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THE MENTOR

LACE AND LACE
MAKING

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W. S. Moffat
EDITOR

THE richest and most beautiful of all laces is Venetian Point, of which there are three well-defined kinds: (1) Venetian Raised Point (*Gros Point de Venise*) (grow pwan deh vay-nee-z') and Rose Point; (2) Venetian Flat Point; and (3) Venetian Grounded Point, or *Point de Venise à réseau* (including *Punto di Burano*) (poon'-toe dee boo-rah'-no).

To these magnificent and delicate laces the poetic name of *Punto in Aria* (stitch in the air) was given to distinguish them from older forms.

The most superb and the most complicated of all Point Lace is Venetian Raised Point, which differs from the ordinary needle point in high relief by means of a padded *cordonnet* (the thread that outlines the pattern), which is button-holed over. The artistic patterns consist of large, fantastic flowers opening from rich foliage and scrolls in the splendid Renaissance way. The patterns are connected by *brides*, and the *brides* are often tipped with *picots*. The terms *brides* and *picots* are defined in the main article in this number.

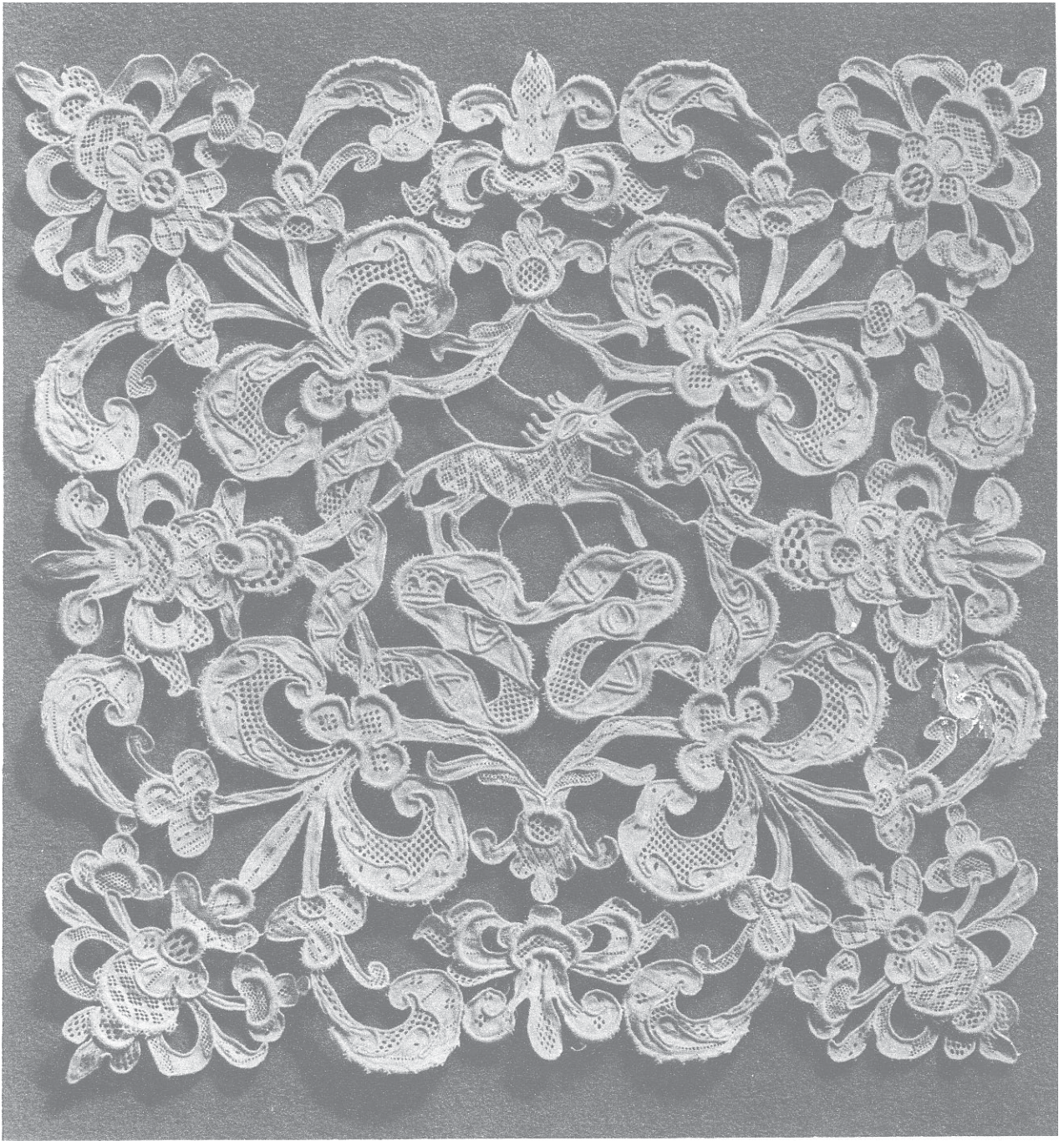
Rose Point differs little from Venetian Raised Point. The patterns are, however, smaller; *brides* play a more important part in the design; the enriching *picots* are more abundant; and to the *picots* little whirls and rosettes are added. The raised *cordonnet*, moreover, is edged with innumerable loops. Because of the whirling, snowy effect of Venetian Rose Point the descriptive name of *Point de neige* (pwan deh nayzh) (Snow-flake Lace) had been given.

Venetian Flat Point is distinguished by the absence of the raised thread, or *cordonnet*. The *brides* are important in the general design and are tipped with spiky *picots*. A variety of this is the famous Coralline Point, which, according to legend, originated with a lace-worker of Venice who took for her design the net of her fisherman lover in which a piece of sea-weed was entangled. The general effect of Coralline Point is a tangle; for the *brides* seem to wander at will

around the branching foliage. This lace is very beautiful, though lacking in clear outlines. It has never been produced anywhere but on the shores of the Adriatic.

Venetian Grounded Point, or *Point de Venise à réseau*, has a net background, as the name shows. It was inspired by the *Point d'Alençon*, produced in France in imitation of Venetian Raised Point. After *Point d'Alençon* appeared, the Venetians, hoping to win back the trade that they had lost by the enterprise of Louis XIV's great minister, Colbert, imitated the net ground of the French. The pattern, which was a new idea for Point lace, is usually of lilies, or other flowers, and the edge of the lace is generally in the form of a shallow scallop that forms part of the design. The *cordonnet* of Venetian Grounded Point is not outlined in button-hole (as in *Alençon*), but is merely stitched down round the outline of the pattern.

The manufacture of this Grounded Point lasted in Burano (Venice) till the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was revived in 1872 under the patronage of the King and Queen of Italy. The old Burano laces were a coarser outcome of the *Point de Venise à réseau*. The Burano makers copied the late *Alençon* patterns. The mesh of the Burano *réseau* is square (as in *Alençon*) and the *cordonnet* is (like Brussels needlepoint) stitched around the outline. The *Alençon* way of covering a horsehair outline with a button-hole stitch was not followed at Burano. Burano mesh is rounder than *Alençon*; and the unevenness of the thread gives Burano *réseau* a somewhat streaked, or cloudy appearance.



· VENETIAN RAISED POINT
CHALICE VEIL, 1650

VENICE was chiefly known for her Point Lace. Genoa produced almost exclusively Pillow Lace. Genoa was a great mart for Pillow Lace during the greater part of the seventeenth century. The handsome "Collar Lace," with scalloped border, is familiar in portraits by Rubens, Coques (kok), Van Dyck and Rembrandt.

It is bolder in design than the Flemish lace, also used on collars and made familiar to us by portraits.

There are two kinds of Genoese lace: (1) Made with plaits of four threads in each, the scallops somewhat pointed and having little oval ornaments called "wheat ears" (also to be noted in Maltese lace); and (2) a Tape Guipure, (gee-pure') the tape twisted into spiral forms and connected by *brides*, tipped with *picots*.

The most beautiful of all Italian pillow laces is *Punto di Milano*, or Milan Point, which name describes the quality and not the class. The tape pattern of this lace is made first and the ground network is filled in afterwards, sloping in all directions to fit the spaces. The diamond shaped mesh of Milan Point, with a plait of four threads, greatly resembles the network of Valenciennes.

Ruskin writes accurately:

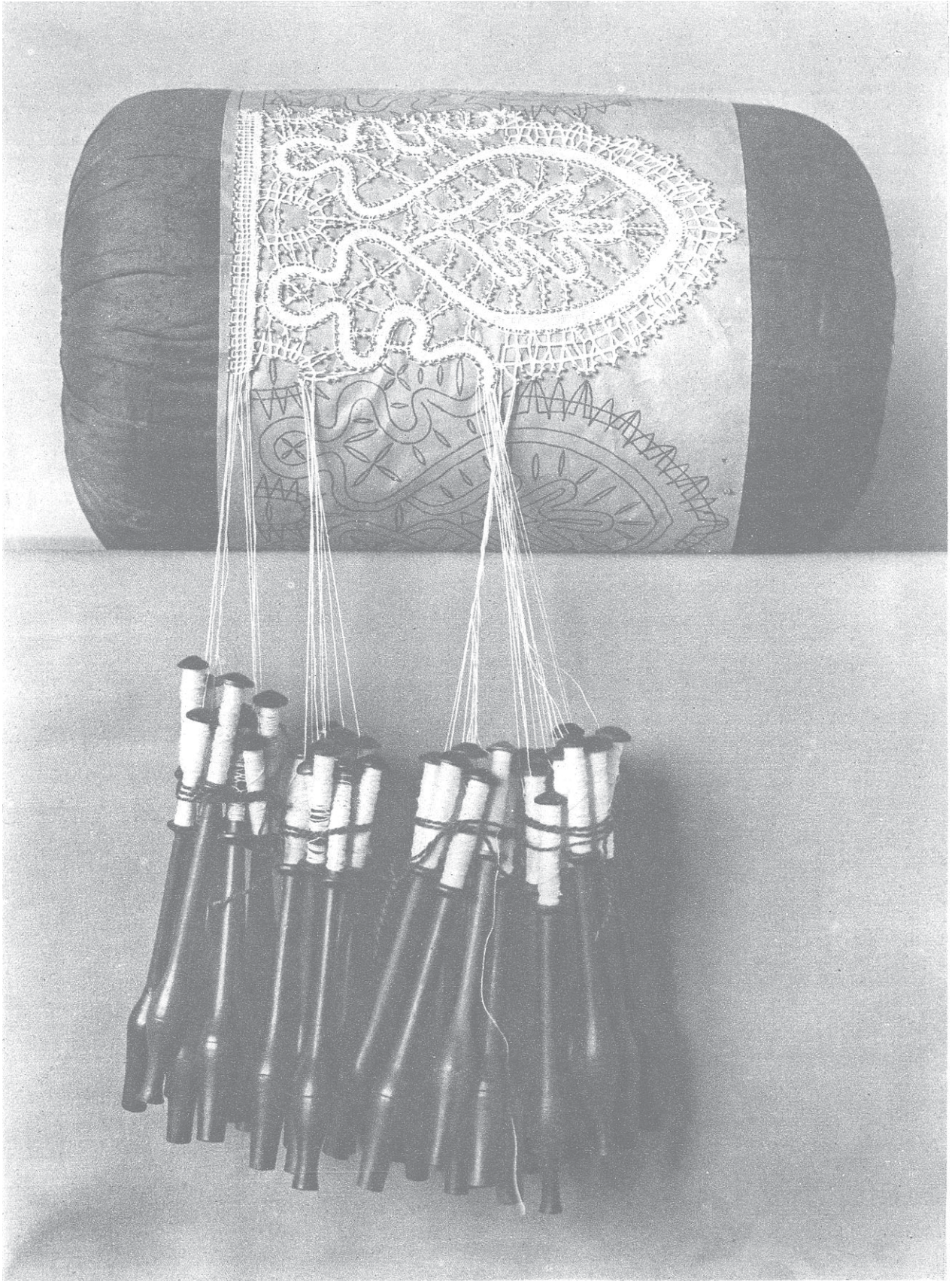
"The real good of a piece of lace you will find is that it should show first that the designer of it had a pretty fancy; next, that the maker of it had fine fingers; lastly, that the wearer of it has worthiness

or dignity enough to obtain what is difficult to obtain and common sense enough not to wear it on all occasions."

This wonderful art was quaintly described by the Dutch poet J. Van Eyck, in 1651, as follows:

"Of many arts one surpasses all; the threads woven by the strange power of the hand, threads which the dropping spider would in vain attempt to imitate, and which Pallas would confess she had never known.

"The maiden, seated at her work, plies her fingers and flashes the smooth balls and thousand threads into the circle. Often she fastens with her hand the innumerable needles to bring out the various figures of the pattern; often again she unfastens them. The issue is a fine web, open to the air with many an aperture, which feeds the pride of the whole globe; which encircles with its fine border cloaks and tuckers, and shows grandly round the throats of kings; and, what is more surprising, this web is of the lightness of a feather, which in its price is too heavy for our purses."



PILLOW AND BOBBINS

POINT D'ALENÇON has been called the "Queen of Lace." It was first made in 1665. Louis XIV had issued laws forbidding extravagant sums to be spent by his courtiers for Italian lace. They paid no heed. Thereupon Colbert, the King's prime minister, decided to improve the native laces and to make them

fashionable, hoping to keep the money at home. He, therefore, established a number of schools, among which was one near Alençon, where lace was soon produced in exact imitation of Venetian Point. By royal decree it was called "*Point de France*." The name lasted till 1690.

An authority says: "It is impossible now to distinguish the earliest lace so called and produced in Alençon from the finest Venetian Point. The designs are in the same style and the workmanship is extremely beautiful; but by degrees, as greater freedom was very wisely allowed to the workers, a new and separate style developed itself. The patterns became smaller and more delicate, finer thread was employed than that made use of in Italy, *brides* became closer and more regular in arrangement, and, finally, the needlework *réseau* (ground) was invented in imitation of the pillow laces of the neighboring Flemish provinces, and we see attained in perfection the style of lace now known as Point d'Alençon."

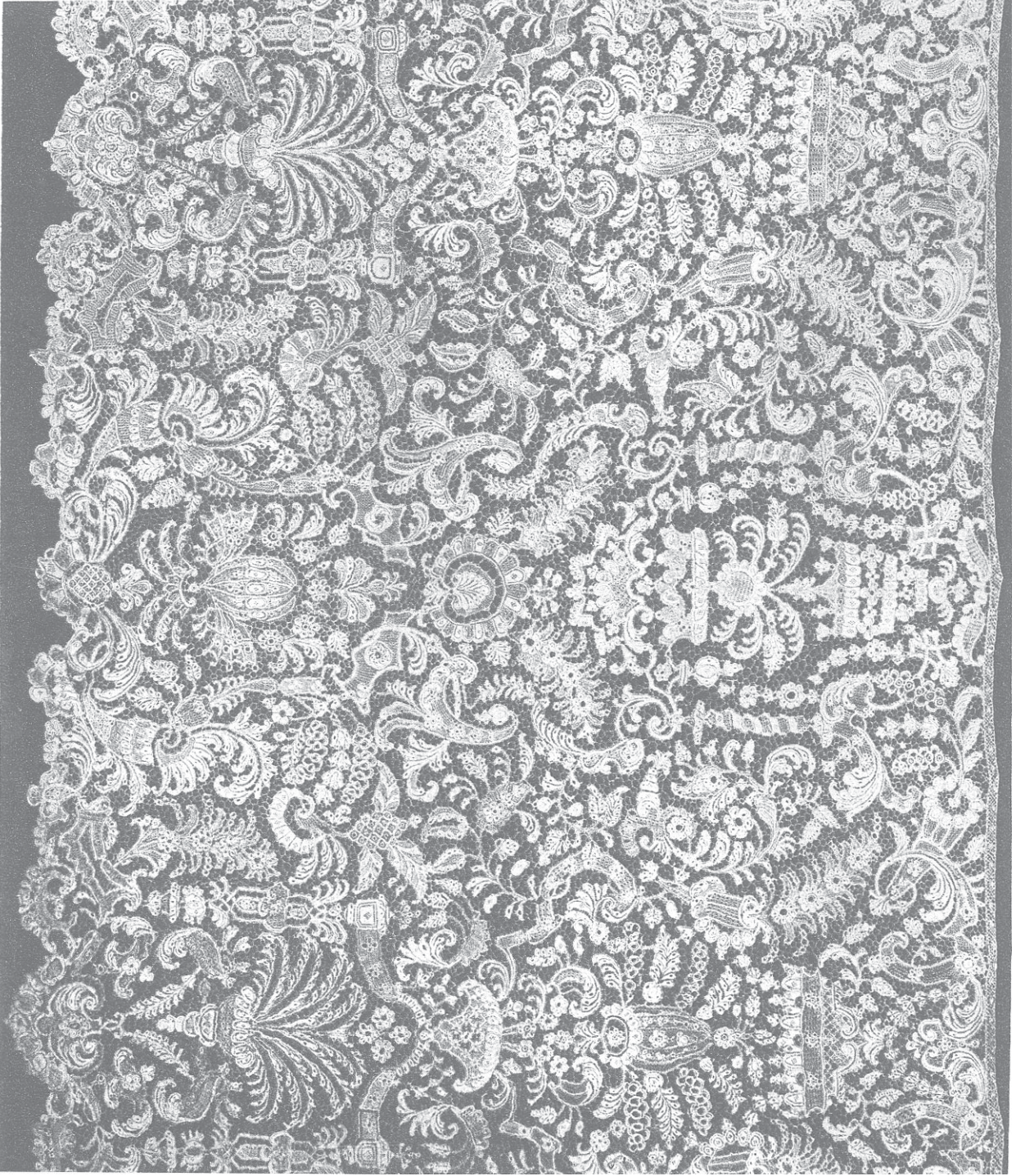
Stupendous prices were paid for this glorious lace. Its marvelous delicacy, only to be appreciated by the use of a

magnifying-glass, is a characteristic. Another characteristic is the thick outline (*cordannel*) which, being worked (with button-holed stitches) over horsehair, is firmer and heavier than that of any other lace. *Point d'Alençon* is usually regarded as a "winter lace."

The factory became extinct during the Revolution, when many lace-workers were guillotined because of their association with the aristocracy and production of such an aristocratic adornment. In the days of Louis XVI, the *réseau* was sprinkled with spots, tears, sprigs and insects. Revived in Napoleon's day, bees were introduced. The "powdering," or sprinkling, is still used in combination with flowers.

At present the finest *Point d'Alençon* is made at Bayeux (by-yuh), in France, and in Burano, near Venice. The magnificent dress that Napoleon III bought for the Empress Eugénie in 1859 at the Exposition, for which he paid 200,000 francs (\$40,000), was of this lace. The Empress Eugénie gave it to Pope Leo XIII, who wore it as a rochet (a garment similar to a surplice, but with closer sleeves or without sleeves).

POINT D'ALENÇON



MALINES is the French name for Belgian Mechlin; consequently its lace is known as both Point de Malines (mah-leen') and Mechlin. Before 1665 nearly all the lace made in Flanders was called "Malines." The genuine Mechlin Point (not a needlepoint but a pillow lace), called Point to define its quality, became fash-

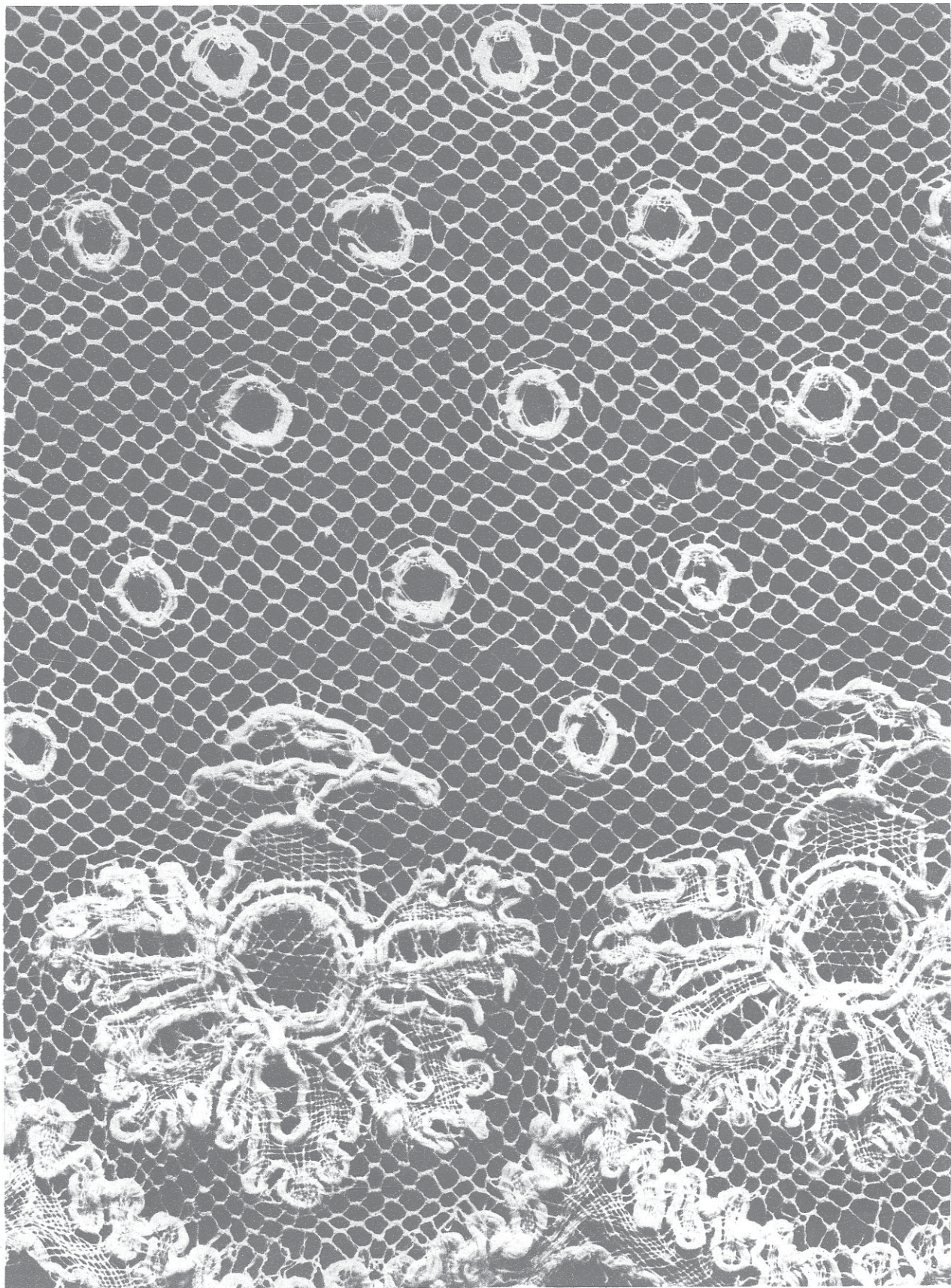
ionable in England at the end of the seventeenth century. Queen Anne purchased large amounts of it. Mechlin was also a great favorite of Queen Charlotte. It is regarded as a "summer lace," and was much used to trim the filmy Indian muslin dresses so fashionable in the early nineteenth century. Mechlin lace was always costly. The finest Antwerp thread was used. The ground and pattern are worked together, and two kinds of *réseau* are used; in one, the meshes are circular; in the other, hexagonal.

Mechlin is also sometimes grounded on an ornamental *réseau*. The *Fond de neige* (fon deh nayzh), meaning snowy background, is often used; also the *Oeil de Perdrix* (u [as in urn]-ee' deh pare-dree), meaning

partridge eye; and also the Chantilly back ground known as *Fond Chint* (fohn-shahn), which is a net made of tiny six-pointed stars.

The patterns of the earliest Mechlin lace resemble those of Brussels, but they are heavier. A four-petaled flower as a filling for the spaces in the scrolls is one characteristic of Mechlin.

Mechlin produced a style of its own. The pattern, usually floral, forms the edge of the lace, and the *réseau* (network) is sprinkled with small flowers, or spots. The rose and carnation are the favorite flowers. Open spaces filled in with *brides* give this exquisite lace a charming delicacy. Connoisseurs rank Mechlin very high.



MECHLIN
GREATLY MAGNIFIED

IT is said that bobbin lace was begun at Valenciennes in the fifteenth century, when the town belonged to Flemish Hainault (ay'-no); but the Valenciennes that we know is supposed to have been developed from the lace factory founded by Colbert in the neighboring town of Le Quesnoy (leh kay-nwah). The latter drops from

notice as Valenciennes comes into favor. Le Quesnoy, according to tradition, contributed the *Fond de neige* (snowy background) to the world of lace-workers.

Valenciennes is the most beautiful of all French pillow laces. It is made in one piece, the same threads forming *toié* (twah-lay) and *réseau*. Its peculiarity is the absence of any *cordannel*. The *réseau* (network) is fine and compact, and the flowers (tulips, carnations, iris, or anemones) resemble cambric in texture.

The earliest Valenciennes designs consist of flowers and scrolls in thick, close stitches. Minute circles form the *réseau*.

Valenciennes was the most expensive of all pillow lace to make, on account of the number of bobbins required. It took one worker ten months, working fifteen hours a day, to make a pair of sleeve ruffles for a man. The lace-workers sat from four in the morning till eight at night in cellars, earning only a few pennies a day. Many went blind before they reached the age of thirty. It was considered a great triumph when a whole piece of lace could be worked "all by the same hand"; and such a piece was sold for a large price.

From 1725 to 1780 there were from 3,000 to 4,000 lace-workers in the town, where they made what the trade called "*vraie Valenciennes*" (true Valenciennes), while the suburbs and vicinity produced "*fausse Valenciennes*" (false Valenciennes).

Valenciennes was not regarded as a "*dentelle de grande toilette*" (lace for full dress). Nor was it a "Church lace." It was used chiefly for ruffles, cravats, fichus (fee'-shoo), barbes, *négligés* (neg'-lee-zhay) and trimmings. It was, however, tremendously popular.

Valenciennes lace fell with the monarchy. After the Revolution, many lace-workers fled into Belgium; and Alost (al-lost), Ypres (eepr), Bruges (broo'-jiz), Ghent (gahn), Menin (may-nan), and Courtrai (coor-tray) became centers for its manufacture. The *réseau* of every town was distinctive.

The Valenciennes of the present day is not so elaborate or fine as old Valenciennes.

The dotted or "*semé*" (seh-may'), pattern is usually worked with a scalloped border, containing a leaf, or petal, or feather,



VALENCIENNES—THREE SPECIMENS
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY