



FIG. 1.—INSERTION OF CARRICKMACROSS *appliqué* LACE, MADE AT THE BATH AND SHIRLEY SCHOOLS, CARRICKMACROSS, FROM A DESIGN BY MISS EMILY ANDERSON.

## LACEMAKING IN IRELAND.

BY ALAN S. COLE, OF THE SCIENCE AND ART DEPARTMENT.



LACEMAKING in Ireland, regarded as something more than a name to cover a number of kindly meant but spasmodic efforts to find employment for the poor, has to compete with lacemaking in any other part of the world. And although a good deal that is plausible might be urged against the fairness of comparing this Irish industry with similar industries in France and Belgium, it is only by means of such a comparison that one can arrive at a just idea of the position which the Irish industry occupies. To do this with completeness one would have to bring together a number of trade statistics which are not readily obtainable. Certain conditions of the lacemaking industry however are fairly well known, and upon these conditions the success of the industry really seems to depend. I propose therefore to make those conditions the principal topics of this article.

Now the art of lacemaking by hand has been pursued for close upon four hundred years in Italy, the Netherlands, and France. The continuity of its traditions in those countries is an element in its life there, the parallel to which is not apparently to be traced in either England or Ireland. In its earliest days, lacemaking abroad, practised as it was by peasant women and religious communities, secured the support of a *clientèle* of patrons, whose whimsical tastes stimulated the exercise of artistic invention and subtle handicraft. But whenever that was relaxed, the industry and its trade were seriously affected. Supply stimulated demand, and the nature of the demand helped to keep up a high character of supply.

The merchant or dealer took early note of these conditions in the life of the art. His finger was always upon the pulse of fashion. He knew not only to what designers to turn for ornamental patterns but also how to guide them in inventing devices; he knew what local agents to employ in directing and supervising the peasant women in their cottages to make the required lace from such patterns, and good thread was an article he himself supplied to the lace workers for most of the commissions he gave them. Collecting the laces as made, and then placing them for sale, were matters of ordinary commerce with which of course the dealer was well acquainted. This organized employment, in one part of Europe, of village women's labour to satisfy the wants of fashion, gave rise to hazy ideas about the possibilities of such labour in other parts of Europe; and the general public in England and Ireland, for instance, concluded that a principal characteristic of lacemaking, as a wage-earning employment was

that it was a peasant and cottage industry. This aspect of the industry commended itself to the notice of benevolent persons anxious to do good to their poorer sisters. Experience however has shown that simple benevolence does not imply artistic perception, or capacity to direct; in fact the impulsive sentiment of benevolence usually leads to results different from the more lasting ones of commercial discipline. The influence of benevolence is somewhat strongly marked in its connexion with lacemaking in Ireland. Widespread as lacemaking had become amongst the women of France and Flanders by the end of the seventeenth century, it was at that time somewhat extensively practised in England, whence it passed over in a modified degree to Ireland. Here from the beginning, the conditions seem to have been too weakly to secure for it a fairly promising foothold. This may

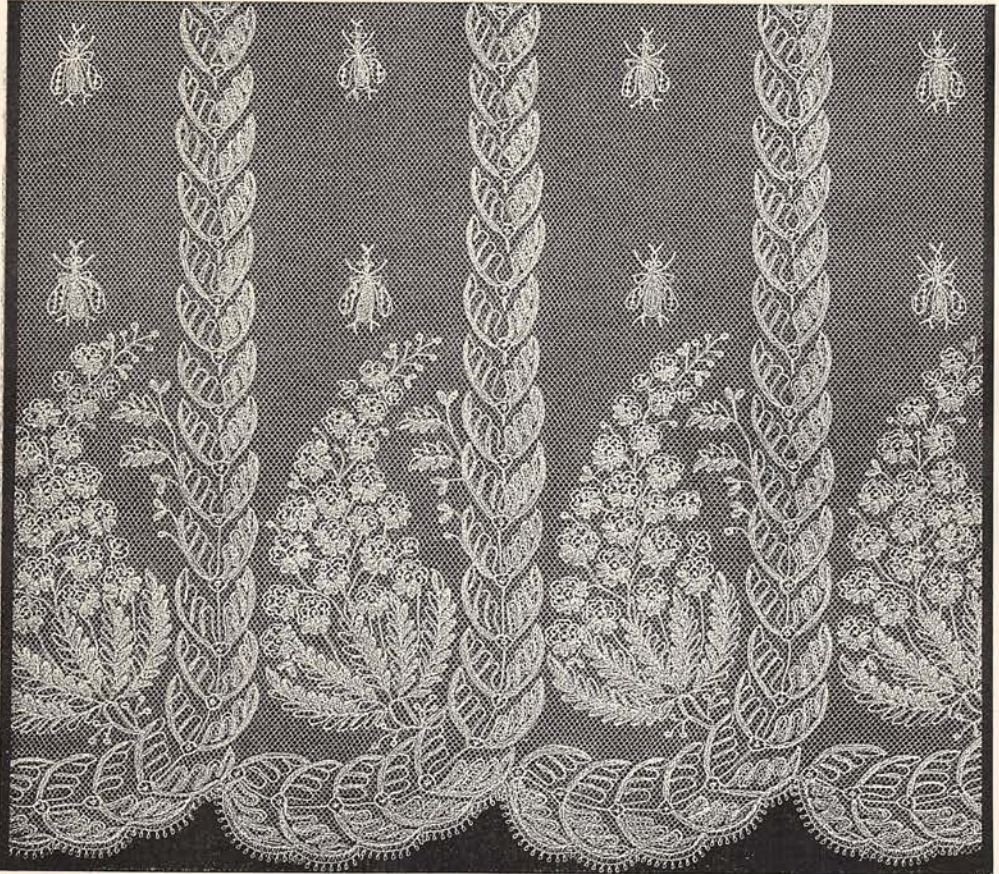


FIG. 2.—PART OF A LIMERICK LACE FLOUNCE, MADE BY WORKERS UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MRS. R. VERE O'BRIEN FOR MESSRS. HAYWARDS (LONDON), FROM A POINT D'ALENÇON DESIGN.

be inferred from the fact that in the year 1743 the Royal Dublin Society granted to a benevolent and energetic lady, Lady Arabella Denny, thirty pounds a year to be distributed by her as she pleased in prizes to those who excelled in lacemaking. She was possibly fired with ambition to promote the industry in Ireland by noting, in the southern counties of England, the diligence of the "free maids who weave their threads with bones," as well as by reading passages in Bishop Berkeley's *Word to the Wise*, which describes how on a summer's evening common labourers were to be seen "sitting along the streets of a town or village, each at his own door with a cushion before him, making bone lace, and earning more in an evening's pastime than an Irish family would in a whole day." She seems to have set to work to teach children in a few of the Irish poor-houses how to make "Bone lace"—a small trimming lace something like the *torchon* of modern commerce, so that they should win the prizes. The Royal Dublin Society continued its annual grants for thirty years. Nevertheless

as soon as, or very shortly after, the death of Lady Arabella Denny occurred, the Irish bone lacemaking became extinct. The effort to give it life had depended upon benevolence and lacked those elements which were necessary to place the industry in a condition for it to compete successfully with similar industries flourishing elsewhere. But the tradition of the industry having been practised in Ireland survived and gave ground for new attempts in reviving the work early in the present century. Like the preceding one, these attempts were due rather to a spirit of philanthropy than to enterprise launched with definite aim and knowledge of necessary conditions. The first of these attempts was made it is said in 1820, and others soon followed. In one place we hear of the rector's wife teaching her housemaid to imitate Italian lace and so spreading the industry to peasant women in the village, with enough success to induce private friends to buy or give orders for similar imitations. Small groups of lace-makers were thus formed. But trade in their out-put was of an amateur nature, inevitably precarious, and



FIG. 3.—PART OF A FLOUNCE OF CARRICKMACROSS *appliqué* LACE, MADE AT THE BATH AND SHIRLEY SCHOOLS, CARRICKMACROSS, FROM A DESIGN BY MISS EMILY ANDERSON.

beset with the difficulties which attend the want of experience in regulating wages and prices. At Limerick a rather more serious endeavour was made. "Mr. Charles Walker, a native of Oxfordshire, while studying for the church married the daughter of a lace manufacturer. He gave up his professional prospects to engage in lacemaking; and in the year 1829 he brought over from England twenty-four girls as teachers, and they commenced to teach the Irish in the city of Limerick" how to embroider net in imitation of the patterned *tulle*, *blonde*, and Brussels pillow laces which were in considerable vogue at that time. This sort of work was identical in character with the *Broderies de Luneville*, which had been flourishing in France since 1800, and continued to do so as late as 1860. Mr. Walker's efforts succeeded so well that in a short time some fifteen hundred women were employed. But in less than fifty years the fifteen hundred had dwindled down to three hundred. The name of Limerick lace had nevertheless established itself. About 1846 another form of Irish lace, or more properly speaking an embroidery on net and with cut cambric, acquired some notoriety. This was the Carrickmacross lace. Now both the Limerick and Carrickmacross laces educed a good deal of skill in dainty needlework. So much so, indeed, that an occasional tradesman saw business in the sale of such things, and employed travellers and local agents to collect them for shops. To this limited extent a commercial spirit may be said to have entered into the enterprises of benevolence. But, as it is not unusual, when benevolence failed to hit public

taste, and its productions would not sell, the tradesman turned his attention to other vendible goods. It was his part to sell what he could, and he did not find it worth his while to try, like his foreign *confrère*, to manage the industry. The uncertain and declining sales of Irish lace then gave birth to a "Ladies' Industrial Society for Ireland," whose announced object was to correspond with English and foreign acquaintances to induce them to sell, free of charge, any Irish work sent to them, and to remit to the owners the full amount that their work realized. With a programme so innocent of commercial conditions it is not surprising that the Ladies' Society did not live many years. During its short term of existence it experimented with diffusion of instruction in

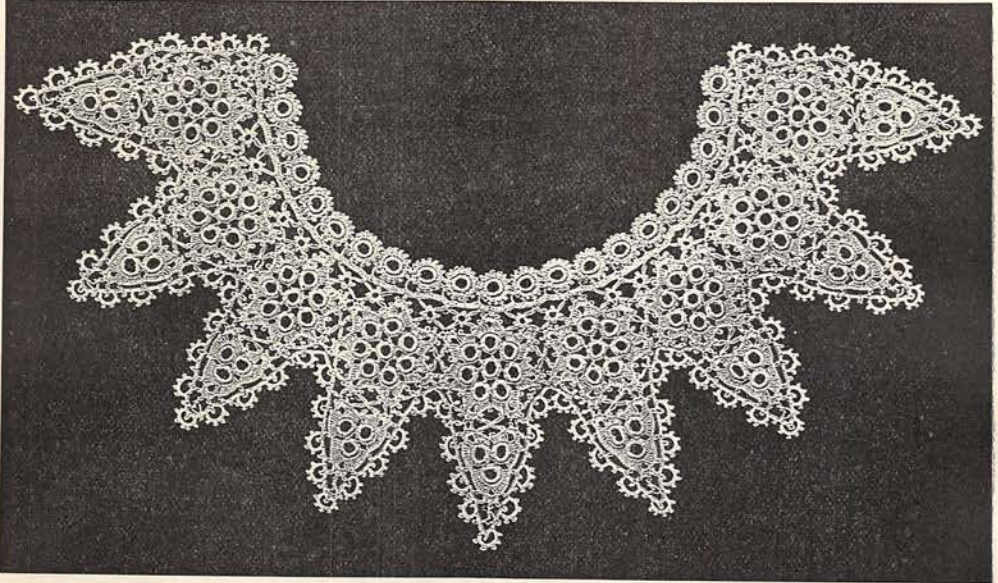


FIG. 4.—COLLAR OF CROCHET BY WORKERS IN CO. CORK, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MR. MICHAEL HOLLAND (MESSRS. DWYER OF CORK).

lacemaking, and the encouragement of ornamental designing, to which last I shall refer shortly. But the operations of the society were not very far reaching, and, as usual, were undertaken under the stimulus of benevolence.

At the time of the famine in Ireland (1847) other efforts of benevolence sought to

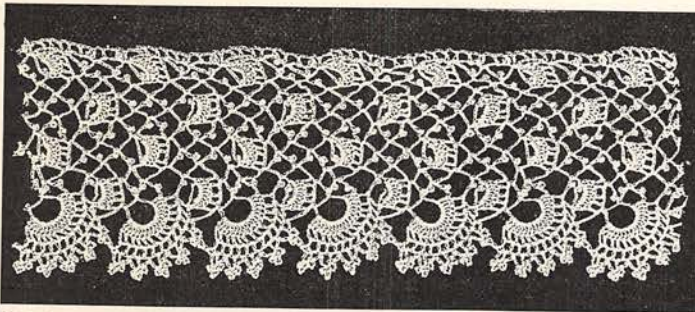


FIG. 5.—CROCHET EDGING, MADE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MR. MICHAEL HOLLAND (MESSRS. DWYER OF CORK).

allay distress by teaching women and girls to earn something out of lacemaking, and by forcing a sale for the work. Convents which had sprung into existence, and managed poor schools, gave instruction in the craft, and set apart work-rooms where adults also might make lace. Some of the nuns were clever at making needlepoint laces, but were not im-

pressed with the necessity of skilfully designing ornamental patterns for their pupils. Clumsy ornaments were wrought in various sorts of needlepoint lace and sold through charitable persons, and even through professional dealers. Crochet work in imitation of needle-made laces appears to have arisen about this time, and was very readily learnt and produced by a number of peasant girls in the south and north of Ireland: so too a form of netting known as tating. Thus Irish lacemaking, although without

refinement of pattern, had assumed varied forms of expression which have survived to the present day, and it is to this variety of work appealing to different tastes that the industry seems to owe its continuance.

About 1853 some organization was undertaken for training talent in composing and drawing ornamental patterns suited to lace.

As already stated, this essential element in the industry had always been to the fore abroad. Although well recognized by certain leaders of thought, it had not been understood either in England or Ireland; and apparently to no purpose had Bishop Berkeley written early in the eighteenth century: "How could France and Flanders have drawn so much money from other countries for figured silks, lace, and tapestry if they had not had their Academies of Design?"

Now the Ladies' Industrial Society for Ireland, which has been mentioned already, besides selling work, established a Normal Lace School in Dublin in 1851, where pupils were taken in at moderate fees and instructed in making pillow laces. The school petitioned Government for a grant in aid of its expenses, and a Parliamentary vote of £500 was accorded to it. The committee of the school at once engaged a more commodious house, and made application for an Art teacher to instruct the lace pupils in drawing and the principles of design. The drawing classes had not been at work for more than a year when the committee regretted being obliged to report that, whilst their drawing classes had steadily increased, the lacemaking had ceased to be "any attraction to the school." The consequence of this was that further aid from Government was not granted, and the Normal Lace School, as such, closed.

Looking back upon what the school had done, and how it had trained a certain number of pupils to make pillow lace, the quality of which was highly commended by a leading London lace merchant in 1853, it is rather hard to understand that in three years its failure was, as officially ascribed, really due to the fact "that there is not sufficient demand for the labour to make its exercise profitable." The managers of the school were benevolent persons, and at the outset attempted to make their school support itself by fees paid by students, by the proceeds of bazaars and other entertainments. Students were consequently free to pick and choose how much, or how little, or for how long, they would learn lacemaking. The Ladies' Industrial Society assumed that the work turned out by the pupils deserved treatment as a marketable commodity, and accordingly plunged into the error of "giving more than the whole-



FIG. 6.—PART OF A CURTAIN of *appliqué* ON NET, OR CARRICKMACROSS LACE, MADE AT THE LACE SCHOOL OF THE CONVENT OF MERCY, KINSALE, CO. CORK, FROM A DESIGN BY MISS EMILY ANDERSON.

sale price for it in order to prevent the workers from being discouraged in their first attempts." Then the drawing classes at the school, as has been seen, were allowed to supersede the lacemaking classes. There was no distinct notion at the school that the composition of lace patterns was a special branch of instruction to be followed by persons other than the actual makers of laces. Lacemakers are not as a body specially fitted to be trained into designers of ornament any more than bricklayers are peculiarly destined to become architects. The failure of the school cannot therefore



FIG. 7.—RAISED NEEDLEPOINT LACE, MADE AT THE CARMELITE CONVENT, NEW ROSS, CO. WEXFORD, FROM A DESIGN BY MR. MICHAEL HAYES.

be set down wholly to an insufficiency of demand for lace. It is more directly traceable to the system of optional and varied instruction adopted by the managers of the school,



FIG. 8.—RAISED NEEDLEPOINT LACE, WORKED AT THE CARMELITE CONVENT, NEW ROSS, CO. WEXFORD, FROM A DESIGN BY MISS PERRY OF CORK SCHOOL OF ART.

in whose report occur such passages as "the lacemaking is not sought either by the pupils themselves or by their parents for them;" and again, "since the committee received Parliamentary aid it was enabled to enlarge the education given in the school, appropriating a greater portion of the pupils' time to elementary instruction." The plea for lacemaking secured a Parliamentary grant the possession of which, however,

seems at once to have demoralized the committee, who dashed off in other directions altogether.

For some years after the collapse of this Lace School, there was a considerable sale of Irish laces, showing that the demand for it was lively. During this period, as specimens in the South Kensington Museum exemplify, all sorts of poorly contrived patterns—frequently debased imitations of old foreign laces—were in use by the lace workers, who on the whole were left to themselves not only to devise quaint and semi-barbarous ornaments, but in their poverty to make shift with inferior qualities of threads. It is not therefore surprising that the time arrived when trade had become stagnant, the public being satiated with Irish laces. Stocks of poorly-patterned goods of indifferent material were held by merchants. Prices had declined, and the wages paid for labour had fallen. It seemed as if the lace industry in Ireland was irretrievably moribund. At this juncture a number of important firms who had dealt in Irish laces decided to make an effort to save the industry by holding an exhibition of Irish lace in London at the Mansion House in 1883. Every description of Irish lace and crochet work was then displayed. The cleverness of the different sorts of handicraft was generally acknowledged, but it was felt that the artistic or ornamental taste

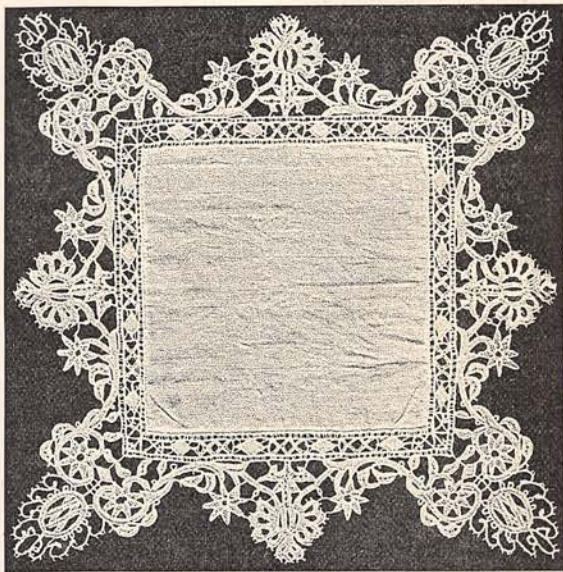


FIG. 9.—DOYLEY EDGED WITH NEEDLEPOINT LACE, WORKED FROM A DESIGN BY MISS KEANE, BY WORKERS AT CAPPOQUIN, CO. WATERFORD, UNDER HER DIRECTION.



FIG. 10.—PART OF A FLOUNCE OF NEEDLEPOINT LACE, MADE FROM A DESIGN BY SISTER M. REGIS, BY THE LACE SCHOOL AT THE PRESENTATION CONVENT, YOUGHAL, CO. CORK.

displayed in them was not only dull but was low in standard; and a few specially prepared specimens made from good patterns and with superior threads did not materially alter this feeling. The exhibition however served to give some hope of new possibilities in Irish lacemaking, and certainly awakened new, if limited, interest. Of this a few Irish Members of Parliament took advantage. They made application to the Department of Science and Art to arrange for the delivery of lectures upon lacemaking and on designing lace patterns, at such centres of lacemaking as chose to apply for this form of instruction. In less than a couple of years later some of the lacemaking convents in Counties Kerry, Cork, and Waterford applied for the lectures, started art classes, and began to earn payments on results of examination, in drawing and designing, from Government. For the most part these convent classes were branches of the School of Art at Cork, an institution under the direction of Mr. James Brenan, R.H.A., and connected with the Department of Science and Art. By means of local funds and a grant from the Department, the Cork School of Art bought a good collection of old hand-made laces, for the study of its own students as well as of the students at the convents. In regulating the courses of instruction in drawing and design at the newly-started convent classes, the study of ornamental composition was reserved for advanced students who had some proficiency in drawing. The special application of the principles of ornamental composition to inventing patterns for various sorts of lace and embroidery work was taken in hand by those advanced students who could either make lace or knew how it was made.

The number of such students at each lacemaking convent is, of course, small, but apparently upon the training and influence of such students, who for the most part are nuns, the possible future success of lacemaking in Ireland will largely depend. At the different centres many of the children learning lacemaking, as well as a few of the adult workers, who come to the workrooms provided for their use, learn to draw and so to accustom themselves to good flowing lines and a sense of proportion in ornament, though very few, if any, of them possess or can be expected to possess the capability or aptitude to compose ornament.

These scattered art classes, most of which are equipped with good examples or photographs of old laces and with other works displaying types of ornamental compositions, are in direct touch with groups of lacemakers. This feature, which is at least a new one in the conditions of lacemaking in Ireland, has been developed since 1884. There are now eight of such classes at lacemaking centres besides six similar classes at convents where varieties of industrial instruction are given. At the Schools of Art in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, and Waterford small classes of lace pattern designers have been established, and the students in them are sometimes commissioned by dealers to compose patterns for laces which may be made in different parts of Ireland.

At Innishmacsaint, Cappoquin, Newtownbarry, Borris, and elsewhere, ladies interested in lacemaking supervise the work done by little groups of peasant women. There is a prosperous lace school on the Bath and Shirley estate at Carrickmacross; but at none of these last-named places are there any drawing and pattern-making classes corresponding with those at the convents.

Limerick lace-workers for recent years have become indebted to Mrs. R. Vere O'Brien for all she has done and is effecting towards the improvement of methods of work, quality of materials, character of patterns, and means of finding sales for the work. Fig. 2 displays a small portion of a deep flounce of Limerick lace made quite lately under Mrs. O'Brien's directions for Messrs. Haywards, of Oxford Street, who derived the pattern from a flounce of French needlepoint lace made at Alençon for the Empress Josephine some eighty years ago. Limerick has now opened a training school for young lace-workers. This school is supported by public subscriptions started by Mr. Shaw, of Limerick, but has hardly been at work sufficiently long to prove its value in influencing the industry. A greater number of children apply for admission than can be accommodated. But with this encouraging sign, much depends upon competent personal supervision of the children, and steady and continued effort. The School of Art, under Mr. Brophy, at Limerick, has also bestirred itself, and a small class of designers of lace patterns has been formed there. Local prizes are offered to stimulate these designers, and some of their patterns have been made use of in the lace training school.

Limerick and Carrickmacross embroideries on net are perhaps the more easily



produced of the different Irish laces. The portions of a flounce and an insertion and trimming for a dress, shown in Figs. 3 and 1, are from work done at the Bath and Shirley Schools, Carrickmacross, and are rather more elaborate in pattern and of better materials than usual. The designs were made by Miss Emily Anderson, of the Cork School of Art; so also was that for the ornament of Fig. 6, which gives a part of a curtain, worked in the same way as Carrickmacross lace, but with coarser net and heavier material for the cut linen and *appliqué* objects. This specimen was made at the lace school of the Convent of Mercy at Kinsale, on the south-west coast of county Cork. It is only within the last two or three years that this lace school has got to work. There is an admirable drawing and pattern-making class in connection with this convent school, and the children who are instructed here in the Limerick and



FIG. 11.—LACE PATTERN DESIGNING, CONVENT OF POOR CLARES, KENMARE. FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY LADY COLOMB.

other methods of embroidering on net, do their work from patterns made by senior students in the drawing class.

Thirty years ago this convent did much in the locality towards organizing the peasant and fish-women's cottage work, and for a time some success was secured for it. However a rage ensued for making crochet—a class of thread work more easily made, when the pattern is not exacting, than embroidery or net. “Wanton-eyed” women standing at their doors, and chattering with any one who would stop and talk, greatly favoured crocheting, and it soon superseded the embroidery on net. Crochet was readily bought up, but it as quickly earned a bad name—not merely on account of its artistic deficiencies, but also because of its socially demoralizing effects. Godly people held the crochet-worker in horror, and so long as travelling agents bought the work freely, and enabled the demoralized crochet women to thrive, there was no doubt a justification for the outcry made against the vice which seemed to be inseparable from this form of industry. But the lesson has not perhaps been useless or too severe.

Crochetmaking has managed to survive a desperate period of decline, and is now apparently in a healthier state than previously. Dealers are beginning to require more careful and more artistic work, and the consequence is that the crochet-worker cannot be the heedless gossip and mischief-maker she was if she is to succeed with her *métier*. There are many hundreds of crochet-workers about Cork, Waterford, and Clones.

Messrs. Haywards have within the last four years invented a sumptuous-looking crochet fabric of silk, which they call "Royal Irish Guipure." Their lead in this matter has told beneficially upon other dealers. In the Cork and New Ross districts the firm of Messrs. Dwyer and Co., of Cork, has of late years raised the quality of crochet. Between two and three years ago I am told that this firm found it difficult to give remunerative and regular employment to a total of sixty workers. Trade was bad, and there were on hand large stocks of old and poorly-patterned crochets. Now, however, the report from this firm is that the demand for well-patterned crochet is unprecedented, and instead of sixty workers, six hundred are busily kept at work. The Americans and French are the larger buyers of the southern Irish crochet. The collar in Fig. 4 is one of the newer patterns for small goods produced by the thousand. The pattern is merely a repetition of two forms, each of which has to be carefully wrought



FIG. 12.—NEEDLEPOINT LACEMAKING, CONVENT OF POOR CLARES, KENMARE. FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY LADY COLOMB.

and shaped in order to fit its duly assigned place. In the days of degenerate crochet (and this is not extinct in some districts) the worker made her forms or objects irregularly, and fitted them together irregularly. The ornamental qualities of the collar and the little bit of trimming, Fig. 5, may not perhaps be high in aim, still the crocheter employed upon such patterns is forced to pay somewhat close attention to her work, for carelessness would waste her labour. This disciplining of the crochet labour has been carried a good deal further in the production of elaborate and striking effects like those of the "Royal Irish Guipure" above named, which involves a certain amount of point lace stitchery in constructing the groundwork between the different crochet-made objects. Endeavours, due I believe to Mr. Ben. Lindsey, of Dublin, are being made to improve the artistic appearance of crochet from the Clones district, county Monaghan, where the influence of convent supervision and drawing classes does not obtain.

At this point I break off to refer to the results of a scheme initiated and carried out by means of private subscriptions. It was started in 1884 and has had an effect upon Irish lacemaking. Under this scheme money prizes were competed for by designers of ornament suitable to be wrought in lace. As many as possible of these designs were subsequently so wrought by order of the committee administering the scheme. Other new patterns were worked as commissions for her Majesty the Queen, the Marchioness of Londonderry, the Countess of Aberdeen, Lady Dorothy Nevill, Mrs. Alfred Morrison, and others. Almost all of the specimens are such as would not have been produced in the ordinary course of trade. Their patterns were intricate, the materials the best obtainable, and the labour of as good a standard as was available. The object aimed at by the scheme was a production of Irish laces, the influence of which might affect, and elevate if possible, the style of the industry in its ordinary practice. The first public display of the specimens due to the scheme took place at the Irish Exhibition held in London in 1888; the second at the Arts and Crafts Exhibi-



FIG. 13.—PILLOW LACEMAKING AT THE INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL CONDUCTED BY THE CONVENT OF MERCY, GOLDEN BRIDGE, DUBLIN.

tion of 1889; on which occasion the Society of Arts awarded special prizes for many of the specimens then shown. The scheme touched all branches of the Irish lace industry. Delicate needlepoint laces involving quite new effects were made by the Presentation Convent at Youghal, and by the Convent of Poor Clares at Kenmare, from designs by nuns, by Miss Julyan of the Dublin School of Art, and Mr. Hayes formerly of the Limerick School of Art. Some handsome, heavy, raised needlepoint laces were made by workers under the direction of Miss MacLean at Innishmaccsaint, Lough Erne, and by others directed by the Carmelite Convent at New Ross, Co. Wexford (see Figs. 7 and 8), the patterns for these being designed by Mr. Scott and Miss Perry of the Cork School of Art, Mr. Murphy of the Waterford School of Art, and some of the nuns at New Ross. Specimens of Limerick and Carrickmacross laces were worked at Mrs. Vere O'Brien's school of workers, at the Convent of Mercy, Kinsale, and at the Bath and Shirley Schools, Carrickmacross, and for these Miss Anderson, of Cork, Miss Brophy, Miss Inman, and others supplied designs. Miss Keane, of Cappoquin, caused some of her workers to produce dainty specimens in the style of such early Italian needlepoint laces as were made from patterns by Cesare Vecellio and F. Vinciolo, of which

Fig. 9 may be taken as an example. And some novel crochet-works were produced by workers in the south and south-western districts of Ireland from designs by Mr. Michael Holland, of Messrs. Dwyers, and by Mr. Murphy. The activity thus engendered is to be fostered for further development under the auspices of the Royal Dublin Society, who, besides prizes given in 1888 and 1889, have announced their intention of giving prizes annually, for new and good lace and embroidery done in Ireland, as well as for drawings of patterns for such work.

Incidental mention only has been hitherto made of the Irish needlepoint laces. These however are or should be evidences of the highest lacemaking talent in Ireland. The designing of patterns is, I think, more special in character for this than for any other branch. But to expound on this matter it would be necessary to go a good deal beyond present limits. The larger quantity of Irish needlepoint lace is filmy and flat as compared with the substantial raised or relief lace of which as a class the *Gros Point de Venise* is the heaviest and boldest in character. This flat point lace is made principally



FIG. 14.—LIMERICK LACEMAKING (TAMBOUR EMBROIDERY ON NET), INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL, CONVENT OF MERCY, GOLDEN BRIDGE, DUBLIN.

at two centres—Youghal, in County Cork, and Kenmare, County Kerry. Youghal, under the direction of the Presentation Convent there, has produced for a good many years some remarkable lace of this sort. But until the attention of the convent was directed to making a special study of the patterns used by the lacemakers, the ornament of the laces remained poor in style. It is now improving, and such a specimen as that figured in illustration No. 10 shows marked progress. The critic conversant with canons of ornamental composition will no doubt detect passages in this specimen capable of correction and revision with advantage in procuring better effect from the abundance of ornamental forms and delicate workmanship displayed here. The design is by Sister M. Regis of the Presentation Convent. The width of the flounce itself is close upon fifteen inches.

Kenmare could not supply any suitable specimen of its lace for illustration, the fact being that the local stock is sold out and lace now in process of making there is being made to order from comparatively unimportant patterns. Kenmare was the first of the lacemaking convents to establish an art class, and during the past five years has not only manifested much energy but has also produced one or two quite remarkable bits of lace—so remarkable indeed that they would, I think, hold their own against similar pieces

of either Alençon or Brussels lace. One may not however speak in the same terms of all the usual Kenmare laces. In some respects they are superior in ornamental design to ordinary Youghal laces, on the other hand these latter are rather daintier in workmanship and lightness of texture.

On the north shore of the Kenmare Bay, in the midst of the mountainous district which has been invested with thrilling romance concerning two chiefs of Dunboy, is Sir John Colomb's residence and demesne. And when I had the pleasure of visiting him last October, Lady Colomb most kindly consented to seek the permission of the abbess of the convent at Kenmare in order to make photographs which might illustrate the operations of the lace school. The reverend abbess, to whose energy and devotion the lacemakers of the district are deeply indebted, readily gave the required leave; and the result is that in Fig. 11 we are brought as it were into the inner life of the convent, and can see nuns at work composing and drawing out patterns for the lacemakers. The lace-working room is a more public department of the convent. Tourists on their journey from Killarney to Glengarriffe, or *vice versa*, are admitted to this room. As a rule there are some fifty or sixty women and girls at work in it. A group of them is shown in Fig. 12. All are making needlepoint lace under the immediate supervision of the nuns in charge of this department. This class of lace is a fabric slowly wrought over the face of a piece of stout linen or parchment on to which an outline of the pattern has been carefully transferred. It is a species of needle embroidery done, as the French say, *à la main*, and not like the Limerick lace, in a frame. This last-named lace or embroidery on net is much more readily produced than the needlepoint lace; but the apparatus for doing it is more imposing, as may be judged from Fig. 14, which represents the teacher of lacemaking and two of her pupils at work at the industrial school of the Convent of Mercy, Golden Bridge, Dublin. Instruction in another branch of the industry is also given at this school. Fig. 13 shows a group of industrial school children engaged in making little pillow lace edgings and insertions generally known as *torchon*, of which great quantities are more skilfully made in the Auvergne and other parts of France and in Belgium, by women and girls who are born lacemakers, and are the descendants of generations of lacemakers.

Very little pillow lace is produced in Ireland. There are one or two *torchon*-making centres in Galway and the West. Some of the industrial school children under the Convent of Mercy at Parsonstown learn to do a sort of Honiton and Brussels *appliqué* lace, but the annual output is small. Attempts have been made by the managers of the Donegal Industrial Fund to introduce amongst Donegal peasants pillow lacemaking, especially with coloured threads, after the style of certain Bohemian and Russian laces. Encouraging reports have been made of these attempts and of the trade in their results.

For the last six years I have had to pay occasional visits to lacemaking centres, chiefly in the south and south-west of Ireland, in order to discuss with the local supervisors of the industry, the application of ornamental design to lacemaking and to give lectures on the subject. An official inspector<sup>1</sup> has also been appointed to visit such places with the view of giving information as to latest fashions in usage of lace, good threads, &c. These arrangements being of an official nature have come under public notice as well as that of Parliament. Last year Mr. Conway, member for North Leitrim, speaking on the subject in the House of Commons, referred in kind terms to my work, but expressed his regret that in a lecture on Irish lacemaking which I had recently given before the Society of Arts, I had rather discouraged the work. I am sorry if such an interpretation may be placed upon any of my remarks. My aim has always been to deal impartially with facts, and to discourage misapprehension. No one can pretend that Irish lacemaking is on an equal footing with its sister industry in France and Belgium. At the same time the conditions of Irish lacemaking contain promises which to a limited extent have proved capable of fulfilment. On the other hand the general state of the conditions is admittedly weak, otherwise special treatment by means of Government resources would scarcely have been asked for. Now in speaking of the efforts which have grown out of this special treatment, it would be misleading to attempt to encourage them in their incipiency by mere applause. Empty praise or "blarney," if one may say so, is at once seen through by those with whom I have been brought into contact in Ireland. And their quick perception and reasonableness require that their work should be candidly criticized. As far as I have been able to give such criticisms, I have done so.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Power Lalor.

The whole gist of what has been lately done (and that it has been acceptable is proved by the repeated demands for more of it) tends towards ascertaining by practical experiments the possibility of putting Irish lacemaking upon a healthy basis. From what I have seen I am inclined to believe in the possibility, but effectually to demonstrate it would entail uphill work for some time to come and would, I think, involve sacrifices and expense. Some branches—the crochet for instance—would possibly pay well. Pillow and needlepoint sections would probably prove more precarious in their returns and profits. The embroideries on net (Limerick and Carrickmacross) ought to be less doubtful. All branches, however, seem to me to require thorough supervision and administration. The operations of the industry are so small, comparatively, that an emulation of the example set in the seventeenth century by the *Manufacture Royale des Dentelles* under Louis XIV. and Colbert, might be useful in bringing about unification of Irish lace interests and in providing efficient commercial regulation of them. One hears of varying prices having so disgusted merchants that they have declined to buy and sell Irish lace. Instances occur of trade having so insufficient a hold on the labour that the workers accept orders directly from private individuals and sell at prices below those of the market. These are elements which creep into minor cottage industries and are disastrous to them. This might, I venture to think, be considerably diminished if a single company, able to be enterprising, were to exploit Irish lacemaking. But then such a company would have to employ a staff of designers, of head-workers to make standard specimens, of efficient supervisors at local centres, and would have to produce splendid pieces of work for exhibition and advertisement. It would have to be in touch with the different markets for Irish laces, and possess adequate resources to develop (if that be possible) new markets elsewhere. It would not probably rely much upon demand from England or Ireland, neither being lace-wearing or lace-fancying countries to the same extent as are France, America, Germany, and Russia. Its head depot might perhaps be in London, Dublin, or Belfast, but Paris would doubtless be preferable. This scheme for a company is perhaps a *château d'Espagne*, but upon it or something like it depends, I believe, the regeneration of lacemaking in Ireland.

