



THE ANNUNCIATION.

FROM THE LACE BOOK OF THE  
DUCHESS OF BRUNSWICK.

A BOOK OF LACE PATTERNS IN THE  
NATIONAL ART LIBRARY.

THE National Art Library has recently added to its collections, which already contained a fair number of early printed or engraved lace

books, a volume of manuscript designs of quite uncommon interest and value. These are all for the kind of work known variously as *Lacis*, *Darned Netting*, *Punto a maglia*, and *Modano Ricamato*, the pattern being entirely set out in squares on a ground of netting. The book bears the name of Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Frederic II, King of Denmark and Norway, and Sophia of Mecklenburg, who was the second wife of Henry Julius, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbützel, Calenberg and Blankenburg (1589-1613), and is dated two years after the death of the latter (1614-1615), the earlier date appearing on the title-page, and the later on the stamped vellum binding, which also has her initials. It contains forty-three numbered designs (page 3 having unfortunately been lost), of which two are double-page in size, each of the others occupying one side of a single page. Page 1, here reproduced, is a fine example of a treatment of heraldry adapted to the purposes of lace. The arms are those of Denmark; and the initials those of the inscription below; in English, "Elizabeth, by the Grace of God, born of the Royal race of Denmark, and princely widow and Duchess of Brunswick and Lünebürg." Page 2 is similar in character, but with the cypher of Henry and Elizabeth in a cartouche supported by two angels with drawn swords and surmounted by a ducal crown. The inscription describes the Duke as "Henry Julius, formerly titular Bishop of Halberstadt, and Duke of Brunswick and Lünebürg," the titles of Elizabeth being the same as on the preceding page.



THE ARMS OF DENMARK.  
TITLE-PAGE OF THE LACE BOOK OF THE  
DUCHESS OF BRUNSWICK, 1614.

These are followed by a quaint representation of the Child Jesus, Jacob wrestling with the Angel, the Two Spies with the bunch of grapes, Samson and the Lion, Satan being chained by the Angel, the Four Evangelists, the Annunciation, Nativity, Circumcision, Visit of the Three Kings, Killing of the Innocents (double-page), Presentation in the Temple, Jesus with the Doctors, the Baptism, Feast in Cana, Christ in the Garden, the Flagellation, Crowning, and Crucifixion, the Twelve Sybils, the Twelve Disciples, Christ bearing the Cross, the Instruments of the Passion (twice), Emblems of Faith, Hope, Charity, Justice, Prudence, Bravery, Temperance, Patience, the

Story of the Prodigal Son (five scenes), and—a most curious finish—a dance of Saxon peasants (double-page), the musical instruments being the bagpipes and a pipe. All these are executed with quite unusual spirit and excellence; and the drawing is uncommonly well maintained in the difficult convention demanded by the fabric. The origins of the designs are to be sought for among well-known engravings of the period or the previous century; and it is interesting to observe how intelligently the designer has simplified an elaborate composition so as to adapt it to the need of the moment. As an example of this we reproduce a wood-cut “Annunciation” by Vergil Solis from his *Biblishe Figuren*, published at Nürnberg in 1562, which has seemingly inspired the design of the same subject. The general resemblance will at once be seen (allowing for the enormous difference in technique), especially in the figure of the angel, the vase of flowers, and the pose of the Blessed Virgin, whose right hand is crossed over her breast, and left hand resting on an open book as in the woodcut. Her head also is draped, and her sleeves puffed at the shoulder; while the Dove is introduced in both compositions in relatively about the same place. Similar resemblances can be worked out in other instances; and this fact, together with the way in which the personality of the Duchess is insisted on in the first two patterns and on the binding, make it far from improbable that the work was her own. One would hesitate to allow her the genius necessary for the making of the almost invariably fine composition and arrangement; but seeing those qualities to be, to some extent at all events, attributable to artists of known powers, it is not too much to give a skilful needlewoman credit for the taste and judgment required to adapt their pictures to her own uses.

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