

The History and Technique of Pillow Lace.

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The origin of pillow lace is uncertain, but is generally conceded to Flanders (modern Belgium). Not before the beginning of the sixteenth century have we a well-defined variety of this lace, and even then the patterns were simple, open guipurès. Soon Germany, Switzerland, and Italy took up the pillow lace making, and each country developed a variety of her own. During the seventeenth century needle point laces reigned supreme in fashionable circles, but in the eighteenth century the pillow laces became the rage, and the art rose to its supreme height.

The method of making pillow lace is as follows: The design is drawn on colored paper and pricked so that the worker may know where to put her pins. The threads are wound on bobbins, which are in reality spools with handles. The pattern is pinned on a cushion. The bobbins hang over the pattern and are worked in pairs, for pillow lace is only a form of weaving. A pair is used to weave through the warp from side to side of the pattern, but is passed through only two warp threads at a time. For strip lace, such as edgings and insertions, the pattern is put on a revolving cylinder, so that an unlimited quantity of lace may be made. Small figures, such as sprays of flowers, scrolls, and medallions, are made on small, round cushions, each figure completed by itself, then all are placed upon the design and united.

There are in Boston several foreign makers of the simplest kind of pillow lace, which we know by the name of "torchon"; this lace is found all over the world; it is made in Sweden, Norway, Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Russia, England, South America, Japan, Smyrna. In some of these places it is called "torchon." In France a very elaborate variety is called "Cluny," from the Cluny Museum, where a fine collection of laces is kept. In England a very elegant kind, made with fine thread as well as silk, is called "Malta" or "Maltese," the patterns for this kind having come from Malta originally. The Italian torchon is called simply "Italian lace," and so on through the different countries.

The next important variety of pillow lace is that having a pattern thrown out on fine mesh groundwork, such as Valenciennes, Mechlin, and English thread. The first named is worked with both pattern and ground made of the same thread. The mesh is diamond shaped and has all four sides plaited. The Mechlin and English thread are sister laces, having their pattern outlined with a single, heavy, glossy thread. The Mechlin mesh is six sided, but four sides are simply of two threads twisted and the other two sides are of four threads plaited. The English mesh is also six sided, but has all six sides of two twisted threads.

Then there is quite a different class of pillow lace, which has its pattern worked in separate pieces and the mesh ground worked in afterwards, either

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