

# THE LACE COLLECTION OF MR. ARTHUR BLACKBORNE

BY M. JOURDAIN

## PART IV (*conclusion*)—MILANESE LACES<sup>1</sup>

**I**N the fifteenth century, when the North was still immersed in feudalism, in Milan alone, the foremost city of northern Italy, were to be found riches and the ease of life. Passements of gold, silver, and silk were made at an early date in Milan, as is proved by the often-quoted instrument of partition between the sisters Angela and Ippolita Sforza Visconti (1493).<sup>2</sup> 'Trina' is mentioned there under its old form 'tarnete'; but trina, like our word lace and the French passement, was used in a general sense for braid or passement long before the advent of lace proper. Florio, in his dictionary, gives *Trine*, cuts, snips, pincke work on garments, and *Trinci*, gardings, fringings, lacings, etc. In the Dictionary of Florio and Torriano (London, 1659) we have still given 'Trina, twist lace of gold and silver, as *Trena*. *Trena* = a three-fold cord or rope. *Trinci*, cuts, jags, snips, pinks, gardings, and idle ornaments about gay garments.' It will be noticed that the *tarnete* of the Sforza inventory is of metal and silk. The *radexelo*<sup>3</sup> which Mrs. Palliser understood as reticella, I am inclined to believe refers, not to reticella (cutwork), but to some form of embroidery upon net, a simple drawn-thread work upon linen. The term reticella does not occur in the pattern books until Vecellio (1591).

The Milanese appear to have been skilled

<sup>1</sup> For Parts I, II, and III, see THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE, Vol. V, p. 557; Vol. VI, pp. 18 and 123 (September, October and November, 1904).

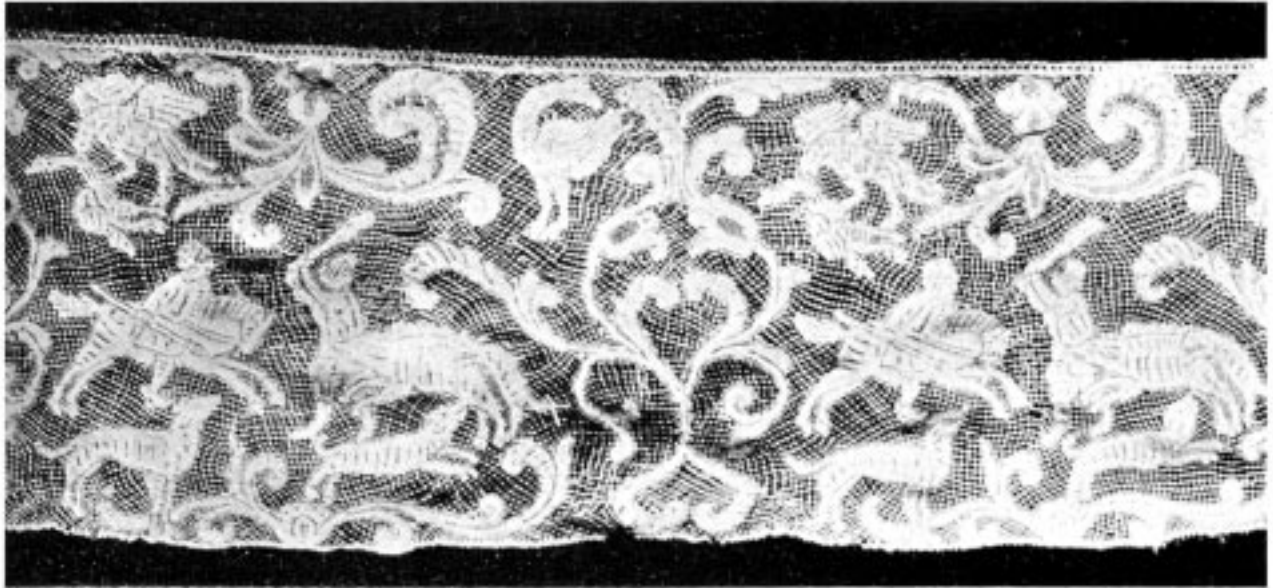
<sup>2</sup> 'Peza una di *tarnete* (trina) d'argento facte a stelle. *Tarneta* una d'oro et seda negra facta da ossi. Lenzolo uno de tele, quatro lavorato a *radexelo*.'

<sup>3</sup> The spelling varies. We have:—  
'Lenzolo uno de tele quatro lavorato a *radexelo*.  
Lenzolo uno lavorato cum le *radice* large.  
Peze quatro de *radicela* per uno moscheto.  
*Radixela* una larga per un lenzolo.  
Peze sei di *raxela* nova picinine.  
Item uno lenzuolo lavorato cum le *radicelle*.'

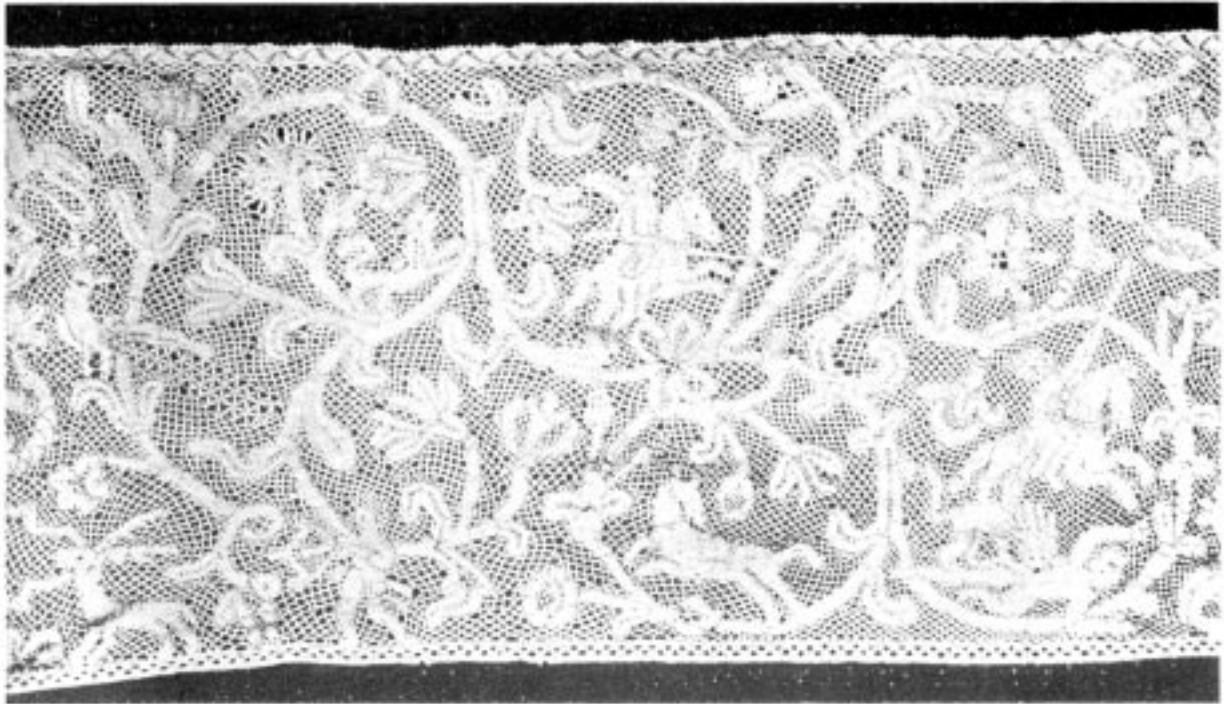
with the needle, for about 1584 there was an *università dei ricamatori* at Milan, and Brantôme, in his 'Dames Galantes,' declares the embroiderers of the city 'ont sceu bien fair pardessus les autres.'

After first making passements Milan imitated upon the pillow the scroll design of Venetian needle points. The Milanese pillow work is, however, entirely flat, the *toilé* a close, even cambric-like braid, varied by pinholes. The earlier pieces are guipure of exceedingly bold rolling scroll design, held together by simple brides. In the specimens illustrated, various forms of the *réseau* ground are used. The earliest portrait in which mesh grounds appear is that of Madame Verbiest, by Gonzales Coques (1664), where a straight-edged lace of Milanese type is shown. The *toilé* is first made by itself, and the *réseau* ground is worked round it afterwards, sloping in all directions so as to fill the spaces, while in Valenciennes and Mechlin pattern and *réseau* are worked all in one piece together. In the specimens in this collection the *réseau* ground varies; sometimes it has four plaited sides like Valenciennes, and has a somewhat round appearance, in others the threads are merely twisted. The design in the majority of cases consists of a narrow braid enclosing here and there open spaces, or simple fillings such as are found in Honiton or Maltese. Animals, eagles, hares, boars, and hounds are frequently introduced, and though sometimes rough and archaic in drawing are always vigorously treated. The peculiar spirit of these designs can be traced to the characteristics of the Lombard, who, according to Ruskin, covered every church he built with the expression of his fierce energy, and scenes of hunting and war.

Boar-hunting was a favourite amusement of Bernabo Visconti of Milan, who in the

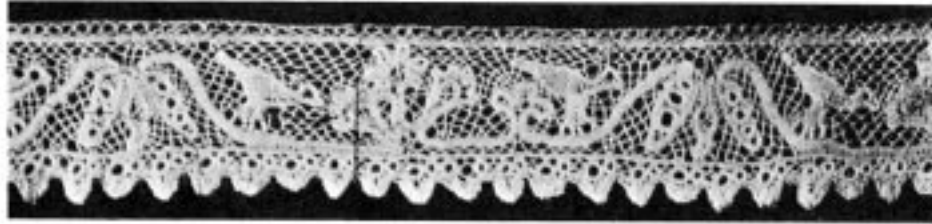


NO. 48



NO. 49. 10 INCHES DEEP

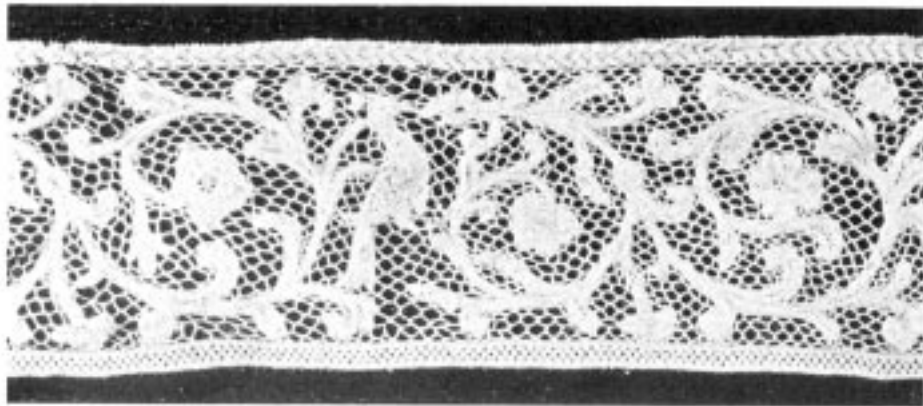
LACE IN THE COLLECTION OF  
MR. ARTHUR BLACKBORNE.  
PLATE XI, MILANESE LACE



NO. 51. 4 INCHES DEEP



NO. 50. 10 INCHES DEEP



NO. 52. 12 INCHES DEEP

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fourteenth century succeeded to his brother Galeazzo's inheritance, and soon showed himself a tyrant of the worst kind, submitting state criminals to strange and devilish tortures, and keeping a pack of 5,000 boar-hounds, which he distributed on his subjects, punishing them alike (says Corio) whether those hounds were too fat or too thin, while if they died the poor peasant lost his all.

This long-standing connexion with sport is reflected in Milanese lace. In No. 48 the design consists of one *motif*, which is repeated—a wild boar attacking a man who is defending himself with an uplifted club; a hound is hanging on the boar's hind-quarters, while a second dog is advancing to the assistance of the first; and a mounted man is riding with a boar-spear levelled. Above are a group of birds; a hawk (?) attacking a long-necked bird. The groups are enclosed in light scrolls; the various forms are defined by lines of pinholes; the *réseau*, an irregular square mesh, is coarse, and slopes in various directions.<sup>4</sup>

49 (21 by 10 inches).—The design of this piece consists of bold scrolls enclosing various scenes. The right-hand scroll shows a lion, somewhat conventionally drawn, attacking a fallen man, and attacked in turn by a mounted man with a spear. To the left is a riderless horse galloping away, and to the extreme left a man with a cross-bow aiming at a stag. Above, a peacock with a very decorative tail, and a horseman with a spear charging a second stag.<sup>4</sup>

50 (37 by 10 inches).—A design of bold floral scrolls, enclosing various animals and birds—the stag, leopard, dog, peacock, and various birds. The body of the stag is varied by diamond-shaped open-work.<sup>5</sup>

51 (3½ yards by 4 inches).—A design of various birds feeding on leaves. The ground, which is unusual, is formed by four threads twisted to produce an irregular square mesh. The design is crude and ill-contrived.<sup>5</sup>

52 (3 yards by 12 inches).—A long rolling scroll of fruit and flowers with tropical birds of various kinds, among others a sufficiently accurate representation of the hoopoe.<sup>6</sup>

53 (47 by 3 inches).—The design of this consists of a double-crowned eagle—the arms of the Italian nobleman for whom it was made—and various birds and animals—a cock with uplifted foot, a dog, a squirrel, an ape, a turkey-cock, a raven, and an eagle—separated by single flowers.<sup>7</sup> Charles V conceded as a great distinction marking special favour the privilege of bearing the imperial arms to several Italian as well as Spanish families, who used this instead of their own coat.

54 (42 by 7 inches).—A very fine specimen of *point de Milan*, the design of which is composed of bold flowing scrolls with leaves and fruit and tropical birds. The open-work and variety of stitches in the leaves is to be noted, and a number of pin-holes in the *toilé* lighten the effect of the lace; the *réseau* is peculiarly fine.<sup>7</sup>

55 (2 yards by 4 inches).—Guipure of bold flowing design enclosing birds and animals feeding on the fruits in the centre. The work in the leaves is varied by small open chequer-patterns.

56 (2 yards 22 inches by 4½ inches).—The design of this is curious. Beginning from the left, the first *motif* is the sun and moon, separated by a tree, a bird, and a butterfly. The second has a three-tiered fountain surmounted by a winged Cupid, from which two streams of water fall into the basin, from which a peacock and a stag are drinking. Above are two birds and two insects alighting upon flowers. The third *motif* shows inverted scrolls, in the centre of which a mermaid is shown rising out of the fountain or sea, symbolized by waving lines. Overhead are two flying birds. The fourth *motif* has a heart-shaped shield enclosing the initials

<sup>4</sup> Plate XI, page 385.

<sup>5</sup> Plate XII, page 388.

<sup>6</sup> Plate XII, page 388.

<sup>7</sup> Plate XIII, page 391.

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E U I M C surmounted by an eagle with outspread wings (a family badge). The fifth *motif* is a double-headed eagle surmounted by a crown, with a *fleur-de-lys* and the initials E U S T M C worked in the base. The sixth and last *motif* represents the arms of the family, a round shield enclosing initials, held by two costumed supporters. Of similar *provenance* is a piece of good arabesque design (21 by 3½ inches), with a heart-shaped shield with letters E U I M C, above which is an eagle with outspread wings.

57 (23 by 3¾ inches).—Fine Italian braid lace of bold design. The peculiarity of this specimen is the fineness of the braid and the work in the inside of the flowers.<sup>8</sup>

58 (1 yard 14 inches by 4½ inches).—A pair of sleeves, joined in the centre, of fine *point de Milan*. The design is composed of three curved leaf forms with open guipure work in the centre. The *réseau* of this specimen and the pillow work of the outlines of the flowers are very fine.

59 (24 by 9½ inches). Italian Church Lace.—The design consists of two winged angels, kneeling, in the act of elevating the Host in a monstrance surrounded by five cherubim. Underneath is the flower of the pink. To left and right are flying angels in the act of adoration. To left and

right of these angels are two angels blowing trumpets, while above them are two smaller angels playing lutes.<sup>8</sup>

60. *Point de Milan* Church Lace (3 yards 31 inches by 15 inches).—The design consists of two panels, in the first of which is the Virgin in ornamental conventionalized dress which develops into scrolling forms. She is crowned with a seven-pointed crown, and from her shoulders rise large scroll ornaments. The figure is surrounded by foliage, among which are fishes, birds, and animals naively drawn. At the foot of the figure are two crested animals and two hares: above, there are two birds building a nest,<sup>9</sup> and a variety of long-tailed crested birds. On either side of this central figure is a Pelican in his Piety: 'the pelicane,<sup>10</sup> whose sons are nursed with bloude, stabbeth deep her breast, self-murtheresse through fondnesse to her broode'—always a favourite ecclesiastical symbol. The second part has for its central *motif* a rayed monstrance standing upon a pedestal or miniature altar, upon which are six curious figures or letters in six compartments. Beneath the pedestal is a cherub; and the pedestal is supported by four angels. To right and left of the monstrance are two angels in adoration, and three cherub-heads surround the upper portion.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Plate XIII, page 391.

<sup>9</sup> Plate XIII, page 391.  
<sup>10</sup> *Bibliotheca Biblica*.

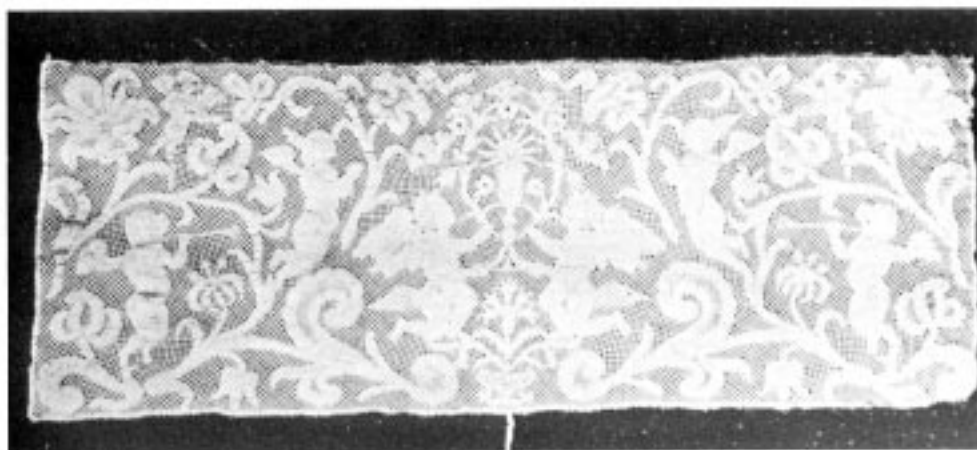
<sup>11</sup> Or drinking from a vase?  
Plate XIV, page 393.



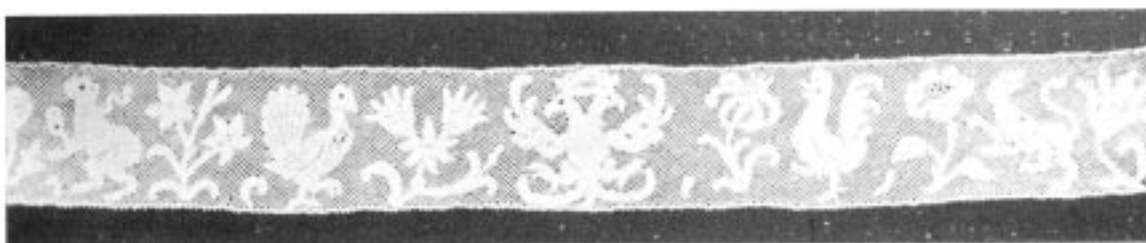
NO. 57. BRAID LACE,  $3\frac{3}{4}$  INCHES DEEP



NO. 54. POINT DE MILAN, 7 INCHES DEEP



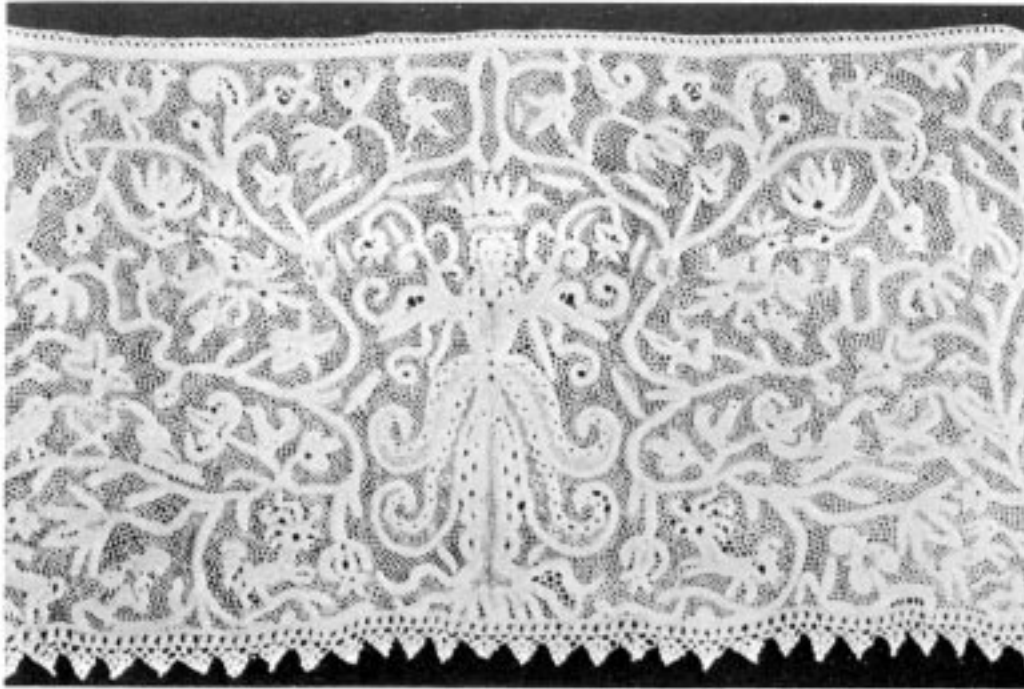
NO. 59. CHURCH LACE,  $9\frac{1}{2}$  INCHES DEEP



NO. 53. 3 INCHES DEEP

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PLATE XIII, MILANESE LACE





NO. 60. POINT DE MILAN CHURCH LACE, 15 INCHES DEEP



NO. 60. SECOND PANEL

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PLATE XIV, MILANESE LACE