

## LACE AT THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM.

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**D**URING the last few years many interesting and valuable specimens of lace have been added to the collection at the South Kensington

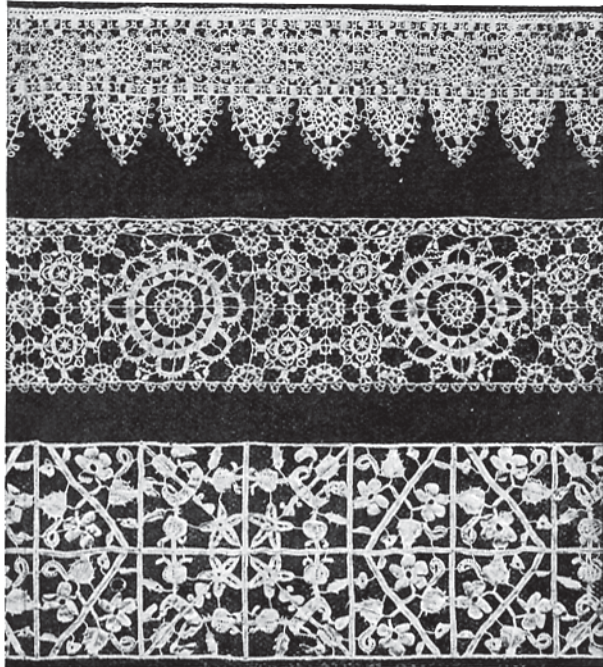


FIG. 1.—VANDYKE BORDER AND TWO BANDS FOR INSERTION LACE.

(The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.)

Museum, as fine a public collection of laces as is to be seen anywhere. Good typical pieces of all the various hand-made ornamental laces—needlepoint and pillow—are included in it; besides specimens of lace-like fabrics, such as embroideries on net, cut-linen, and drawn-thread works. The greater number of them have been purchased, but very many have been given or bequeathed to the Museum. And of these latter, by far the more important are those which were bequeathed in 1891 by the late Mrs. Bolekow.

Whilst needlepoint and pillow laces date from the sixteenth century only, cut-linen and drawn-thread works have an earlier origin. Hand-made needlepoint and pillow laces are formed of threads twisted, plaited, intercrossed, and looped together into ornamental textures; the characteristic feature of which is ornaments of close thread work contrasted with open spaces be-

tween and about them. The lace-maker with her threads follows and reproduces the lines and shapes of patterns drawn on paper or pricked into parchment or card, and so produces her lace. The embroiderer on net, the cut-linen and drawn-thread worker, on the other hand, starts with a piece of net or of linen, and ornaments or enriches it with needlework, producing something which possesses a

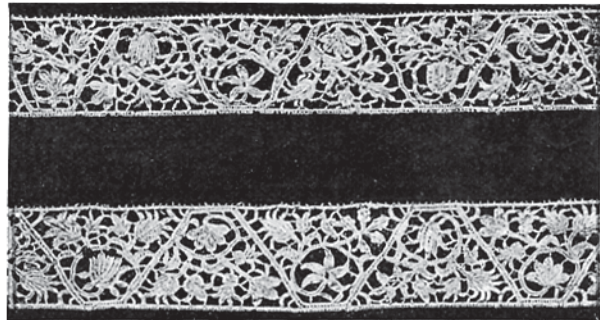


FIG. 2.—BANDS FOR INSERTION OF NEEDLEPOINT LACE.  
(Early Seventeenth Century. Italian.)

lace-like effect. Technically, however, such work is not real lace according to the definition of it given above. This difference is important in the classification and description of lace and lace-like embroideries. Obvious as it is, it is too often overlooked.

Lace-like embroideries are usually found on comparatively large cloths, hangings, &c.; accessories to costume, like collars, cuffs, trimmings, flounces, &c., are generally made entirely of lace, that is, of course, when lace effects are wanted in



FIG. 3.—COLLAR OF NEEDLEPOINT LACE.  
(Early Seventeenth Century.)



them. Still, large pieces solely of lace have been produced from time to time for altar frontals, curtains, and bed-coverings. The size of them, the amount of workmanship in them, and the intricacy of their ornament, always excite astonishment and sometimes legitimate admiration; but I think that the more graceful and subtle qualities of laces are better displayed in smaller specimens designed for personal adornment.

Ornament in laces and lace-like fabrics is composed of an endless variety of forms brought

description of geometric lace was used on the great ruffs of the late sixteenth century. The narrower of the trimmings shown in Fig. 1 was used for the edges of linen turn-back cuffs, as well as

sometimes to encircle the velvet caps worn in James I.'s time by judges and ministers. Succeeding these are laces

of small floral devices, comparatively simple in shape, but fuller in substance than the wiry geometric laces as in Fig. 2. Suggestions of human and animal forms are often intermixed with the floral devices in these more substantial laces. (See Fig. 3.)



FIG. 4.—PILLOW-MADE LACE.  
(Middle of Seventeenth Century.)

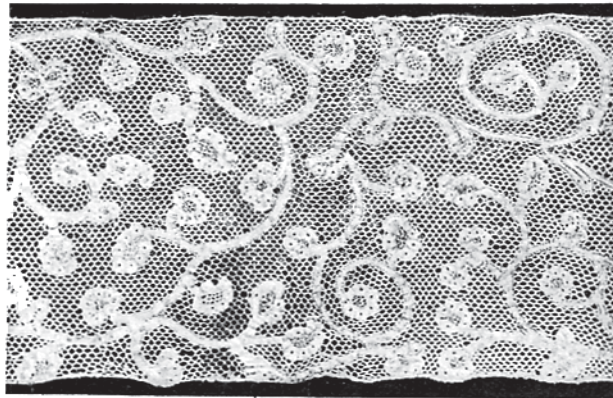


FIG. 5.—PILLOW-MADE LACE WITH SIMPLE SCROLL PATTERN.  
(Middle of Seventeenth Century.)



FIG. 7.—RAISED NEEDLEPOINT LACE.  
(Middle of Seventeenth Century.)

into contrast with one another, according to plans or schemes of arrangement, which are numerous and diverse. A few broadly-marked classifications of these ornamental arrangements are of assistance in determining periods and styles of lace-making. For instance, geometrical rosettes and star shapes set within squares, stiff and wiry in texture, predominate in the laces of the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century. As a rule, they are made up in lengths and used as straight-edge borders, though more frequently series of tooth-shapes or vandykes are added to the lower edge of them. Fig. 1 presents a few types of such early laces, which were made in both the needlepoint and pillow methods. This

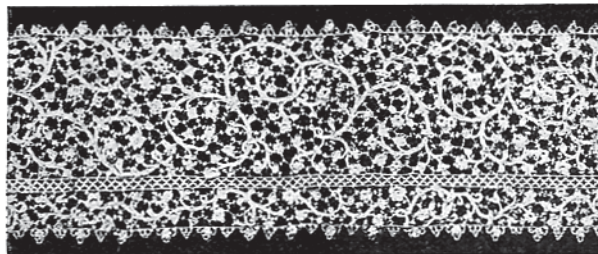


FIG. 6.—DELICATE ROSEPOINT LACE.  
(Middle of Seventeenth Century.)

The different ornaments in these laces are linked together by small ties or bars, and are slightly diversified by the insertion of open-stitch work to vary their textures. These are typical of laces made

between 1610 and 1650. In paintings by Franz Hals and Rembrandt, lace collars similar to Fig. 3 are often seen. There is much ingenuity in the arrangement of the ornamental devices in this collar. Rather more ambitious is the designing of the human figures and other objects

in the border given in Fig. 4. Ornament of this type has been frequently adopted for beaten iron-work, and the counterpart of Fig. 4, but on a much larger scale, may be noticed in an iron balustrade, of the seventeenth century, Italian in workmanship, to



be seen in the Ironwork Collection at the South Kensington Museum. Designs in which continuous scrolls play a leading part mark the next series of

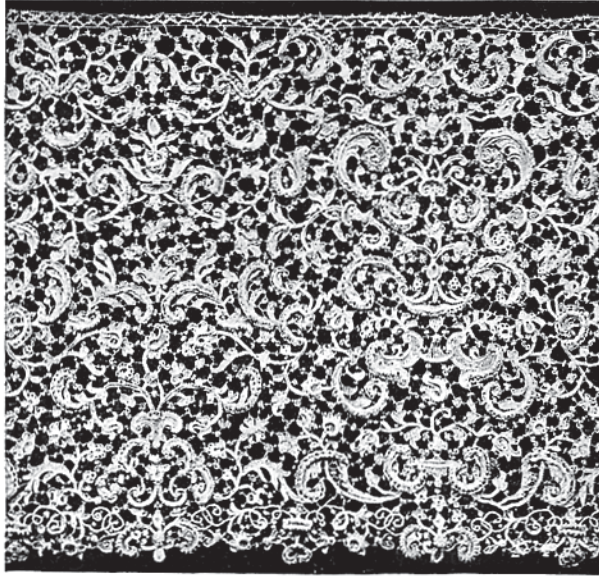


FIG. 8.—RAISED NEEDLEPOINT LACE.  
(Latter Portion of Seventeenth Century.)

laces, which may be classified together. Some of the scrolls are elaborated with suggestions of leaf-like appendages and fanciful non-botanical blossoms; whilst many of them are of a chaste simplicity. (See Fig. 5.) But elaborated or simple, and whether worked out in pillow or needle-made lace, these scrolls are designed to hold themselves together by touching one another, or they are connected and more openly displayed by the insertion between them of ties or bars or of net grounds having round meshes. These scroll laces belong to the commencement



FIG. 9.—FINE NEEDLEPOINT LACE.  
(End of Seventeenth Century.)

of the Louis Quatorze period. It is at this time that the famous raised Venetian points—the rose points—were so profusely made. Some of them are notable for solidity of effect and massive ornamentation, as in Fig. 7, whilst others are of an extraordinary delicacy, as in Fig. 6. A little later, and different in elements of ornamental composition, are laces of which a fine specimen is given in Fig. 8. In this lace the ornament, distinctly differing from the continuous scrolls previously noted, is made up of a series of vertically-arranged and repeated groups of curling and curved devices. Many

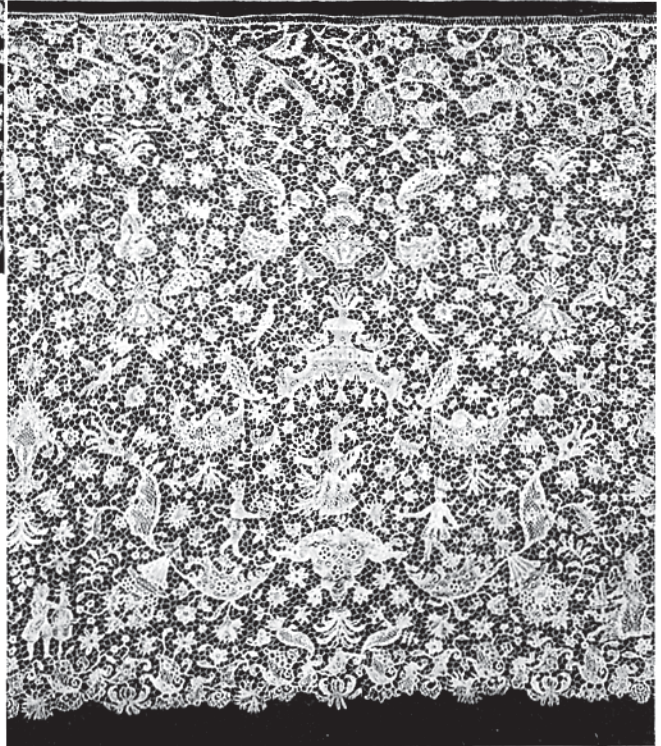


FIG. 10.—NEEDLEPOINT LACE.  
(Early Eighteenth Century.)

of them are enriched with dainty needlework in relief. The fanciful name of snow point, *point de neige*, has been given to this lace. It was much in vogue at the Court of Louis XIV., and in England during the reigns of Charles II. and James II. All these laces (Figs. 6, 7, and 8) come into the class of Venetian Rosepoint.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, designs for lace are composed of forms lacking the strict ornamental restraint of earlier lace. A marked tendency towards closer imitation of natural objects and the employment of architectural ornament and fantastic shapes, some of a pseudo-Chinese character, is displayed. The texture of these



later laces becomes more filmy in texture, and this filminess is elaborated in effect through a plentiful employment of varieties of dainty grounds

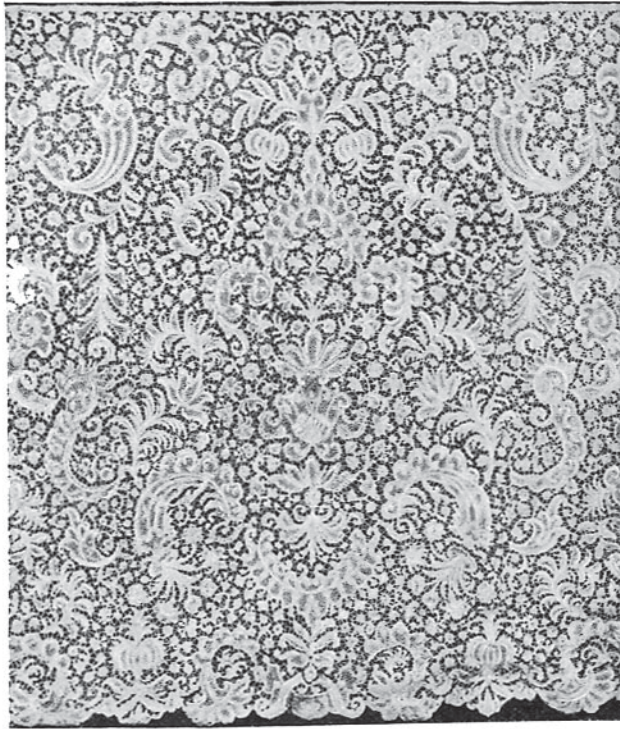


FIG. 11.—PILLOW-MADE LACE.  
(End of Seventeenth Century.)

and nets of round and hexagonal meshes. Figs. 9 and 10 are from laces of pseudo-Chinese and rococo styles of design; and Fig. 11 is from a filmy lace in which the representations of the floral forms, &c., are closer imitations of forms in natural plants than are to be met with in earlier lace patterns.

Notwithstanding the successive types of design and texture which arose in the development of the art of lace-making, there came a period, and, indeed, it is an existing period, when, instead of new departures in design, copies of old designs or adaptations from them were produced. And amongst many of the more finely-finished laces of modern make, there are some which are such close counterfeits of their prototypes that it is difficult to detect them from the originals. This is often the case with many of the modern Brussels, Alençon, and Burano laces.

In so brief a review as the present, one cannot attempt to enlarge upon the different incidents and circumstances which have affected the production of laces. The main purport of this article is merely to direct attention to a very few of the comparatively recent additions to the lace collection at South Kensington. It would add to their interest and

educational value, were it feasible to intermingle with them good-sized photographs of portraits, in which laces are conspicuous, by painters of the sixteenth to eighteenth century. But it is evident that more ample exhibiting is desirable for the laces—especially the larger pieces—to be more characteristically displayed than at present. The greater number of the pieces are placed flatly under glass, and the design of their patterns and their textures can be thoroughly studied. A good deal of the beauty of the effect of laces, however, depends upon the folds taken when draped, as well as upon their appearance when disposed for actual use. The exhibition of certain collars, fichus, flounces, and lappets arranged as parts of complete costumes or of coverlets, cloths, hangings, and such-like, in suitable positions for household purposes, would give a new and interesting tone to the collections. The richly-trimmed priest's robe (Fig. 12) is suitably displayed. The flounce, too, which belonged to Fenelon, Archbishop of Cambray, would probably be better understood were



FIG. 12.—PRIEST'S ROBE TRIMMED WITH NEEDLEPOINT LACE OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

it similarly exhibited as forming part of a vestment instead of being mounted on a board. (See Fig. 11.)