HAMILTON HANDBOOKS

LACE - MAKING IN HAMILTON

by

Jessie H. Lochhead, M.A.

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In the absence of a reasonably comprehensive history of the Burgh of Hamilton the Libraries and Museum Committee intend to publish a series of handbooks, under the series title of *Hamilton Handbooks*, which will be authoritative and which together will meet the numerous requests for a history of Hamilton from schools and colleges, from Hamilton residents and from individuals furth of Hamilton. The first in the series, already published, is a *Handbook to the Burgh Museum* where much of Hamilton's history is stored and displayed.

This Handbook, numbering 2 in the series, is written by a lady who has made a special study of Hamilton Lace; not only has she written on Hamilton Lace but she has also produced examples of lace from equipment supplied by the Museum or made specially for that purpose.

Other Handbooks in the series, presently under preparation for early publication will be *Hamilton Palace*, which will be copiously illustrated; *As We Were*, a series of photographs showing parts of Hamilton as they are today and as they were 100 years ago; *From the Records*, a collection of articles on the government of the town and the activities of its citizens; *To School in Hamilton*, a history of education in Hamilton.

WM. STEWART,
Director of Libraries and Museum.

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HAMILTON
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FOREWORD

By Her Grace
The Duchess of Hamilton

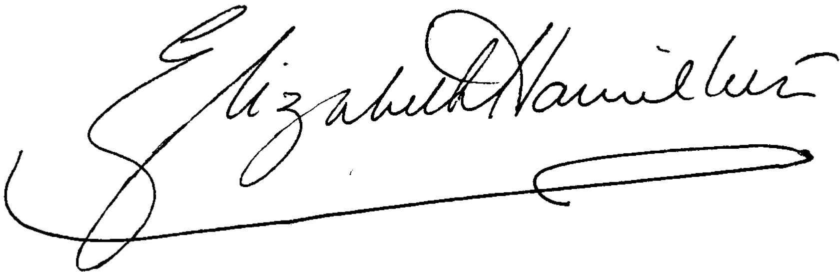
Anne, Duchess of Hamilton, is on record as being benevolent and pious, but she cannot have been insensitive to the pleasures of the eye, and the delights of dress, for she introduced Lace-making to Hamilton.

Later, a name-sake of mine, Elizabeth, the Miss Gunning who married the 6th Duke of Hamilton, played her part in fostering the industry. Now, 255 years after Duchess Anne's death, I have been asked to contribute a Foreword to Mrs. Lochhead's excellent account of Lace-making in Hamilton.

Hamilton lace has not attracted the attention it deserves. Mrs. Lochhead's valuable addition to the record brings it into focus. It is written by one who has not only made a long study of the subject herself, but has also learnt to practice what had almost become a lost art, and in so doing to revive a practical interest in it.

This handbook tells a story of quality and craftsmanship. It is a worthy tribute to those who, for more than 200 years, learnt and practised the art of Lace-making in Hamilton, and who should be remembered for the fame they brought to their town and the surrounding area.

As one, who also enjoys the pleasures of the eye, and the delights of dress, I am happy to speed it on its way. I hope that it will stimulate fresh interest in the story of the ancient and beautiful work that it records, and encourage those who are now finding Lace-making a rewarding way of spending their leisure time.



LACE-MAKING IN HAMILTON

Lace-making became popular in the sixteenth century, was at the peak of its production in the seventeenth, and had practically disappeared by the end of the eighteenth. Its making falls into two sections. The first is entirely made with the needle, a development of embroidery; the second, a derivative of the knotted, openwork fabric found in a Pharaoh's tomb, is known as bone or bobbin lace. It was originally made by plaiting and twisting various threads with the fingers, as is shown in a manuscript of the fifteenth century. The craft developed more quickly after some lace-worker had the idea of attaching weights to the threads to make the twisting easier. It developed more rapidly still after the invention of pins. Bone of bobbin; or bunt lace as it was called in Hamilton—must be worked on a pillow-needlepoint may be. Frequently we find a combination of the two methods on the one piece of lace. It is interesting to note that, whereas needlepoint was favoured in southern European countries, the northern countries preferred the bobbin variety.

As one might expect from the perishable nature of the material, comparatively few specimens of old lace have survived. A great deal of our knowledge of old lace comes from sculpture and portraits. Books of patterns were published as early as 1587. Designs were often handed down from generation to generation. A piece of lace purchased in one country could be copied in another; hence the place name attached to any one type of lace may not signify much, though certain countries and districts did develop an individual style which became better known than others. This applies to the town of Hamilton, where both needlepoint and bobbin lace were made, and, later, a form of needlepoint or embroidery on net, known as "tambour".

Hamilton must have had lacemakers in the early days of the craft though records are non-existent and much is a matter for conjecture. Inventories of the sixteenth century, royal and otherwise, mention various kinds of lace. For instance, Mary, Queen of Scots, before the birth of James VI, made a will, detailing items in her collection and the ladies to whom she wished to bequeath them. In the collection was a small square of lace made from human hair, a gift from her mother-in-law, the Countess of Lennox. Mary had been brought up at the Court of France just as the art of lacemaking was being developed and was a skilled worker herself. A portrait of the queen, painted at Loch Leven Castle, shows her wearing a veil edged with narrow bone lace. She went to her execution similarly attired. It is reasonable to assume that Mary wore lace during her visits to the Marquess of Hamilton at Cadzow Castle in whose forest she frequently hunted. It is extremely likely that she presented some of the expensive novelty to her hostess.

The fashion of wearing lace, and so the need for lace-makers, spread rapidly among the ladies and gentlemen of the nobility and of the well-to-do. In 1575 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland decided the time had come to curb the dress of the clergy, at least, and forbade the sewing on of laces or trimmings. The demand continued however. Every woman demanded her "pearlin" as lace was called in Scotland, and her "cock", a high muslin cap trimmed with many rows of narrow lace. Things came to such a pass that, in 1621, James VI passed a sumptuary law forbidding the wearing of lace by any except nobles, prelates and lords of session. These were allowed to have pearlin on their "ruffles, sarks and sokkes", but it had to be of Scottish manufacture. This is the first official mention of Scottish lace. The lacemakers suffered so greatly that the law was later repealed and "all and every person might wear whyt pearlin", again, if it were made in Scotland. Lace was condemned by the Covenanters as devil's thread, but still the demand continued.

Charles I and the Cavaliers bring us to another woman who had an influence on the growth of the lace trade in Hamilton, the famous "high and mighty princess", the Duchess Anne. With a ban on the entry of "forain perling" and the fashion for lace on dress and toilet accessories continuing to grow, trade should have been brisk for the lacemakers but for the misfortunes of the day in Scotland and especially in Hamilton. Anne's father, by now created Duke of Hamilton, was executed in London. His brother, who succeeded him, was killed at the Battle of Worcester and Anne became Duchess in her own right. Two years later Charles I was executed, Cromwell came into power and the use of lace was, in theory at least, forbidden. The legend goes that Anne was forced to retire to the castle at Strathaven, where she and her maid eked out their slender resources by the making of lace. After the Restoration, however, all that was changed. Anne was now a wealthy and powerful woman, well-travelled and business-like, anxious to do her duty to her tenants. Among her benefactions was a school of lacemaking, in the first instance probably for orphan girls, taught by experts from Flanders. This venture developed into a prosperous home industry. When James II died, wearing a lace-trimmed cap, all good Jacobites aspired to pass away similarly adorned. Even shrouds were trimmed or completely made of lace. The extraordinary boom in the lace trade continued through the reign of William and Mary. Mary herself was an inveterate lace maker. No doubt she was specially interested in the Hamilton development, since the Duke, Anne's husband, had presided at the Convention of Edinburgh which had offered the Scottish crown to Mary and her husband.

The beginning of the eighteenth century saw the Union of the Parliaments and the accession of Queen Anne, in whose reign, according to one authority, lace was worn on everything, in and out of bed. Lacemaking had become the recreation or the livelihood of rich and poor, taking, with many, the place of spinning. Noblemen paid high fees to

have their daughters instructed in the art. A pamphlet dated 1702 states that many portionless gentlewomen were spinning lint to finest flax thread and making it into lace at a good profit, gaining sometimes ten pounds from lint costing one shilling. The wearing of lace was by no means confined to members of the upper classes. It was on sale in provincial shops, at the Luckenbooths, at markets, at fairs. It was hawked round the countryside and the lace-basket was a common sight in any of the numerous public houses, where the lacemaker often sold direct. Small children attended lace schools and before long they were able to support themselves. When workhouses were first instituted, the inmates were mostly employed in spinning. They now switched over to lace-making, every piece of lace being sealed while the lace was still on the pillow to prevent stealing, for lace had become a valuable commodity and many robberies took place. As foreign lace was still banned by law, smuggling offered a well-paid career to many.

The demand for lace was further stimulated by fashions brought from France by the Jacobites, while the Hanoverians inveighed against their extravagance. The gentlemen wore lace cravats and long ruffles on their sleeves, admirably adapted, said their enemies, for passing secret Jacobite notes and cheating at cards. Scottish ladies, especially in the Canongate of Edinburgh, with its high "lands" and narrow turnpike stairs, adopted perhaps the most extravagantly trimmed petticoats and garters in Europe, so that the rich lace might show as they tilted their extravagantly wide hoops to mount the narrow stairs. They were accused of squandering their money on lace, but could reply that they were following royal example to help the poor. Lace smuggled from France appears to have been sold in the Jacobite cause.

Scotland, with its riots and '45 rebellion, did not benefit from this passion for lace as did England and a recession in the Hamilton lace trade had set in when another woman appeared to assist the town's commercial interests. This was Elizabeth Gunning, one of two beautiful daughters of an Irish viscount. They both married into dukedoms, Elizabeth becoming Duchess of Hamilton by marrying the seventh duke in February, 1752. Dissatisfied with Hamilton's share in the lacemaking boom and realising that the dwindling number of lacemakers needed some encouragement, she set an example to her peers by having her cap and full skirts made from locally woven muslin, lavishly trimmed with locally made lace edging. She also set up a school for the making of lace, similar to those she had seen in France and London. "The Duchess of Hamilton", says the *Edinburgh Amusement* for 1752, "has ordered a house to be fitted up in Hamilton for the reception of twelve poor girls and a mistress. The girls are to be taken in at seven; to be clothed and fed and taught to read and spin, etc., and to be dismissed at fourteen. What they gain by their work is to be their own, and to be given them at the end of their time. The whole is to be under the inspection of four trustees." Two years later, the same paper records the success of the

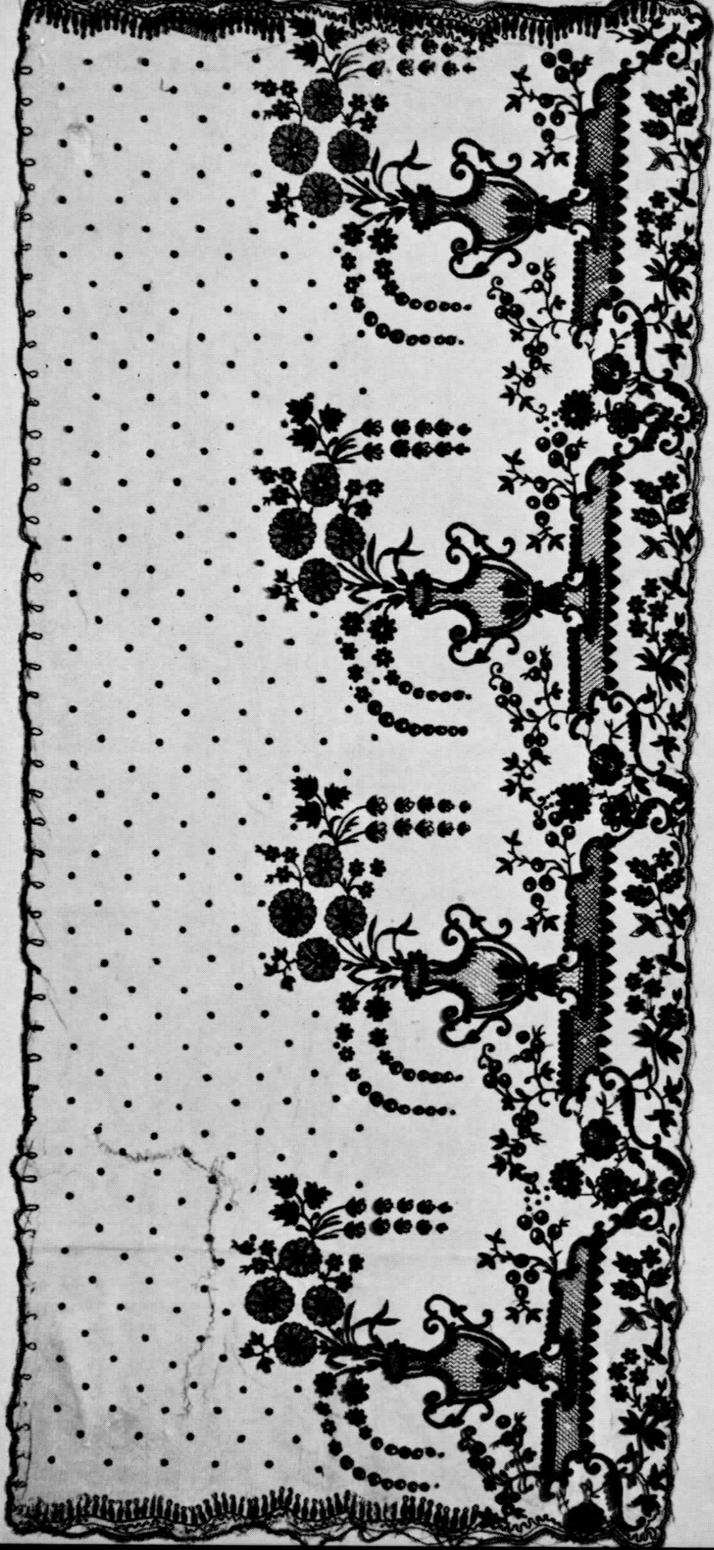
duchess' charity. The girls by then had several looms at work making fine hollands, "worn by men of refinement", cambrics and lawns, both plain and flowered, and they had recently presented their patrons with "some suits of exceeding fine lace ruffles" of their own manufacture. The Duke wore his ruffles at his birthday party, when the ruffles and the lace worn by the duchess "vied with anything worn on the occasion, though there was a splendid company present". The report goes on to say that "the yarn of which the ruffles were made weighed only ten drops* each hank".

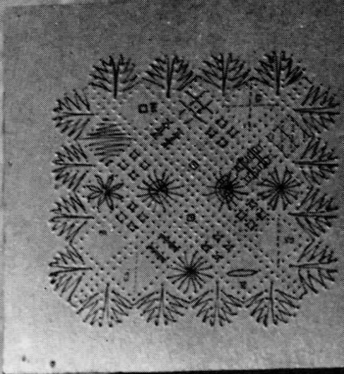
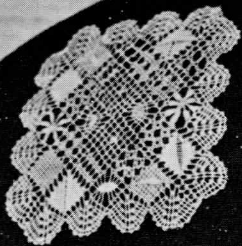
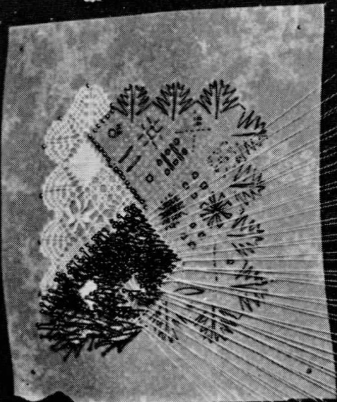
The quality and design of Hamilton lace, as it was now named, improved greatly and attracted the favourable attention of the Select Society of Edinburgh. This Society, designed to encourage the arts and manufactures of Scotland, was very likely set up at the instigation of the lively and progressive Duchess Elizabeth. The Duke acted as its chairman during its comparatively short existence. The trustees were generous in their support, offering national prizes for various types of lace, including one of five guineas for the best twenty yard length of lace, not less than three inches in breadth and a similar amount for the best gentleman's ruffles. Several prizes came to Hamilton including one of two guineas to Anne Henderson for "the whitest, best and finest lace, commonly called Hamilton lace and of the best pattern, not under two yards in length and not under three inches in breadth". That was in 1757. Prizes followed for the next two years, in 1759 to the value of four guineas. The Select Society gave considerable impetus to lacemaking in Scotland and encouraged the craft in the ladies' academies that were everywhere springing up. In Hamilton, a large house and garden (later the Old Manse, two houses up from the mart in Muir Street and recently demolished) were set aside as a lace school, each pupil receiving a bonus at the end of the year.

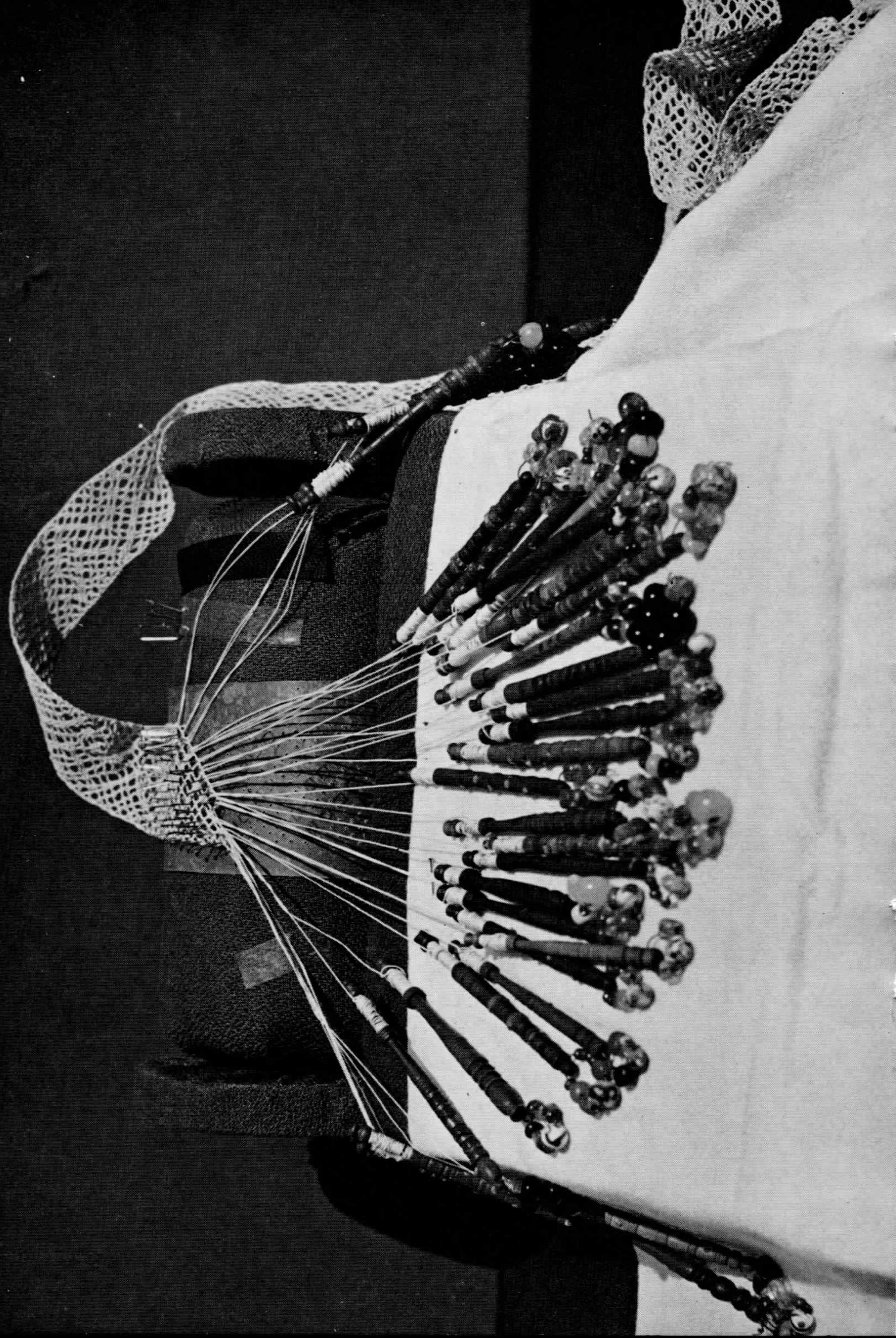
One of the pre-requisites of good lace is a fine, smooth, even thread made from flax. Every farm, cottage, manse and schoolhouse grew some flax which was steeped in moss holes after being cut, then dried, bracketed, shingled and spun into thread during the long winter nights. It was generally of coarse quality. For years attempts had been made in Scotland to produce a thread which could compete with the thread imported at considerable national expense from the Continent. By 1763 the Government was trying to encourage home industries through one of its departments, the Trustees and Commissioners for Fisheries and Manufactures.

Among other proposals, it was decided to offer special bounties for the best specimens of yarn and thread produced from flax grown in Scotland. In Hamilton, at the time, the lacemakers were mostly supplied by Miss Ann Leslie and her three sisters, who had brought the spinning of lace thread to a fine art at their home at Whitehill House, which stood halfway between Burnbank and the Bothwell Road. It was said that from one

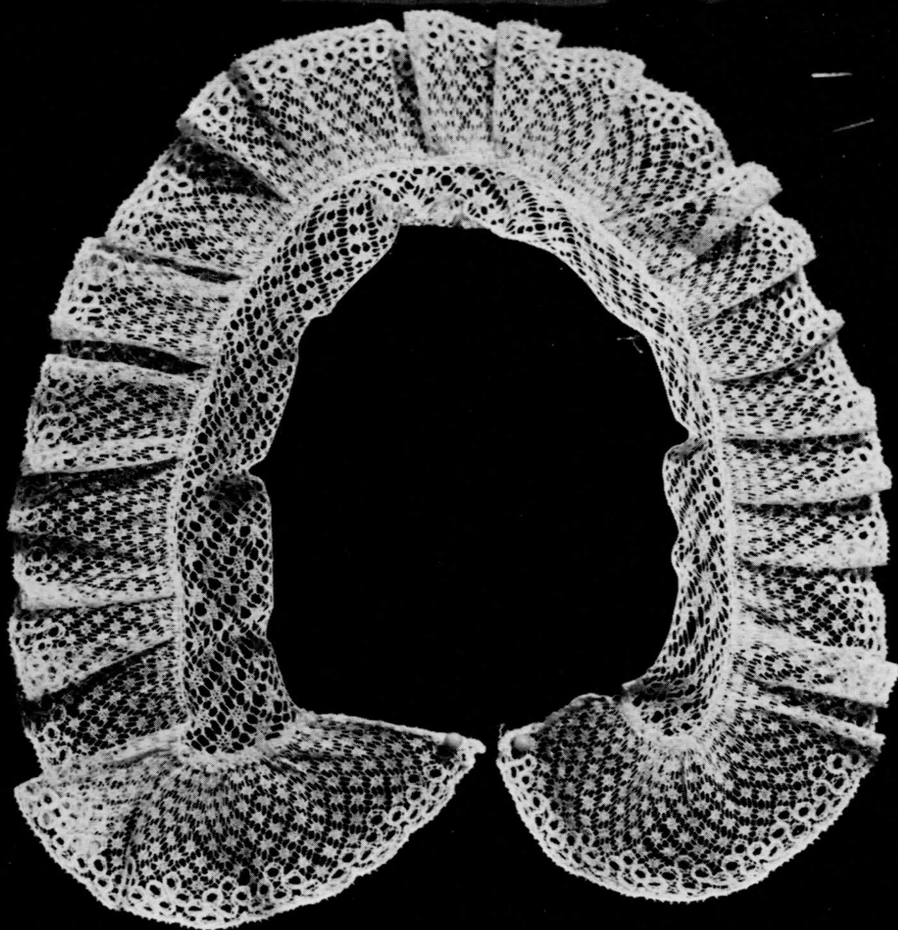
* drop – an old Scottish measure of weight equal to $\frac{1}{16}$ of one ounce.

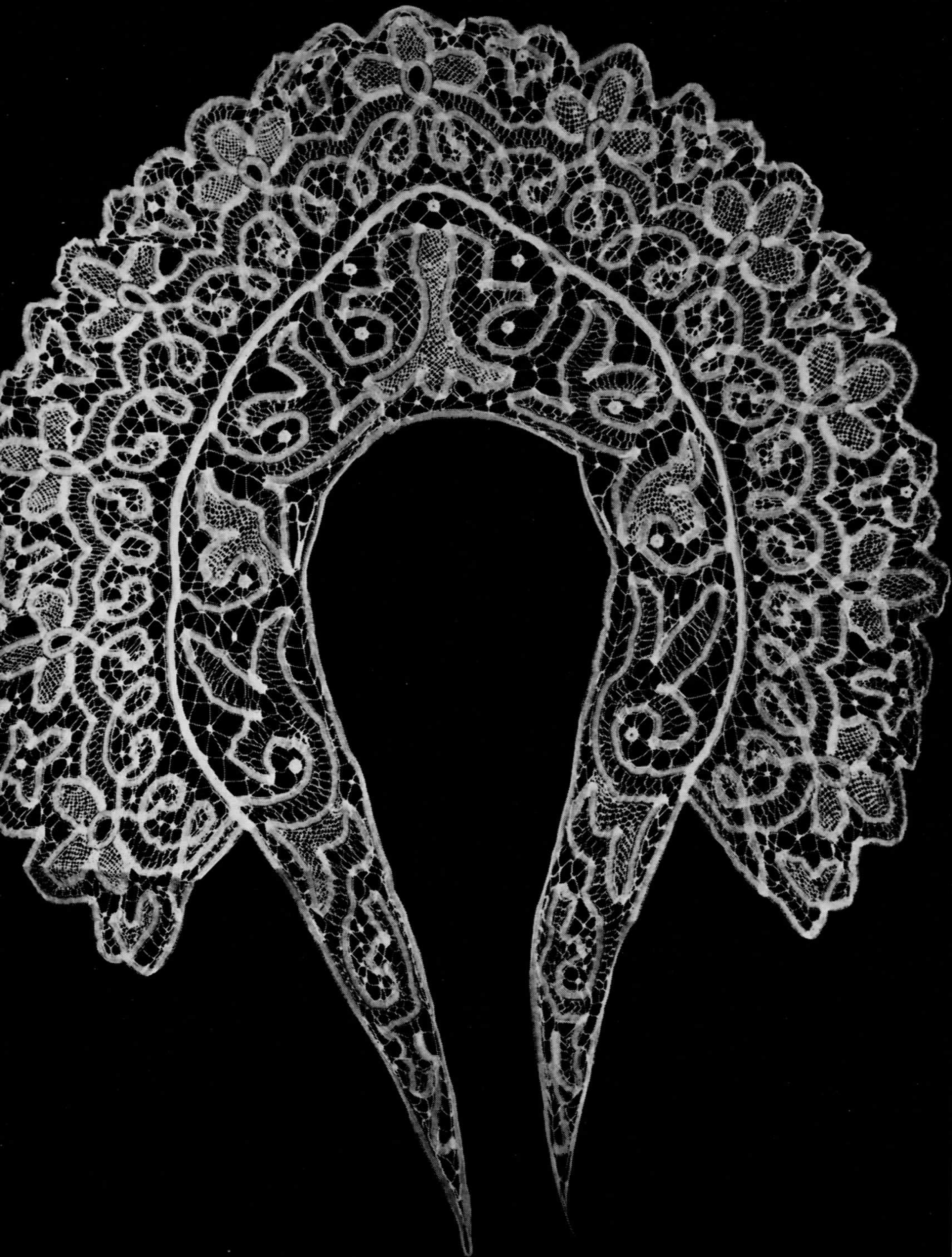




Shawl, Hamilton Lace, 2nd Period





pound of flax the sisters could spin a thread that would reach from Hamilton to thirteen miles north of Aberdeen. However that may be, the the Leslie thread, tested by London lacemakers as well as the local workers, was "as good in texture and quality as any foreign and as cheap". The Londoners even said it was superior to the foreign article. Besides, His Majesty King George III had been graciously pleased to accept a pair of fine ruffles made from the thread by Miss Leslie in Hamilton. The Misses Leslie decided to enter for the bounty with thread spun from flax grown at Uddingston. They were promised a reward and compensation for their labours and encouraged to extend their spinning factory. This they did, using up their limited resources in the process, as well as money subscribed by wellwishers. For some mysterious reason, due, it would appear, to misrepresentations by one of the Scottish members on the committee in London, the promised award was withheld. Numerous inquiries were made as to the abilities and morals of Miss Leslie and her sisters. A resolution was passed in their favour by the Trustees in Edinburgh. Manufacturers in Hamilton and London testified to the excellence of their wares. A petition was organised, signed by the magistrates of Hamilton, the Justices of the Peace, the parish minister, the lace merchants, the member of Parliament and many of the County gentry. It was despatched to the Board of Fisheries and Manufactures in Scotland, but was returned from that Government body unopened. One wonders why. Miss Leslie played a prominent, if unrequited part in the promotion of trade in Hamilton. A sample of her thread is said to have been accepted by the British Museum.

The beautiful Duchess Elizabeth, who had become the Duchess of Argyll on the death of her first husband, continued to encourage lace-making in Hamilton. According to Thomas Pennant, who made a tour of Scottish industry in 1769, the thread lace trade was flourishing in Hamilton. David Loch in his "Essays on the Scottish Commerce" comments on the success of Hamilton lace. Heron, in his "Journey through Scotland" pays tribute to the long manufacture of thread lace in Hamilton, carried on through all the fluctuations of fashion, but refers to its decline. The repeal of the Act forbidding the import of foreign lace dealt a severe blow to the trade in Hamilton, as elsewhere. The French Revolution, inspiring fashion to decree the utmost simplicity in dress, caused further decline in the trade. The Statistical Account of Scotland, 1791, notes this decline and states that just about forty persons are now in the business in Hamilton, though they make handsome laces of different patterns. By the time that the effects of the French Revolution on the world of fashion were wearing away, machinery, competition from abroad, a demand for higher wages and increasing opportunities for women rang the death knell of the lacemakers. Some workers took up the fashionable silk Maltese lace. But they were the last of the race.

While the lace trade was dying and spinning had rapidly decreased since the Irish had succeeded in spinning enough for their own needs, a

new light cottage industry had sprung up in and around Hamilton. This was the tambouring of fine muslin and lawn, a type of embroidery introduced from the East to France about 1750. The looms of the West of Scotland could produce muslin as fine as any imported from India. Fashion demanded dresses of white embroidered muslin with skirts seven yards wide. By the end of the century production of tamboured muslin was in full swing. When ladies took up tambouring as a hobby, they used dainty, usually circular, frames over which the muslin was tightly stretched, as on a drum. (Hence the name "tambour", French for "drum".) It was fashionable to have one's portrait painted seated at a tambouring frame. For commercial purposes the frames were sturdy and rectangular, made to hold the full width of the muslin and to allow several women to work on the material at a time. A frame used by the sisters of David Livingstone, who were muslin tambourers, is preserved in the Livingstone Memorial at Blantyre, Lanarkshire.

Now, to revert to lacemaking. For years experiments had been going on to try to reproduce, by machine, the foundation net made by hand with bobbins. At last, in 1809, an Englishman, John Heathcot, evolved a machine which twisted instead of looping the thread. This gave an excellent imitation of bobbin net, which could be decorated at will. When his fourteen years patent expired, there was a rush to buy bobbinet machines. The lowered prices caused consternation among the remaining laceworkers, but the foundation of a new and profitable lace industry had been laid. Nottingham became the centre for the manufacture of this bobbinet or machine-made net and Hamilton shared greatly in the resulting prosperity. So far as can be ascertained the tambour lace industry was introduced to Britain by a French émigré who settled in Essex in the early nineteenth century. The story goes—you may read about it in the *Hamilton Advertiser* of November 1856—that a large consignment of bobbin net reached Paisley during the 1820's for tambouring. The tambour force was inadequate for the task. Then someone remembered Hamilton's long reputation for lacemaking and its skill in tamboured muslin. Workers were recruited and teachers provided. According to the Statistical Account of 1841, by 1835 some 2,500 women were engaged in making tambour lace in Hamilton and district. The report adds that about twelve respectable houses were engaged in this lucrative and thriving branch of trade and new firms were daily forming to exploit the manufacture of tambour bobbinet. As there was a tremendous demand for lace veils and scarves and shawls throughout the whole of Britain and also in America and the Colonies, there was a rush to get into business. Anyone with a few pounds to spare went into the lace business to become a "cork" (colloquial Scots for an overseer or a small employer of labour). *Brown's Directories* for the years 1855 and 1859 give the names of twenty or more lace manufacturers, agents, washers, dressers and pressers. Most of the premises were near the Old Cross, Muir Street, Cadzow Street, Miller Street, Chapel Street, Campbell Street, while there were several in Holmes Street and the furthest away

were in Almada Street. A few seem to have had secondary occupations. Robert More was a fruiterer in Townhead Street and John Smith was beadle of St. John's Kirk. Soon, good tambourers were in such short supply that the "wee corks" were at their mercy. They didn't even dare complain of faulty workmanship or the worker simply went off to another employer. Some most beautiful lace was produced, one especially fine veil being accepted by Queen Victoria. You may read in the *Glasgow Herald* of the fourth of November 1844 that "the lace manufacturers (of Hamilton) are preparing a fine large square veil, with the royal arms, the family of Hamilton arms, the town's arms and a number of other national devices as a present to the Queen. Hamilton has been for two centuries famed for lace workers".

A Tambourer could make higher wages than her weaver husband. Indeed, at one point, the tambouring trade looked as if it would absorb the weaving. Alas! fashion changed again. More than that, the early sewing machines put on the market made chain stitch instead of the modern lockstitch, so it was both speedy and easy to imitate the once valuable and beautiful tambour lace at home, while masses of it were factory produced. And so, another chapter was closed in Hamilton's industrial history.

To make bone or bobbin lace you required, first of all, a pillow. The pillow could be large or small, mushroom-shaped or cylindrical, depending on the kind of lace to be made. The mushroom was used for motifs, later to be joined to make collars, ruffles and the more elaborate laces and flounces. The cylindrical pillow, or "bunt" as it was known colloquially in Hamilton (hence the name "bunt lace") was used for edgings and insertions. The pillows were firmly and evenly stuffed with chopped straw, well hammered down, and covered with strong, smooth material. The thread might be fine or coarse as desired.

On to the pillow was pinned the pattern, the design carefully pricked out on a sheet of dark parchment. For the bunt pillow a strip of parchment was used, sometimes completely encircling the pillow. Frequently, for economy's sake, a short strip was used, the lace, as it was completed, being carefully moved to the top of the "eac" (pronounced "eke", hence the phrase "to eke out"), and the finished lace allowed to fall into a pouch at the back of the pillow. Numerous pattern books were published. Later, lace samplers were used in the schools to demonstrate the various stitches and fillings. Unfortunately, most of the parchment patterns were destroyed or boiled down to make glue.

Then you required pins. In the very early days pins were made of bone, wood, bronze and silver. For lacemaking thorns and fish bones trimmed to size were much in demand, as brass pins had to be imported and were most expensive. The pins had to be of brass, otherwise they would rust and leave stains on the lace. Six shillings and eightpence per hundred

was the price of imported brass pins from France in the sixteenth century. Early in the seventeenth century a ban was put on their import and the Pinmakers' Corporation of London was established. Pins became more plentiful and considerably cheaper, and so lace was more easily and cheaply made. Some pins had fancy heads, usually added by the lace-makers themselves. They were used to ornament the pillow and mark the progress of the work.

Next you needed bobbins, and lots of them. Quite a narrow edging required two dozen bobbins. For wider lace as many as six hundred might be required. The earliest bobbins were probably knuckle bones or sheep's trotters, whence the name "bone lace" which first appears in the accounts of Queen Elizabeth I. The use of these suggested simple wooden bobbins with little heads and stumpy bodies and a neck between on which the thread was wound. Bobbins, like pillows, tended to develop differently in different countries. Unlike the bulbous variety favoured on the Continent the English bobbin was straight, more ornate, with little bunches of beads and tiny buttons known as "jingles" or "spangles" threaded to the end to lend decoration and weight. It will probably never be known whether the Hamilton lacemakers favoured the slightly bulging, elegant bobbins of the French, or the spherical-ended Flanders type, or the slender decorated kind that became customary in England after the various religious persecutions in France and the Low Countries had brought many refugee lacemakers to our shores, but could any girl, even in austere Scotland, resist decorating her bobbins with colours and beads? Besides, the straight bobbins were much more easily made at home, and very many bobbins were home-made. Any hard, smooth wood could be used, plum, apple or oak, for instance and these were easily obtainable in Hamilton. The Hamilton museum is fortunate in having a fairly representative, though small, collection of bobbins mostly in wood. There are many kinds of bobbins, wood or bone or ivory, even silver and other precious metals and many named varieties. There are *leopards* with pewter spots, *tigers* with metal rings, *old maids* specially thin and unadorned. Some are wound with wire or encircled with tiny beads. Some boast designs of tiny sunken spots in red or blue or green. Some are engraved with pious mottoes. Some commemorate an event in family history. Many bobbins were given as love tokens, marked with the name of the girl or her lover. Bobbins were rarely bought, but were made and handed down as heirlooms. A decorated bobbin was a common prize for the best pupil in the lace class.

The lace schools, of which there must have been quite a few in Hamilton, were commercial propositions, though in some of them, the pupils learnt a little reading and a few simple counts. Anyone who knew how to make lace and was of good character could set up a school, even if it were in a dark single end. The children generally began to learn at eight years of age, though sometimes they were younger. School began at six

or eight in the morning. The children were allowed a certain amount of time off, but probably worked for ten hours a day, maybe more. Discipline varied with the teacher, but was, in general, strict. The girls had bare arms—some said to be slapped more easily—and had their hair in plaits or tied tightly back. They must never touch it, as greasy fingers could cause permanent marks to appear on the lace. A strict schedule must be adhered to. So many bobbins had to be emptied in a day or so many pins stuck in, depending on the design. And if any poor child fell behind, that meant staying in after the others had left. The class of up to twenty or thirty pupils of varying ages sat on four-legged stools, their pillows on their knees, resting against a small three-legged stand or "lady".* Sometimes the stools were arranged round the room, sometimes in straight rows across. The teacher stood in the centre or in front, a long slim pointer in her hand for prodding the drowsy or administering short, sharp punishment. It was customary to place the best laceworkers next to the window. Mostly the children paid fees, twopence or threepence a week. They were allowed to sell, or receive payment for the lace they made, and could earn, when they were sufficiently skilled, about sixpence a day. Fires, whether of peat or outcrop coal, were not allowed since the whiteness of the lace was more important than the workers' comfort. Various means were adopted for keeping warm, for example a small pot filled with hot ashes or a heated stone wrapped in a "clout". When it became too dark to see, a tallow candle was placed in the middle of a small table—the candle-stool—and surrounded by bottles filled with water. This reflected the light and enabled eight or a dozen girls to see to work, especially if they were seated on stools of varying heights. It wasn't work all the time, however. The children were allowed outside to warm themselves by jumping about and to stretch their cramped limbs. They competed, at times, individually and in teams, to see who could stick in most pins in a given time. They counted silently up to fifty and shouted out at the fiftieth pin, sometimes putting in a fancy pin to mark the place. There were specially composed rhymes chanted to help them along. Some nursery rhymes, especially in England, such as "How many miles to Dublin town?" had their origin in lacemaking. They, and the grown-ups too, had a holiday at Tanders, a corruption of St. Andrew's Day. St. Andrew was the patron saint of lacemakers, though that fact was probably never mentioned in the strict Presbyterian days. Then, special tanders cakes were made, eaten and enjoyed as a change from the prevailing oat meal bannocks and coarse bread.

Lacemaking was a cottage industry. The women collected their materials and instructions from the lace schools and were paid for the finished articles which would then be despatched to some central agency or laid by to be sold at the Fair. Or perhaps the men-folk of more independent workers would bring the precious thread from Glasgow when they tramped there and back with the material for their weaving. The lace thus made was bought by itinerant agents, often at pathetically small prices to be retailed at a handsome profit in the towns and among

* Scottice "Cuddy"

the wealthy. That is very likely the reason why an advertisement appeared in an Edinburgh paper in 1763, offering "very cheap bone lace" in the Luckenbooths. The Glasgow Silk Company in the Trongate, in the *Glasgow Journal* of May 1759, offers for sale laces of all kinds.

It is completely wrong to dismiss Hamilton lace, as one authority has done as "edgings of the commonest description, of a coarse thread, always of the lozenge pattern. Being strong and firm, it was used for nightcaps, never for dresses". Chambers, in the *Domestic Annals of Scotland*, recalls an old lady, who had been born in 1714 and who wrote down recollections of her girlhood. "I remember", she says, "in '30 or '31, of a ball where it was agreed that the company should be dressed in nothing but what was manufactured in the country. My sisters were as well dressed as any and their gowns were striped linen at 2/6 per yard. Their heads and ruffles were of Paisley muslin at 4/6 with fourpenny edging from Hamilton and all of them the finest that could be had. At the time I mention, hoops were constantly worn four and a half yards wide." The Caldwell Papers mention a ball dress trimmed with yards of Hamilton fourpenny lace. The word "fourpenny" refers to the spots or lozenges characteristic of Hamilton lace. Hamilton spotted lace was famous and closely resembles the "fourpenny spot" made by the lacemakers of Ripon in Yorkshire. The lacemaker could, of course, use fine or coarse thread, simple or elaborate designs, just as a woman today can choose and vary crochet and knitting patterns to suit her requirements. As you can see from the specimens on view in the museum, the edgings could represent the coarsest torchon or the finest valenciennes, with endless variations between.

When we come to consider tambour lace, the set-up is much more organised and elaborate. A number of women worked in small factories, though the majority preferred to work in their own homes, a cradle on rockers at their feet or the toddler tethered to a movable wooden arm or to the table leg, or kept from straying by a board across the open door, low enough for a man to step over but high enough to restrain the activities of a small child. The equipment was simple and consisted of a circular frame of about two feet in diameter and three inches in depth, frequently covered with velvet, and standing on two sturdy legs. Over this fitted a similar hoop or girr, the net being held firmly between them. As with tambour muslin, the design was lightly printed on the net, in outline, from engraved wooden blocks. The thread, wound upon a reel revolving on a spindle attached to the frame was held in the left hand and brought from the underside of the net with a short crochet hook held in the right hand, and the design outlined in chain stitch and elaborated at will. The centres of the flowers and other parts of the design were sometimes filled in with needlepoint stitches. The decision lay in the hands of the "pattern-setter". The work was rapidly done by an experienced tambourer and was used mainly on veils, scarves and shawls. The beautiful wedding shawls are specially worthy of notice. Much

handling gave the white net a yellowish tinge, which had to be removed by bleaching. It was said that there was no house in Hamilton without its tambour frame, whether for gain or amusement. There were many agencies for distributing the materials and collecting the finished articles and there were schools for apprentices. Mrs. Cunningham ran a large school in Muir Street. She was also interested in the Ayrshire embroidery, which brought much profit to the town and of which the Museum possesses several examples. Later, when tambour lace was declining, Mrs. Henderson, of 15 Church Street, was one of the few women manufacturers. In 1900, Miss Henderson wrote to Mr. Alfred Miller, the local historian, enclosing specimens of old Hamilton lace in order that he might photograph them. Prints of these are in the lace section of the Museum. Miss Henderson could remember two old women who were still making bobbin lace in her childhood. She also mentioned a Miss Gray of 59 Campbell Street as a good tambourer.

One other type of lace was made and sold in Hamilton at the end of the nineteenth century, though not on any large scale. This was an imitation of the tape lace, popular in the seventeenth century, where a narrow bobbin-made braid followed a winding pattern and was held in place by numerous bars and joins. This kind of lace became very popular again when machine made braids became available. Its cheapness was a recommendation and local women produced some beautiful specimens, mostly large collars and fichus. The braids were basted between the parallel lines of the design which was traced on linen and joined together by various needlepoint stitches, forming interesting and attractive fabrics. The museum specimens are from the stock of Miss Christina Scott, who, in the 1889 directory, is noted as a "ladies' furnisher" at 63 Quarry Street.

NOTES TO ILLUSTRATIONS

Lace made in Hamilton

1. Fragments of 18th century bone lace edging and insertion.

2. Lady's hat veil, tamboured on very fine net, with needlepoint fillings, early 19th century.

3. Sampler, worked for the Museum by Mrs. J. L. Scott, of York, showing twenty-five different lace stitches. The mushroom pillow shows a similar sampler, partly worked. Note the closely placed pins, necessary for so fine a lace, and the decorated bone and ivory bobbins, some with name inscribed. The pricked pattern card is shown at right hand bottom corner.

4. Coarse insertion, from an old design, worked diagonally on a cylindrical pillow, using a selection of wooden bobbins.

5. Wedding shawl, mid nineteenth century, tamboured on white net.

6. Black tambour net shawl, with flounce, early 19th century.

7. Collar made from insertion and frill of 18th century Hamilton spotted lace, with added edge.

8. Tape lace fichu, sometimes called princess or duchess lace, made in imitation of continental bobbin lace when machine made tape became available in the early 19th century. The taped design is joined and embellished with needlepoint stitches.

Photographs by Mr. G. Walker, Hamilton Burgh Museum

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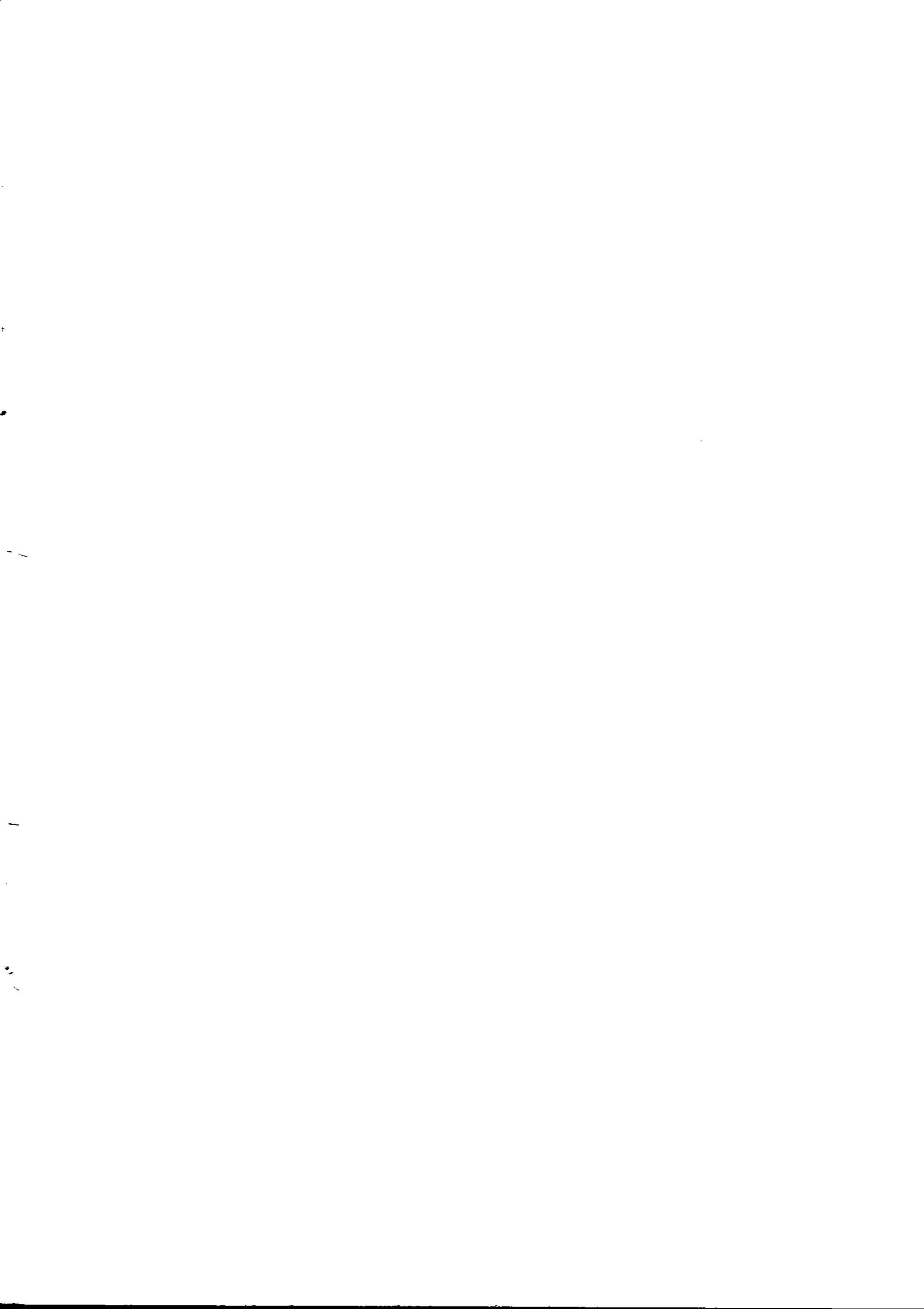

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