



FRONTISPIECE

PORTRAIT OF A LADY WEARING SCALLOPED LACE OF THE TYPE OF DANIELI'S DESIGNS.
BY A HAMBURG PAINTER, COLLECTION OF DR. OERTEL, MUNICH.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITALIAN LACE
FROM THE EARLY PERIODS TO THE BAROQUE

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FOR A LONG TIME the history of lace has been treated more as a part of the history of culture than of the history of art and made interesting by amusing anecdotes, though there is scarcely a craft that can be more obviously followed in its formal evolution than lace. For its life is short, beginning with the middle of the sixteenth and ending with the last part of the eighteenth century, and belongs to the period when painting and portraits were at their height and the interest in fashion and dress had gained an importance not dreamt of in earlier times.

Dated portraits of people wearing lace, "lace without words," would be the ideal history of this fabric, but it will be long before this dream becomes reality, if ever it does, for today only America takes a real interest in lace, and many such portraits are still hidden, if not destroyed. Such a picture book would be a gay accompaniment to the most serious and painstakingly written book on lace, Lotz' *Bibliographie der Modelbücher*.* This is written with the utmost modesty and careful scholarship and an incomparable scientific acerbity which somewhat conceals the history of lace as an oyster hides its pearl. It is a book that is not easy to read, even for a German, and therefore I should like to try, with Lotz as my guide, to follow up the evolution of lace from its beginning to its baroque period even if facts are repeated that are known to the connoisseur. For this I apologize in advance.

The history of lace starts with the year 1542 in Venice with Matio Pagano's *Giardinetto di punti tagliati* (Lotz 80). This is the first mention of *punto tagliato*, cutwork, the immediate forerunner of needlepoint lace, that took as its beginning the open quadrangles of linen prepared for cutwork (Plate I). This kind of rich embroidery must have been well known and familiarly practiced by the Venetian needlewoman even before a publisher had the idea of printing a book of patterns exclusively

* *Bibliographie der Modelbücher*, von Arthur Lotz. Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der Stick- und Spitzenmusterbücher des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts. Karl W. Hiersemann, Leipzig, 1933.

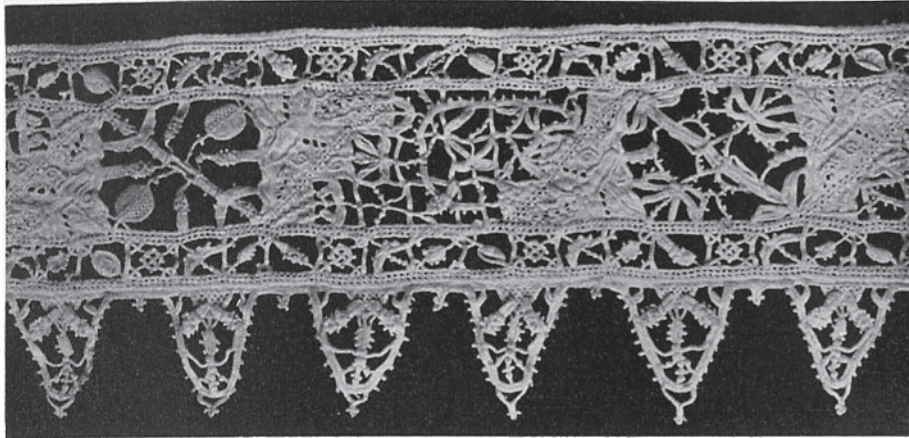


PLATE I

BORDER SHOWING EARLY ITALIAN LACE TECHNIQUES, XVI CENTURY. RETICELLA; PUNTO TAGLIATO (CUTWORK); PUNTO IN ARIA (IN THE SCALLOPS). EMBROIDERY STITCHES: PUNTO QUADRO (SQUARE HEMSTITCH); PUNTO REALE (SATIN STITCH); PUNTO RICCIO (CURL STITCH).

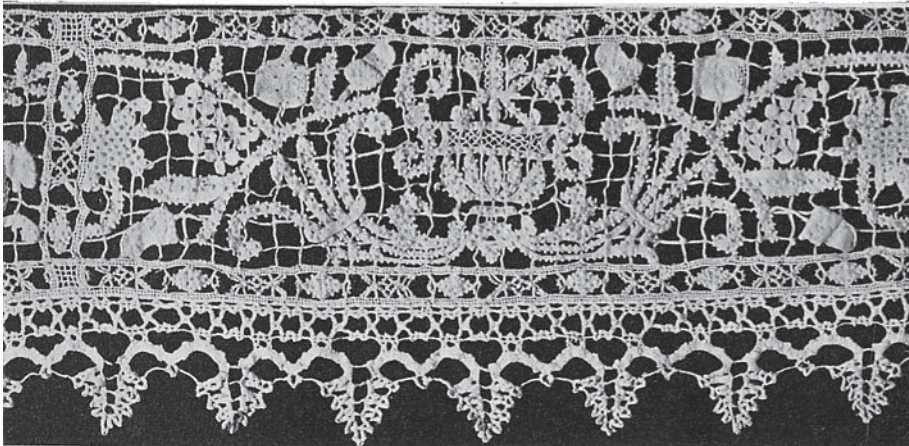


PLATE II

CUTWORK WITH FOLIAGE DESIGNS FROM L'HONESTO ESSEMPIO, MATIO PAGANO, VENICE 1550. COOPER UNION MUSEUM.

for the purpose of introducing a new technique for the benefit of Venetian ladies, eager for novelty to outdo their neighbors, very much as housewives do with cooking recipes. Technical details in the designs, such as the picots on the edges of little triangles filling the corners of squares would seem to prove this theory. These few facts sum up all that is known positively about the predecessor of needlepoint.

The next stage is *punto a fogliami*, cutwork with foliage designs (Plate II). It appears eight years later, in 1550, on the title page of the same ambitious publisher's *L'Honesto Essempio* (Lotz 85) and is its sole subject. This is, in fact, needlepoint, for the foliage-like pattern in spreading out and crossing the quadrangular openings does away with the little geometric lozenges, crosses and broken S-lines. *Punto tagliato* now adopts the foliage patterns of embroidery and introduces into the lace pattern blossoms, leaves, vases and human and animal figures.

The term *punto a fogliami* was in use for only a short time during the sixteenth century. It appears in 1556 for the last time on the title page of the second edition of Pagano's *Gloria et l'Honore de ponti tagliati a fogliami*, adding in a most instructive manner as the title continues, *delle quali tu portai fare ponti in stuora (matting stitch) a fogliami: Opera nuova & con somma diligentia posta in luce* (Lotz 87b), which is to say, Glory and honor to cutwork with foliage from which you can learn to make stitches in the air, network with foliage; a new work brought into being by means of the greatest diligence.

Stitch in the air (*punto in aria*) is the name for the fully developed free needlepoint and appears for the first time in 1554 on the title page of the first edition of Pagano's *Gloria et l'Honore* (Lotz 87a) as a new type and as an equal to the popular *punto tagliato* (Plate III). This is the birth certificate of the freely worked needlepoint and, judging from the pattern books, we would infer that needlepoint changed from the linen grounding of *punto tagliato* to the parchment foundation in the years between 1550 and 1554 with the term *a fogliami* added to that of *punto in aere*. Venetian pattern books of the sixth and seventh decades of the sixteenth century show the horizontal classical scroll to be the favorite lace design emphasizing the close connection with the older art of embroidery, as lace was considered in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It is remarkable that while in Italy these scroll patterns lead uninterruptedly into the seventeenth century and, in the first half of that century, to the baroque style of that versatile lace maker, etcher and designer of lace, Danieli of Bologna, in Paris in 1587 a Venetian, Frederic Vinciolo,

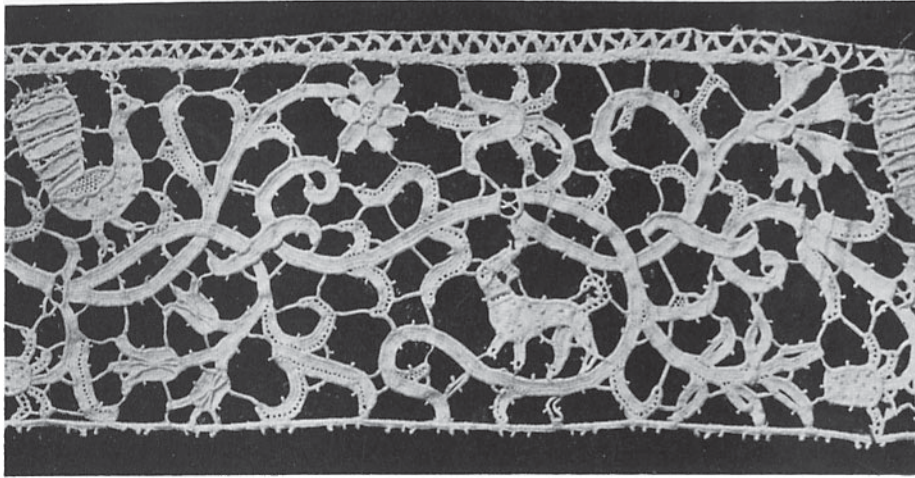


PLATE III
PUNTO IN ARIA, ITALIAN, XVI-XVII CENTURY.

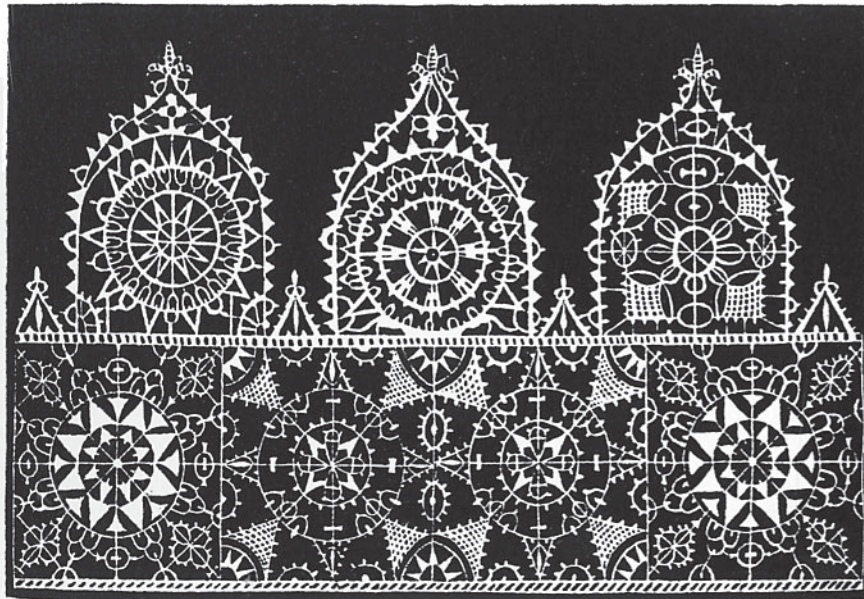


PLATE IV
RETICELLA DESIGN FROM CORONA DELLE NOBILI ET VIRTUOSE DONNE, LIBRO PRIMO,
CESARE VECCELLIO, VENICE 1601.

was offering the first geometrical lace designs (later to be termed *reticella*) in his famous work, *Les singuliers et nouveaux pourtraicts et ouvrages de Lingerie* (Lotz 110). No doubt the book owed its stupendous success to the more severe and new patterns which were in harmony with the French spirit, but as late as 1587 it means as well a reversion to the cutwork of the forties and in keeping with this every pattern is marked *point coupé*. In pronounced contrast to the Italian usage which, under *punto tagliato* means only cutwork, French needlework of the Renaissance is never named otherwise than *point coupé* by Vinciolo's contemporaries.

Vecellio, the artistic and imaginative relative of Titian, cultivated the Italian character — scrolls, figures and animal forms — without neglecting the new geometrical patterns, the *reticella* (Plate IV). This familiar name appears for the first time in 1591 (Lotz 116, 120) in Vecellio's *Corona delle nobili et virtuose donne*, the most graceful, abundant and inspiring of all Italian Renaissance lace books. For nearly thirty-five years it remained the favorite of both Italian women and their foreign sisters so that it attained about sixty editions until 1625. The influence of this stimulating work with its five separate books cannot be easily overrated as to style, propagation and fashions in lace.

These two Venetian authors published, with their *reticella* designs (a name that, as we see, had apparently not yet been taken up in 1587, the year of Vinciolo's publication), a type of lace that, to judge by portraits, had been in fashion at the French court in about the year 1560 and that can be found in Venice about 1570. This is a matter of importance for it shows, as has already been demonstrated, that the actual practice of such handicraft preceded the books. Many authors also lay stress upon the fact that they have painstakingly collected their patterns in foreign countries and give them respectively local names whose real meaning we can not unfortunately prove.

So far no satisfactory explanation of the term *reticella* has been found, nor of its derivation. The simplest seems to be its likeness to the spider's web with its threads, like rays, radiating from the center. [As a source there also is to be considered the rectangular character of its design.] *Reticella* may be termed a classical lace type. It lives a life of its own, apart from changing lace patterns. After its first appearance in the third quarter of the Cinquecento it remained long in fashion and was so much in favor that the bobbin copied this pattern that had its origin in cutwork and the construction of the linen weave with the result that bobbin-made *reti-*

cella, such as is seen in Parasole's *Teatro delle nobili et virtuose donne* 1616 (Lotz 143), and in the Englishman, Mignerak's *La pratique de l'aiguille industrielle* 1605 (Lotz 140), became the height of fashion for ruffs and collars in Holland and England. Since the days of Vecellio, *reticella* has become a customary feature on the titles of lace books so that in the course of time the term has changed its meaning. Giacomo Franco, who had the courtesy in his *Inventione nuova* 1596 (Lotz 143) to give every pattern its name, called *reticella* the "quadrangular patterns" no matter whether they were composed of straight lines only or of foliage and flowers. In the later pattern books the once so popular *punto tagliato* is seldom mentioned; it seems to hide under the name of *reticella* as in Parasole's *Specchio delle nobili* 1595 (Lotz 129a). The book does not mention *punto tagliato* but shows under the title *Lavoro a ponto Reticella* a broad cutwork insertion (Lotz plates 90, 176) which in technique and pattern bears the closest resemblance to the earliest *punto tagliato* in Pagano's *Giardinetto* of 1542 (Lotz 80, plates 59, 114). This is worth mentioning as it shows how strong tradition was in the course of the evolution of lace and how popular cutwork remained. The last mention of *Reticelli di varie sorti* in about 1634 in the title of Danieli's *Libro di diversi disegni* (Lotz 48) means lace in general as the author never showed designs of this particular kind of lace in any of his works.

The development of *punto in aria* can be clearly traced in Parasole's books. (Lotz, plates 91, 178 and 94, 184). The earlier type of *lavoro a ponto in aria* as it is named shows an effective design of coats-of-arms in quadrangles and the characteristic graceful Renaissance scallop with corresponding figures, while in the *Studio delle virtuose dame* (Lotz 132) in 1597 the modern style appears as the symmetrical S-shaped scroll without the slightest trace of a *bride* or tie-bar. The design might just as well have been used for embroidery except that the *jours* [or open spaces in the pattern] refer to lace. The co-called *Intagliatela* and "false Spanish lace" [the design cut out of linen edged with colored silk thread with gold forming the picots] appear also in lace work in this period of transition.

Tie-bars or *brides*, very modest in character, appear for the first time in Vecellio's work. Bartolomeo Danieli is the designer who cultivated this important little item, and even the few specimens shown by Lotz (plates 100, 104, 105, 106) make clear how he developed this motive until, in his last book of 1641-1643, it developed into a background for the design (Plate V). And with this we have early baroque lace.

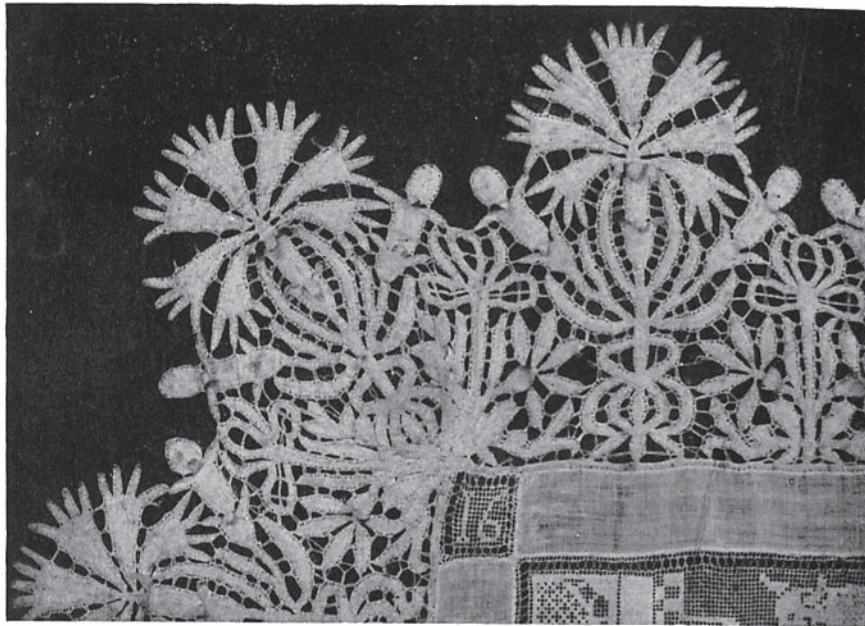


PLATE V
DETAIL OF A LINEN COVERLET WITH FILET INSERTIONS DATED 1612.
ITALIAN, STYLE OF BARTOLOMEO DANIELI.

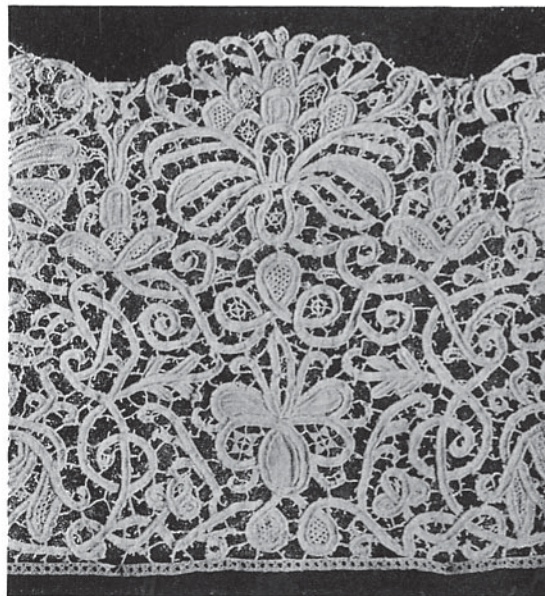


PLATE VI
NEEDLEPOINT LACE, MEZZO-PUNTO, ITALIAN, VENETIAN, XVII CENTURY.

Early baroque is shown in the large size of Danieli's patterns, by the shape of his lace, that is to say, the deep and broad tongue-shaped scallop, and by the foliage (Frontispiece). Danieli's designs are of special interest as, owing to the haphazard chance by which old lace is preserved, it is impossible, with the few specimens that still exist, to follow clearly the transition of Renaissance lace to the baroque style. There is, well known to all lovers of old lace,¹ a most graceful type of the same period as Danieli's late work — Venetian, with long, interlaced band-scrolls radiating flowers, palmettes, carnations, lilies and columbines with curly spurs, in the same manner as Danieli's (Lotz, plates 106, 209) (Plate VI). These laces are, perhaps, more Renaissance in character in their details than Danieli's designs, but on the other hand they show, with very few exceptions, and in marked contrast to Danieli, the straight border of the baroque lace which followed the heavy, broad and tongue-like scallop. These laces, both needlepoint and bobbin, are the late Renaissance predecessors of the baroque scroll lace in which figure and animal motives show less and less. Never were needle and bobbin lace more closely related in technique and design than in this transitional period.

Early baroque and transitional lace is extremely rare and shows certain characteristics peculiar to itself. The scroll work has another rhythm, the leaves become shorter and as a rule there are two main alternating axes in which the leaves and flowers swing symmetrically to the two sides of the design forming in turn a heart and a lyre (Plate VII). The design is less naturalistic and more conventional than the beautiful lace in the Victoria and Albert Museum.² This type is followed by the lace of the Kunstgewerbe Museum in Vienna, and from there the way leads to the close texture of the piece in the Anton Ulrich Museum in Braunschweig, formerly the Vieweg-Brockhaus Collection.³ This type has been called "Spanish" without, as often occurs, any proof. Therefore until more information has been added they may remain as Italian and Venetian.

Danieli is the last Italian lace designer of importance. Lace making

¹ Dreger: *Entwicklungsgeschichte der Spitze*. Wien, 1901. Plates 17, 18, 19, 24a.

Schuette: *Alte Spitzen. Handbuch*. Berlin, 1926 Abb. 94.

Schuette: *Spitzen von der Renaissance bis zum Empire*. Sammlung Vieweg-Brockhaus. Plate 37. Nr. 56, Plate 54, Nr. 40.

Morris and Hague: *Antique Laces of American Collectors*. New York, 1920. 1926. Pl. XXIII, etc.

Ricci: *Antiche Trine*. I, II. Bergamo, 1908, 1911.

² Schuette: *Alte Spitzen. Handbuch*. Abb. 96, 97.

Dreger: *l.c.* Pl. 25 a, 26.

³ Schuette: *Alte Spitzen. Spitzen-Ausstellung*. Leipzig, 1911. Leipzig, 1912, Pl. 32.

Schuette: *Spitzen Renaissance bis Empire*. p. 46. Nr. 92.

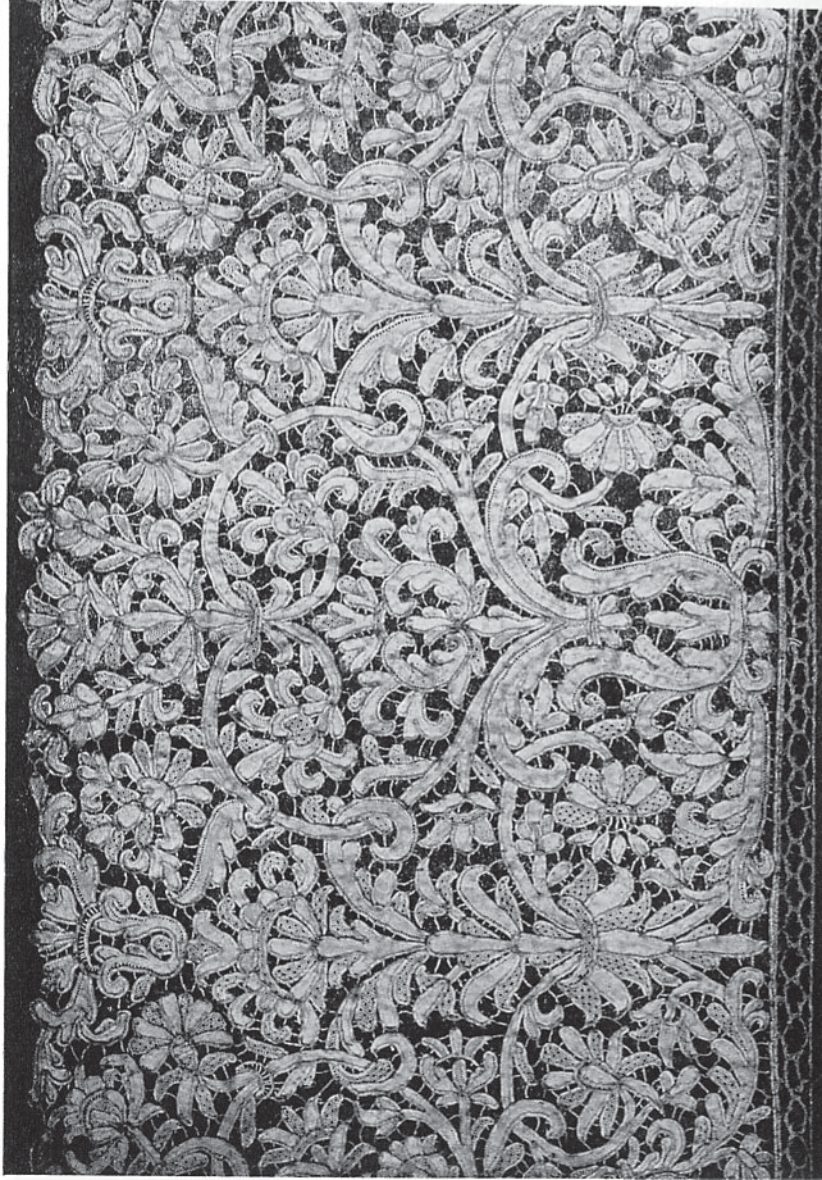


PLATE VII
NEEDLEPOINT, TRANSITION STYLE, VENICE, SECOND THIRD OF THE XVII CENTURY.
KUNSTGEWERBE MUSEUM, VIENNA.

having become an industry in the seventeenth century — of which we know nothing definite about Italy, however interesting it might be — the manufacturers made their own designs for their special use so that there was no longer need for pattern books. It was a rare happening, and one that affords a peculiar interest, to have found in the Print Room of the Victoria and Albert Museum loose leaves of pattern books of Italian lace makers with patterns copied a hundred years ago from books already mentioned, Parasole's *Teatro delle nobili donne* 1616 (Lotz 143) and Danieli, *Libro di diversi disegni*, about 1630 (Lotz 148a), three from each book.⁴ The copies were made, as is noted on the backs of the etchings, by a renowned lace maker, Francesca Bulgarini born Solemni of Sienna, in the years 1841 to 1845 for high-born persons and for merchants in Paris and London who paid from 500 to 900 francs, for that time a high price. This leads to the question as to whether we may have met with one or the other of Signora Bulgarini's works without knowing what it was, or if indeed we shall ever find one.

⁴ The leaves from Parasole are stamped "Luigi Arragoni Libreria Antiquara, Milano" and are inscribed as follows: 1. Corner of a table-cloth (Lotz pl. 101, 199). "Eseguito dalla Bulgarini a commissione del Negoziante Roberto Faure e di Parigi e pagato alla sudd. compresa una golettina ed un paio maniche fr 900." (Executed by the Bulgarini as commission from the dealer Signor Roberto a pair of sleeves at 900 francs.)

2. (Reticella) "Eseguito in ricamo da Francesca Bulgarini Sienese e venduto a Londra per F 500." *On the back*: "Xbre 1852 a Milano £500. Eseguito da Francesca Bulgarini e venduto a Londra nell'Anno 1854." (Reticella executed in embroidery by Francesca Bulgarini, Siennese, and sold in London for 500 francs.)

3. "Eseguito della Bulgarini Francesca a Commissione della Msa Spinola di Genova pagato F 500." (Made by the Bulgarini Francesca as a commission from Msa Spinola in Genoa for 500 francs.) *On the back*: N 27 "Disegni rimasti di Srina—400 imitati alla perfezione da Francesca Bulgarini nata Solemmei fino dell' Anno 1841." (Drawings remaining of Srina—imitating to perfection the fine work of Francesca Bulgarini end of the year 1841.)

The three etchings from Danieli (Lotz 148a) have the initials: F B. One is dated 1841, the others 1842. The one dated 1841 is inscribed: "Eseguito dalla Bulgarini p il corredo di S.A. la Principessa Christina figlia del Granduca di Toscana." (Scallops) Fazzoletto eseguito dalla Bulgarini per S.A.I. e R. la Granduchessa di Toscana 1845." (Executed by Bulgarini for the trousseau of S.A. the Princess Christine, daughter of the Grand Duke of Tuscany." (Scallops) "Handkerchief executed by the Bulgarini for S.A.I. the Grand Duchess of Tuscany 1845.")