



## “The Lace Book”\*      Reviewed

THE lucid setting forth of historical facts, as well as the charming appearance of *The Lace Book*, compensate, in a measure, for the want of fresh information in Mr. Hudson Moore's volume, which is the latest addition to the bibliography of hand-made lace.

On the vexed question of the priority of Italy or Flanders in producing lace in its present form, we are interested to read that it is to the Italians that the author awards the first place, though with a very nice distinction.

“Two countries claim to be the birthplace of lace—Flanders and Italy; and while the Dutch lace contributed more to the making of thread lace, it seems undoubtedly true that Italy was first in the field with this beautiful adornment, but in its earlier form of gold and silver, and, later, with coarse threads of flax. It is in the Italian inventories that the earliest mention is made of lace, and Italy long

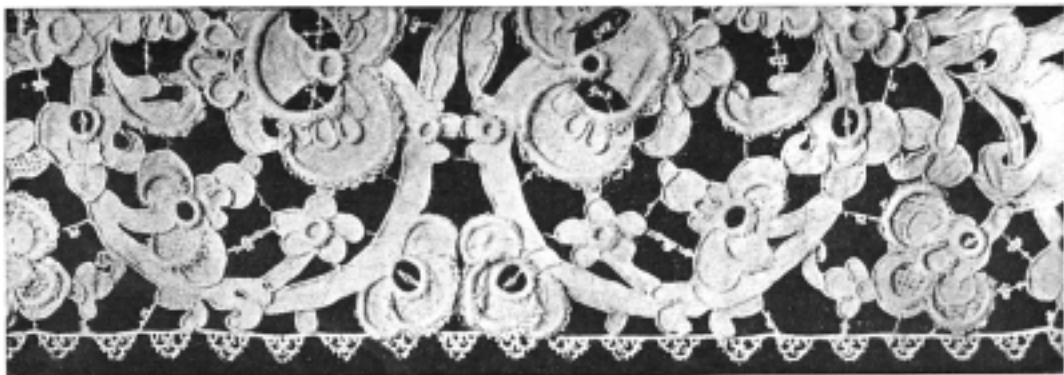
sustained her supremacy in the production of superb points.”

The dividing of the styles of lace into the periods when they flourished, will undoubtedly assist those who already possess a widespread knowledge of the work done in many centres of the industry, in dating early specimens; but there is danger in this method, on account of the overlapping of early styles long after the allotted period, through conservatism, an established reputation of the workers for a particular type, or a desire to reproduce early patterns.

Mr. Moore gives 1480 to 1590 as the geometric or Gothic period without the use of *brides*; from 1590 till 1630 there were floral forms held by *brides*, these being rendered necessary by the heavy character of the lace. Up to and after 1670, “modes and fillings became more elaborate, and development and elaboration were constant. Not only were floral forms attempted, but figures, heads, scenes, and birds, were used, and there was more lace made with meshed or net ground.

“From 1720 to 1780, little bouquets, sprigs,

\* *The Lace Book*. By N. Hudson-Moore. (Chapman and Hall, 21s. net.)



GROS POINT DE VENISE

SIXTEENTH CENTURY

## The Connoisseur

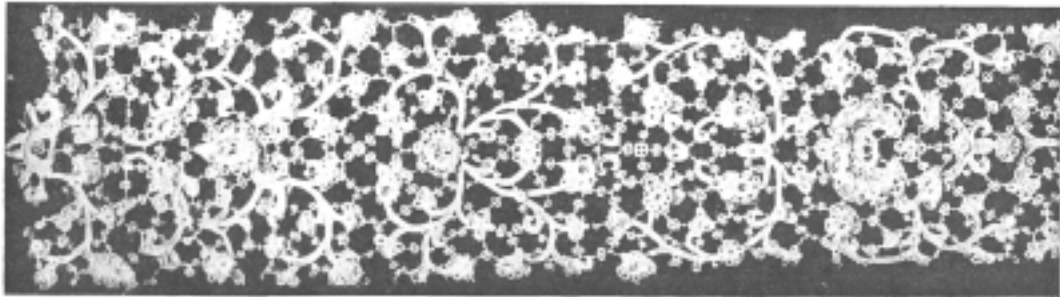
sprays, flowers, leaves, buds, and dots were freely scattered over grounds, and these patterns we have since copied constantly, for their beauty cannot be improved upon."

Under the heading "Points de France," we read Mr. Moore's theory of the growth of the *réseau*: "During the time of Louis XIV. the ground work of Points de France had been rather regular meshes, which were ornamented by loops or picots. Little by little these meshes were reduced in size, and grew to the ground called *petit réseau*, or small mesh."

"The final evolution of Point d'Alençon was completed by about 1678, and from this time was called by the distinctive title of Alençon. The quality of this lace, which is needlepoint, is its crisp firmness, due to the character of the

price paid was £460 for a founce of Point d'Argentan, 4 yards long and 25 ins. deep; the pattern was a graceful one, with scrolls and arabesques. A length of Point de Venise, 58 ins. long and 24 ins. deep, brought £360; while 4 yards of the finest old Italian Rose Point, although only 11½ ins. deep, brought the sum of £420.

Experienced lace buyers need no reminder, but lest such figures should discourage those who would wish to purchase old lace, or mislead any who wish to sell, we must emphasize the fact that in lace it is on the condition of the specimens that the value almost entirely depends. The prices quoted above were high, but the quality and condition were exceptional. Historic connection, well authenticated, counts for something,



PUNTO TAGLIATO A FOGLIAMI

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

cordonnet, or outline to the edge of the pattern, which is made of horse hair, giving it a peculiar wiry feeling, as well as a firmness, to which is due the preservation of much of this perishable fabric. Louis XIV. and Louis XV. were its two greatest patrons; and with the Revolution in 1794 it suffered greatly, and has never again resumed the place it once held."

The prices recently given for laces are mentioned from time to time throughout *The Lace Book*, and add very considerably to its interest; thus, "The prices paid for Alençon in auctions to-day compare favourably with what they brought in the hey-day of their fame. Within the past year, at Christie's, in London, an Alençon panel for a dress front, 44 ins. deep and 17 ins. wide, brought £43; a length of 2½ yards of flouncing, 14 ins. deep, showing a charming design of flowers tied up with ribbons, sold for £46."

Several of the prices given at the sale of Sir William Drake's fine collection, which came under the hammer in 1902, are given. The highest

as in the case of a piece of Alençon made for the little King of Rome, in which the N appeared amongst floral forms, and which naturally fetched a high price recently; but, as a rule, fine workmanship and condition are the most important qualities in augmenting the price of lace.

Amongst the bobbin laces, those of Devonshire and Buckingham are fully described in *The Lace Book*, and we are glad to note that the author adopts the distinctive name—bobbin lace—for the work made by the twisting of the threads by means of the bobbins; rather than the name pillow lace, which was used by Mrs. Bury Palliser. It was first pointed out by Mrs. Nevill Jackson, in her *History of Hand-made Lace*, that as both needle point and bobbin laces are supported on a pillow in the hands of the worker, the instrument used for making, rather than the pillow, should be used as the distinctive name.

"The laces of England, chiefly bobbin made, are said to have been taught to English workers by the industrious Flemings. During the sixteenth

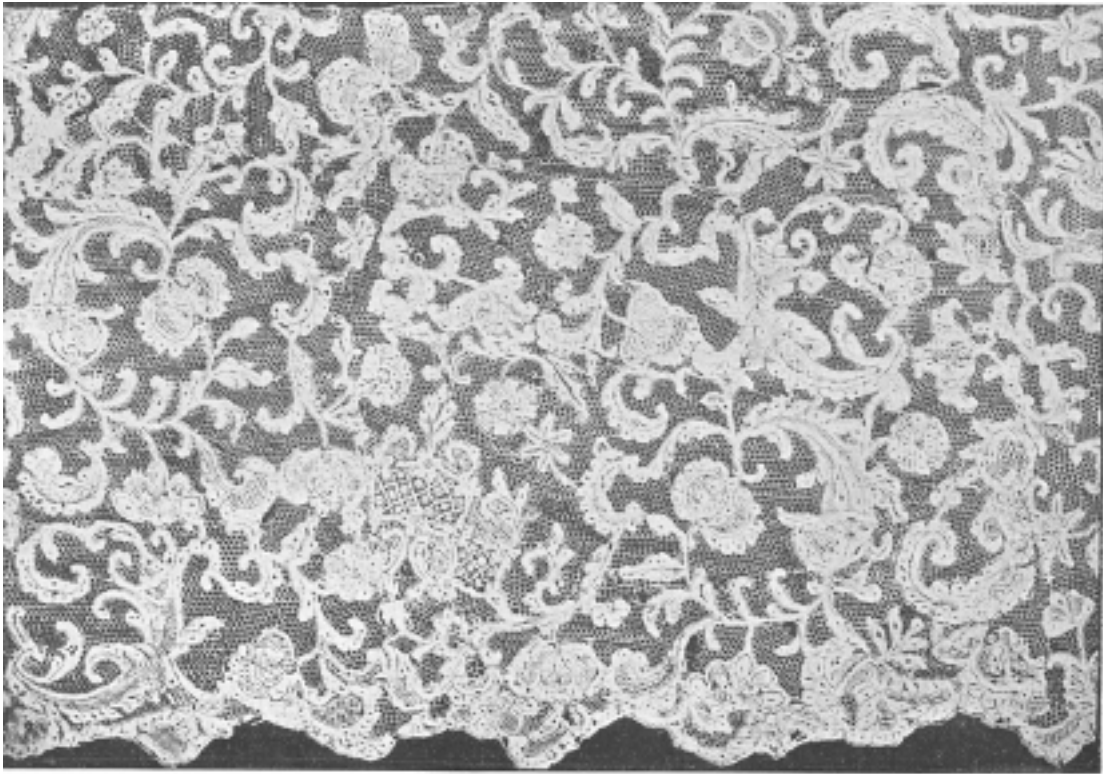
## The Lace Book

and seventeenth centuries, the manufacture extended over an area which included the counties of Dorset, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Oxford, and Devon." Several references are made to the fact that men were busy workers of lace in their leisure time, both boys and girls being taught the art in the schools. Berkeley, in his *Word to the Wise*, reads a reproof to Irish labourers by drawing pictures of English thrift in this particular.

The indebtedness of Spain, for her knowledge of lace-making, to Flanders is also pointed out by Mr. Moore. "During the sixteenth century, when Flanders was Spanish territory, the Spaniards learned all that the Flemings had to teach in the art of bobbin laces, and of twisting and plaiting gold thread. The convent laces were, however, chiefly made of thread (flax), "rich and heavy, and resembling the Gros Points de Venise, from which, too, they were copied. There were finer

laces made, too, like the choice French and Italian laces, and at the dissolution of the monasteries about the middle of the nineteenth century, many of these laces were released and sold. Now were revealed, for the first time, specimens of those rich fabrics, on which many a nun spent her eyesight and her life, and unfinished pieces of lace still stitched on their bits of parchment, marked with the name of the sister who was expected to make it, are parts of the property preserved in the convents."

We have quoted sufficient of *The Lace Book* to show that Messrs. Chapman & Hall have published a very interesting book on this most fascinating subject. Of the seventy plates which illustrate it, showing specimens of lace or its wear in famous portraits, perhaps those from photographs of pictures by famous masters are the most successful; but where the standard of excellence is so high, it were invidious to make distinctions.



POINT DE VENISE À RÉSEAU

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY NEEDLE-POINT LACE