

“GERMAN VAL” AND “VAL DE DIEPPE”

“**G**ERMAN VAL” is an inferior but hand-made copy of true French or Belgian Valenciennes, a “short cut.” The true variety has an outlining “roue” surrounding each motive, and a ground made of four braided threads; the copy has a two-thread, twisted ground, no “roue,” and sometimes a simplified “picot.”

In describing the old original and the new, simpler varieties, additional confusion has arisen through the use of the words “real” and “true.” Hand-made lace is usually spoken of as “real,” yet both these Vals are hand-made. In using the word “true” to distinguish them, we come upon the early historic use of that term to designate the fine lace made in the city of Valenciennes itself, considered superior to that made in the surrounding neighborhood, as the climatic differences were such that a piece begun in the damp city, where the spider-like threads were easily manipulated, was supposed to show a marked difference if finished by the same worker outside the town limits. The latter variety was called “fausse” or “false”; that made in the city, “vraie” or “true.”

Another cause for the uncertainty enveloping the term “*German Val*” is the *national* adjective; for Germany and Austria just previous, at least, to the present war, were about the largest producers of real, genuine, hand-made Valenciennes—such as is made in Belgium and France. Nevertheless, German peasants are probably also responsible for the hand-made copy or “short-cut,” which saves material, time and eyesight, though the French make it also and call it “Genre Valenciennes,” or “Imitation de Valenciennes.” The terms “copy” and “imitation” should not be misunderstood, for we are still speaking of the hand-made.

However, machine-made Valenciennes is copied from “German Val,” as its two-thread, twisted ground can be readily reproduced, whereas the four-thread, tressed or plaited ground costs more when made by machine than by hand, so, naturally, is not manufactured. Thus arises a sixth cause of doubt—real, true, German, copy, imitation, reproduction—and the poor layman is lost in bewilderment.

The inserted illustration opposite the last page shows three bits of hand-made “German Val” and two working designs or “prickings.” A slight difference is apparent between the three samples, one having a “roue,” a circular mesh, and also two cords near the edge, which is not true to type, as real Valenciennes is flat and cordless. This was made in Bohemia a generation ago (No. 1). The piece with a corner has no outlining cordonnet, no “roue” or wheel, but a square mesh, and was recently made in Switzerland (No. 2). The third is a modern Italian variation with characteristic Italian openings (No. 3). A maker of these pretty edges would know their hand origin, but others might mistake them for machine work. The weaver could not then champion them as real, for, after all, they are not truly the “real thing.” However, as “imitation is the sincerest flattery,” and it is the fate of most beautiful things to be copied, it may still be justifiable to make “German Val” for humble uses, particularly when expense, long training, eye-strain, and a tediously minute task are to be avoided.

“Dieppe Val,” another short-cut modelled after the old, standard Valenciennes, is made with three threads instead of four. That is, the tulle background consists of a triple instead of a quadruple braid, and at the tulle joints the two centre pairs of the plait—one from each side—weave a linen or cloth stitch, while the two single, outer threads—one on each side—dangle idly, waiting until this joint is finished, to be again taken up in order to continue making the triple tress, three threads now working downwards towards the left and three downwards towards the right. A pin is placed under the cloth stitch joint to support it, but the pin is not closed.

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