

GODEY'S

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A LADY'S GLANCE AT THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION.

LACES, AND HOW THEY ARE MADE.

HAVING in our last notice reviewed in detail the brilliant display of jewellery in the International Exhibition, some account of the best specimens of foreign art might have been expected to follow in natural succession. Our attention is invited by a class of fabrics which, as regards minute critical examination, is almost virgin soil; and to enthusiasts in lace we especially address ourselves on the present occasion.

Of Brussels lace there are two distinct kinds—the valuable *pointe-à-l'aiguille*, to which class belong the majority of articles now exhibited, and another, technically called Brussels plait, resembling our Honiton *appliqué*, in which the flowers are made separately on the pillow and afterwards attached to a foundation. There are also two descriptions of the net used for groundwork. The veritable *réseau*, the crowning distinction of first-class articles, is made with bobbins on the pillow, and is superior to the best machine imitation only in its unapproachable fineness and the slight inequalities which reveal its value as the production of human, opposed to mechanical, industry. Although some cotton is employed at Brussels, the material chiefly used is the finest thread, made from flax grown at Hal and Rebecque. Some years ago the greater proportion was handspun; and when we consider the extreme delicacy of the operation, it does seem impossible that the dexterity of human fingers should be successfully emulated by artificial means. The finest quality of the thread is said to be made in damp underground rooms, for the tenuity is so great that contact with the dry air above would be injurious. The life of a Belgian thread-spinner being unhealthy, and her work requiring great vigi-

lance, the price of her labor is proportionably high. She examines closely every inch of thread drawn from the distaff, and where the slightest inequality occurs stops her wheel to repair the mischief. Every artificial assistance to the eyesight is adopted. A background of dark paper is placed to throw out the slender thread, and the scene of labor is sometimes arranged to admit only one single beam of light falling directly on the work. So much for material; we now turn to construction. The different processes involved in this vary so much that each is intrusted solely to women peculiarly versed in its details. For instance, one class known by the name of *plattuses* are continually occupied in making flowers for the pattern on the pillow; others, again, are educated to work them in point with the needle; these when attached to net constitute a lace properly described as Brussels *appliqué*. Another division of the labor consists in making the real net-groundwork already alluded to, and two examples in the Belgian cases gives a clear idea of the modes in which the *drocheuses* execute their task. The *striqueuses* are perpetually employed in attaching the flowers to the net; whilst the designation of *attacheuses* is given to persons whose sole occupation consists in uniting the different portions of a pattern, so that it should appear to be made entire. Last, but not least in importance, come the *faiseuses de pointe-à-l'aiguille*, of whose skill we will now seek for evidence in the Belgian department.

It may be remembered that a certain M^{me}. Hubert, of Paris, distinguished herself in 1851 by the exhibition of some lace flowers in every respect but color good imitations of nature.

This idea may have suggested the execution of floral patterns in relief as ornaments of a flat surface; but, at any rate, the introduction of this novelty, no less beautiful than marvellous, entitles M. Hoorickx, in our opinion, to the post of honor among his fellow-exhibitors; it remains to be seen how far professional authority will support this verdict. The invention is displayed to the greatest advantage, perhaps, in a handkerchief which presents every variety of point stitch, as well as several styles of design. At the extreme edge of the lace border is a wreath of convolvulus leaves and flowers, very fine, but simply executed; within that is a kind of arabesque pattern enriched with *plumetis* or satin-stitch, which is quite a new feature of the Belgian laces; and then comes the triumph of art in a border of exquisite little bouquets. The miniature flowers are all in relief, the rose showing its circling petals, and other blossoms their natural forms. The small centre of cambric is inclosed within a mechanical design of heavier substances, and the effect, no less than the details, is worthy of admiration. The price, if we mistake not, is about £200—certainly no undue return for the outlay of unusually skilled labor which must have been expended upon it, nor more than this is constantly absorbed in the purchase of luxuries which we should call utterly useless, but for the thought of the humble producers to whom they have for many a day supplied the necessaries of life. A section of flounce, half a yard wide, with flowers in the same style of relief, is also displayed. The value of the set of two would be £800; that of a tunic with berthe and handkerchief, made to order, about the same. These statistics are offered, as it is well known that the question of price is interesting to ladies, even in cases where they have no intention or desire to become purchaser; and this lace being new, even an experienced judge might be puzzled to determine its worth. Although this is scarcely more costly than the other styles of fine Brussels point, the difficulty of cleaning will most likely render it always an exceptional style of work. There is a curious silk shawl in the same compartment—white ground with colored flowers, every part of it constructed by hand, like lace; but the result is so unattractive that one feels that great ingenuity has been wasted upon it.

The collection of articles exhibited by Julia Everaert and Sisters next claims our attention on the ground of excellence, for nowhere has the ordinary Brussels point been brought to greater perfection than in the deep white

flounce to be found in their case. The ground, real of course and necessarily made in sections, is finished off with a regularity equal to that of machine net, over which its fine texture gives it a great advantage; the pattern is a *mélange* of lilac, pansies, and convolvulus sprays, intersected by a ribbon, and giving the natural effects of light and shade. This noticeable improvement in design is of recent date; it may be remarked in each of the three chief collections of lace, but most prominently in the French patterns. The appearance of shadow is given by transparency of texture; a solid substance representing full lights. Another example of tasteful design is contributed by the same house, in the shape of a dress and shawl of black pillow lace of exquisite quality, bearing the semblance of large tropical leaves. Nor should genuine lovers of lace omit to examine one of trimming width embroidered in plumetis, and so fine that a needle would scarcely pass through its meshes. Some good specimens of white *pointe-à-l'aiguille* will also be found exhibited by Mdme. Clippéle. A white fan, with delicate wreaths of black introduced into the pattern, is intended for mourning, and fulfills its intention very tastefully. As much may be said for the flounces and canézou which surround it. Some recent additions by Van Rossum, consisting of point sets, handkerchief, lappet, collar and sleeves, are of excellent quality, as may be inferred from the fact that each set is worth £240, and occupied four years in its construction. In short, a multitude of beautiful specimens might be enumerated, and a goodly fortune quickly assume a very portable form, in this tempting department. Before taking leave of it, we must do justice to the magnificent black lace contributed by the Maison Lepage-Kina, which carries off the palm from all rivals in this branch of manufacture. A tunic flounce and shawl of uniform scroll pattern, with drooping bell-shaped flowers, is of curiously fine and varied workmanship. This style is that recognized here as French lace; but it is certainly quite equal to anything of the kind we shall meet with in turning our attention to the contributions of France.

The character of the lace worn in Paris has undergone a great change within the last few years; and manufacturers accordingly devote much of their attention to the production and improvement of the kind called by them "guipure," by ourselves "Maltese." They have brought it to great perfection, and we must admit that it is peculiarly adapted for any service in which substance is desirable, and to

which large, bold designs are appropriate. For instance, an African *bournous* sent by the Compagnie des Indes is very handsome; and, in such a case, we are content to accept effect in lieu of quality. The ground is thin, resembling netting, the central ornaments are horizontal bars of mechanical pattern, and the border a combination of medallions and shells, with a Greek scroll. In the same style is a half shawl, the property of M. Faure, very striking in design. A broad ribbon is represented curling round and round a wreath of large leaves and flowers, and the contrasts of light and shade presented by the varied texture add much to its beauty. Near at hand we find specimens of this same black guipure with colors intermixed in the Spanish style: there are two parasols, one ornamented with flowers of various gay hues, and another for half mourning, with the pattern white; but in neither case is the result very attractive, as in this pillow-lace the black threads of the ground mingle with the bright tints and completely deaden them. The other specimens of this manufacture are a flounce in black, white, and red; some gigantic butterflies, exhibited as curiosities of course; and a variety of so-called guipure ribbons, in other words, black lace of different widths, with colored patterns, and finished off ornamentally at each edge. These may possibly be taken into favor for a time as applicable to trimming purposes; in this country they are undoubted novelties.

Having glanced at the best examples of the recent fashion in French lace, we must mention those which represent its staple production—the beautifully soft and fine thread lace called now Chantilly, but chiefly made at Caen and Bayeux. Among the various shawls and flounces of this description we think the most elegant are those of M. Seguin. No one could pass unnoticed the half shawl, valued at £140, completely covered with drooping willow-boughs, amidst which we perceive baskets suspended, fountains with birds drinking thereat—in fact, a perfect Chinese garden; and this pattern is carried out in other articles of the *parure*. The lace of M. Loisean is also very fine, though less distinguished in ornamentation.

It is well known that, although its chief trade is in black lace, France can, by its *point d'Alençon*, compete with the most valuable description of Brussels; and of course, on so important an occasion, has put forth all its resources. Geoffries, Delisle & Co., otherwise the Compagnie des Indes, show in their case a wonderful fan,

representing cupids swinging in a bowery garden, and likewise trimming laces of exquisite quality. There is also a flounce priced at £1000; but, we venture to think, by no means worth the money as compared in effect with other laces. *Point d'Alençon* is, however, so seldom to be met with in articles of large size, that its value on these rare occasions becomes arbitrary; nor must we forget that its construction is most laborious.

The design, first engraved on copper, is afterwards printed off in divisions on small pieces of parchment. These are numbered according to their order, and holes are pricked along the outlines of the flowers; a piece of coarse linen is then laid on, and a tracing thread is sewn with fine stitches, which unite thread, parchment, and linen together. Two flat threads, held beneath the thumb of the left hand, are then guided along the edges of the pattern and fixed by minute stitches passing through the holes in the parchment. The skeleton of the lace thus completed, the centres of the flowers must be filled up. The worker supplies herself with a long needle and very fine thread, and with these she works a knotted stitch from left to right, successive rows of which at length fill up the interstices. The plain ground connecting different portions of the pattern is commenced by one thread being thrown across as a sort of pioneer, and others, intersecting it and each other, form the delicate meshes. Then there are spaces reserved for fancy stitches, termed *modes*; and finally, the design is enriched with an embroidery in relief, known as the *brodé*. When the work is so far happily accomplished, the various sections are united so skilfully that the joins escape detection, and the result is the *point d'Alençon*, now sometimes described as the *point de Venise*, the most costly of modern laces. In addition to this *spécialité*, France exhibits much white lace resembling Brussels plait. A large semicircular bridal veil, with small projection to fall over the face, is really perfect in design. It is a mixture of Brussels and point, and, from its style, we should conclude of Belgian origin, as far as execution goes; but the wreaths of flowers which radiate from the outer edge towards the centre are so perfectly natural in their imitation of the very accidents of nature, that we are sure half its attractions are due to France, which still unmistakably occupies the vantage-ground in ornamentation.

The reputation of Great Britain as a lace-making country formerly depended entirely on the industry of Buckinghamshire, the two

adjacent counties, and the region about Honiton. But within the last fifteen years it has been further supported by the development of the manufacture in Ireland. The introduction of crochet-work by various ladies as an occupation for women during the repeated periods of scarcity and distress, was the origin of this very successful branch of our trade. Those who are acquainted only with the imitation of heavy point will be surprised on visiting the case of Messrs. Forrest to see the delicate effect which can be produced with crochet and embroidery needles. Two flounces, described respectively as "lacet point" and guipure, afford that variety and elegance in which Irish lace may have been considered for some purposes deficient. The lacet point consists of a fine groundwork of crochet, into which are introduced flowers, leaves, etc., filled in with various lace stitches. The guipure has a still more filmy foundation, in which some indication of the pattern is shadowed forth, but further defined by embroideries in buttonhole and satin stitch. This novel mode of finishing light laces, which we remarked in the Belgian department, certainly gives great richness to the material. We could scarcely point out any trimming lace superior in effect to that which is festooned around the case of Messrs. Forrest; it shows the best results of this mixed style. Mrs. Allen and Messrs. Copestake are also exhibitors of crochet lace; but the grand feature in the collection of the last-named firm is a tunic of Honiton guipure, made, as our readers probably know, on the pillow in sections, and afterwards united. This dress of ambitious, but good design is nearly covered with rich wreaths and scrolls, connected at intervals by large prince's feathers. A flounce displayed by Messrs. Urling affords great variety in the style of work, and is on all grounds worthy of admiration. Nor can we say less for the tunics of Messrs. Biddle, and Howell, and James.

The finest description of pillow-lace has always issued from the neighborhood of Buckingham; Bedfordshire producing a rather inferior article. Accordingly, we find Mr. Godfrey the chief exhibitor in the case shared by manufacturers of the midland district. In addition to the splendid black flounces of Maltese and ordinary pillow-lace which appear under his own name, he can claim credit as the producer of the admirable half shawl and dress exhibited by Northcote & Co., and the tunic which is a feature of Messrs. Biddle's assortment. We notice also a wonderful improvement in white Maltese lace, the style chiefly adopted in small articles.

It is no longer heavy and monotonous in pattern, but rather resembles a cloudy kind of Honiton. Lester & Sons (of Bedford), Mr. R. Vicars (of Padbury), and Mr. Sergeant (of Sandy), exhibit exquisitely fine specimens, very well designed, in the shape of collars, sleeves, lappets, and a bolder style in flounces. It must be regarded as a very acceptable substitute for the more expensive class of foreign laces, and we commend it to general patronage.

While lauding the enterprise of real lace manufacturers, it would be unfair to pass unmentioned the wonderful imitations of the fabric which Nottingham supplies in various styles. The Spanish shawls and mantillas, which fall little short of the original models, have deservedly obtained universal favor; it is needless to dwell on their excellence. The imitations of black Chantilly are also remarkable, the patterns and texture having been so much improved that at a little distance they would deceive an experienced eye. The same can scarcely be said of the tambour-work, supposed to represent Brussels, but it is very pretty in the form of shawls, dresses, etc., and affords employment to many poor women in London and other places.

The lovers of the gay and fanciful in lace will be attracted by a case of Spanish blondes containing articles richly embroidered in colors and gold thread. The real gem of the collection, however, is a white mantilla; the pattern, wreaths of flowers supported by flying cupids, is of solid texture, whilst the ground is light guipure. Saxony is remarkable rather for the low price than the quality of its laces; but Berlin has lately added to the attractions of the exhibition a very creditable suite of Brussels point on real ground; and the Zollverein may therefore be expected, on a future occasion, to deserve more particular mention in our general survey of lace.

ADVICE.—Be and continue poor, young man, while others around you grow rich by fraud and dishonesty; bear the pain of defeated hopes, while others gain the accomplishment of theirs by flattery; forego the gracious pressure of the hand for which others cringe and crawl; wrap yourself in your own virtue, and seek a friend and your daily bread. If you have, in such a course, grown gray with unblemished honor, bless God and die.

THE VALUE OF TIME.—One of the hours each day wasted on trifles or indolence, saved, and daily devoted to improvement, is enough to make an ignorant man wise in ten years.