

THE LACE COLLECTION OF MR. ARTHUR BLACKBORNE

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PART II—LATER PUNTO IN ARIA¹

IT will be remembered that *punto in aria*, though it had freed itself from the restrictions of the linen foundation of cutwork, produced at first purely geometrical designs. The following specimens show the application of the same flat needlepoint to curved and scroll forms and human figures. The tendency to introduce grotesque human and animal forms, curiously enough, is almost entirely absent from 'rose point.'

22 (50 by 6 inches). — Long panel of needlepoint illustrating the death of Holofernes, with the description in Portuguese on the top, viz., 'Abra e Judique e Alfuaranes e como Judique ov matou de

noite estando durmindo e posva a cabeça na torre' (Abra and Judith and Holofernes, and how Judith him killed by night while he was sleeping, and placed his head on the tower.)²

The foot and the upright borders which frame the subjects show a pattern characteristic of this type of lace—a series of semi-circles ornamented with a loop at one extremity. The history is contained in thirteen compartments, enclosing figures, and an irregularly-drawn conventional flower. The first shows a maid (Abra) in a plain gown with simple headdress, carrying a pannier in her left hand, filled according to the description (Judith, ch. 10, v. 5) with 'parched corn and lumps of figs and with fine bread,' for their provision during

¹ For Part I, see THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE, No. XVIII, September 1904.

² Plate V, page 21.

The Lace Collection of Mr. Arthur Blackborne

their stay in the Assyrian camp. The second compartment shows Judith with a large and horned head-dress (her 'tire' is specially mentioned in the scriptural account) which in needlework always seems to denote an elderly or important personage. She had 'put on garments of gladness,' her bracelets, and her chains, and her rings, and her earrings, and all her ornaments, and decked herself bravely to allure the eyes of all men that should see her.' The third compartment, a bearded warrior, with steel cap, slashed trunk-hose, and boots, offering a key and pointing the way to the fourth and fifth compartments, where Holofernes, seated on a couch, invites Judith to share a meal in his tent. An attendant is bringing a cup of wine (Judith, ch. 12, v. 1).

The sixth and seventh show two soldiers or attendants, one blowing a horn, the other holding a flag; the eighth, Holofernes lying upon his couch (decorated to represent insertions of cutwork³), with an open-worked and tasselled canopy above—the canopy mentioned in the book of Judith as hanging from the pillar above his bed (ch. 13, v. 9). The ninth shows Judith carrying the head of Holofernes to the astonished maid, who in the tenth compartment holds their pannier ready to receive it (ch. 13, v. 10). The eleventh shows Judith placing the head on the walls of the city (ch. 14, v. 11). The twelfth represents two soldiers, with round shields, steel caps, trunk-hose, and boots, conversing—the captains of the Assyrians, no doubt, who were 'wonderfully troubled' at their general's death. The thirteenth and last compartment shows the head of Holofernes hanging upon a high tower.

23 (10 by 9½ inches).—A round piece to be compared with the following.

24 (31 by 2½ inches).—Specimen of

³ The custom of trimming the seams of bed-curtains with lace was common throughout Europe; e.g., among the articles furnished to Mary Stuart in 1567 is 'une pacque de petite dentelle pour mettre sur les coutures des rideaux des ditz lits contenant dix aunes.' *Rec. Off. Edin.*

similar lace, but of finer quality. This piece appears at first sight to be made with a braid worked over. It is, however, of needlepoint. The brides are *picoté* once.

25 (35 by 3 inches).—A specimen of which the principal *motif* is the sun in splendour, and a five-lobed ornament obliquely placed.⁴ The edge is formed by highly ornamental semi-circles of alternate design, arranged so that the strip can be joined at the sides, to widen the piece, as in many insertions of geometrical design. The edge of this specimen is not original. The shading of the rays of the sun is to be noticed, and also the fine openwork in the centre of the semi-circles.

26 (19 by 1½ inches).—A specimen of curious design, showing alternate lines of reptiles; the top and bottom are formed by a conventional design of detached ornaments.

27 (32 by 4¾ inches deep).—A very fine deep-pointed lace with insertion, remarkable for the quantity of raised work on the plain work and the variety of the stitches as well as for the originality and beauty of the design, which consists of two upright *motifs*. From a double-tiered *jardinière* with branching sides there springs a stem bearing a flower with buds and leaves. The second *motif* consists of an open-mouthed gourd-shaped ornament supported on a stand out of which springs a semi-circular flower with two buds. The honeycombed raised work in the flower is to be noted. Adjoined is an insertion, carrying out the design of the lace. The gourd-shaped ornaments, like the Persian sun in Nos. 25, 30, and the rosette-like flowers of No. 30, show unmistakable signs of Persian influence upon the design in this early type of lace, just as the geometrical designs of the wall-tiles, etc., of that country influenced the geometrical laces of Venice.

28 (37½ by 2 inches).—Figured lace,

⁴ Plate VI, page 23.

The Lace Collection of Mr. Arthur Blackborne

which is very similar to the piece which represents the history of Judith and Holofernes.⁵ The design is formed of squares enclosing figures in mediaeval costume. The first represents a woman in a rich open-work dress, with a veil or headdress hanging from the head to the waist. She appears to be soliciting entrance into a castle. The second represents a warrior in a long coat of mail, with sword at side, apparently refusing the lady admittance. The third shows a second woman who is less elaborately dressed—perhaps a servant—pleading in the same manner. The fourth represents a more richly clad matron, bringing a present in her hand. The fifth, a high official, as is denoted by his richer dress and sword. The sixth, a woman seated and pleading. The seventh, a fifth woman (a matron with a very ornamental veil) offering a present. The eighth, a king wearing a pointed crown and seated on a throne, extending his hand to receive the present. The ninth, a lady, her right hand on her hip, her left arm extended, evidently addressing a man in the next square, standing in the same attitude. The eleventh square is a lady and child bearing a bouquet which she is in the act of presenting to a matron in the next square. The thirteenth square is a repetition of the first, and so on with slight variations in costume and style. No clue has been found to the incidents this lace represents.

29.—A magnificent specimen of bold and upright design, measuring 58 inches by 8½ inches, with an original and beautiful edge.⁵ The centre of the design is formed by circles composed of an eight-pointed star surrounded by two rings, within which are four round and four pointed ornaments. There are nine circles in this piece, and each one is slightly varied. Upon the top of the circle is an open leaf, on which is a ring out of the centre of which springs

an upright stem with a half-opened flower which supports the next circle. From each side of this central stem springs a bold scroll enclosing an open flower, from which falls a drooping branch with buds and flowers.

30 (2¼ yards by 9½ inches).—The pattern represents the Persian sun in splendour; the centre of the sun is a small eight-pointed circle which is again the centre of an eight-pointed star enclosed by a circle of close work surrounded by eight oval openings from which spring thirty-two points alternately shaded, forming the rays; these rays are surrounded by eight inverted scrolls, ornamented in the centre, and joined together by a point which forms eight fleurs-de-lys. These are again surrounded by eight heart-shaped compartments decorated in the centre with different flowers. These heart-shaped compartments are surrounded at top and bottom by flowering scrolls, at the sides by larger and bolder scrolls, enclosing baskets of leaves, the scrolls meeting in the centre, and joined together by a circle with twenty-four points, within which is a six-pointed star. This design is repeated. The light interlacing stems and circles, the pear-shaped and rosette-shaped flower, and the radiating sun (as in certain other laces the cone-like ornament), are all variations upon well-known Persian decorative designs.⁶ It is remarkable that in Italy during the Renaissance period, at a time when the characteristic scroll forms and acanthus foliations were dominant both in architecture and decorative art, the textiles, also influenced by foreign imported stuffs, have the character of Sicilian, Persian, or Indian ornament.⁷

⁶ The rosette, the palmette, the sun with its disc, the moon, the pine-cone, the pomegranate intermixed with clearly defined and not much entwined geometrical patterns, were the principal means of ornamentation among the Persians.

⁷ The finest silk velvets produced from the looms of Florence show a distinct Persian influence in the bold artichoke and pomegranate patterns of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

⁵ Plate VI, page 23.

(To be continued.)



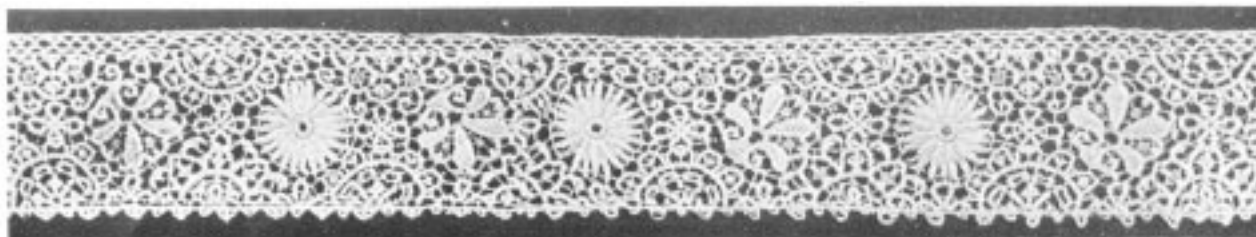
NO. 22. FLAT VENETIAN NEEDLEPOINT—THE STORY OF JUDITH—DETAIL



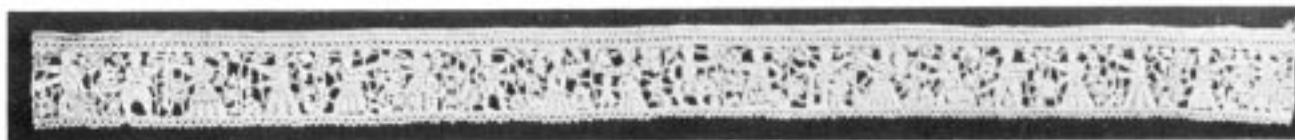
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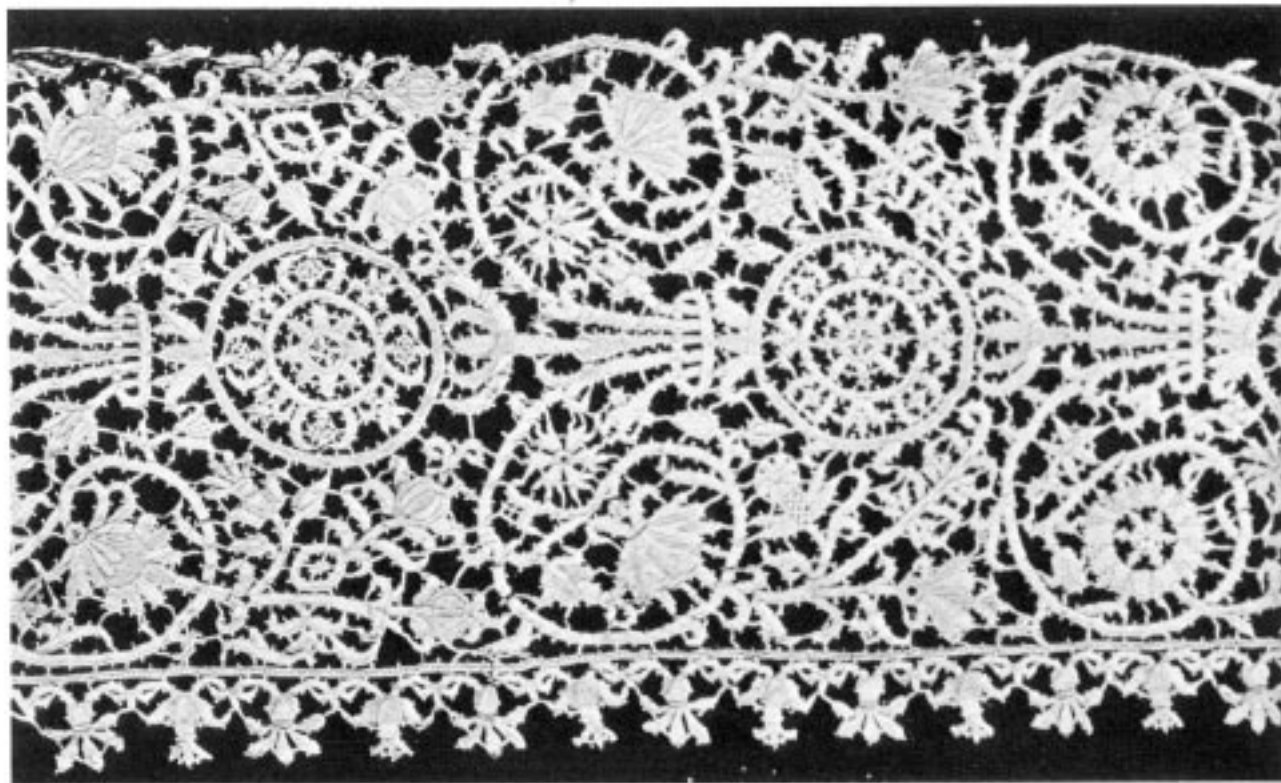
NO. 22. FLAT VENETIAN NEEDLEPOINT—THE STORY OF JUDITH



NO. 25. FLAT VENETIAN NEEDLEPOINT



NO. 28. FLAT VENETIAN NEEDLEPOINT



NO. 29. FLAT VENETIAN NEEDLEPOINT