



## Gold and Silver Lace Part I. By M. Jourdain

COMPARATIVELY few specimens of gold and silver lace have survived, owing to the value of the material, and especially as "Parfilage,"\* an unravelling of gold and silver thread from lace, was greatly in fashion at the end of the eighteenth century. This work is depicted in a portrait of a certain Mrs. Danger by L. Tocqué, 1793, in the Louvre. The lady is unravelling an edging of gold lace which surrounds a sachet and is winding the thread upon an ornamental shuttle. Some of these delicately carved shuttles are still preserved. De Genlis in her memoirs says that it was the custom to ask for old gold epaulettes, sword-knots, even gold galons, from the valets, and separate the gold from the silk, and sell the gold.† Arnault‡ and La Harpe also refer to the custom, which was not confined to the French court. "All the ladies who don't play at cards," writes Lady Mary Coke§ from the

\* "Parfiler. Defaire fil à fil une étoffe, ou un galon, soit d'or, soit d'argent, et séparer l'or et l'argent."—*Littvé*.

† t. III., p. 173.

‡ *Loisirs d'un banni*. t. II., p. 58. "Il fut un temps où la mode était de parfiler, c'est-à-dire, de mettre en charpie des galons."

§ *Letters and Journal*, Lady Mary Coke.

Austrian court, "pick gold. 'Tis the most general fashion I ever saw: they all carry their bags in their pockets."

In Italian and Flemish paintings in the fifteenth century, little openwork borders of plaited and twisted metal threads, applied like braid as trimming to garments, may be noticed. From inventories such as the Sforza-Visconti act of partition,|| it would appear that such metal threads were frequently twisted with coloured silks. The use¶ of gold and silver wound upon a foundation of silks or flax to make "gimps" or "guipure"\*\*\* preceded the use of lace flax thread.

The metallic threads, more difficult to loop and twist together than flax threads, almost imposed the necessity of comparative simplicity of pattern, and certainly prevented the production of minute and elaborate work, such as is obtainable with linen threads.



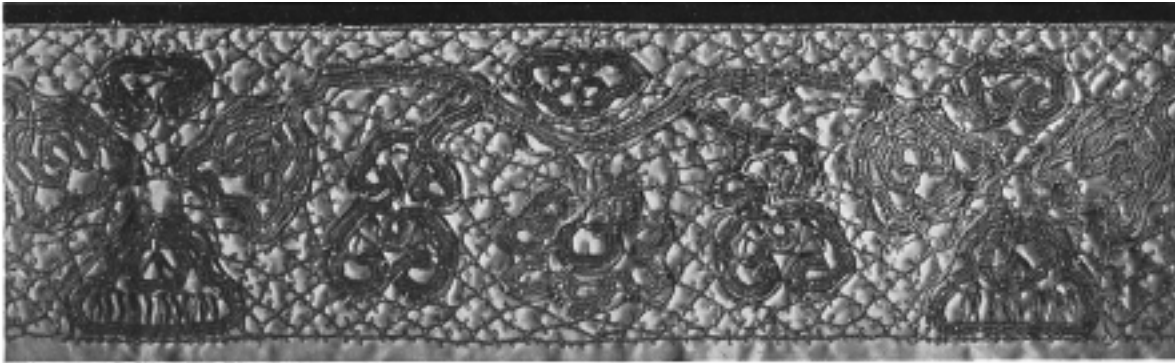
PORTRAIT OF A LADY, EARLY 17TH CENTURY, WEARING RUFF OF GOLD GEOMETRICAL LACE. UNIVERSITY GALLERIES, OXFORD

|| 1493.

¶ A. S. Cole.

\*\*\* Savary says that "guipure is a kind of lace or passement made of cartisane and twisted silk. *Cartisane* is a little strip of thin parchment or vellum which was covered with silk, gold or silver thread, and formed the raised pattern. The silk twisted round a thick thread was called *guipure*."

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"BEARING CLOTH" OF LIGHT BLUE SATIN, WITH BORDER OF GOLD AND SILVER LACE  
THE PROPERTY OF MISS C. M. M. SMYTH, IN WHOSE FAMILY IT HAS BEEN SINCE 1699

Sumptuary edicts forbade or restricted the use of these metal laces in Italy, Spain, France and England, in every country in fact in which they were in use, except Russia.\*

The earliest pieces have the appearance of braid, with a simple lozenge pattern, but geometric patterns in plaited and twisted gold and silver thread were made about the end of the sixteenth century, as may be seen in the portrait from the Oxford University gallery.

In Italy, gold and silver laces were chiefly made at Venice and Genoa. At Venice they were in 1542 forbidden to be wider than *due dita*, i.e., about two inches. Specimens of such laces are now rare, owing to the intrinsic value of the metal, for like the metal laces in the *Révolte des Passemens*, gold and silver laces must have been frequently sentenced to be "burned alive." At Ashridge, among the relics of Queen Elizabeth's enforced stay is a toilet-case of red and gold striped silk, with a trimming four inches

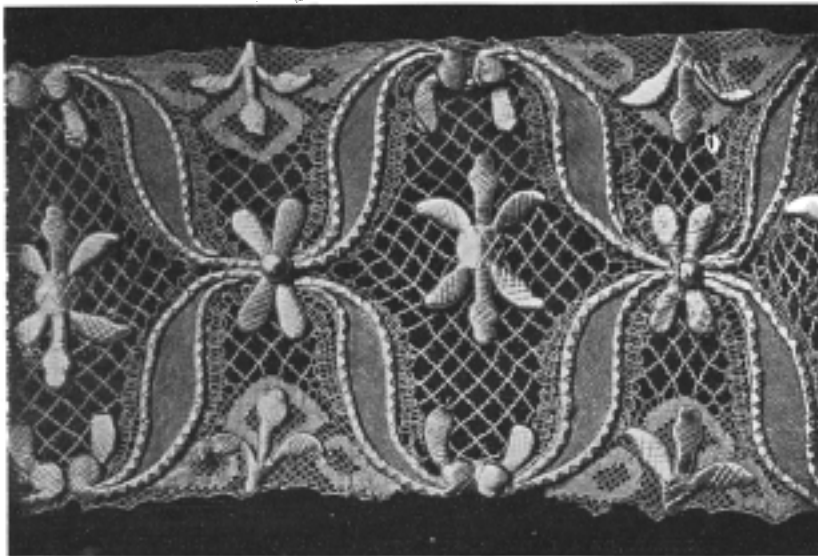
broad of gold and silver lace, embroidered with coloured silk,† which is unfortunately too delicate to be removed from its frame and photographed, and the broader and more elaborate specimens described in the New Year's gifts and wardrobe accounts of Queen Elizabeth are generally specified as "of Venice."

The Venetian method of making gold and silver thread is described in an English document, dated 1614, as differing from the "drawing of gold and silver wire and melting it after the manner of England and France." The Venetian method was to beat the metal into a sheet, cut it with shears into strips, and then "spin" it upon silk.

Genoa had in the early fifteenth century a considerable industry, the art of making gold thread, and gold and silver lace was made out of this drawn wire. Later in the eighteenth century we hear constantly of the gold and silver lace of Genoa being held in high estimation, though the Genoese themselves were

\* *La Dentelle Russe*, M. Sophie Davydoff.

† *Needlework as an Art*, Lady Marion Alford.



METAL LACE, EMBROIDERED, LATE 17TH CENTURY (POINT D'ESPAGNE ?)

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forbidden to wear it within the walls of the city; and large pieces with a réseau ground were also made in the eighteenth century.

Laces of silver and of gold, mixed with silk, are mentioned in the Sforza-Visconti instrument of partition, which gives an interesting glimpse of the richness of a Milanese wardrobe of the late fifteenth century, and later, according to Savary,\* Milanese "galons," passements and broderies in gold and silver were highly esteemed.

Some of the silk Cretan laces have the pattern embroidered or outlined with gold thread. A cuff or trimmings to a sleeve of the seventeenth century, consisting of an oblong piece of pillow-made blue silk and gold thread lace in alternate bands, is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and another piece in the same collection is a border of eighteenth century pillow-made lace of pale red silk réseau, with a flower pattern in gold thread, edged all round with the same. The pattern is done in a sort of gold tape lace (1997-76.)

### SPAIN.

Ornaments of plaited and twisted gold and silver threads were produced in Spain during the seventeenth century; part of a cardinal's robe, with gold and silver thread pillow-lace, said to have been made in Spain, was lent by Mrs. Alfred Morrison to the special loan collection of ancient lace and fine art needlework at Nottingham, 1878.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, "Point d'Espagne," † a term which when used of metal laces signifies that gold and silver lace sometimes embroidered in coloured silks, ‡

\* 1723.

† "It has been surmised that the name of Point d'Espagne arose more from the compliance of Italian and French manufacturers with the demands of Spanish customers than from any remarkable manufacture in Spain itself of a certain 'Point.'"—A. S. Cole.

‡ "On met de la dentelle brodée de couleur de points d'Espagne aux jupes."—*Mercurie Galant*.

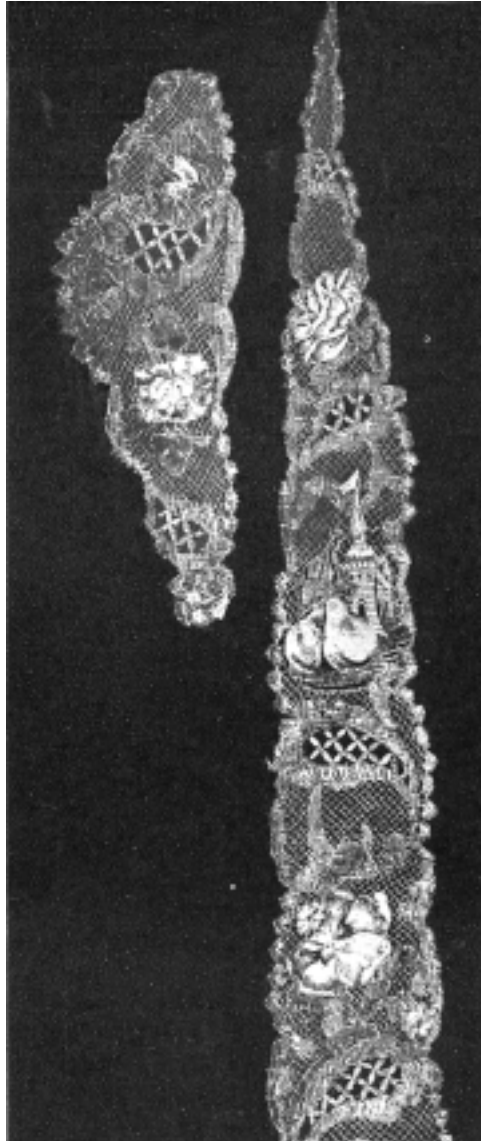
which was at the height of its popularity in the earlier years of the reign of Louis XIV. was much worn. The manufacture was introduced into France about 1596, by Simon Châtelain, a Huguenot, who amassed a large fortune in France, and was protected by Colbert. The

wearing of gold lace was prohibited in the early seventeenth century in Spain, § which does not make it probable that there was any large manufacture of metal laces in Spain at that period. When the prosperity of Spain was waning, through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, attempts were made to encourage or introduce manufactures.

Gold and silver laces were made at Barcelona, Talavera de la Reyna, Valencia and Seville. In 1808 the manufacture of Seville was flourishing. The gold was badly prepared, having a reddish cast. Larruga, in his *Memorias*, || mentions in the late eighteenth century a manufacture of gold and silver lace which had been set up lately in Madrid, where there was already a manufacture of gold thread.

A Spanish pillow lace, in white thread, as well as in gold and silver, is a loose fabric made of three "cordonnets," the centre one being the coarsest, tied together with finer threads running in and out across them, with "brides" to connect them and keep the pattern in shape.

A specimen of fine gold lace in the Musée du Cinquantenaire at Brussels, that is described as of Italy or Spain of the seventeenth century, is probably of the early eighteenth century. It is a pillow-made stole or



GOLD LACE WITH RÉSEAU GROUND, WITH EMPLOYED EMBROIDERY 18TH CENTURY

§ In the *Pragmatica y Nueva Orden cerca de los vestidos y Trajes, asi de Hombres como de Mujeres* (Madrid, 1611) people "may be allowed to border and edge the said silken materials with thread lace, which are not to be made of chain stitch or gold and silver, and when those laces are mentioned we should understand they are exclusively for women's use." In an ordinance of the time of Philip III., dated 1623, gold and silver lace was prohibited.

|| Madrid, 1788.

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cravat of straight-edged lace, resembling Mechlin in its pattern. The toilé is as closely made as that of flax laces; a cordonnet of stouter gold thread outlines the design. The lace is brightened by the introduction of touches of coloured silk, blue, pink and green.

### GERMANY AND HOLLAND.

The manufacture of drawn wire of gold and silver and gimps was carried on in South Germany, especially at Nuremberg and neighbouring towns, from the fifteenth century at least; and also in Holland. "It is probable that at these places borders and fringes were made, although of no sufficient artistic design to give them a name such as that which gold and silver points of Venice, of Lyons,

of Aurillac, of Paris, and the 'Points d'Espagne,' obtained for themselves."\*

Shortly after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) a considerable manufacture of gold and silver lace was set up in Hamburg in Germany, and in Holland, by Huguenot immigrants from France.† In the Steen Museum at Antwerp are some specimens of gold lace that may be of Dutch workmanship. The ground is usually a loosely twisted square mesh with here and there the "Genoese" millet-shaped enlargements. Strips of very narrow flat metal ribbon are introduced here and there.

\* A. S. Cole.

† The founder of the industry in Holland was Zacharie Châtelain, grandson of the Simon Châtelain who introduced "Point d'Espagne" into France.



GOLD LACE WITH RÉSEAU GROUND, WITH APPLIED EMBROIDERY

18TH CENTURY