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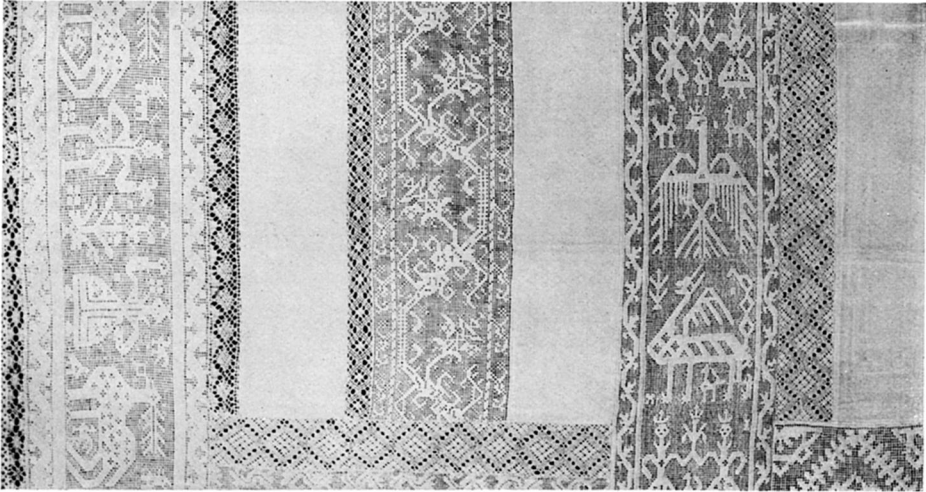
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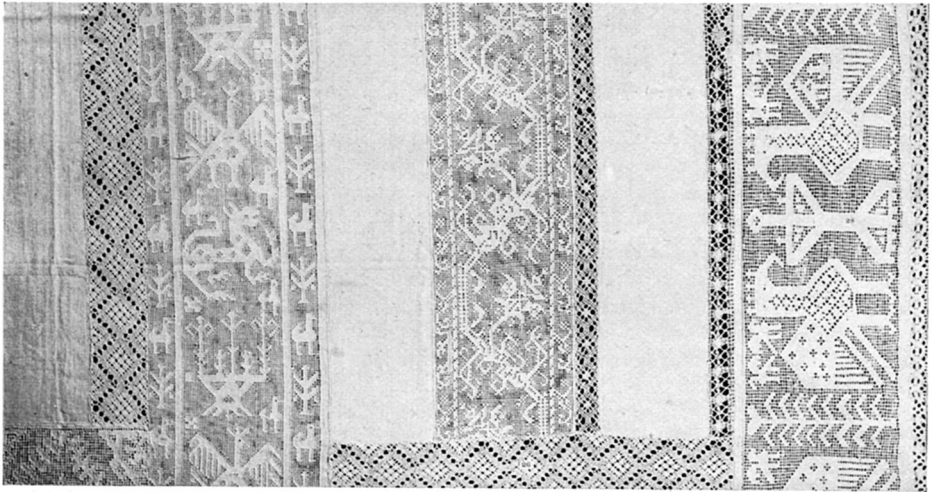
SICILIAN DRAWN-WORK OF EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY IN
COLLECTION OF LACE LENT BY MRS. ROCKEFELLER McCORMICK

THE McCORMICK LACE COLLECTION

FROM its beginnings in the fifteenth century up to the present day, the art of lace-making is distinguished among handicrafts for its eventful history and for the definite phases through which it passed in its progress. To the workers of the Middle Ages, each new step was a triumph of creative imagination, so that great artists did not disdain to draw books of designs for the "noble and virtuous" ladies who spent their leisure hours with needle or bobbin. During the summer months the beautiful collection of old laces belonging to Mrs. Rockefeller McCormick has been on exhibit in Gunsaulus Hall, thus making it possible for many visitors to study at first hand the story of the last five centuries in the making of lace.

The laces composing the collection have been expertly joined into coverlets. The illustration at the top of this page shows a coverlet made up of strips of fifteenth

century Sicilian drawn-work, set together with coarse torchon laces from the peasant districts of Abruzzi. The designs of the drawn-work are most naïve and are somewhat archaic, since they were inspired by a period much earlier than that of the work itself. On the extreme right the panel is composed of two confronting peacocks, drinking from a fountain, alternated with doves in pairs, and a conventional tree. The third panel from the right displays a rampant spotted leopard, a squirrel, candelabra, and a crowned eagle. In the panel to the extreme left are a man and his wife in fifteenth century costume, a tree, and a stag with extraordinary, horizontal antlers. A small dog and a triangular bird are used to fill the spaces. Third from the left, the pattern shows a mythical creature known as the hippograph, with the horns of a buck, the wings of an eagle, and the neck of a giraffe; two crowned figures of Flemish



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origin, a lamb, and a double eagle. The eagle is of that Moorish type which bears so startling a resemblance to the birds of Aztec picture-writing.

Drawn-work on fine linen was followed by drawn-work on coarse linen, or *buratto*, and this in turn by darned designs on net. Both these types, the *buratto* and the darned *lacis*, are remarkably well represented in the collection. Contemporary with the *lacis* was cut-work, from which grew the beautiful *reticello*, the first real lace. Certain threads of the linen were drawn and cut, leaving other threads to form the skeleton of the design. On these remaining threads the *reticello* was worked in buttonhole-stitch and a fine weaving-stitch. The many different pieces of *reticello* in Mrs. McCormick's collection clearly illustrate how the simple geometric patterns, demanded by the weave of the linen, grew to the more complex and unhampered designs that marked the later *reticello*. Soon the lace-makers tired of limitations and did away with them altogether, working their designs with fine thread over a pattern traced on parchment. Thus was born the famous *punto in aria*, or "stitch in the air," and thus lace became a thing quite apart from any parent fabric.

Meanwhile another sort of lace-making was growing up—a craft in which bobbins and pillows were the tools. The difference between the needle-lace and the bobbin-lace is usually easy to detect, but occasionally the bobbin-worker copied the needle stitches so accurately that the eye is deceived. Another type of lace is *mezzo punto*, in which both sorts are combined, the pattern being woven with bobbins and the *brides* or fagoting done with the needle.

Perhaps the most beautiful piece of *punto in aria* in the country is the "Rose" (or "raised") point example in Mrs. McCormick's collection. The edges of the flowers and foliage are heavily padded, and over the cord thus formed is twisted a picôté chain. In the lower center of the piece, which is about six feet square, a pelican feeding her young with blood from her breast symbolizes the Eucharist, and confirms the impression that the former French owners used the lace as an altar-piece in their private chapel.

Nothing among the bobbin-laces equals in magnificence this altar-cloth, though there are many yards of the finest Milan point and of the graceful *Guipure de Venise*, besides the pillow-laces from Flanders, Brussels, and Spain.