



**Point de Venise à Réseau      Old Burano Point      By M. Jourdain**

*Point de Venise à réseau*, a delicate type of Venetian needlepoint, is frequently found in the form of borders with an edge of a shallow scallop, arranged to form part of the design. The design, unlike that of rose point, which rarely varies from its variations on its tropical, non-natural, and highly ornamental flower, shows conventional tulips, pomegranates, and a floral device (palmette) much affected in Persian and Rhodian designs.\* This type of lace is chiefly distinguished by the conventional treatment and arrangement of the ornament, and by the general flat look of the work, by the outlining thicker thread or cordonnet stitched to the edges of the pattern and worked in flatly,† by a minute border to the cordonnet of small meshes which intervenes between it and the réseau, and by the horizontal appearance

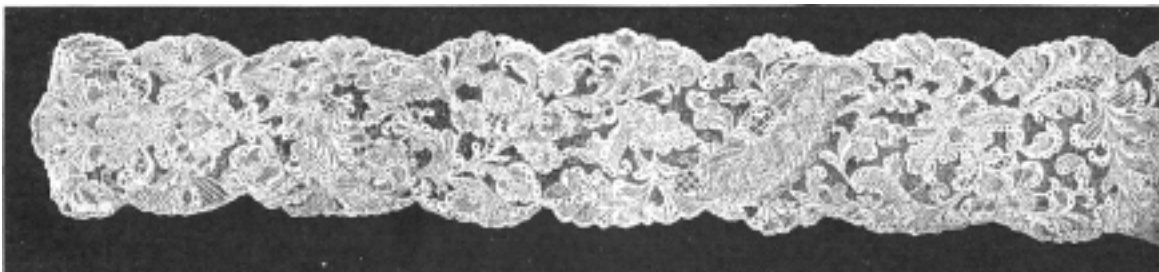
of the réseau, which is of square meshes composed of double-twisted threads throughout, and very fine. Some exceptionally fine examples may be seen in the bequest of the late Mr. Edmond Dresden to the Victoria and Albert Museum. The pomegranate motif, so frequent in heavy rose point, re-appears; but the crest of the fruit is elaborated into a scrolling leaf. A curved pod, such as is met with in Indian designs, is of frequent occurrence.

In other specimens‡ a French influence is apparent in the larger number of open modes, in the ribbon motif crossing the design, the spacing

\* A. S. Cole.

† In some specimens certain details are outlined with a thick thread stitched along the stems, leaves, and flowers. The introduction of the thick thread, to give stronger definition to some of the forms is, however, unusual in this make of lace.

‡ Such as specimen 508—1883, of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The influence of France has been already noticed. At the beginning of the sixteenth century Priuli in the *Diario* writes that it was difficult to find an explanation for the oaths of all classes of society, and for the fact that France had influenced the Venetian costume, although that nation was disliked throughout Italy (*Galluccioli*, 1,341). Sansovino, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, reproaches the Italians for having changed their costume, and appearing now in the French and now in the Spanish habit. The influence of France was very strong in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.



LAPPET OF POINT DE VENISE À RÉSEAU  
VENETIAN: FIRST HALF OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

## Point de Venise à Réseau

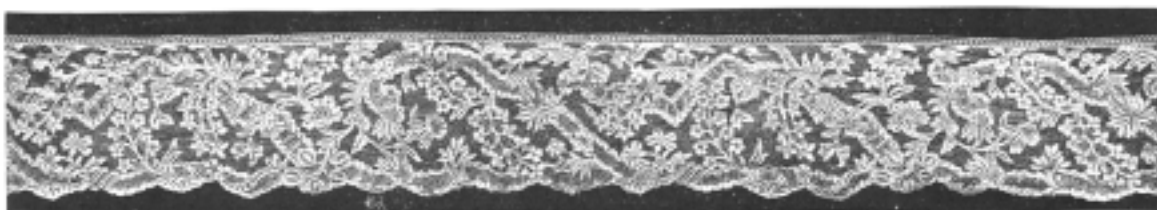
of the ornament, and the cordonnet which is worked around certain flowers, and the more broken outlines of the flowers.

The work of these grounded laces is always flat; but in some fillings minute button-hole stitched rings are added.

From this grounded point certain details of fine Alençon appear to have been borrowed. Brussels could not reach the high standard of Venetian workmanship, being forced to content herself with a frequent use of modes more open than the fine close modes belonging to the Venetian point à réseau, which are in general bar, chevron, trellis, and chequer pin-hole patterns, such as are found in the raised points. Variety of effect is obtained by the use of barring (or honey-comb grounding) inserted amongst the stems and leaves of the sprays; but very open modes,

foliations in Point de Venise à réseau are marked by minute regular open-worked fibres or veinings.\*

In general appearance, according to Mr. Cole, the designs would seem to give a date somewhere about 1650, that is, at the time when the raised points were largely in circulation. Upon the establishment of the Points de France, in 1665, the French were diligent under the tuition of their Venetian workers in their attempts to imitate. Upon this the skill and invention of the Venetians perfected the point à réseau—an attempt to win back the custom the French manufacturers were taking away from them.† Here their labours culminated. As Alençon rose, this type of lace declined, “Hence it is that Point de Venise à réseau, having probably had but a short existence, died out soon; comparatively few specimens of it are to be seen.” There are, however, a very



POINT DE VENISE À RÉSEAU

FIRST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

as a general rule, are used sparingly, like “high lights” upon a picture. The style of Venetian à réseau is less floral and more conventional than in Brussels; and the cordonnet of Brussels straggles.

Alençon differs from grounded Venetian point in design. Whatever France touched became French. Naturalistic imitations of flowers, birds, vases, and other material objects are freely interspersed in the more ornamental portions of Alençon, while in Venetian lace—à réseau or rose point—there is rarely any change from purely conventional treatment. Alençon also differs in workmanship from Venetian point in the raised and continuous outlines to the petals of the flowers, the leaves, and the ornamental forms throughout. Lighter and more open decorative modes are introduced: the *réseau rosacé* is more freely used as a groundwork; the *réseau* of grounded Venetian point is square; that of Alençon is hexagonal and less fine; the horizontal waved lines of the *réseau* are more irregular and marked in Alençon; the

fair number of specimens in perfect preservation—the Victoria and Albert Museum is peculiarly rich in them—and these do not appear to be later than the last years of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the lace industry was already declining. In 1734, French, Flemish, and English laces were sold at cheaper rates in the Venetian lace shops than the local production.‡

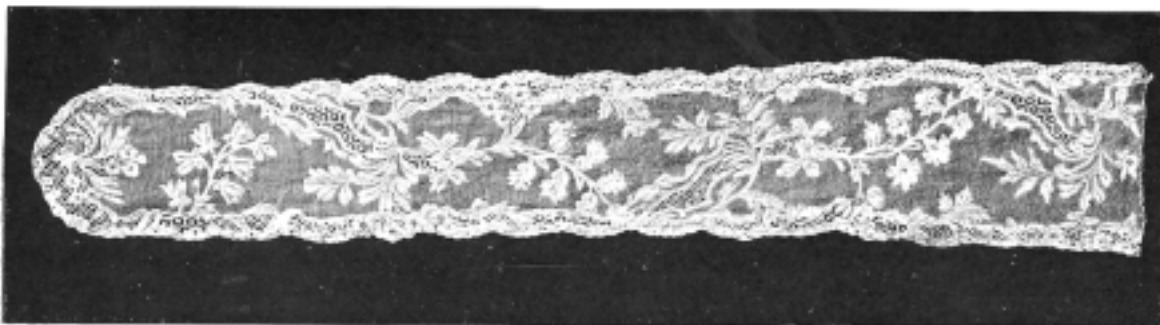
\* Some of the Alençon modes are very close imitations of those in Point de Venise à réseau.

† A. S. Cole.

‡ *Figurarsi lo Stato Veneto tributario degli Stati forestieri nell'industria dei pizzi. E' bello è che verso la metà del xviii. secolo alcune botteghe veneziane vendevano per lo più de' pizzi esteri. Nel 1734 esistevano ancora a Venezia i seguenti spacci de pizzi: al San Carlo, alle due Rose, all Premio, all Bucintor Ducale, [all' Aquila d'oro, alla Madonna degli Angeli, al Cardinal. Non pochi certamente e più che sufficienti se in ognano se fosse lavorato e venduto soltanto della produzione locale. Ma invece, oraque si appagava la taccagneria della gente, col vendere i pizzi di Fiandra, de Francia, d'Inghelterra a miglior mercato dei Veneziani.*

*Svaggi artistici. Melani.*

## The Connoisseur



LAPPET OF POINT DE VENISE À RÉSEAU

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

In 1750, Benedetto Raniari and Pietro Gabriele attempted to "improve" the lace-industry by imitating Flemish and French laces, especially *blonde*. They were exempted from taxation for ten years by the Senate, and their enterprise succeeded from the commercial, if not from the artistic, standpoint, as is proved by their prosperity in 1758.\*

"The old Burano laces are a coarser outcome of the Point de Venise à réseau, and alone of all the Venetian needle laces survived the dark days of the close of the eighteenth century. Marini quotes from a document of the seventeenth century in which, speaking of merletti, it is said that 'these laces, styled "punti in aria," or di 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.'" †

\* "Nel 1758, si racconta, erano addette alla suddetta fabbrica quindici maestre e quattrocotrentetre scolari e in dieci anni vi si produssero 289,000 braccia di pizzi di varia altezza." —*Ibid.*

† Mrs. Palliser.

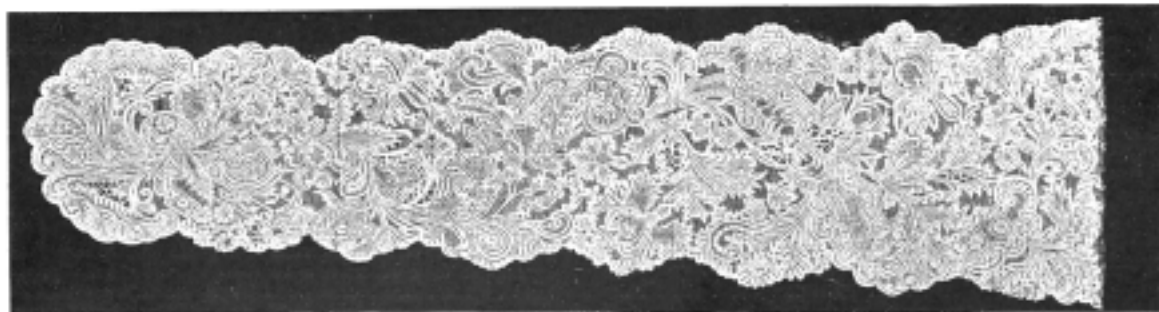
Very little is known of the early history of Burano lace. Peuchet ‡ writes that a great number of fisherfolk in the island of Burano, as well as people in Venice itself and in the convents, were employed in lace-making; but that their profits were small. The thread, he adds, comes from Flanders, as the local flax thread was not so strong when equally fine. In 1793, the *Gazetta Veneta* refers to Burano lace, "del quale si esercitava largo commercio anche nei vecchi tempi." §

The designs of old Burano, like those of Venice à réseau, are distinguished by a conventional treatment of the flowers and ornament; but the designs are somewhat thinner, there is more réseau in proportion to the pattern, and in some modern specimens there are *semés* upon the ground, as in French laces of the Louis XVI. period.

‡ Peuchet writes of Venetian laces: "Elles portent le nom de point ou *punti in aria*."

§ Svaghi Artistici. *Melani*.

"Il Moschini nel suo *Itineraire* mostro che nel 1819 nell'isola de Burano non era scomparsa ancora l'industria dei pizzi." —*Ibid.*



LAPPET OF POINT DE VENISE À RÉSEAU

FIRST HALF OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

## Point de Venise à Réseau

In a description written in 1875 of certain Burano laces in the possession of Sir Henry (then Mr.) Layard, specimens were described as "exactly like Alençon,"\* the only difference perceptible being that "the flowers are matted and thick, and very clumsily put into the ground." In an account of Venetian lace-making, written by Urbani Gheltof, published in Venice and translated into English by Lady Layard, a very detailed description, accompanied by diagrams, is given of the mode of execution of Burano point.

From this it appears that it is usually worked on a pillow, not, however, of course with bobbins, as for pillow lace, the object of the pillow or bolster is merely to raise the work to a suitable height

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\* "Mr. and Mrs. Layard were here consulting on some Burano lace. It looks exactly like old point Alençon, the only difference (perceptible) was that the flowers were matted and thick, and very clumsily put in the ground . . . The great thing wanted in the flowers is clearness, so that you can see through them, and also see each stitch, . . . and the very finest thread must be used. (Mr. Layard) . . . also told us that they had begun by using the wrong thread."

Extract from a letter of Aug. 30th, 1875, *A. Blackborne*, re Burano laces:

"Lady Layard joined with Sir Henry Layard in this enterprise, but it was not successful. Modern Burano laces at first suffered from the quality of the\* thread." One disadvantage long seemed unsurmountable, the coarseness and unevenness of any thread that would then be found in Italy. This difficulty, which had so much to do with the failure of the English lace trade in the seventeenth century, threatened to doom modern Burano lace to an inevitable inferiority. However, thread was chosen by Baron Beckmann, imported from the Belgian thread manufacturers, and much improved the quality of lace produced.

on the lap of the lace-maker, and to diminish the necessity of much handling. On the middle of the upper side of the pillow there rests a small wooden cylinder across which the parchment pattern is stretched, leaving an open space under it for the convenience of the worker; thus the strip of lace is kept smooth and flat. In working the *réseau* ground, a thread is fixed straight across the whole width of the lace as a foundation of each row of meshes, being passed through and fastened to any sprig or part of the pattern which may intervene, and on this thread the looped meshes are worked. The result is the formation of a remarkably square-shaped mesh, and by this and also by the streaky and cloudy appearance of the *réseau* (owing to the bad quality and unevenness of the thread), Burano point may be recognised. The *cordonné* is, like the Brussels needle-point,† of thread stitched round the outline, instead of the Alençon button-hole stitch over horsehair.

In 1866 the industry was extinct. "Venice point," writes Mrs. Palliser, "is now no more; the sole relic of this far-famed trade is the coarse torchon lace of the old lozenge pattern, offered by the peasant women of Palestrina to strangers on their arrivals at hotels." The same fabric is mentioned by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, when she speaks of "peddling women that come on pretext of selling pennyworths of lace."

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† Sometimes the *cordonné* is button-hole stitched.

