Recueil de Rubans
De Notre-Temple Commence en
1732:
Pour
Souverain de Suite
Au lieu des écluses raccordées
de
Notre Temps
Com. 1er.
THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES

by

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LONG ago I read that Marshal Richelieu, a grandnephew of the famous Cardinal, had made a collection of samples of all kinds of textiles of both French and foreign manufacture between the years 1732 and 1737. Later, when in Paris, I obtained a permit to visit the manuscript department of the Bibliothèque Nationale, where I found the collection,¹ which consists of seven large volumes full of samples of silks, of cotton, linen and woolen stuffs, of ribbons, gauzes, and laces. Each sample was carefully annotated with the name of the material, the place of manufacture, the date, and the price. The interest and importance of such a collection to students of textiles is obvious, and a pains-taking and systematic study of this vast array of samples would surely revise and extend our knowledge of European textiles of this period in many respects.

One whole volume was devoted to ribbons made in the various cities and provinces of France (Plate I), while another was filled with ribbons made in Italy and Holland. Many pages of other volumes showed samples of common woolen, linen, and cotton cloth; some of these were examples of the weaving done by prison labor of the time, and others were samples of the fine table linen woven for the Royal Household in 1736 (Plate II). Among the more elaborate materials were small scraps of the handsome silks made for the Queen, Marie Leszinska, in 1735 and 1736.² Samples of gauzes were also included, those light materials used for horned caps (cornettes) and sleeve ruffles (engageantes), or used over colored taffetas in gowns (Plate IV). These gauzes resemble the Far Eastern examples

¹ Rubans de France et des Pays Etrangers, 1732-1737. Échantillons d'Étoffes et Toiles des Manufactures de la France recueillis par le Maréchal de Richelieu. 7 vols.
² A page of these silks is illustrated in The Romance of French Weaving by Paul Rodier (Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1931, p. 274), who describes this work more fully. None of the samples illustrated in the Rodier volume are duplicated in this article.
PLATE I
EXAMPLES OF RIBBON AND LACE FROM THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES.
PLATE II

TABLE LINEN WOVEN FOR THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD IN 1736.
FROM THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES.
PLATE III
WOVEN MATERIALS FROM THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES.
PLATE IIIa
WOVEN MATERIALS FROM THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES.
from which they may have been copied. Finally, there are samples of
various laces (Plates V-Va). Many familiar types are present, for ex-
ample, points d’esprit, spiders, tulle double, fond de la Vierge, or cinq trous
perhaps, the whole general Marli type, and fond de Paris.

It was surprising and confusing to find in carefully turning over page
after page that the samples so closely resemble later fabrics and patterns.
The accompanying illustrations, therefore, may not seem especially rare
or superior, but they date authentically from the years 1732 to 1737, and
present a unique index of the range and variety of textiles made in this
period.

One page from the original preface is reproduced here (Plate VI),
and a free translation of it has been added to the above notes to give an
idea of the kind of information Richelieu gathered regarding the lace and
textile industries of his day.

“"The ordinary price of lace made in Havre and its environs is from
ten sols ³ to six livres the ell, Paris measure, from a barely visible width to
a good four fingers wide.

“"It is sent to the French islands of America, and principally to the
French Cape, in open and kindred designs, for the consumption of the
Spanish who come to buy it. Assortments are composed of twenty-five,
fifty or one hundred pieces, from five to ten ells long, according to the
wish of the dealers, at from ten sols to six livres the ell, and from the
width of a good four fingers upward. It is also sent for the consumption
of the French who are established there, and for them these laces are
finer, priced from twenty sols to eight livres, and of a width of two fingers
upward.

“"At the time of the departure of the Spanish fleets, Havre often fur-
nishes great quantities of lace, there to be loaded and transported to Peru,
assorted as described above for those sent to the French Cape for the
consumption of the Spanish.

“"There are made in Havre many laces of questionable superiority,
beginning at a good two fingers in width, priced from fifteen sols to three

³ The coinage signs used in this document correspond to those tabulated under livres, sols
and deniers in various manuscript copy books of the period; as for instance, Les Examples de
Lettres Financiere et Batarde of Lespre (Paris, 1694), and the Nouveau Traite
d’Ecriture of Glachant (Paris, 1754). The livre, sol and denier formed the universal money
of accounting throughout France until the Revolution and they have left their mark on the
English money symbols of today in the £, s., d. The livre, the value of which varied at
different times, was the equal of a pre-war franc; the sol or sou, five centimes, and the
denier the twelfth part of a sou. The ecu, which does not appear in this manuscript, was a
larger coin varying in value from three to six livres. The franc and centime were adopted
toward the close of the century.
PLATE IV
SAMPLES OF GAUZE WEAVING, DATED 1736. FROM THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES.
PLATE V
LACE OF PERPIGNAN, DATED 1737. THE PRICE BY THE ELL IS INDICATED BESIDE EACH SAMPLE. FROM THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES.
PLATE Va

LACE OF PERPIGNAN, DATED 1737. THE PRICE BY THE ELL IS INDICATED BESIDE EACH SAMPLE. FROM THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES.
livres the ell. The thread used for home consumption, serving for the fabrication of all the laces, is in skeins, and is drawn from French Flanders.

"Women work the lace with bobbins: the cleverest workers earn seven to eight sols at the most a day; the lesser workwomen earn but four to five sols; the inferiors, who are much greater in number, with difficulty attain three sols at the end of their day, working from sunrise to dark.

"The export is more considerable at the time of the clearance of the Spanish flotillas. Taking several years together, Havre and its environs can export on an average some three hundred thousand (300,000) livres worth of lace of all kinds each year; this manufacture has fallen off considerably since the wearing of silk lace and embroidered muslin in France."
Map showing location of printing yards near Dublin.
Adapted from Rocque's maps of Dublin and environs,
C. 1760.

X Localities where one or more printing works are recorded.