses' all of flowers of point de Spain in silk and gold, which looked very pretty."

The oldest banner of the Inquisition—that of Valladolid—is described as bordered with real point d'Espagne, of a curious Gothic (geometric) design. At the Auto-da-fé the grandees of Spain and officers of the Holy Office marched attired in cloaks with black and white crosses edged with this gold lace.* The Duke of Postrana entering Paris is described as travelling *en seigneur* with his hundred mules, his train, and his "seventy other pages and servants, all apparayled in scarlett Ierkin and hose trimmed with gold lace."† The Spanish Ambassador, in the reign of James I., appeared at Whitehall, where he was entertained with great magnificence, with a train of pages and gentlemen "clothed in cassocques and hose of black velvett, and clokes of black fyne clothe, all passemented thicke with golde lace panewise."‡

* *History of Lace*, Mrs. Palliser (Spain).

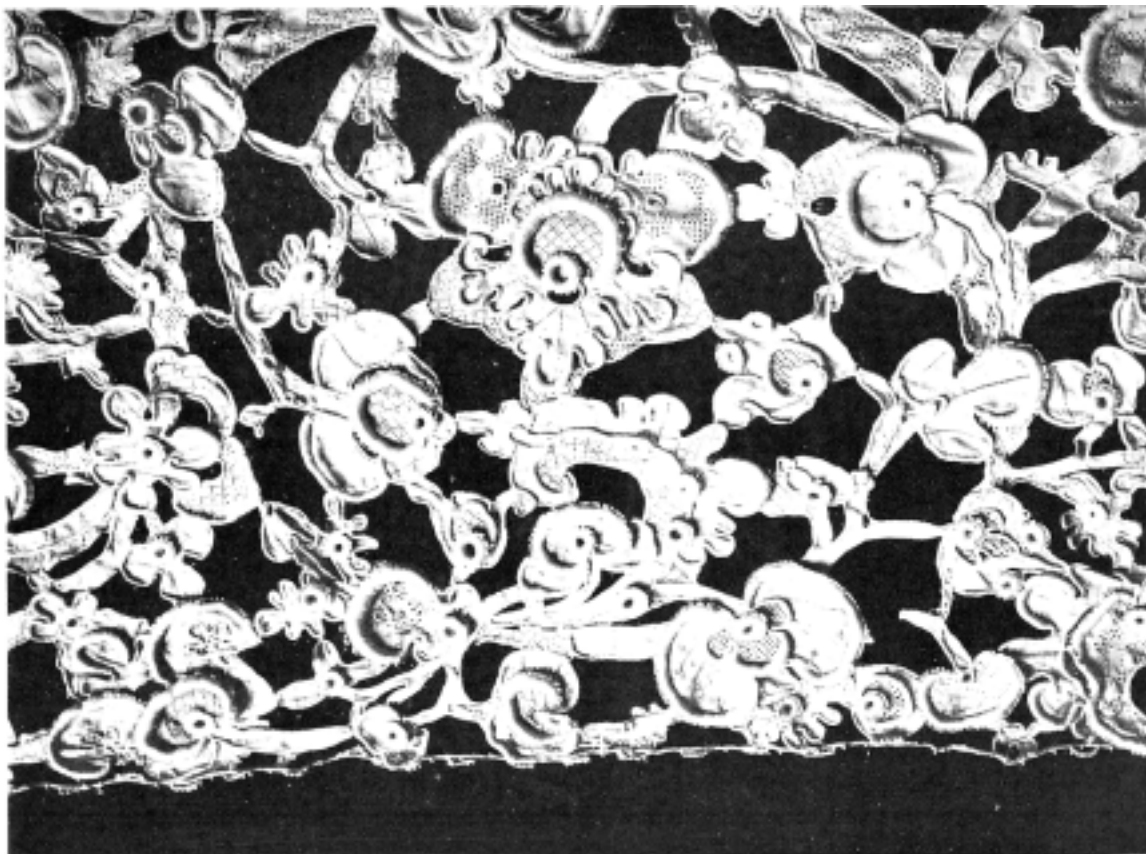
† Aug. 13, 1612. *MSS. of George Wingfield Digby, Esq.*, Hist. MSS. Comm.

‡ *Progresses of James I.*, J. Nichols, vol. iii.

The dress of the Spanish ladies was of corresponding magnificence, according to a writer of the seventeenth century. "They wear a dozen or more petticoats," it is written, "one finer than the other, of rich stuffs trimmed with lace of gold and silver to the girdle. They wear at all times a white garment called a *sabenqua*, and so great is their vanity, they would rather have one of these lace *sabenquas* than a dozen coarse ones ; and either lie in bed till it is washed, or dress themselves without any, which they frequently enough do"—a story which is a *pendant** to Doctor Monçada's computation of the more than three million Spaniards, who, though well dressed, went shirtless! The national taste for magnificence in costume is noticed in the reign of James I., when it is said that though the Spaniard "go plain in his ordinary habit, yet upon some festival or cause of triumph there's none goes beyond him in gaudiness." †

* Dr. Monçada, in the year 1660, and Osorio, in 1686, reckoned more than three millions in Spain who wore no shirts, because they could not afford to purchase linen.

† *Epistolæ Ho-elianæ* (quoted in Nichols's *Progresses of James I.*, vol. i.)



POINT DE VENISE (TYPE KNOWN AS "SPANISH POINT")

Lace Making in Spain and Portugal

The account of the Princess de Monteleon, by the author of *Letters of a Lady's Travels in Spain*, bears out this statement. "Her bed is of gold and green damask, lined with silver brocade and trimmed with point de Spain." Her sheets were laced round with an English lace, half an ell deep. The garters, mantle, and even the curtains of the Princess's carriage were trimmed with fine English thread, black and bone lace.

The heavy and valuable point laces which unexpectedly came out of Spain after the dissolution of the monasteries in 1830 were in no way distinguishable from similar pieces of Venetian workmanship. Spain had neither trade nor manufacture in her decline; she had nothing but memories. Even in the days of her power she imported rather than created. Her commercial dependence is noticed by Sir Richard Hawkins in a letter to Elizabeth as early as 1598, where he declares that "with munition Spain is furnished from Milan and Flanders," and that she "cannot sustain herself without help of France, England, the East Countries and other parts."*

From there, and especially from the great lace-making centres of Flanders and Italy, were brought the valuable laces with which to dress the numberless images of our Lady, and of other patron Saints, such as St. Antony, at Valencia, whose laced costume, periwig and ruffles are described as "glorious."

A curious fact has been adduced by Mr. A. S. Cole† in proof of the dependence of Spain upon foreign imported lace. "The most important of Spanish ordinances," he writes, "relating to Spanish art and industry are those which appeared in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Toledo and Seville, both remarkable centres for all kinds of artistic productions. In neither of these, nor in the sixteenth and seventeenth century ordinances relating to Granada—another art-centre—is there any mention of lace.

In the laws which were passed by Ferdinand and Isabella at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries, no mention is made of lace, though numerous details of costumes are named.

The only exception to this statement is a curiously early use of the word *blonda* in a Castilian law at the

beginning of the fifteenth century; but in this case the word probably refers to some form of trimming:—

"Furthermore, I ordain and command that no Jewesses of our kingdoms shall wear mantillas with *blonda*,* or trimmings." It is referred to as a manufacture in general use, and consequently long established.

References to the wearing of lace are somewhat rare. It is related of Philip II., shortly before his death in 1598,† that "so intense was his interest in things funereal, that he now ordered his bronze gilt coffin to be brought, that he might satisfy himself that his orders had been strictly carried out with regard to its ornamentation. When the coffin appeared he desired that it might have a lining of white satin and lace,‡ and a larger supply of gold nails."

It was the extravagant consumption of foreign lace at court which induced Philip III. to issue an ordinance in 1623, which enjoined "simples rabats, sans aucune invention de point couppe on passement" for the men, and similar plain fraises and manchettes for the ladies—both without starch. During the visit of Prince Charles to Spain, however, this ordinance was suspended; "the late Proclamation against gorgeous apparel dispensed with; the great ones being most richly attired"§ at the bull-fights, tilts, and tournaments, organized for the Prince's entertainment. The Queen of Spain herself sent the Prince, on his arrival in Spain, ten trunks of laced linen.

The lace worn in Spain during the reign of Philip IV. can be best studied in the portraits of Velasquez. The amount of thread lace to be found in his portraits has been under-rated. Velasquez' most frequent royal sitter, Philip IV., wears a stiff linen collar or golilla, untrimmed with lace, but others wear a wide lace collar, as in the portrait of a lady, from Devonshire House.||

* Ord. John II., Cifuentes, July, 1412 (quoted in *The Pillars of Hercules*, by David Urquhart, 1848).

† *Spanish Towns and Pictures*, 1870, Mrs. W. A. Tollemache.

‡ The custom of using lace on such occasions survived in Spain. In a description of a funeral of a young unmarried Spanish lady we read: "In a low, open hearse with a dome-shaped canopy, lay the dead, with her head resting on a pillow edged with rich lace—a mode of ornament common in Spain."—*To the Sunny South*, 1871, by Lieut.-Col. the Hon. C. S. Vereker.

§ Sir F. Cottington to his Lady, *Ellis Letters*, vol. iii., p. 142.

|| *Admiral Adrian Pulido Pareja* (National Gallery) wears a wide scalloped lace collar, also *An Infanta* (J. Pierpont Morgan, Esq.), *Don Baltazar Carlos* (Marquis of Bristol), *Mariana of Austria* (H. B. Brabazon, Esq.), *The Duke of Medina* (C. F. A. Breuil, Esq.).

* *MSS. of the Marquis of Salisbury*, part viii., Hist. MSS. Comm.

† A. S. Cole, *Ancient Needle-point and Pillow Lace*.

(To be continued.)