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Lace: in fashion for four centuries

HAVE YOU SEEN THE IKLÉ AND JACOBY COLLECTIONS ?

Have you seen the Iklé and Jacoby collections ? If not, we strongly advise you to do so ; it is well worth a visit... if you are fond of lace and fine collections. What is more, this is no lifeless monument to lace, no vast labyrinthian museum packed to the point of satiety with exhibits ! In illustration of the slogan "Lace : in fashion for four centuries" there are only two rooms, some forty showcases, two hundred and fifty exhibits, and yet...

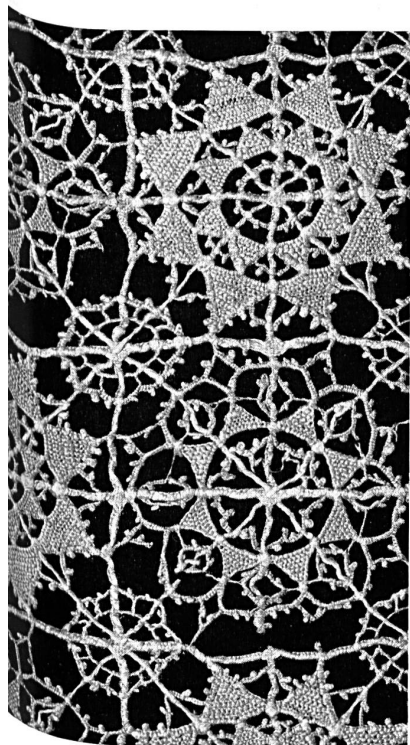
But let us begin at the beginning. Leopold Iklé (1838-1922), a successful lace manufacturer of St. Gall, one day decided to form a collection of embroideries and laces to act as a source of information and inspiration for the designers who created his novelties. He rapidly became an enthusiastic collector and thanks to the excellent knowledge he very soon acquired of the subject and to his private means, which enabled him to buy valuable pieces, he gradually built up a collection of great value. In 1904, he bequeathed part of his inva-

luable collection to the St. Gall Chamber of Commerce, which exhibited it in the Museum of Industrial Arts.

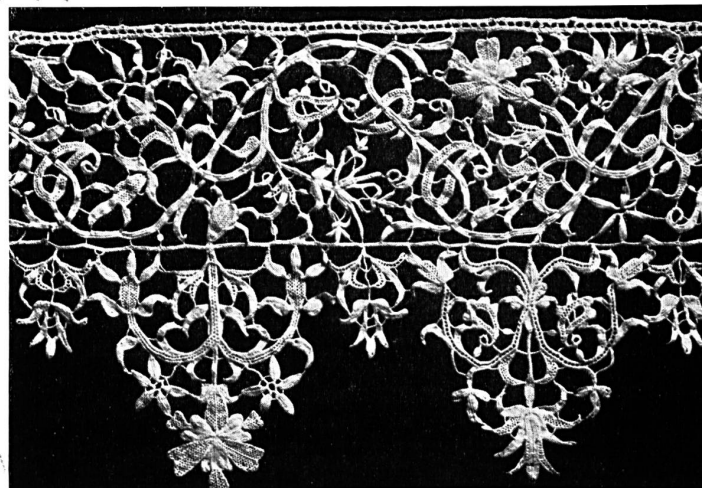
John Jacoby-Iklé (1869-1953), a London embroidery manufacturer and son-in-law of Leopold Iklé, was also an enthusiastic lace collector and built up a wonderful collection which he completed by a rich selection of white embroideries of the nineteenth century. In 1955, the Chamber of Commerce, together with the Swiss Embroidery Association and aided by other textile associations, acquired the Jacoby collection.

In the course of several years of painstaking classification and careful selection, presupposing a thorough knowledge of textile technique and the history of costume, Mr. Hans Stettbacher of St. Gall, choosing only the most representative, most artistic and best preserved pieces, merged the two collections into one consisting of some two hundred and fifty remarkable exhibits — that is to say but a tenth of the samples of lace in the two collections together.

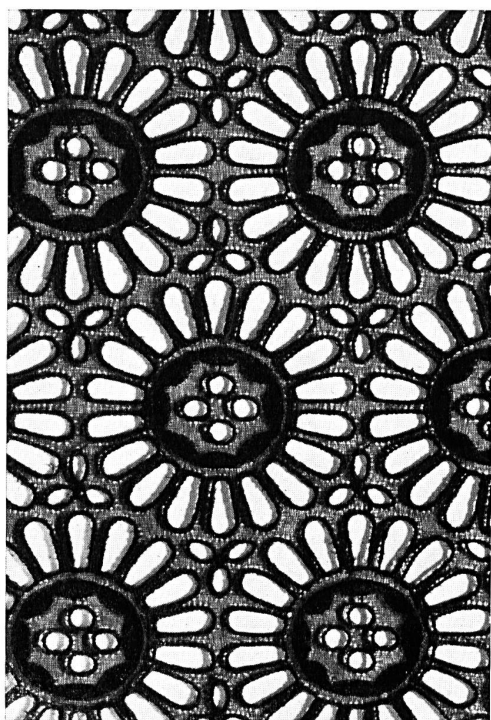
Superlatives are far too hackneyed nowadays for us to care to use them to describe this selection of two



Reticella, Italian needle point of the Renaissance, about 1550



Punto in aria, Italian needle point lace, beginning of the 17th century



Eyelet embroidery, Saint-Gall,
end of the 19th century

already very carefully chosen collections. The Iklé-Jacoby collection contains only items of exclusively European origin (Italy, France, England, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Germany and Switzerland) of the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries and a number of samples of embroidery from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. All the exhibits — some of them very large — are of undoubted artistic and technical interest, in a perfect state of preservation, and are displayed with taste and simplicity in large well-lit show cases with ample space between them in two spacious rooms of the Museum of Industrial Arts. The pieces of embroidery, whose beauty is enhanced by the tasteful manner in which they are displayed, are accompanied by short texts relating the history of the manners and costumes of the period and above all by photographs of paintings and engravings, which make it possible to see the use formerly made of lace. It would be impossible to mention here all the different types — reticella, needle-point, bobbin-lace — or the magical names of the places where these lovely laces are made: Venice, Alençon, Valenciennes, etc. Let us just call attention to a particularly valuable piece: a dress in Alençon needle-point lace bespoke by Napoleon III for the Empress Eugénie; this fabulous piece of work took thirty-six women eighteen months to make and cost the Emperor nine hundred pounds sterling of the day, that is to say twenty-two thousand five hundred gold francs.

Finally, we should like to congratulate both the Chamber of Commerce and the textile industry on having succeeded in acquiring and displaying to such good effect the treasures we have just mentioned, and at the same time Mr. Stettbacher on his excellent work of presentation, which includes an instructive, carefully and artistically presented catalogue in three languages. And one last word: if you go to St. Gall, you must not fail to go and see the Iklé-Jacoby collection — you will not regret it!

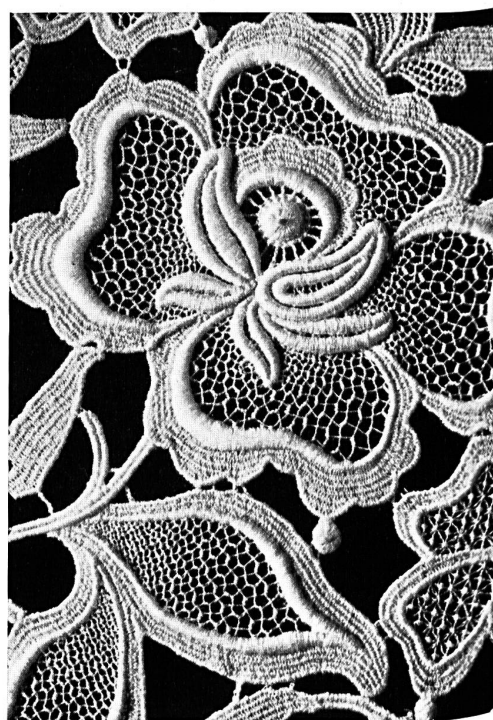
René Cadet



Chantilly Bobbin Lace made
in silk, 1870-1880



Net lace, Saint-Gall, middle
of the 20th century



Burnt-out lace, Saint-Gall, middle
of the 20th century