

## THE LACE COLLECTION OF MR. ARTHUR BLACKBORNE

BY M. JOURDAIN

### PART III—ROSE POINT<sup>1</sup>

**T**HE term *punto tagliato a foliami* was given to scroll and flowery patterns of the middle of the sixteenth century wrought in embroidered and cut linen. Towards the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, the type of patterns known as *punti tagliati a foliami* were also worked in needlepoint laces, and became classed as rose, or *raised*, points. Rose point differs from later *punto in aria* in three important details: in the conventional character of its design, its relief, and in the elaboration of its brides. A great deal of later *punto in aria* is tentative in design; flowers, birds, human and animal forms, are frequently to be met with in the pattern-books, while in rose point there is no change from a purely conventional treatment of scroll forms, and human<sup>2</sup> figures are rarely, almost never, treated.

In some specimens of later *punto in aria* the pattern has a slightly raised edge; in rose point this edge is present, and high relief is also developed. This 'relief' is formed by laying down a pad of coarse threads, varying the quantity according to the height required, and covering the pad or layer by close button-hole stitches. This solid raised rib is often fringed, or *picoté*; and free or flying loops ornamented with picots are used to lighten certain portions of the flowers.

No open fillings or *à jours* are introduced into the *toile*, which is of an even button-hole stitch, varied by pin-holes arranged in lines (to vein the ornament),

<sup>1</sup> For Parts I and II, see THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE, Nos. XVIII and XIX, September and October 1904.

<sup>2</sup> In a specimen belonging to the Falier family, the Doge's horn and double F's are represented, and in a 'pale' of rose point in the Victoria and Albert Museum two angels are displayed holding up a chalice, above which is the sacred monogram, IHS, in rays of glory.

or in simple chequer or diaper patterns, which break and vary the surface, but are entirely subordinate to the general 'value.'

The design is connected by an irregular groundwork of brides. Some pieces, even in a public collection such as the Victoria and Albert Museum, are pieced from imperfect specimens which have lost their brides, which are more liable to be destroyed than the solid work. In such cases the scroll design, whose details were originally separated by open spaces occupied by the bride ground, is wrenched and bent from its natural to a debased, flattened, or angular curvature, in order that certain portions of the design may touch one another, thus supplying the lack of brides. Such imperfect and 'secondary gems' can be recognized by the fact that some details are sure to overlap and encroach upon one another, and the flow and continuity of the scroll is lost.

The brides, plain and unornamented in some of the early and heavy *points de Venise*, become highly decorative in the more attenuated designs of the lighter rose points, in which intricate detached and balanced short scrolls and leafy and other fantastic ornament take the place of the flowing scroll, and are ornamented not only with picots but with circles and semi-circles *picoté*, star devices, and S-shaped forms. In other specimens the brides form a mesh ground, sometimes square, sometimes hexagonal, but always *picoté*—the original of the so-called Argentan mesh. The hexagonal mesh is not *regular* in Venetian laces, but is more effective with its rich picots and slight irregularity than the plain and regular brides of Argentan.

Another variety of rose point is coral point, a small irregular pattern supposed to have been copied from a branch of coral.

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31 (15 by 6½ inches).—One of the most interesting specimens of rose point in this collection is the pair of cravat ends formerly belonging to Louis XIV.<sup>3</sup> In this the design is composed of a central canopy formed of two floreated scrolls, surmounted by a fleur-de-lys between two birds. Beneath the extremities of the two scrolls is the monogram of Louis XIV, two interaced L's, resting upon ornamental bases joined by the royal crown. Below each base is the heart—another royal emblem—and on either side of the heart a peacock. To the right and left of this central *motif* is a peacock standing on a base supported by scrolls, and above it is a decorated canopy. At the upper corners is a tropical bird with flowing tail, and at the lower corner the S-shaped *motif*—in reality a detached and debased scroll so frequent in this type of lace—is to be noted. The ground is a hexagonal irregular mesh, each side of which is twice *picoté*; the *toilé* is varied by diamond diaper patterns of pin-holes. The relief is remarkable for its even and close texture, and has the effect of polished bone. This is the type of lace which French authorities describe as among the rare and early *points de France*. Many or most of the rose point laces which appear in French portraits after the date 1665 are undoubtedly *points de France*, though in design they are entirely derived from Venice, and cannot be distinguished from the similar laces depicted in portraits before the date of the establishment of the royal fabrics. Other specimens show the influence of a style of balanced and symmetrical composition with fantastic shapes in which the French designer Bérain excelled, and which is reflected in the textiles and metal of the reign of Louis XIV. In Venetian laces of this period, owing to French influence and costume, design is more frequently vertical, and repeated upon either side of an imaginary central line. The canopies with scroll

<sup>3</sup> Plate VII, page 127.

devices on either side of them are peculiarly in the style of Louis XIV ornament; this regularity and balance reflected the taste of the King. As Madame de Maintenon says in one of her letters, Louis XIV was so fond of symmetry in his architecture that he would have you 'perish in his symmetry,' for he caused his doors and windows to be constructed in pairs opposite to one another, 'which gave everybody who lived in his palaces their death of cold by draughts.'

32 (15 by 6½ inches).—The design of No. 32 consists of a large central *motif* with two smaller medallions on either side enclosing the royal monogram.<sup>4</sup> At either end is a vertical design of a vase, surmounted by a peacock and leafy ornaments. To the right and left of the central *motif* are grotesque figures on either side of a two-tiered vase upon which rests a tropical bird. These two specimens are interesting both from their *provenance* and the beauty of their design. The brides forming an irregular hexagonal mesh are twice *picoté*, and certain portions of the raised work are edged with a fringe; the perfect and original edge should also be noticed. The 'hanging' pattern of this and the succeeding pieces is, it will be seen, more appropriate to the 'hang' of a full cravat than the earlier 'rolling scroll' horizontal designs, which require to lie flat.

33, 34.—Two collars, showing the design of light, detached, and slender scrolls, graceful but intricate, which superseded the simpler and bolder designs.<sup>5</sup> The arrangement of these forms in balanced or vertical groups is to be noticed, with the introduction of the vase-*motif* in both pieces, and the S-shaped devices, which became so marked a feature in these points under Louis XIV. The vase-*motif*, which had fallen into disuse in textiles, was revived by the French artists of the reign of Louis XIV, who employed it in a series of

<sup>4</sup> Plate VII, page 127. <sup>5</sup> Plate VII, page 127; Plate VIII, page 129.

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figured Lyons damasks; and the minute vase-*motifs* of lace no doubt reflect its revived popularity in textiles. The relief in both pieces is slight. In No. 34 the decoration of tiers of free loops *picoté* is very rich and beautiful. The mesh in both specimens is irregular, and *picoté* twice upon each side of the bride.

35 (20 inches from point to point).—A pointed collar and a pair of pointed cuffs, of similar character but much finer in quality.<sup>6</sup> The brides meet, three in one point, and are ornamented at the point of intersection with semi-circles, rosettes, and S-shaped devices. The relief is low, and consists of rings or circles powdered upon the design, some of which are fringed with picots. In some examples of *Venise à réseau* minute and almost flat circles of button-hole stitches are used upon certain fillings, the last survival of the relief of rose point.

36 (16 by 2 inches).—Lace lappet with very fine edge.<sup>6</sup> The vertical design consists of a vase with flowers above which is a peacock with a finely ornamented tail of raised work. In French laces naturalistic imitations of flowers, vases, animals, and birds, and even in some pieces of flags, cannon, and other military trophies, are freely used, while in Venetian lace, whether rose point or *à réseau*, the conventional treatment is predominant. In textiles also, of the seventeenth century, the expression of plant forms pervades French work in a more lively, vivacious, and distinct manner than in Italian patterns of the same period. It would seem that the constant reference to the plants in the 'Jardin du Roi,' used from early times by embroiderers and designers as much as by scientists was one of the incentives for the realism so typical of the French school of patterns. Italian realism in textiles and in lace (in later *à réseau*) appears to be only a reflection of that of French designs, an adoption of a

foreign fashion in vogue. The mesh, finer than No. 34, is a close hexagon *picoté*. The earlier *points de France*, according to Madame Despierres, were exactly similar to Venetian laces in their mesh, an *irregular* hexagon, made 'at sight,' and *picoté*. Some specimens in the Victoria and Albert Museum of early Alençon show the large hexagonal mesh with picots.

37.—A half-lappet (13½ by 3½ inches) of which the design consists of scrolls springing from a central ornament. In the centre, under a small canopy similar to the portico, shell, curtain, or canopy which forms part of Bérain's compositions, is the double L of Louis XIV.

38 (53 by 3½ inches).—Fine rose point of which the principal *motif* is an upright basket with a foot; the second *motif* is a two-handled vase on either side of which are triangular forms which throw out scrolls.<sup>7</sup> (From the Morrison collection.)

39 (18 by 4½ inches in greatest depth).—A unique specimen of rose point, formerly the property of the late Lady Sherborne, forming two ends of a cravat.<sup>7</sup> The raised part is ornamented over and over again by peculiarly fine work, and the flowers are varied by the finest pin-hole patterning. In one flower alone there are seven variations of these patterns. The brides call for especial notice. These are:—(1) Single brides ornamented with two or more picots. (2) Double brides joined at the centre and ornamented at the sides by a circle four times *picoté*; small picots also ornament the brides between this circle and the extremities. (3) Three double brides meeting in a small triangle each side of which is ornamented with a circle with five picots. (4) Three brides meeting in a point in the centre. Each is ornamented in a different manner. The shortest bride is ornamented on each side by two picots, and by two semi-circles joining the two other brides and ornamented by six picots.

<sup>6</sup> Plate VIII, page 129.

<sup>7</sup> Plate IX, page 131.

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The second bride is decorated at one end by a similar semi-circle *picoté* eight times, which joins the semi-circle previously described, thus forming an S-shaped *motif*. Upon the opposite side is a small semi-circle ornamented with three picots, forming the head of the S. The third side, at the point of intersection, is ornamented with a segment, six times *picoté*, which forms the tail of the S. The foot of this bride is also ornamented with a small circle *picoté*. (5) A straight double bride ornamented at either end by two picots on either side, and in the centre by two semi-circles joined, and connected by another semi-circle forming a trefoil. Each semi-circle is ornamented by three picots. (6) A double bride ornamented on either side by two picots, in the centre by two semi-circles, each four times *picoté*. (7) Two single brides and one double bride meeting in a point, the single brides ornamented on one side by a semi-circle *picoté* four times; the double bride ornamented in the centre with a circle decorated with five picots. At the point of intersection of the three brides they are joined together by three semi-circles ornamented by five picots, forming a rosette. (8) Three curved brides meeting in a point, each bride being ornamented by a scroll-shaped ornament which crosses it, and enriched with thirteen picots. All these varieties of brides are to be found in a small portion of the original three inches square, and a closer study of the remaining portion would show an infinite variety of these ornamental devices. This is probably the most highly elaborated specimen of this type of rose point in existence.

40 (12 by 2 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches).—A curious specimen of rose point—an exception to the rule that rose point never attempted the introduction of human and animal forms.<sup>8</sup> This piece represents mythological personages in 'cartouches' outlined upon the *toile* by small pin-holes. The background is shaded

<sup>8</sup> Plate IX, page 131.

in open stitch in all but the central group. Beginning at the left of the collar the first group is Leda and the Swan, the next Europa carried off by the Bull, with a woman looking on from the extreme left of the very irregular compartment. The centre shows a costumed lady surprising a warrior (in Roman armour) asleep. The next compartment shows a nude figure and Cupid with his bow, while in the last a second rendering of Leda and the Swan appears. (From the Cavendish Bentinck collection.)

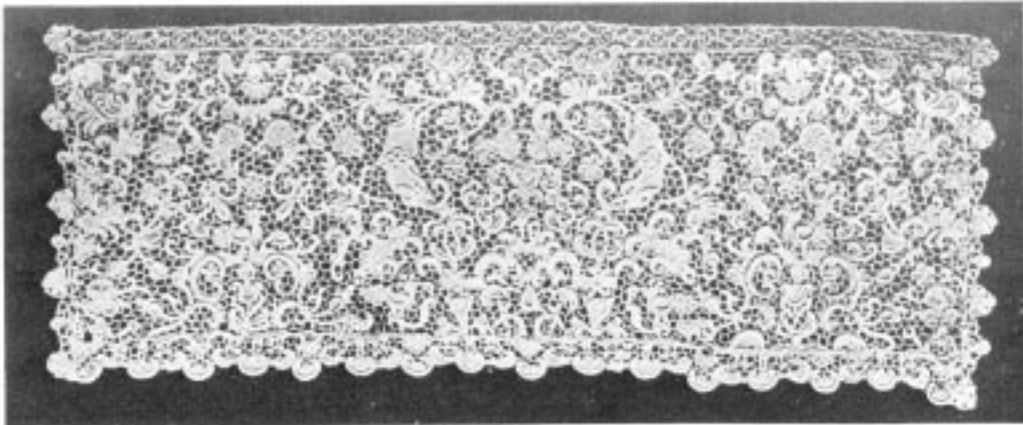
41.—16 by 10 inches of *point de Venise*, the outline of the pattern of which is surrounded by open work. The pattern consists of a system of scrolls and curves, with the emblem of Louis XIV, the *flamme d'amour*—two hearts joined together, with a flame arising from them. Above the hearts is the royal crown. The picots on the brides are to be noticed. The peculiarity of this piece is the semi-circles of open-work rings.

42.—Border of heavy rose point of free and elaborate design.<sup>9</sup> The relief is noticeably high; the flower rich and much indented.

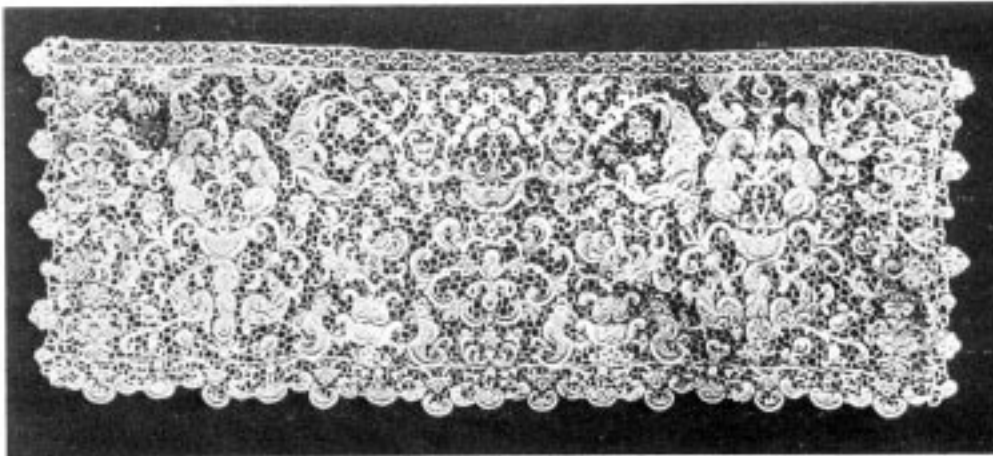
43.—A pair of lappets and a triangular piece. The design consists of groups of leaves and flowers under canopies. The groundwork of brides is *picoté*, and also the outline of the edge, which is unusual. This specimen shows the debt of French to Venetian laces; the pine-apple ornament, the *motifs* of flowers under canopies, so often found in Alençon, are here shown in Venetian lace, and the ground is exactly similar to the so-called Argentan ground.

44.—A specimen in this collection shows well-known Alençon fillings in Venetian lace, among others the *réseau rosacé*, a small circle *picoté* suspended in a hexagon. In Alençon the *réseau rosacé* generally consists of a small solid hexagon connected with the surrounding outer hexagon by means of six small brides. Lace of this particular ground

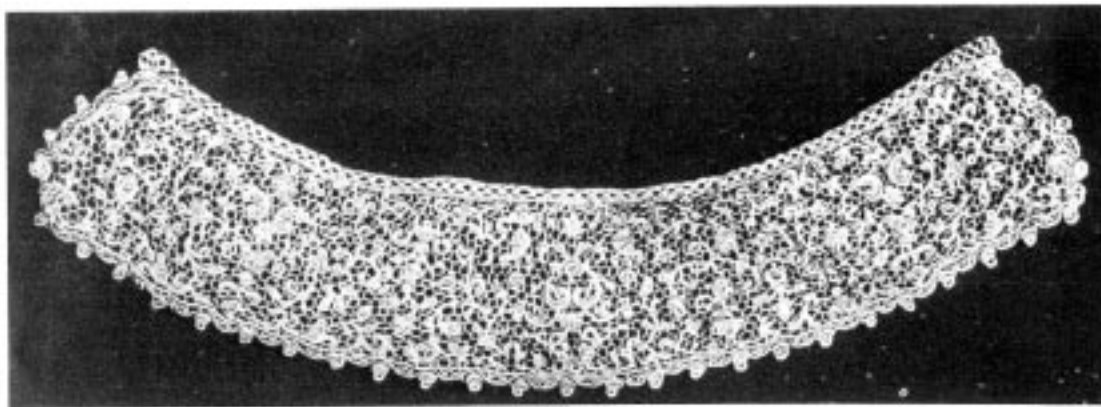
<sup>9</sup> Plate X, page 133.



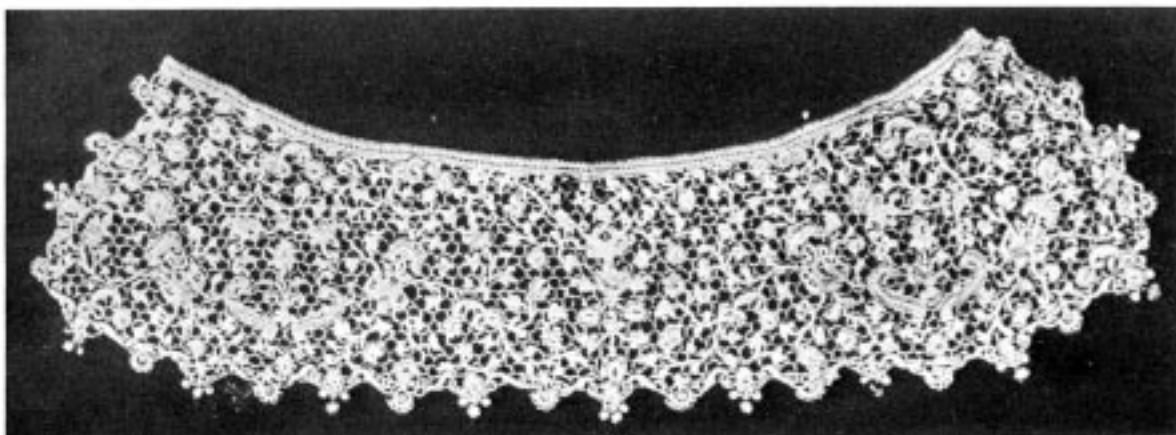
NO. 31. CRAVAT END OF POINT DE FRANCE, FORMERLY THE PROPERTY OF LOUIS XIV



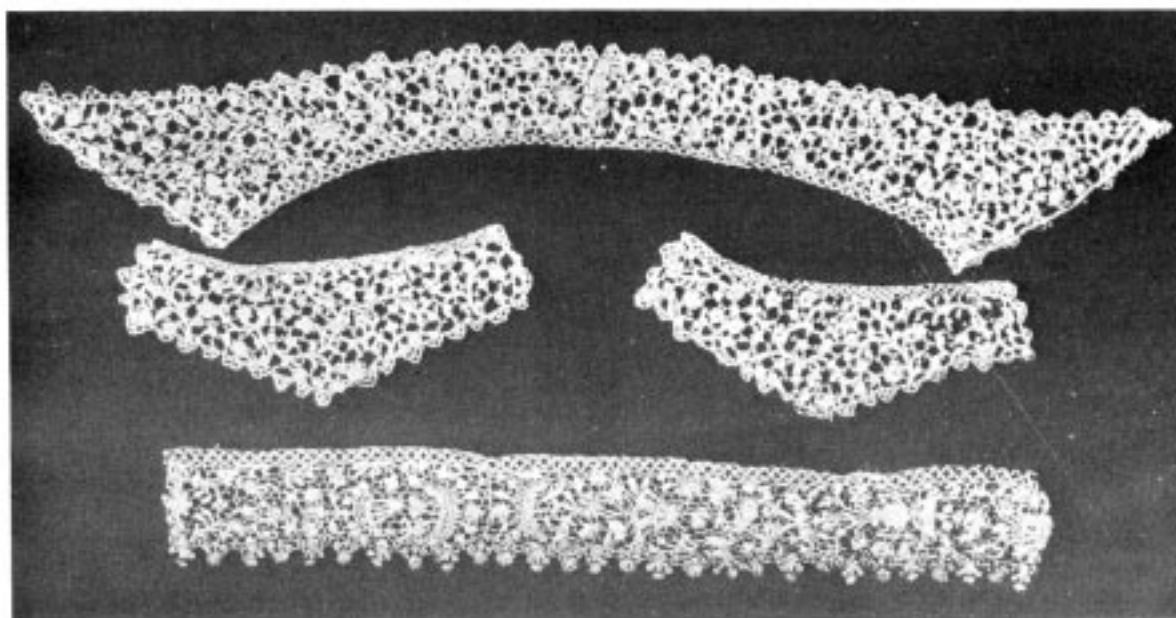
NO. 32. CRAVAT END OF POINT DE FRANCE, FORMERLY THE PROPERTY OF LOUIS XIV



NO. 33. COLLAR OF ROSE POINT

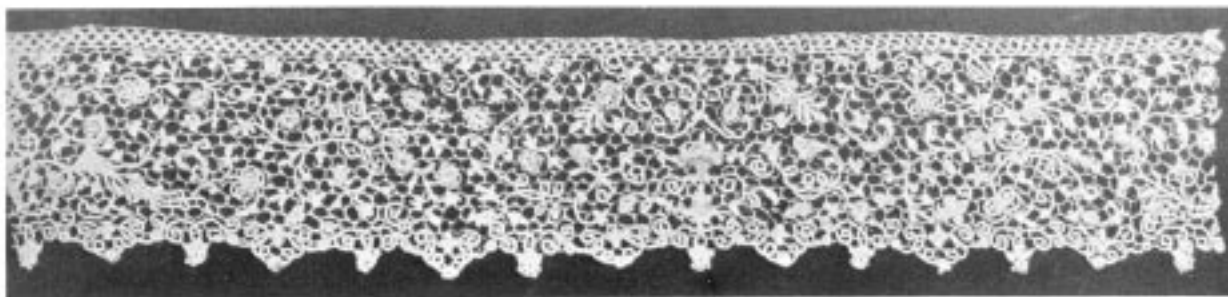


NO. 34. COLLAR OF ROSE POINT

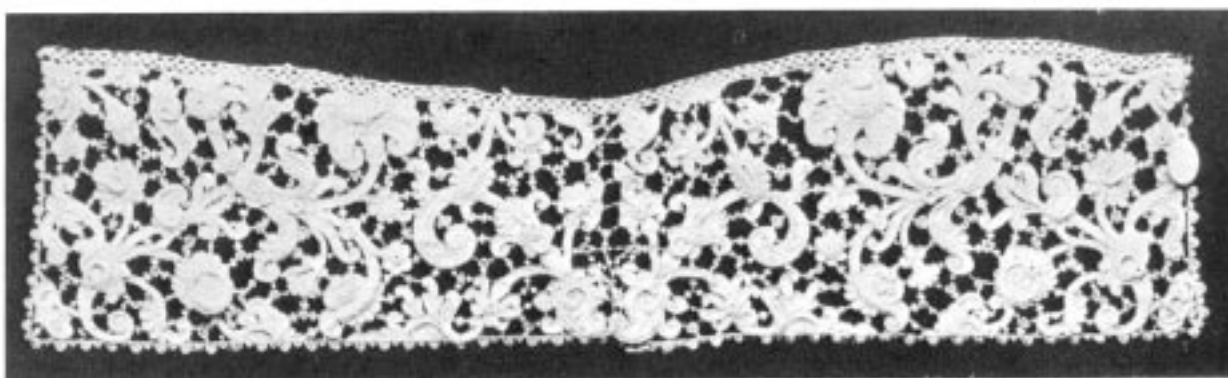


NO. 35. POINTED COLLAR AND CUFFS

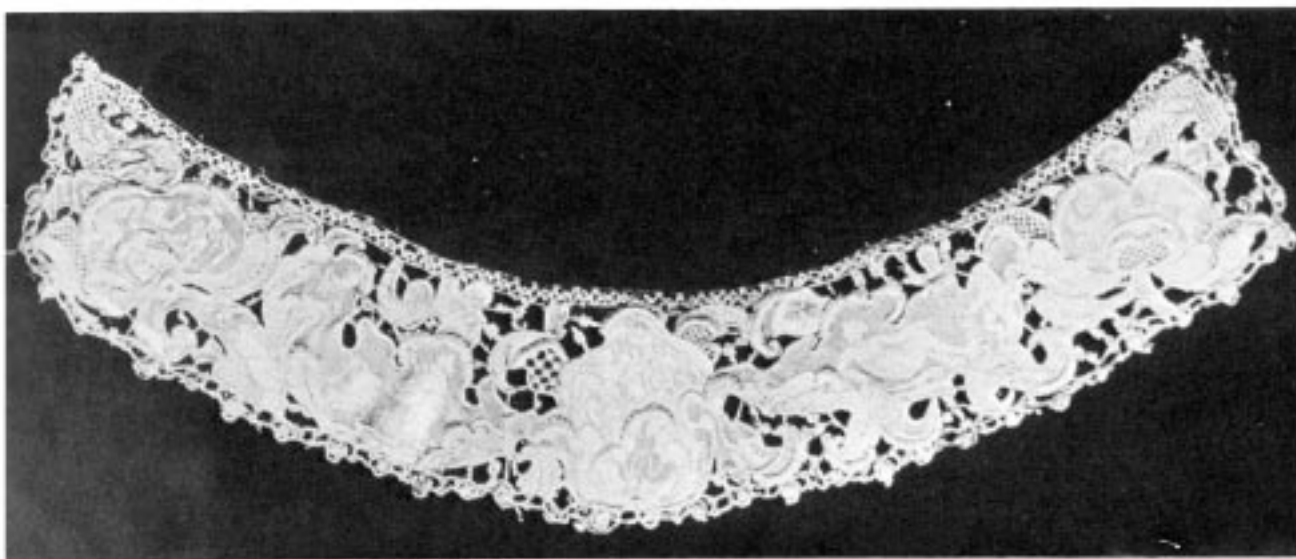
NO. 36. LACE LAPPET



NO. 38. ROSE POINT

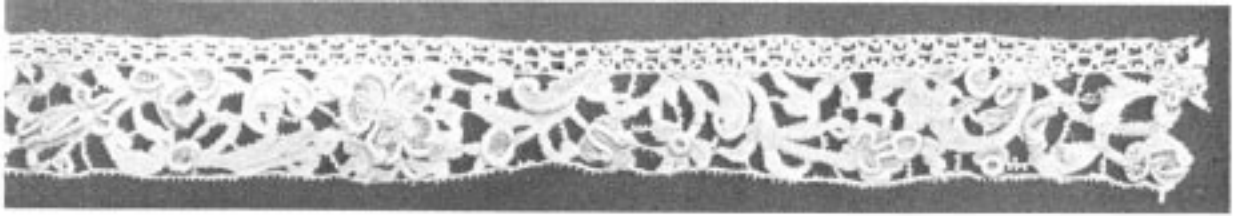


NO. 39. ROSE POINT

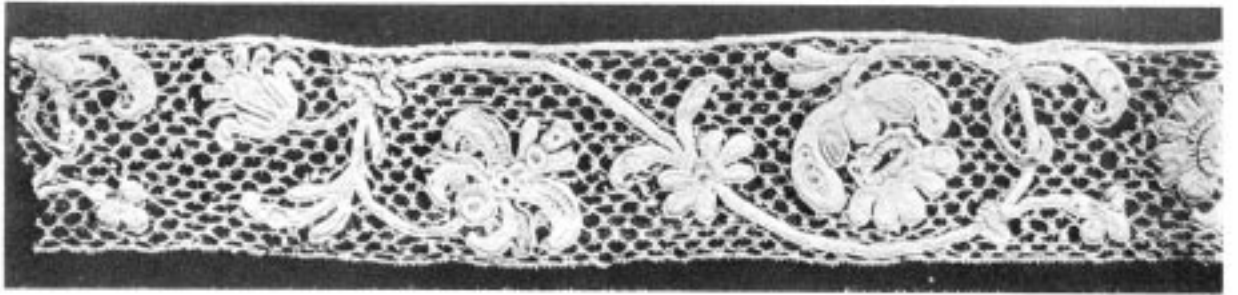


NO. 40. ROSE POINT





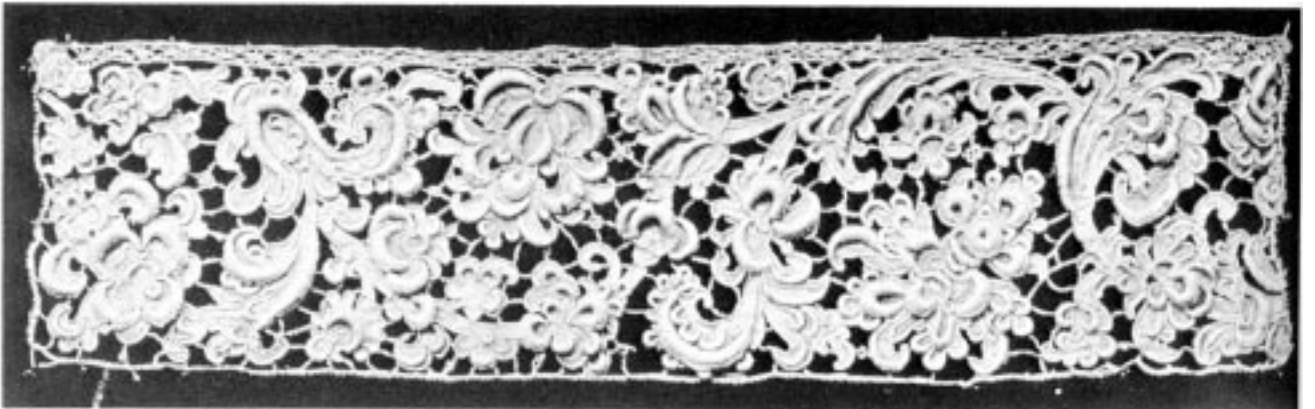
NO. 45. ROSE POINT



NO. 46. ROSE POINT WITH TRELIS GROUND



NO. 47. BURANO LACE



NO. 42. ROSE POINT



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has been given the name of Argentella, but both Venetian and Alençon laces use this ground either in open-work fillings or in portions of the ground. The French modes, when not derived from Venetian laces, were borrowed from the Flemish. In the 'Dictionnaire du Citoyen' of 1761 a writer finds fault with the 'modes' of Alençon, and says that much point is sent from France to Brussels to have the modes added there, giving it a borrowed beauty; but connoisseurs, he adds, easily detect the difference.

No. 45 is a cut specimen with curious ring ornament.<sup>10</sup>

46.—A rolling scroll, in low relief, with ring ornament, trellis ground, *picoté*.<sup>10</sup>

47.—Specimens of old Burano lace, which is a coarser outcome of the *point de Venise à réseau*.<sup>10</sup> In a document of the seventeenth century, quoted by Marini, it is said that 'these laces, styled *punti in aria*, or *de Burano*, because the greater part of them were made in the country so called, are considered by Lannoni as more noble and of greater whiteness, and for excellency of

design and perfect workmanship equal to those of Flanders, and in solidity superior.' The designs of old Burano, like those of *Venise à réseau*, are distinguished by a conventional treatment of the flowers and ornament, but the old Burano designs are somewhat *thinner*, and there is more *réseau* in proportion to the design than in *Venise à réseau*, and in some specimens there are *semés* upon the ground, as in French laces of the Louis XVI period, combined with a somewhat insignificant design. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, decadence had set in in the Venetian lace industry. Laces of Flanders, France, and England were sold in the shops. About 1750 Benedetto Ranieri and Pietro Gabrieli proposed to revive the industry and imitate the laces of Flanders and France, and in especial the then fashionable blonde. Their enterprise was successful; and it is to the foreign models then introduced, and to the impulse of competition with France, that is to be attributed the break in the tradition of Venetian design and the adoption of ribbon-like *motifs*, more open forms, broken lines of ornament, and finally *naturalistic* floral devices.

<sup>10</sup> Plate X, p. 133.

(To be concluded.)