

RECENT GIFTS OF LACE



VENETIAN POINT, ABOUT
1725

IN the gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, the Museum collection of laces has received four splendid examples illustrating not only the development of technique, but as well the various periods of design. Three of these pieces are needlepoint, and one is an unusually fine old Brussels bobbin-made lace. In the needlepoint, we have two examples of the old Venetian, while the third shows to what degree of excellence the modern worker has attained in the needlecraft industry of the Italian lace school at Burano. The earlier of the two Venetian pieces is pure Italian both in technique and design, and dates from the end of the seventeenth century, at a period when Venice, once preëminent in the art of the needle, was beginning to realize the ability of her French competitors. In the narrow strip just referred to, the delicate scrolls and tendrils embellished with an occasional "rose" built up of minute picots, show the rose point fabric in its best period when the beauty of line was not lost in the maze of ornament that later marred the perfection of the design. The wider piece of Venetian shows marked French influence in its symmetrical arrangement of vertical motifs with branching scrolls, and the more or less regular arrangement of brides that developed into the hexagonal mesh of the point de France, shown in the modern copy of the superb fragment worked at Burano. This piece dates from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century when the French workers, having acquired the Venetian technique, showed a tendency to abandon

Italian patterns and imprint upon the fabric a character more distinctly individual. The royal patronage of the Grand Monarque demanded a fabric that equaled that of Venice, the market that prior to the administration of Colbert had furnished the court of France with this luxury. As a result court designers were employed and the points de France soon surpassed the Venetian product in popularity, much to the advantage of the national exchequer. The piece of modern lace made at Burano is a reproduction of a flounce of point de France dating from the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the period of the Regency. The rich pattern with its foliated pineapple motif, suggests the brocades produced at Lyons in the early eighteenth century, and is a style of lace well adapted to the sumptuous taste of the church prelates of the period, as is evidenced by contemporary portraits.

The flounce of Brussels lace is especially interesting, representing as it does that stage of the Rococo period when the designer seems to have gone far afield in pursuit of motifs to satisfy a demand for the unique; all balance and symmetry is abandoned, the foliated scroll has disappeared, to be replaced by sinuous branches, like trees in autumn deprived of their summer dress, worked out in the most intricate meshes of the Flemish lace workers' art. While this type of design appears frequently in brocades, only occasionally does one find it reproduced in lace; there is in the large number of Flemish laces owned by the Museum but one similar piece, a small fragment in the Seligman Collection. This flounce doubtless originally formed part of a large piece, such as is shown in the portrait of the Empress Marie Therese by von Meytens illustrated by Drèger¹; in fact, the design is so similar it seems as though the piece might be a fragment of the regal garniture, the small diaper pattern found in the groundwork being identical with that shown in the portrait.

Another gift of unusual beauty recently received is a deep border for an alb of

¹M. Dreger. Die Wiener Spitzenausstellung, 1906, p. 15.

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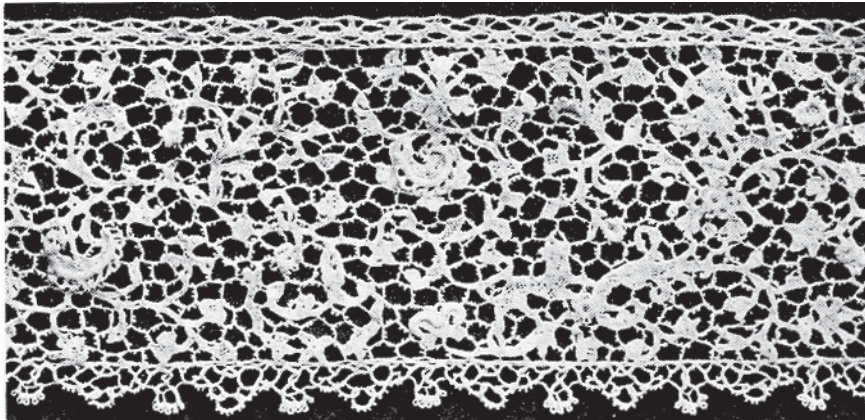
exquisite drawnwork bequeathed by Mrs. Harriette Goelet. This is a church piece bearing emblems of the passion and other church symbols interspersed with birds and butterflies, in a symmetrical arrangement of foliated ornament, a superb example of this class of work. Other recent additions are a charming scarf of white Spanish lace, the gift of Mrs. John C. Gray; a fine example of black Spanish lace of interesting pattern given by Mrs. Russell Wellman Moore; several dainty pieces of English lace from Mrs. Russell Sage, and a delightful strip of point de France à *personages* presented by Miss Emily Tuckerman. While the Museum collection is rich in Venetian points and has a few beautiful examples of the points de France, the greater number of these show the typical scroll of the Italian Renaissance or the more symmetrical patterns of the French designers and only in occasional instances do figures appear. Very early and unique examples of the lace workers' venture in the field of figure work are shown in the Judith and Holofernes piece from the Blackborne Collection and also in a cover, the gift of Mrs. Edward Luckemeyer, in which a centaress alternates with a mermaid. In both of these the feeling is distinctly Gothic, markedly so when compared with the debonair herald

that appears in the lace presented by Mrs. Julian James, or again the exquisite birds and dolphins in one of Mrs. Astor's pieces. Miss Tuckerman's gift shows still another phase of the art. In this the naïve little figures, presumably dancers, trip through the intricate meshes of the pattern apparently unmindful of a rampant lion tarrying in their midst; the fact that the worker seems to have followed no set regularity in placing the figures but adds to the charm of the whole, the eye coming unexpectedly upon them in following out the lines of the pattern. In these lighter and more delicate fabrics one is brought at once into an atmosphere of delicate refinement perhaps more appealing to the feminine taste than the sumptuous fabric produced for court and ecclesiastical circles.

For the present these laces will form an individual group in the lace galleries before they are placed in the collection as classified.

Of special interest also is the recent loan by Mrs. J. S. Spingarn of some very beautiful early Italian needlepoints which, with the exception of a few pieces of Flemish lace placed with the bobbin laces, fill a case in the alcove assigned to cutwork and punto in aria.

F. M.



POINT DE FRANCE, 17TH-18TH CENTURY