

FRONTISPIECE

TITLE PAGE FROM THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES IN THE *Bibliothèque Nationale*,  
PARIS.

## THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES

by  
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LONG ago I read that Marshal Richelieu, a grandnephew of the famous Cardinal, had made a collection of samples of all kinds of textiles of both French and foreign manufacture between the years 1732 and 1737. Later, when in Paris, I obtained a permit to visit the manuscript department of the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, where I found the collection,<sup>1</sup> which consists of seven large volumes full of samples of silks, of cotton, linen and woolen stuffs, of ribbons, gauzes, and laces. Each sample was carefully annotated with the name of the material, the place of manufacture, the date, and the price. The interest and importance of such a collection to students of textiles is obvious, and a painstaking and systematic study of this vast array of samples would surely revise and extend our knowledge of European textiles of this period in many respects.

One whole volume was devoted to ribbons made in the various cities and provinces of France (Plate I), while another was filled with ribbons made in Italy and Holland. Many pages of other volumes showed samples of common woolen, linen, and cotton cloth; some of these were examples of the weaving done by prison labor of the time, and others were samples of the fine table linen woven for the Royal Household in 1736 (Plate II). Among the more elaborate materials were small scraps of the handsome silks made for the Queen, Marie Leczinska, in 1735 and 1736.<sup>2</sup> Samples of gauzes were also included, those light materials used for horned caps (cornettes) and sleeve ruffles (engageantes), or used over colored taffetas in gowns (Plate IV). These gauzes resemble the Far Eastern examples

<sup>1</sup> *Rubans de France et des Pays Etrangers, 1732-1737. Echantillons d'Etoffes et Toiles des Manufactures de la France recueillis par le Marechal de Richelieu.* 7 vols.

<sup>2</sup> A page of these silks is illustrated in *The Romance of French Weaving* by Paul Rodier (Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1931, p. 274), who describes this work more fully. None of the samples illustrated in the Rodier volume are duplicated in this article.

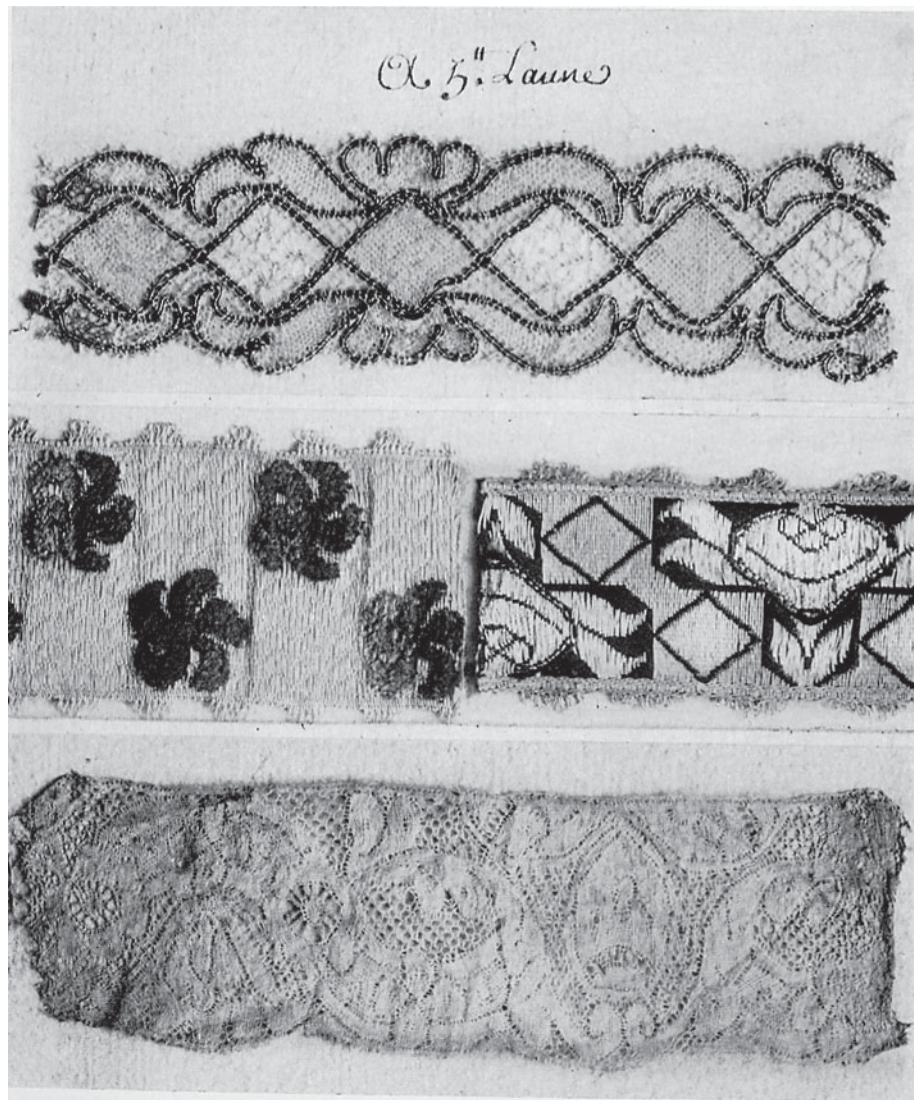


PLATE I

EXAMPLES OF RIBBON AND LACE FROM THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES.

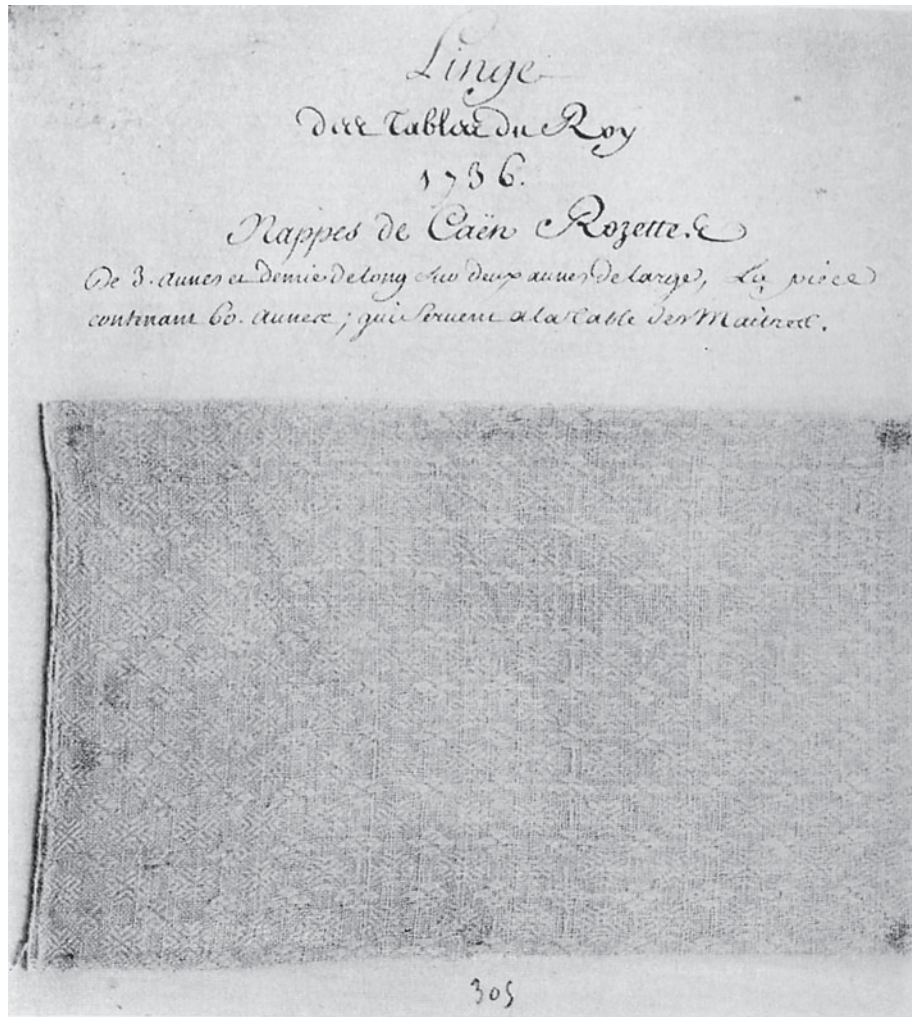


PLATE II  
TABLE LINEN WOVEN FOR THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD IN 1736.  
FROM THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES.

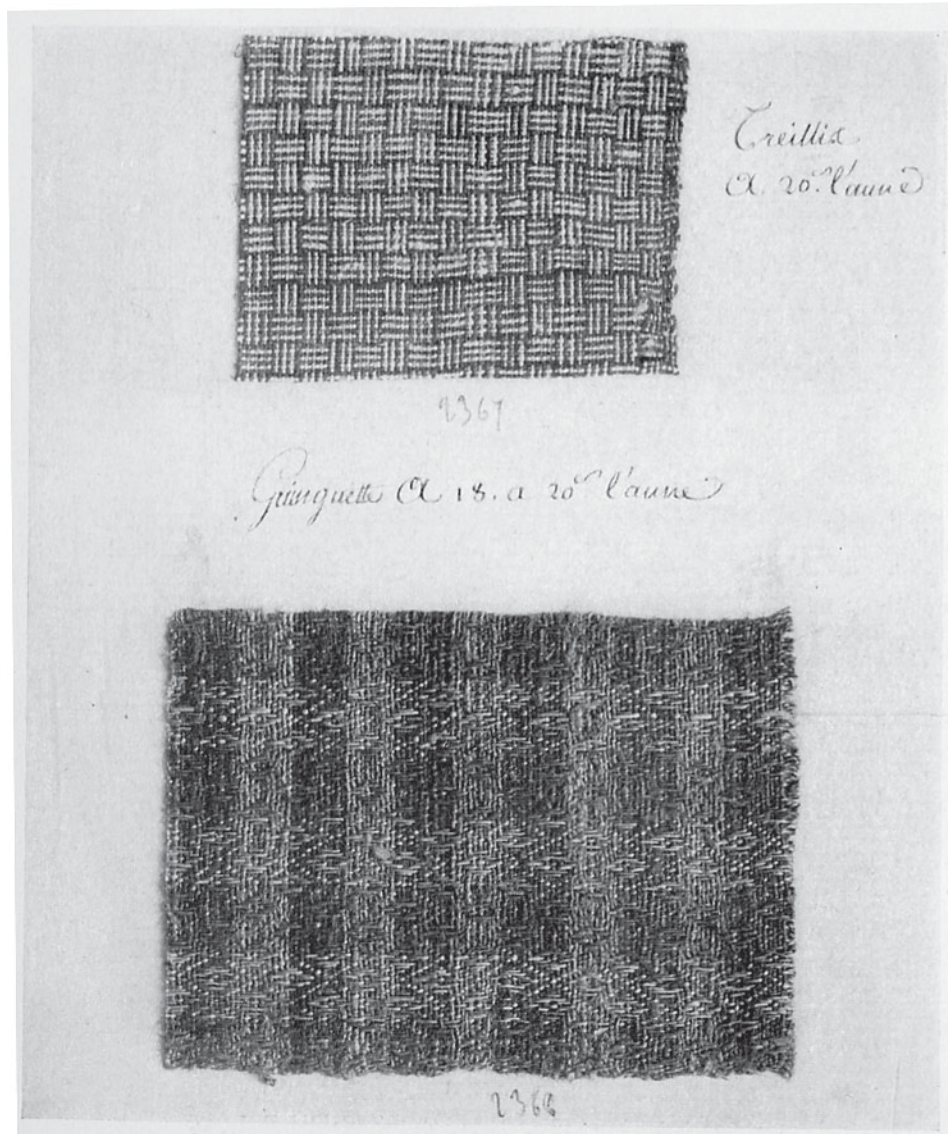


PLATE III  
WOVEN MATERIALS FROM THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES.

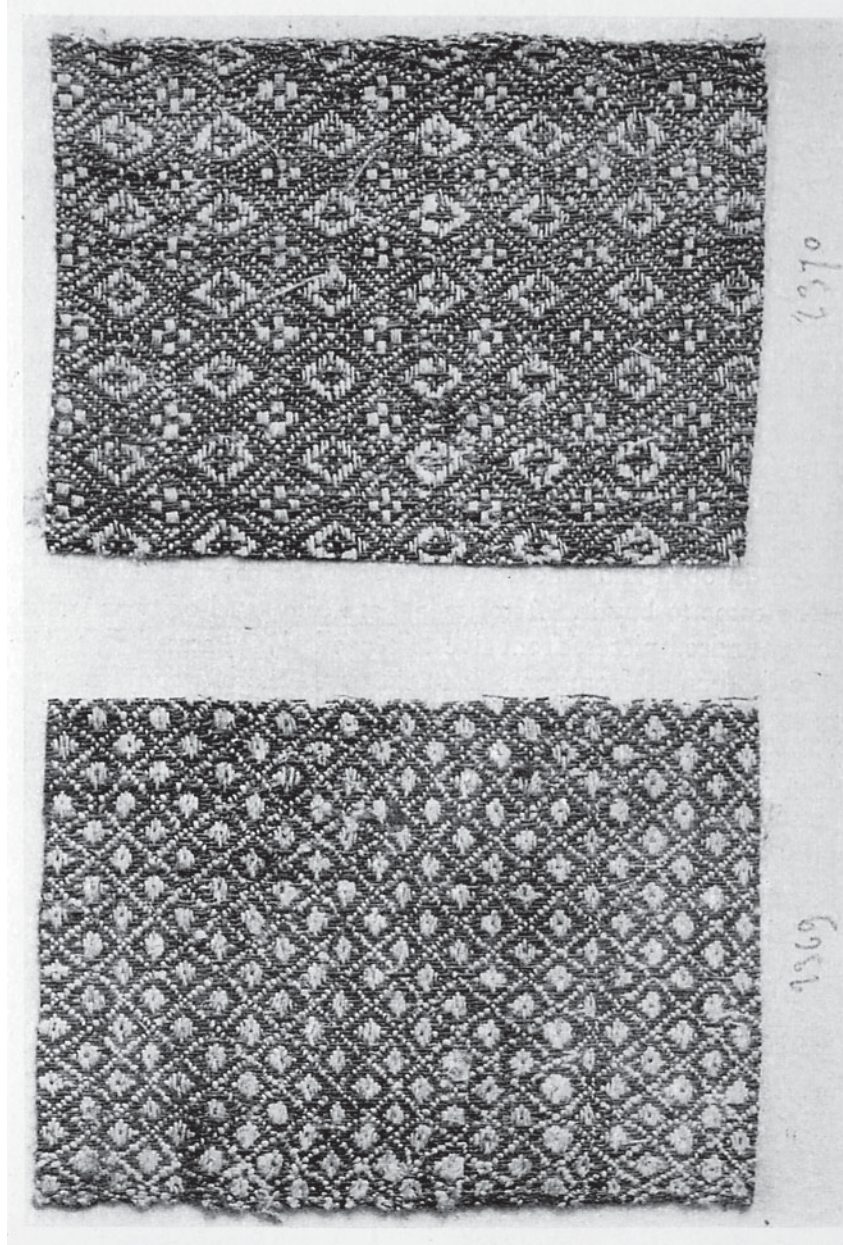


PLATE IIIa  
WOVEN MATERIALS FROM THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES.

from which they may have been copied. Finally, there are samples of various laces (Plates V-Va). Many familiar types are present, for example, *points d'esprit*, spiders, *tulle double*, *fond de la Vierge*, or *cinq trous* perhaps, the whole general Marli type, and *fond de Paris*.

It was surprising and confusing to find in carefully turning over page after page that the samples so closely resemble later fabrics and patterns. The accompanying illustrations, therefore, may not seem especially rare or superior, but they date authentically from the years 1732 to 1737, and present a unique index of the range and variety of textiles made in this period.

One page from the original preface is reproduced here (Plate VI), and a free translation of it has been added to the above notes to give an idea of the kind of information Richelieu gathered regarding the lace and textile industries of his day.

"The ordinary price of lace made in Havre and its environs is from ten *sols*<sup>3</sup> to six *livres* the ell, Paris measure, from a barely visible width to a good four fingers wide.

"It is sent to the French islands of America, and principally to the French Cape, in open and kindred designs, for the consumption of the Spanish who come to buy it. Assortments are composed of twenty-five, fifty or one hundred pieces, from five to ten ells long, according to the wish of the dealers, at from ten *sols* to six *livres* the ell, and from the width of a good four fingers upward. It is also sent for the consumption of the French who are established there, and for them these laces are finer, priced from twenty *sols* to eight *livres*, and of a width of two fingers upward.

"At the time of the departure of the Spanish fleets, Havre often furnishes great quantities of lace, there to be loaded and transported to Peru, assorted as described above for those sent to the French Cape for the consumption of the Spanish.

"There are made in Havre many laces of questionable superiority, beginning at a good two fingers in width, priced from fifteen *sols* to three

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<sup>3</sup> The coinage signs used in this document correspond to those tabulated under *livres*, *sols* and *deniers* in various manuscript copy books of the period; as for instance, *Les Exemples de Lettres Financière et Bâtarde of Lesgret, l'ainé* (Paris, 1694), and the *Nouveau Traité d'écriture of Glachant* (Paris, 1754). The *livre*, *sol* and *denier* formed the universal money of accounting throughout France until the Revolution and they have left their mark on the English money symbols of today in the £, s., d. The *livre*, the value of which varied at different times, was the equal of a pre-war *franc*; the *sol* or *sou*, five *centimes*, and the *denier* the twelfth part of a *sou*. The *ecu*, which does not appear in this manuscript, was a larger coin varying in value from three to six *livres*. The *franc* and *centime* were adopted toward the close of the century.

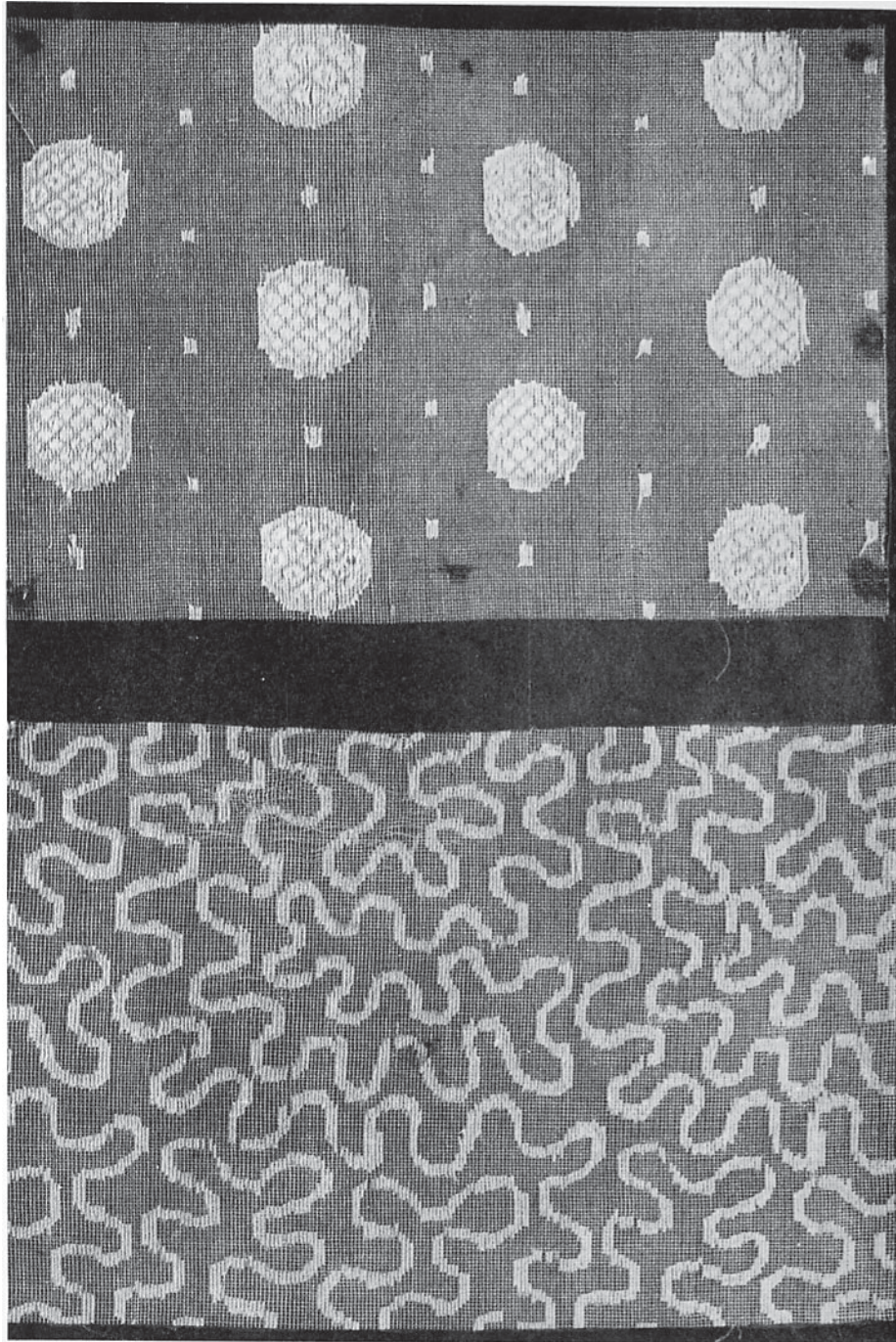


PLATE IV  
SAMPLES OF GAUZE WEAVING, DATED 1736. FROM THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES.



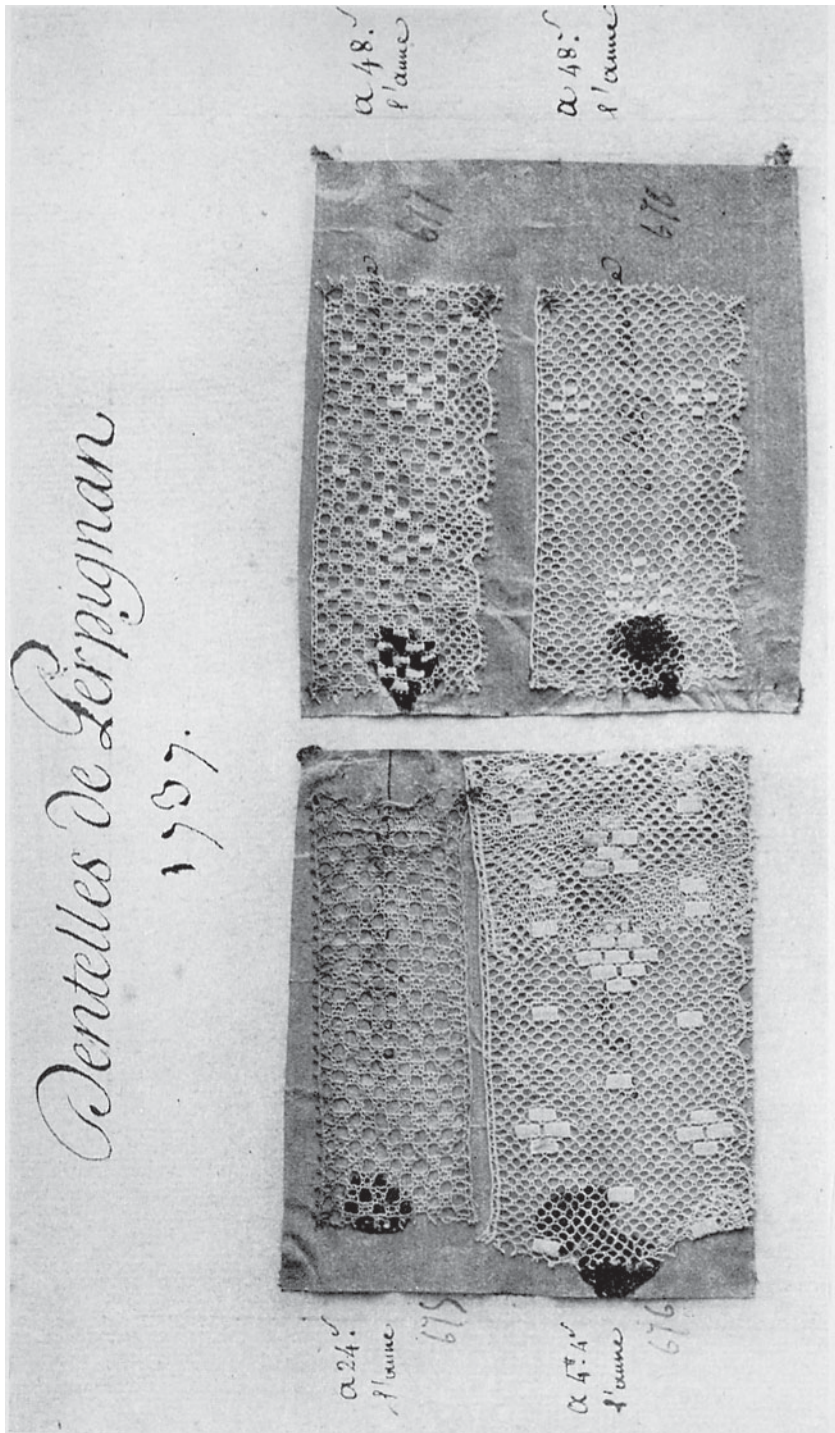


PLATE V  
LACE OF PERPIGNAN, DATED 1737. THE PRICE BY THE ELL IS INDICATED BESIDE EACH SAMPLE. FROM THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES.

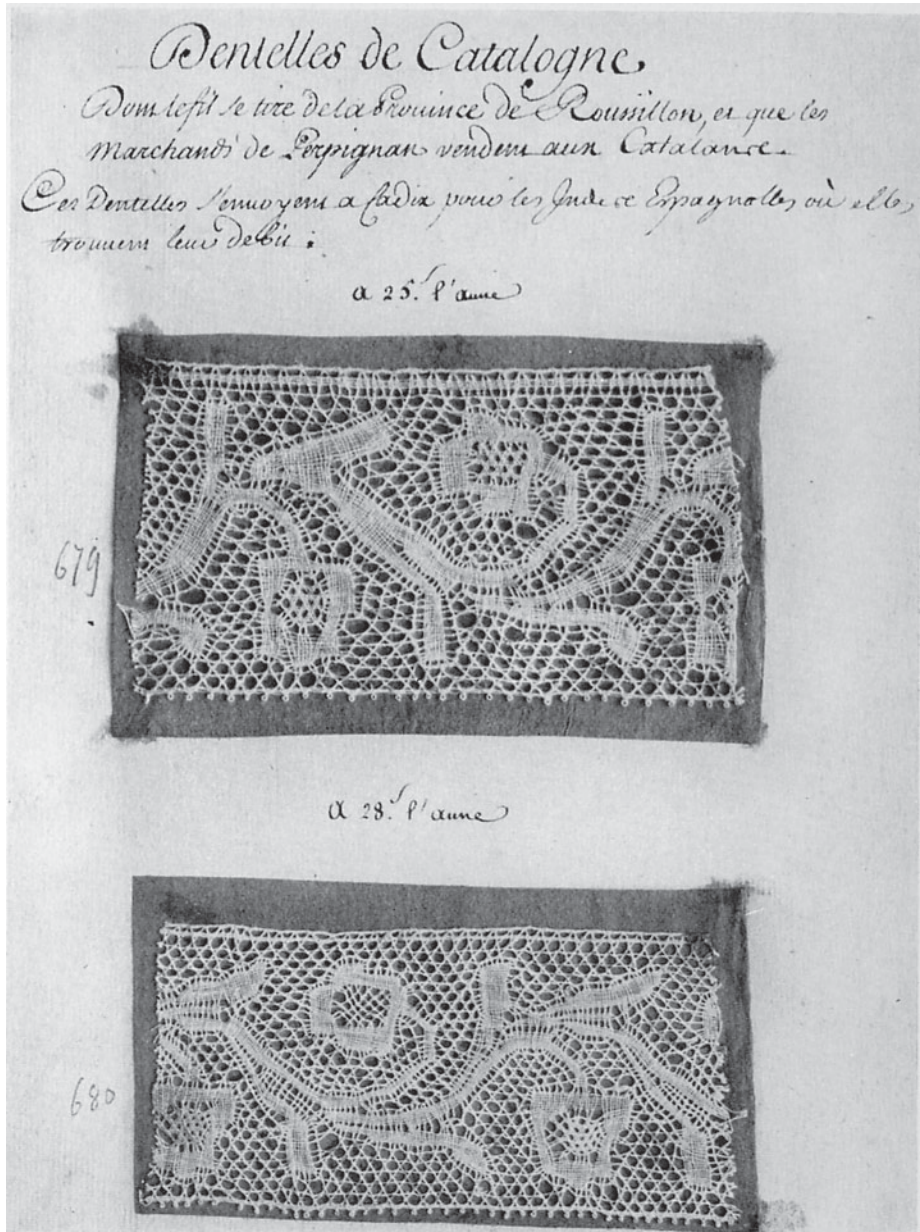


PLATE Va

LACE OF PERPIGNAN, DATED 1737. THE PRICE BY THE ELL IS INDICATED BESIDE EACH SAMPLE. FROM THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES.

L'epine ordinaire des Dentelles fabrique du Linné a 11.  
 des courbes, en largeur 10<sup>es</sup> jusqu'à 6.<sup>es</sup> l'autre mesure des  
 Dents, de la largeur d'un a 4. bon doigt.

On en envoye aux Isles françoises de l'Amérique, et  
 principalement au Cap françois en dessein de vendre et a porteur  
 pour la consommation des Espagnols qui viennent en acheter  
 les assortimens sont composés de 25... So... en six pains, depuis  
 5. jusqu'à 10. au<sup>es</sup> de long, suivant la volonté de l'ouvrier  
 depuis 2.<sup>es</sup> a 6.<sup>es</sup> l'autre et de la largeur des a 4. bon doigt  
 doigt. On y en envoye aussy pour la consommation des  
 françois qui y sont établis, et pour lors ces dentelles sont plus  
 fines et de prix de 2.<sup>es</sup> a 8.<sup>es</sup> l'autre de la largeur des a 2...  
 doigt au plus.

Lors du départ de floces d'Espagne on fournit souvent  
 un grand nombre de Dentelles de l'autre pour y être  
 embarquées, et transportées au Linné, et elles s'achètent  
 comme il en est ordonné, de celles qui se envoye au Cap françois  
 pour la consommation des Espagnols.

Il se fait au Linné beaucoup de Dentelles de hauteurs diverses  
 de 1. a 2. bon doigt de prix de 15. a 5. l'autre qui sont  
 consommés dans l'intérieur du Royaume, les fils dont on se  
 sert pour fabriquer toutes les dentelles sont en Linné et  
 tirés de la flandre françoise.

Ce sont les femmes qui travaillent les dentelles avec de  
 filans: les plus habiles ouvrières espagnoles y a 8. au plus de  
 par jour, les moyennes ouvrières ne gagnent que 4. a 5. Et  
 les qu'on croit qui sont en bien plus grand nombre ont pour  
 a travailler de 1. au bon et leur journée se travaillent de 2.  
 ou 3. et les autres depuis le grand matin jusqu'à six heures.

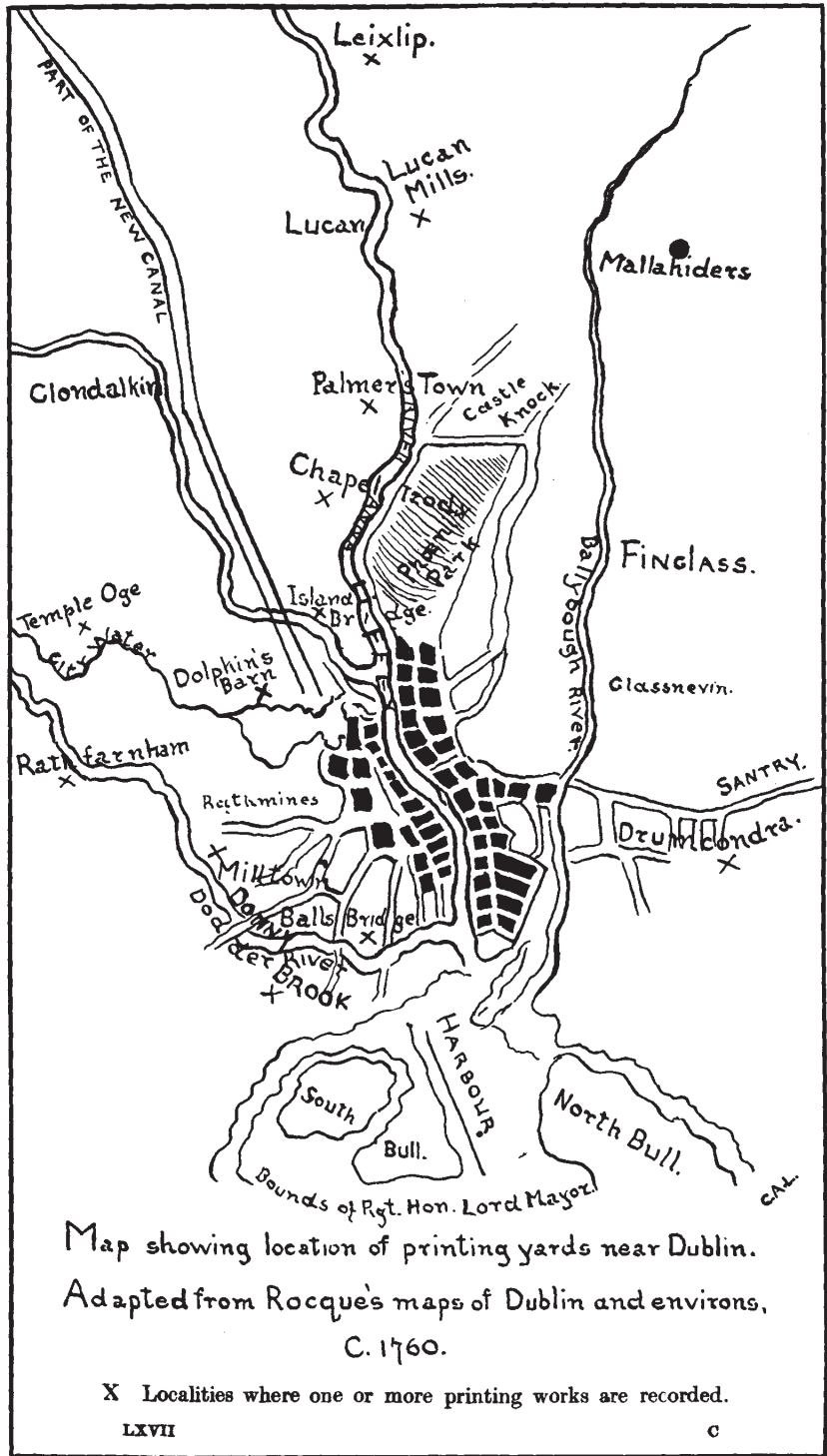
Le débouché est plus considérable lors des expéditions de  
 floces d'Espagne, on en vend plusieurs années ensemble  
 et peut servir du Linné et des environs pour 30000. de dentelles  
 de toute espèce chaque année: ces fabriques a sont  
 considérables, depuis qu'on porte en France des dentelles  
 de 1. et des assortimens de 2. et 3.

PLATE VI  
 PAGE OF ORIGINAL PREFACE FROM THE RICHELIEU COLLECTION OF SAMPLES.

*livres* the ell. The thread used for home consumption, serving for the fabrication of all the laces, is in skeins, and is drawn from French Flanders.

“Women work the lace with bobbins: the cleverest workers earn seven to eight *sols* at the most a day; the lesser workwomen earn but four to five *sols*; the inferiors, who are much greater in number, with difficulty attain three *sols* at the end of their day, working from sunrise to dark.

“The export is more considerable at the time of the clearance of the Spanish flotillas. Taking several years together, Havre and its environs can export on an average some three hundred thousand (300,000) *livres* worth of lace of all kinds each year; this manufacture has fallen off considerably since the wearing of silk lace and embroidered muslin in France.”



REPRODUCED FROM ADA K. LONGFIELD'S "HISTORY OF THE IRISH LINEN AND COTTON PRINTING INDUSTRY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, VOL. LXVII, JUNE, 1937.