

LACE VI. NEEDLE-MADE LACES

England, Arab Lace, Palestine and Cyprus

ENGLAND: HOLLIE POINT

SIR William Lawrence, many of whose treasures are now in the Guild Collection, wrote an article on *Hollie Point* in *EMBROIDERY*, December, 1933. He drew attention to the samplers worked during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and two from his collection were illustrated. These samplers usually measure 8 to 9 inches square, and within them are to be found smaller squares—1½ inch—containing the stitches used in *Hollie point*. Cut-work and counted satin stitches fill the rest of the samplers.

"Hollie point," said Sir William,

"is a flat button-hole stitch worked over certain threads of the material, other threads being cut away; in other cases the whole of the linen is cut away and the *holly point* is merely a needle-point mesh; the pattern is composed by dropping stitches and leaving the ground *à jour*."

These patterns usually show diapers, chevrons, crowns and plants. Some of the latter (often a pink or an 8- or 4-pointed flower) grow from pots, and it has been suggested that these refer to the lilies of the vase or pot shown in pictures of the Annunciation.

Hollie point is always an insertion, except when circular for a baby cap's crown, or a watch padding. The work is peculiar to this country and seems unknown on the continent.

Much of the surviving Hollie point is found in tiny baby caps, mitts and cuffs for small infants, sometimes on a little bib or other garment, and these were used for christening. This custom, together with the name, which is also spelt "Holy" or "Holie," suggests that the pedigree of this lace may go right back to the Crusades, thus being connected with the only other lace with a pattern made by voiding—Arab lace, and in Arab lace too the old work appears always to be either insertion or circular in form.

How interesting it would be if the Guild could organise an exhibition of all the Hollie point that has survived and make a record of all the patterns therein.

The illustration shows a baby cuff in the Guild Collection in which, as is usual, the Hollie Point is bordered on either side by a series of button-hole loops. This is frequently found and, being raised up, would to some extent protect the fine lace.

ARAB LACE.—Having noted above the curious likeness between Hollie point and Arab lace, it is worth studying together with its numerous relatives.

Miss Maynard wrote an interesting

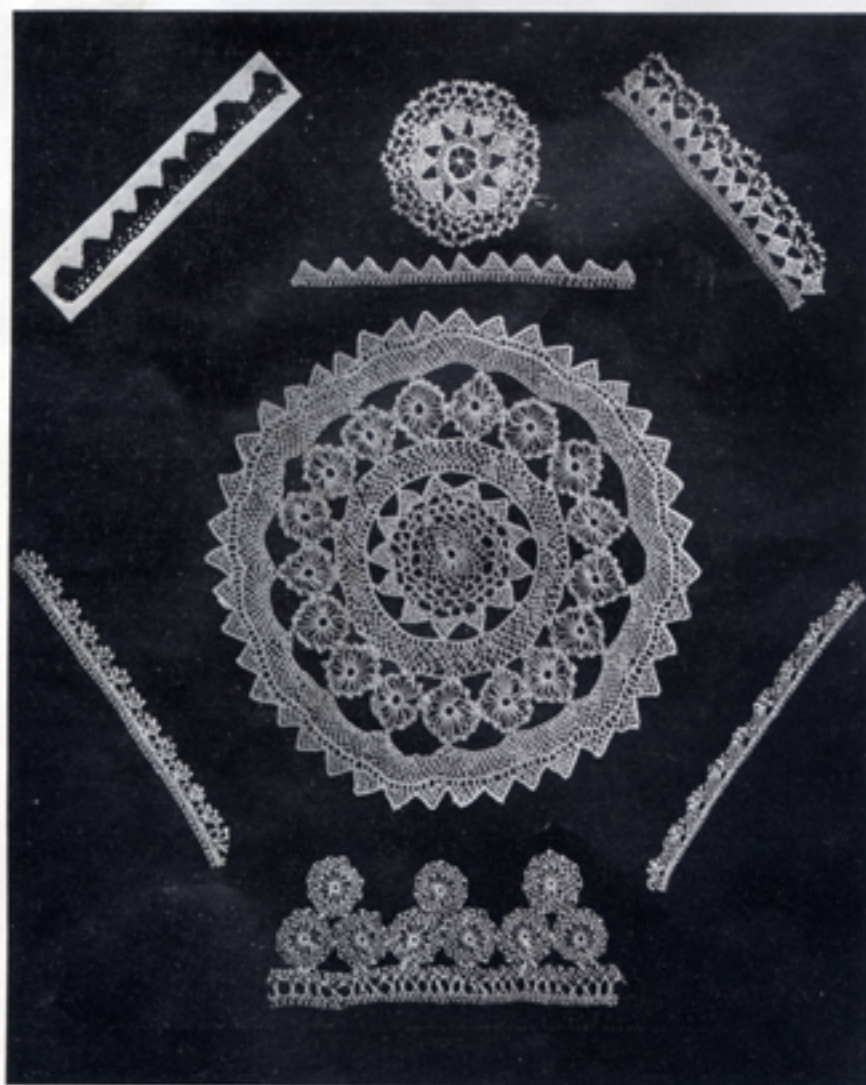


FIG. 79—Edges and mats from Smyrna and Cyprus worked with a stitch similar to that used in Arab Lace and Beilla



FIG. 80—Hollie point panel in a baby's cuff

article in EMBROIDERY, 1951, on the technique of "Armenian needlepoint." In the Autumn number of that year I recounted how, in 1921, in Tunis I had visited, with my sister, a Mussulman lady who made Arab lace insertions. The Armenian stitch was similar to that used by the Arabs.

Further research, in which I had the help of Mrs. Lewis F. Day, presently revealed that this lace stitch was used over a remarkably wide area. Mrs. Day had in her collection an old Persian quilted cap which had a border of pyramids in this stitch. Many Middle East embroideries have something akin as a finish, sometimes this is worked in cream and sometimes in coloured silks. More came to our knowledge from Palestine; to this Mrs. Palliser refers, calling it "Jewish lace," but it seems that there the patterns are largely derived from modern *Torchon*. One piece came to us from Portugal. A craft such as this, which is purely domestic, for it is mostly used on garments and furnishings, and the work passed on from mother to daughter, must be very ancient to be so widespread. The lady I visited in Tunis had her bed linen ornamented with many insertions, most of which she had worked herself. They looked effective over scarlet pillow linings in the bed alcove. The patterns in Fig. 81 were worked by this lady.

To make the lace, a stiff cushion is utilised, and for the insertion two parallel lines are laid down and the work is done row by row from side to side.

Professor Ricard has written a book on "Dentelles Marocaines et Algériennes," for the Institut des Hautes études Marocaines, and other French articles describe the work which they have encouraged as an indigenous craft. Actually the French, being very practical people, quickly realised the great durability of this lace, and it became popular for lingerie. They encouraged the girls to attend schools and the women to work at it in their homes and so built up a considerable market. In 1922 an exhibition of native crafts in Marseilles gave this work impetus, and insertions, lace and motifs in white and colours were shown. The Mussulman designs were traditionally geometrical but modern innovations have brought into use the cypress tree, a Persian design of pinks and so on.

Fig. 82 shows the edging stitch which is so much used in the Balkans and Asia Minor, and other edges are shown in Fig. 79. A wider lace edging is formed by placing on the cushion one thread, and parallel thereto a second thread which zigzags at the required dis-

tance. Between these two threads the pattern is worked across in horizontal lines. When the required length is made, it has a further pyramid-type edge added beyond the edge of the zigzags.

This pyramid stitch is quickly recognised by the little threads which float along the edge of certain stitches, and sometimes from the top of one pyramid to the bottom of the next.

The wheel-like motif which is so

popular to-day in Cyprus appears in Fig. 79. These wheels are sometimes piled up in groups, or they may be neatly graduated in size, perhaps round a collar. Mats vary in design and shape, and in North Africa a favourite traditional design for little mats is a dish piled high with Kous Kous.

Like many folk crafts, some patterns have names. In the large insertion (Fig. 81), the centre of each lozenge is the pattern known in

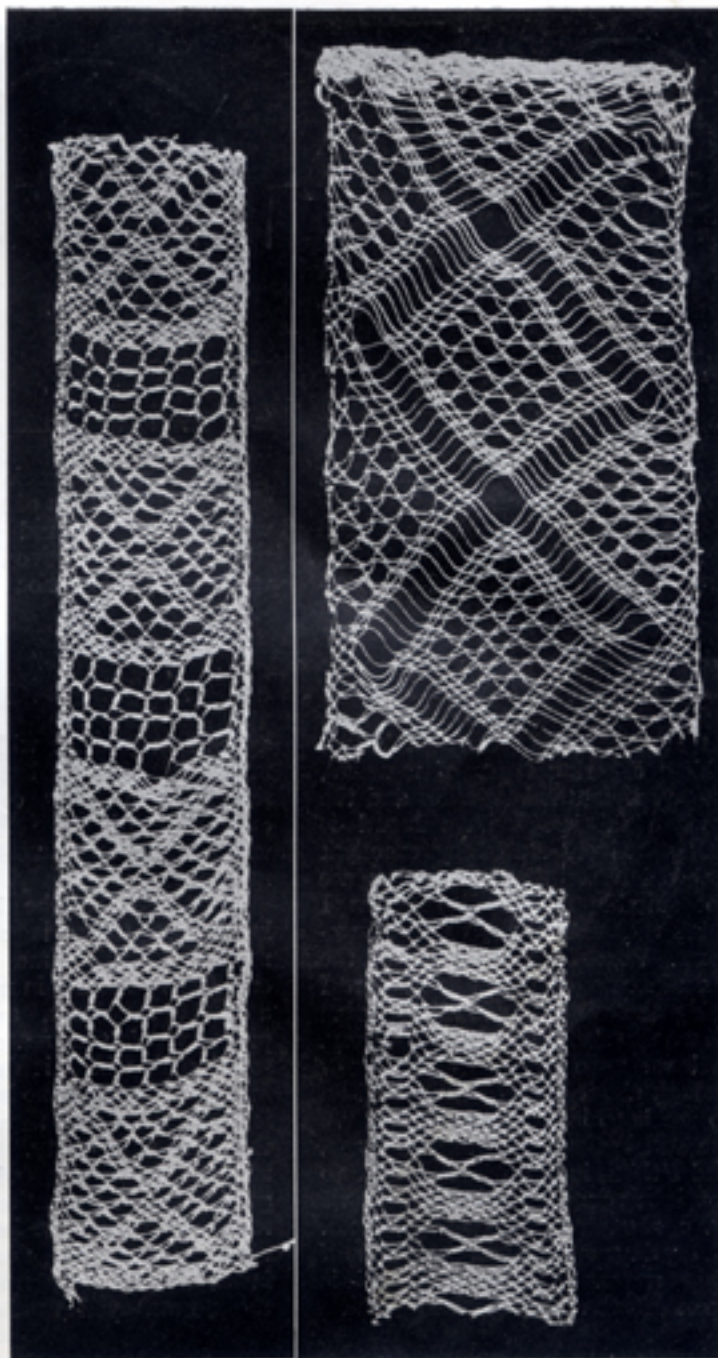


FIG. 81—Three pieces of Arab lace from Tunisia

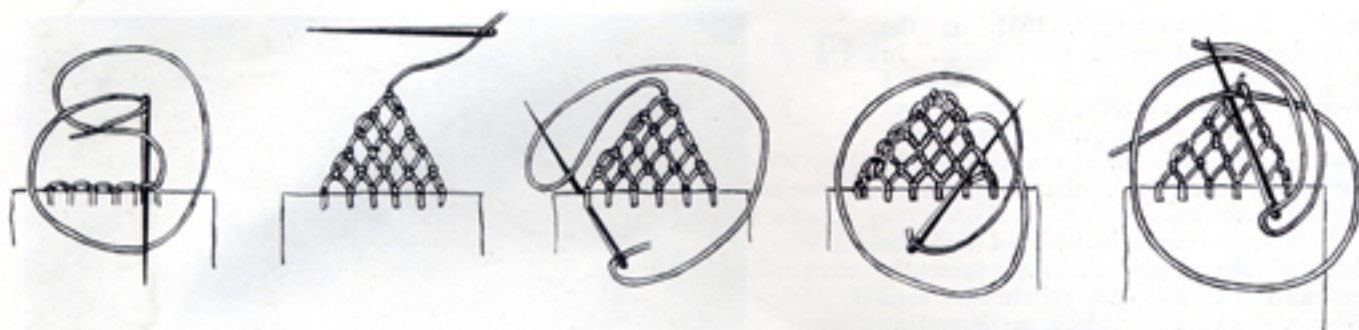


FIG. 82—Diagram of the Pyramid Stitch

Morocco as "Mqirta"—cake, whilst the mesh pattern by which it is built up, having six points, is called "our Lord Solomon's Seal."

The patterns of the old work have a resemblance to netting found in Egyptian tombs, and indeed Arab

lace has some kinship with that ancient craft.

Arab lace has previously had no place in the history of laces, but its wide connections and possible link with Hollie point give it a claim to wider recognition. For some domes-

tic purposes and for durability this lace has few rivals and its knot-like stitch is well worth knowing and utilising for its great strength.

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LINGERIE. No. 4

THIS last article deals with two widely differing types of material, namely nylon and its allies and the woollen fabrics. I have heard it authoritatively stated by excellent embroideresses that the nylons are not suitable for handwork, but I think that that is a very rash statement. What I would say is that the manufacture of nylon (and here I using the word "nylon" to mean all man-made fibres) is in its infancy, and we none of us as yet know enough about it and its possibilities to use it to its best advantage. We are still in the experimenting stage, and I think it is worth our while to continue experimenting until we have mastered this new medium. Every day new and better versions of nylon appear on the market and it is possible that when this article

appears in print it will already be largely out of date; but here are the results of a fairly comprehensive experience of these fabrics, with which other experimenters may or may not agree.

THREADS.—To the best of my knowledge there is not on the market at this time a range of embroidery threads in nylon. This is a great drawback, as the main property of the material is the speed with which it dries and the fact that it requires no ironing makes it illogical to use threads without this same property. Nylon and terylene sewing threads are both good, though in rather a limited range of colours, but for their use I would like to see needles manufactured with very small eyes, as the normal-eyed needle unthreads

incessantly. When using these threads, work with only a very short length, as they untwist very easily and completely.

SEAMS.—The great majority of the fabrics under discussion suffer from the fact that they fray abominably, and for that there would appear to be only two remedies: either making all seams double or fusing the material. The latter method is unorthodox but I have found that it works with most types of nylon, though it is as well to try on a small piece of material first. The advantage of this method is that with it one can make use of an ordinary plain seam. I find it simpler to fuse my edges before making my seam, and so I make the end of a steel sock needle practically red hot and carefully draw it down the edge of the

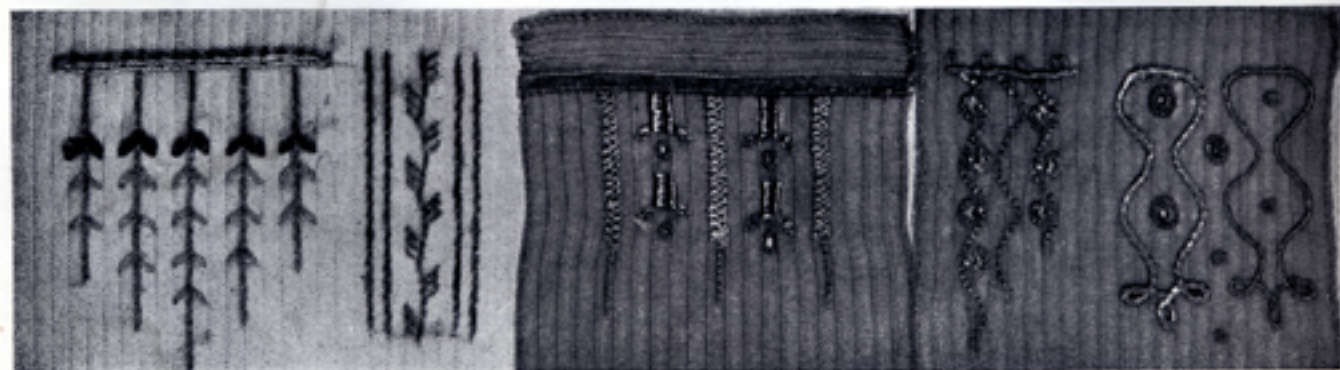


FIG. 83—(1) and (2) Striped nylon using the stripes for the basis of pattern

(3) and (4) Voile with heavy stripe. The design limited by the stripes