



Lace: A History

Santina M. Levey

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Valenciennes, Honiton, Bucks Point, Reticella, Brussels Bobbin Lace, Blonde, Bedfordshire Maltese, Hollie Point and Carrickmacross . . . Why did all these varieties of lace develop as they did? When were they first made? Who made them? How were they marketed? Who bought them and wore them? These are some of the questions asked and answered in this complete and authoritative study. No major book on lace has been published in English since the revised edition of Mrs Palliser's History of Lace appeared in 1902, yet the intervening period has seen enormous strides made in the study and understanding of the lace industry and of its relationship to the history of dress, to textiles and to the development of the decorative arts in general. In writing about lace in the context of fashionable dress and the development of styles and movements of taste, Santina Levey has drawn on extensive researches in these related fields. For lace only existed because fashionable dress required it and the many varieties only came into existence because the lace-makers were able to respond to changing demands. On the occasions when they did not or could not respond, whole sections of the industry collapsed. This book covers the period from the early sixteenth-century to the First World War and is arranged chronologically to accommodate the underlying changes in fashionable dress and in the lace worn with it, but, within each chapter, the different types of lace are dealt with one by one. Greatest attention is given to the leading fashion laces but less important laces are also described; these range from simple domestic trimmings and cheap copies worn lower down the social scale, to 'fossilized' versions of once fashionable laces which continued to be made for peasant communities and for some conservative societies in the New World. The distinguishing technical features of each lace are described and particular attention is given to the close copies of the historical lace which were made in the late nineteenth century. Although not designed as a how-to-do-it manual, the many enlarged details included in the illustrations and the magnified technical details in the Glossary would enable the experienced lace-maker to recreate a number of the patterns, while the rich variety of designs should be a source of inspiration to those working across the whole spectrum of textile and flat-pattern designing. The book is fully indexed and the technical terms and names used in the text are gathered together in a GLOSSARY for ease of reference. The Glossary also includes and explains terms of doubtful validity which are not used in the text but which appear in many older books on the subject.

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The history and development of bobbin lace is highly complex and tangled, which makes it fascinating. In very broad terms one can divide its history into a few periods: 1559-1700 Early development of a variety of working methods and styles: Antwerp, Genoese, Milanese. But only very rarely do laces of this age appear in private collections and I have almost no pictures to show you (only some I have made from LePompe patterns or other old laces).