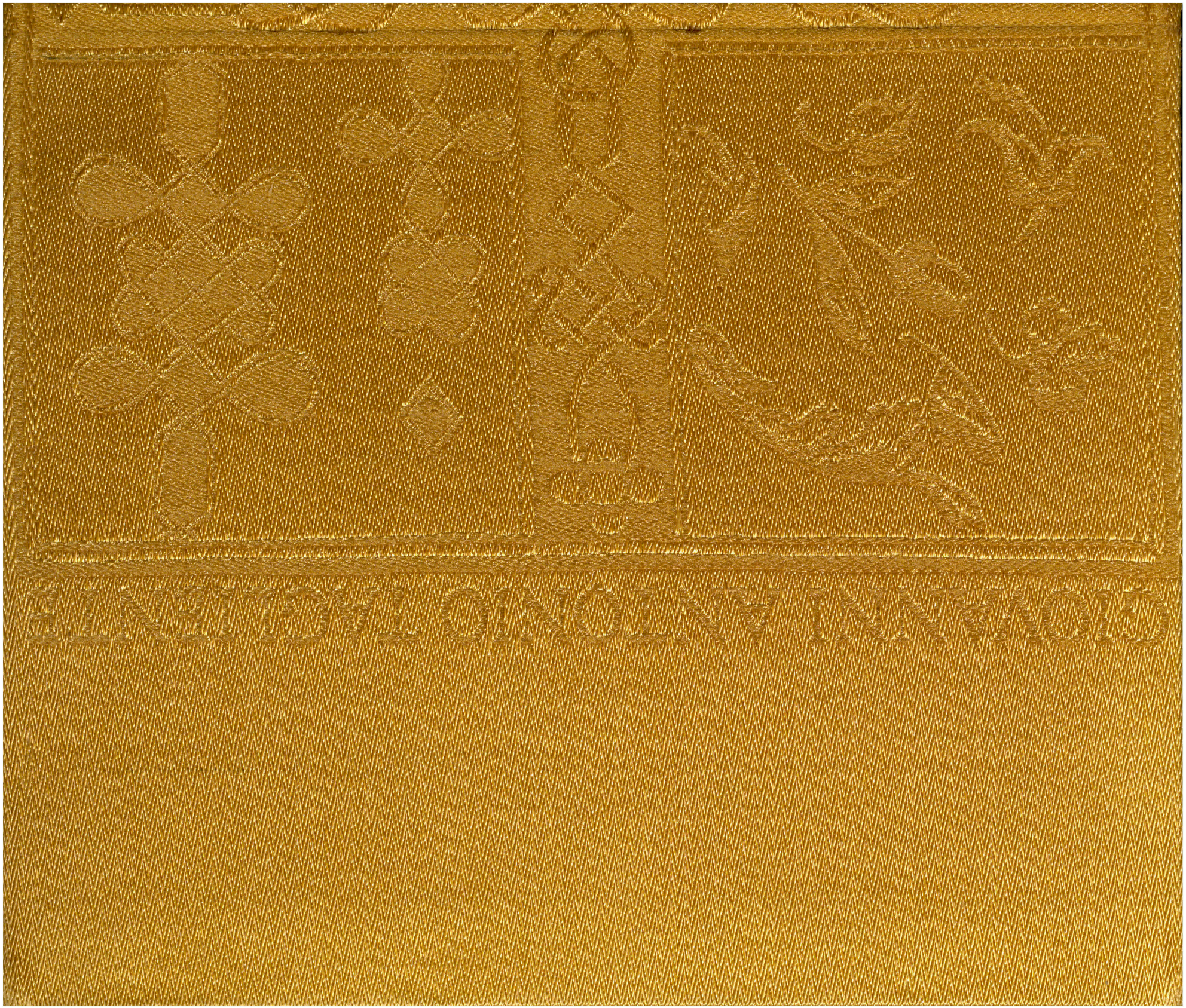
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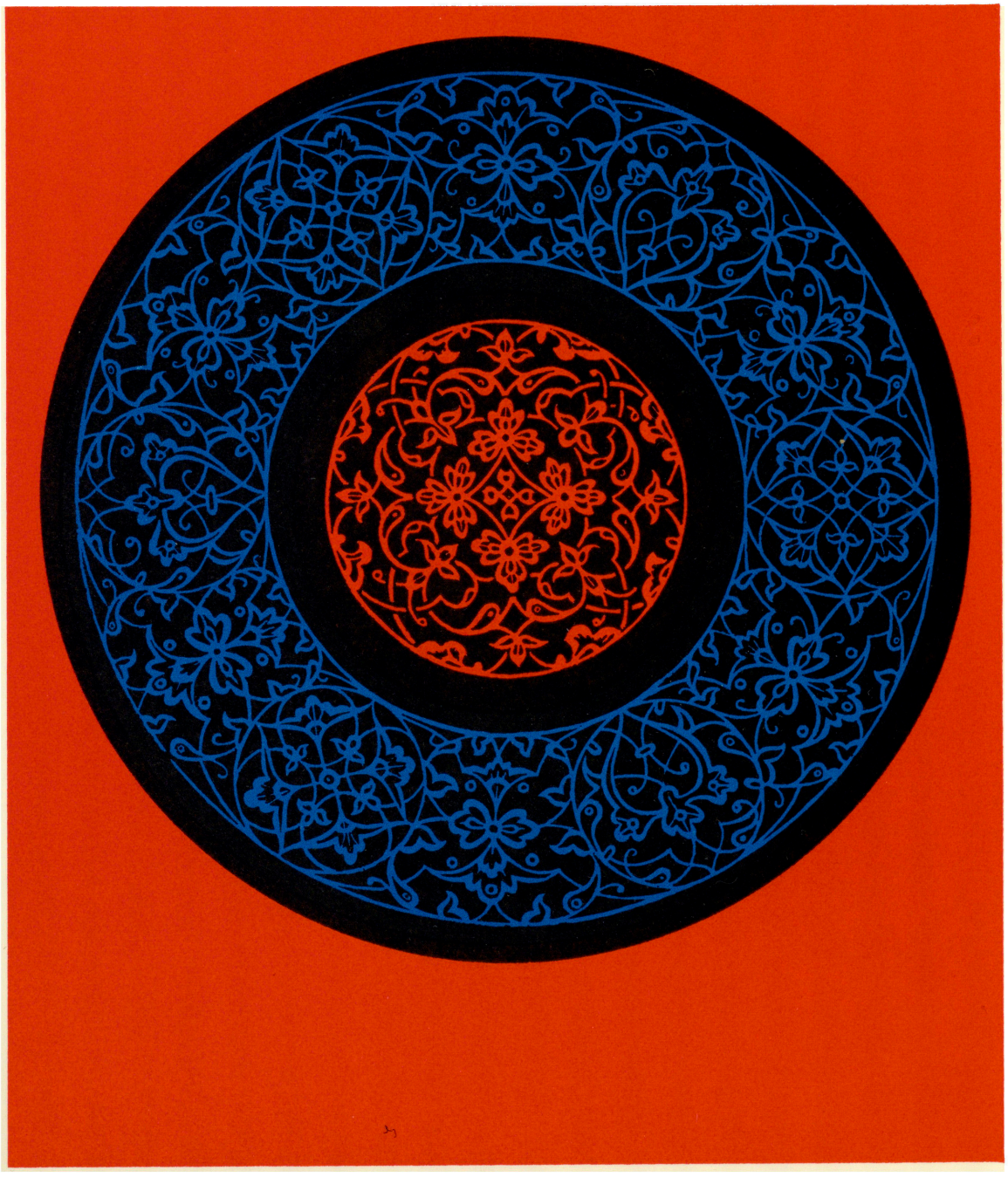
Splendour of Ornament



Splendour of Ornament

by Stanley Morison

Specimens selected from the *Essempio di recammi*,

the first Italian manual of decoration, Venice 1524 by

Giovanni Antonio Tagliente

His life and literary remains, the *Essempio di recammi*

and his typographical style by Esther Potter

Preface by Berthold Wolpe

Lion and Unicorn Press London 1968

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Preface

THE LONG list of Stanley Morison's publications includes several books that were produced in limited editions. 'Why do the heathen so furiously rave against limited editions, large-papers, first editions and the rest? For there is certainly more to be said for than against them. Broadly speaking all such "fads" are worthy of being encouraged, because they, in some measure, maintain the expiring dignity of letters, the mystery of books.'[1]

Limited editions were no fads to Stanley Morison: they enabled him, on the one hand, in ephemeral pamphlet form, to invite criticism from other scholars, before going into a more final format; and, on the other, to give an extraordinary and lasting impact, in more carefully produced and illustrated books, to his aim of communicating certain facts and aspects of calligraphic and printing history.

For the same reason he wanted this book, which I have the honour of introducing, to be well printed, full of colour and splendidly bound. Even if we could not rise to 'tissue and cloth of gold', a specially woven binding has been prepared, that reflects on the outside the richness it contains.

How did Stanley Morison really become interested in typography? I can imagine that as a young man, while working for the British and Foreign Bible Society, he had a chance to peruse and compare many editions of The Book, not only in many languages, but also in various formats. This experience must have helped to sharpen that sense of letterforms which led him to a career in the field of letters—typographic as well as calligraphic; and, last but not least, embracing all aspects of these matters in a scholarly way.

This is not the place to relate his development and to point out his vast influence on the world of book and newspaper printing. But we may note in this particular context that his interest in printing history and its practical application brought him to consider, together with Francis Meynell, 'Printers, Flowers and Arabesque' in the opening essay

[1] Richard Le Gallienne, *Limited Editions. A Prose Fancy.* London, 1893.

of Volume 1 of the 'Fleuron', launched in 1923. Furthermore he read in 1955 a paper to the Oxford University Bibliophiles on 'Venice and the Arabesque Ornament', an attempt to define the meaning of arabesque and to relate the ornaments to the trade between Venice and Constantinople. A compound of his renewed interest in this subject is distilled into his introductory essay to this Lion and Unicorn Press publication. It was a propitious choice of Morison's to enlist Mrs Esther Potter's substantial collaboration in this book.

In his trenchant apologia Morison shows that ornament has an important part to play in the realm of design. After a period when the emphasis was on 'function' and on 'form without ornament', he is able to demonstrate that ornament can still be desirable, particularly when the required function of the very object is to be decorative. Significantly the publication of this book coincides with a revival of interest in decorative curves and in ornamental treatment in graphic design.

Stanley Morison was in close touch with the College over the production of the book. He approved the format and design, though he did not live to see the completed SPLENDOUR OF ORNAMENT. In sending it out we honour his memory, that of a great friend and a Senior Fellow of the Royal College of Art.

Berthold Wolpe

Introduction by Stanley Morison

Splendour of Ornament

THE ESTEEM accorded to decorative arts in the public building of the past and in that of the present, differs in degree profoundly; so much so that the abolition of ornament symbolises the revolutionary element in contemporary architectural style. The priority once given to decoration in building and the auxiliary crafts has now been totally reversed.

The importance of decoration and the dignity of those who designed it in ancient times are vividly presented in the speech by Moses in which he commanded the erection of the special building in which the liturgical worship of Almighty God was to be offered by the dedicated people of Israel. Moses' prime practical item was the appointment of an architect-in-chief. His choice was one upon whom conspicuous skill had been divinely conferred. The architect was instructed, writes the reporter (Exodus 35, 36) 'to design and execute with the assistance of others likewise inspired and gifted, the structure which Moses was minded to erect to the glory of God'.

So, enjoined Moses,

> The Lord has selected Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Juda. And he has made him full of the Spirit of God in all wisdom and knowledge of art of every sort; an expert designer of beautiful things, working in gold and silver and brass; trained in the cutting of stones and the ornamenting of work and of every sort of handwork. And he has given to him and to Obadiah, the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan, the power of training others.
>
> To them he has given knowledge of all the arts of the handiworker, of the designer, and the expert workman; of the maker of needlework in blue and purple and red and of the best linen, and of the maker of cloth; of the arts of the designer and the trained workman they are expert.
>
> So let Bezalel and Obadiah get to work, with every wise-hearted man to whom the Lord has given wisdom and knowledge to do whatever is necessary for the ordering of the place, as the Lord has given orders.

The narrative (Exodus 36, 37) proceeds to recognize the role of the designer and the praiseworthy response made to the public appeal for gifts. This, however, concerns us less than the public acclaim given to the designers, workmen and their work, and that of the women whose skill in ornament and decoration were of an order to make supremely beautiful the place of divine worship.

TODAY a much lesser degree of public acclaim is given to designers of ornament and decoration. It is even doubtful if many contemporary designers desire to excel in decorative artistry. Decoration cannot be said to be a fashionable employment or accomplishment. The standpoint of some present day architects and graphic designers reminds one of an anecdote told by James Bolivar Manson (1879–1945), impressionist painter, lively writer, amusing talker and Director of the Tate Gallery from 1930–1943. Manson was ex officio the resort of colleagues from other galleries. One day he toured the Tate for the benefit of an American director, his wife and daughter. While the talk went on every aspect of modern art the daughter did not speak. At the end, the talkative Manson enquired of the silent daughter whether she had any special interest in art. 'No', she snapped, 'Art just makes me sick'.

Nowadays, in powerful quarters, concepts such as Art and Beauty, and words such as Decoration and Ornament, and strivings after the Beautiful have a similarly emetic effect. Architecture has ceased to be an aspect of art, and has risen to its full stature as a branch of engineering. And the graphic artist, aware of this change, designs his projects to correspond. The world has indeed travelled far since Ruskin could pronounce that 'ornamentation is the principal part of architecture' and Scott say of the 'gothic' style that 'its great principle is to decorate construction'.

From 1910, after the luxuriance of Art Nouveau, an iconoclastic wind rushed into this country from the continent. Gradually, ornamentation, so far from being 'the principal part of architecture', has been altogether denied place and the capacity to create it discarded.

The age-old architectural devices of pleasing the eye by contriving a decorative outline to the hewn stone or marble, or by applying linear ornament to the elevation, have been rejected. Novel devices have taken the place of decoration and ornament. These include the massing of concrete, plastic and glass surfaces some of which are treated with colour.

The outlines of the new buildings are usually rigid and rectangular. In an occasional concert hall or church, curves may be allowed, but no external ornament appears there save, perhaps, a sculptured figure. Obviously if no curving, arching or other organic ornament is permissible, no linear decoration can be allowed.

The designers of the mid-twentieth century public building rely, for the attractiveness of their constructions, not upon the old formula of decoration but on a new capacity to

surprise. Thus, much commercial building is conceived as an aspect of publicity. This attitude is the more appropriate in an age of monetary inflation, burdensome taxation and high-cost maintenance. Large corporations ambitious of occupying the most desirable sites in the chief capitals of the world, eagerly accept a design proposed as combining up-to-date modernization, functional simplicity and economic efficiency. These are the essential criteria, respect for which liberates 'art'. Art is something which increases maintenance costs; while 'streamlining', a term taken appropriately from hydrodynamics, reduces them.

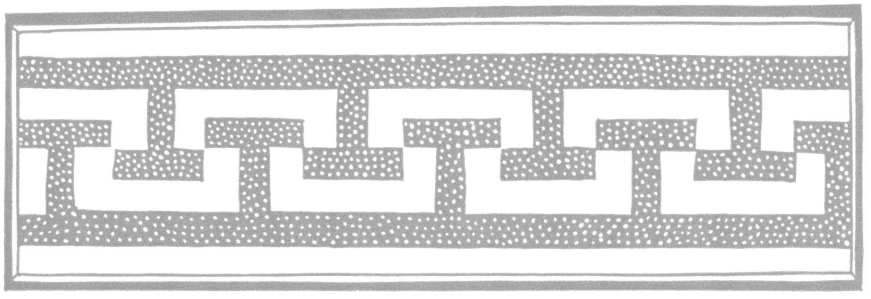
This is the situation of design as it appears to many of the principal architects in practice to-day. Their example inevitably sets the style for lesser practitioners. The innovator is closely followed by the imitator. When the originator of a design is sufficiently and skilfully copied for long enough, a 'style' can emerge. If the imitators, copyists and adaptors are sufficiently persistent and find due acceptance, the schools will inculcate it and the later art historian will note a 'period'.

This style which one sees on every hand rising today in Britain (and elsewhere) has become the conventional choice of contemporary architects. In reality, the constrictive economic situation allows architects little choice. The demands of speed and economy everywhere accelerate the trend away from 'frills'. The complex of activities comprised within what has grown into a world-wide construction style, will, it seems, deny for many generations a place for ornament and decoration. What was optional in 1905 is not optional sixty years later. Architects are not as free to choose. Inevitably, when freedom is abstracted, the deprived seek ideological considerations to justify the acceptance of necessity. Thus the change is welcomed as a healthy development consistent with the other contemporary trends, above all in science. In consequence, the principle most widely accepted rejects the tradition of ornament on the ground that all departure from habit is good in itself as proof of that independence from past times which is appropriate to the present period. Thus the study and practice of ornament are disposed of as out of character with the spirit of the age.

While the term 'spirit' may be open to question there can be little doubt that the 'streamlined approach' has met with wide preference. The original, aesthetic theories excogitated in Dessau fifty years ago have attracted overwhelming support from the accidental, economic and other consequences of two world wars. It is not to be gainsaid that the vastness of the needs and problems involved in reconstruction imposes difficult decisions upon architects and builders of domestic and industrial structures. Inevitably such a mass of new building necessitates new methods. It is not surprising therefore that new theories should expound the situation as one in which the new, i.e., the half-century old Dessau style, should be put forward today as alone being capable of ordering the arts and crafts in a direction consistent with contemporary problems and practical solutions. In default of any alternative possessing the same advantages for the economic and material order, the early twentieth century Dessau style is likely, by force of mute public acceptance, to rank as its promoters wish, the sole style, as characteristic as it is appropriate, to the economic, scientific, religious, moral, intellectual and artistic life of

the new western world, the making of which was imposed by the unprecedented destruction of the war of 1939–1945.

It is not within the purpose of the present essay to discuss the desirability or otherwise of this artistic-economic development but merely to perceive its effect upon the study and practice of ornament. For the reasons given we witness an almost complete diminution of the use of architectural decoration. Hence there would appear to be little justification for the production at this time of a book encouraging an interest in decoration and ornament. Any such book must be irrelevant to most of what needs building: industrial plants, domestic housing and the rest.



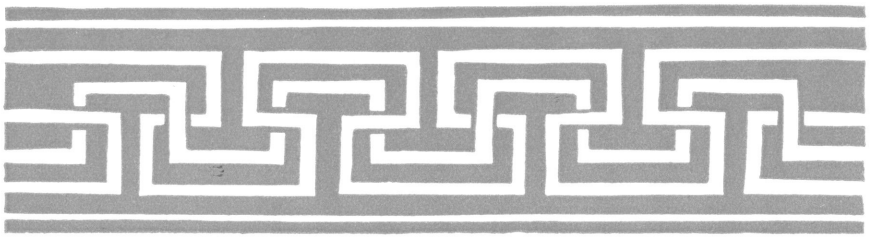
BUT ATTENTION given to ornament in the less industrialized arts may not be so irrelevant. Domestic building, such as private or academic residences, encourages a modicum of ornament at least in the interior furnishings, as for example, wallpapers and textiles. Personal possessions, also, encourage ornament such as jewellery and the innumerable articles needed for household use and others desired for social elegance and civilized amenity; costumes, also, inspire pattern-making. Scenery and curtaining for stage and screen necessitate knowledge and skill in decoration and ornament. Ornament, therefore, may still need to be tolerated, taught and practised in the schools of art.

It would appear, in fact, for these reasons only (though perhaps others) that the art of decorating otherwise plain surfaces, so ancient in origin and uninterrupted in continuity, nowadays stands in need of encouragement. It may not follow that because ornament is superfluous in many buildings it is objectionable everywhere. Irrespective of the decline of decoration in normal commercial public works, there is a place for it in public buildings which are neither usual nor industrial. After everything that can rightly be said against the Victorian abuse of ornaments, and all that can reasonably be urged on behalf of its modern rejection as superfluous is taken into account, there will remain a contrast and even a contradiction between the requirements of sacred and secular architecture. Nothing is more singular, therefore, at the present time than that there should be a strong tendency to assimilate the style of the place of worship to that of the place of work. The result is a downgrading of ecclesiastical art in favour of commercial convention, and to subject the style of the synagogue, the church and the mosque to that of the factory, the office and the airport.

But, if any position is incontrovertible in this respect, it is that the subjection of style to economic conditions is inappropriate to conditions in which man and woman act

primarily as social individuals, as they do in the family, the home and in the church, at the table and at the altar. In both places, home and church, ornaments and pictures have proved necessary. This is not less true of man in his character as a social individual; above all it is true of man as a spiritual being.

It would appear, therefore, that decoration desired and designed with the right end and object is humanly desirable as an accompaniment of certain kinds of building. In all building it is true that it is the walls and roof that matter. The erection is complete as it stands; and, as would be considered today in high quarters, more 'honest' without any 'stuck-on' ornament. This is convincing in respect of factories in which the operatives work; but the reason why it is reasonable to study, practice and use ornament is that the operatives become people when they leave the factory and have to live in and with what the architects set up.

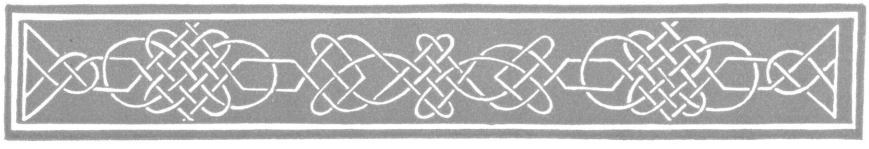


WHETHER ORNAMENT should merely be tolerated or encouraged was considered and answered in 1881 by William Morris in an address on pattern-designing to the Working Men's College. He began directly by asking what reason or right this so-called ornamental art had to existence. His answer was that 'it seems clear that mankind has hitherto determined to have it at the cost of a good deal of labour and trouble'. It is reprinted as 'Some Hints on Pattern-Designing' in *Collected Works* (XXII, p. 175). Thus, Morris judged ornament to be an innate natural human need that never required justification and always required satisfaction. It was not a mere fad to be accepted or rejected at whim. This point he emphasized in a much longer lecture, delivered to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1882. 'The History of Pattern-Design' is reprinted in the *Collected Works* (XXII, pp. 206–234). In sum, Morris held that building and the associated arts and crafts must be as closely as ever possible related to the life of man and in accordance with the needs of his common humanity.

For Morris the present state of building would please only up to a point. He would not approve the slavery of art to capitalist economics, though he would honour the lack of pretence in 'modern' building. Morris could only deplore the lack of contemporary use of ornament. He would point to the historic and demonstrable fact that ornamentation was practised by primitive man and has had a continuity ever since. For Morris the argument arising from the degree of consent, in the civilization of the West, extending from ancient Mesopotamia (Morris could have quoted the example of Bezalel) to his own day, was conclusive. The appetite for ornament is as natural in man as that for bread and wine, and he will seek its satisfaction.

It is not the less to be doubted, however, that the present iconoclastic mood is likely

to prevail, at least until the end of our twentieth century; unless, perhaps a reaction is encouraged. However, discussion of the future evolution of style and of the probability of a reaction on the eve of the next century do not lie within the scope of the present essay. It is sufficient to claim that there is an arguable case for an interest in ornamentation, its history and use. Accordingly, the object of the present work is to stimulate a decent concern for ornament. Hence it is the purpose of the present publication to encourage the study of patterns, but not to suggest their imitation. It is also expected that present-day ornament and decoration shall be used in accord with right reason and without recourse to such an irrational principle as ornament for ornament's sake. The point was made with his habitual pithiness by W. R. Lethaby, first Professor of Design at the Royal College of Art: 'Beware of much ornament, especially of the machine-made sort. Much routine ornament is a disease, a surface eruption which is often repulsive'. The present selection from the designs in Giovanni Antonio Tagliente's *Essempio di recammi*, originally published in 1527, has been prepared in the hope that portions of the book may be of use to those who might aspire to master the art of plain linear ornament.



THE READER may now reasonably ask why selections from this particular book should be published. The question necessitates a plunge into the history of pattern production. By a pattern is meant that which is designed in order to be imitated. Its full title tells us that the *Essempio di recammi* is a work of instruction for ladies who would embroider, weave or sew adornment on tapestries and textiles. It also brings in designs for those who would make pavements and other elements in buildings. The book deals mainly with private, but incidentally with public, ornament. The instruction given in the text is accompanied by examples for their imitation. Secondly, this is the original Italian pattern-book of this kind, and thirdly, use is made here of the editions published in 1527 and 1528. Finally, the blocks here shown are reproduced from the first edition which has not before been laid under contribution.

From the sixteenth century the making of lace was fashionable on the Continent, and the many pattern-books printed in Venice between 1527 and the end of the century were circulated and copied, especially in France. In England the technique, in common with other crafts, suffered so much from the political disputes of the seventeenth century that it did not recover until modern times. The Victorian revival of the study of patterns needs, therefore, to be outlined here, especially as South Kensington plays such a conspicuous role in its completion.

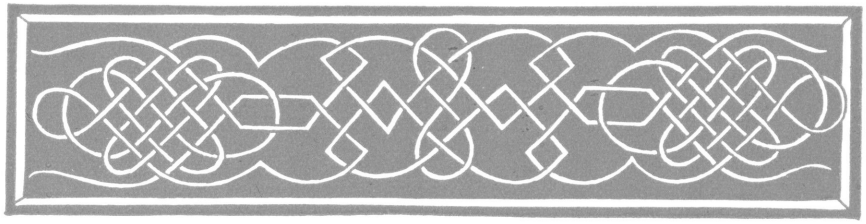
The English gothic movement in architecture encouraged the publication of reproductions of decorations considered appropriate. Sir Frederic Madden's *Illuminated Ornaments selected from the manuscripts of the Middle Ages* began to appear in parts from

1830. The drawings in this ambitious work were by Henry Shaw, whose *Encyclopaedia of Ornament* was published in 1836. Shaw, antiquary, architect, engraver, letterer and illuminator, was also a prolific editor. For more than half-a-century he published works illustrating in monochrome and colour, ornamental wood work, metal work and calligraphy. He was largely responsible not only for spreading the knowledge of gothic ornament, but for propagating a taste for ornament as such. August Welby Pugin's *Floriated Ornament* of 1849 was another powerful stimulant. Owen Jones, the architect, superintendent of the works of the Great Exhibition of 1851, brought out his *Grammar of Ornament* in 1858, the most influential of several works by him on interior decoration.

The works of Shaw, Pugin, Humphreys, Jones and others were addressed mainly to architects, though they were (incidentally and innocently) responsible for the commercial and vulgar abuse of ornament on buildings of every kind.

The Venetian sixteenth-century patterns which this book exemplifies have little in common with those just described. A minimum of the designs benefit architects beset with problems of exterior decoration. So far as these Venetian designs were known in England and the Continent in the middle of the nineteenth century, they were the preserve of the successors of those to whom the original book was addressed (as the full title of the *Essempio di recammi* says), ladies practising the art of the needle.

It is to a lady that the world owes the modern revival of interest in lace and in the literature of lace. Appropriately, also, the resumed study of the subject originated in the neighbourhood of South Kensington. No apology is made for the fact that so much of what immediately follows concerns patterns for lace. Ornament is ornament whether private or public.



MRS FANNY PALLISER was born in 1805. She was the daughter of Joseph Marryat, M.P. for Wimbledon, and his wife, Charlotte, of Boston, Mass. Her brother was Captain Frederick Marryat, the predecessor of G. A. Henty as a novelist. In 1832 Fanny married Captain Bury Palliser, with whom she had four sons and two daughters. Palliser died in 1852. Mrs Bury Palliser, having brought up her family of six, gave her time to the study of antique and modern Italian and French lace work. She was also interested in machine-made lace. In 1865 appeared the first edition of *A History of Lace* by Mrs Bury Palliser. A handsome square octavo, it was published by Sampson Low, Son and Marston, with many illustrations carefully engraved on wood. In the Appendix, at pp. 427–460, there occurs a List of Pattern Books, beginning with Quentell's Cologne edition of *Eyn new kunstlich boich* 1527. This is the first hand-list of pattern-books published in English. It was preceded a year earlier by two articles by the Marchese Girolamo d'Adda in the

Gazette des Beaux Arts volume for 1863 (pp. 342–359) and for 1864 (pp. 421–426) under the title of 'Essai bibliographique sur les anciens modèles de lingerie gravés et publiés au 16^{e} et 17^{e} siècles'. D'Adda's list is divided into Germany, Italy and France. His first Italian item is Zoppino's *Esemplario di lavori*, Venice 1529, which reproduces some of Tagliente's designs. D'Adda, like Mrs Palliser, knew only of the existence of Tagliente's *Esemplario nuovo* (as the title became) of 1531. The 1527 edition was unknown to them.

It would appear that although Mrs Palliser and the Marchese d'Adda had been in correspondence, their notes had been independently collected and listed. Acknowledgement is made to the Marchese in *A History of Lace* for the 'two interesting papers' in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*. These are the basic sources of modern bibliographical scholarship as applied to pattern-books. Mrs Palliser's list was reprinted in the fourth edition (London: Samson Low & Co. 1902) of *A History of Lace* edited and enlarged by Miss M. Jourdain and Miss Alice Dryden. This remained, until recently, the standard list of such books.

It is obvious from the first edition of 1865 that Mrs Palliser had spent at least ten years on its compilation. In all probability she began it even before her husband died in 1852, but that she was stimulated to proceed by the Great Exhibition of 1851 is certain. She was as much an admirer of the right kind of manufactured lace as she was of the right class of hand-made lace, and it cannot be doubted that Mrs Fanny Bury Palliser deserved the credit for the creation of a new interest in the function of lace in the past and the provision for it in the present.

In 1867 Paris mounted a great exhibition which was the object of the attention of a deputation of experts officially appointed to inspect and report upon the several sections. The volume was presented to both Houses of Parliament in 1868. It contained (pp. 109–122, with one folding sheet engraved on wood) a 'Report on Lace, Net, Embroidery and Small-ware Manufacture' by Mrs Bury Palliser. She was, by this time, recognized at home and abroad as the outstanding authority on the subject.

After the first edition she became much more than the Mrs Beeton of lace-making. She might have done more, she did not press the point that the history had an industrial application. The manufactured lace is well described and she distinguishes the products of the several English provincial centres, though she does not particularise in detail the output of the Nottinghamshire factories, beyond listing the types characteristic of the county.

Mrs Palliser, however, was in close touch with the industry through official channels. Her *Descriptive Catalogue of Lace in the South Kensington Museum* was published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in 1871. There was a second edition in 1873, while also in 1873 there appeared *Some Notes on the History of Lace to which is added a Catalogue of Specimens of Lace selected from the Museum at South Kensington, circulated as a Loan to the Midland Counties Museum of Science and Art at Nottingham.*

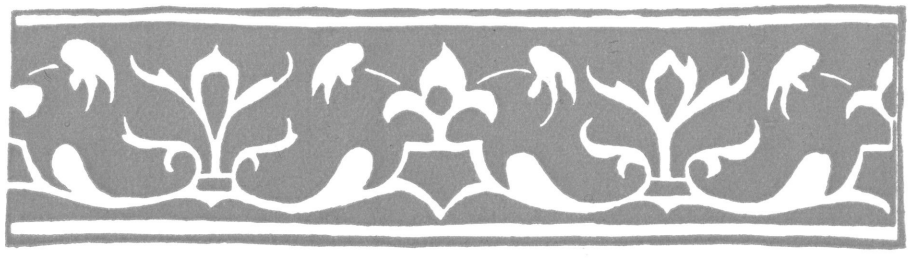
By this time the subject she had made her own had become of continental interest. In 1874 London mounted an International Exhibition of Lace, for which Mrs Palliser produced the concise sixteen-page *Guide* [price threepence]. 'A magnificent collection of

machine-made lace is exhibited by the Chamber of Commerce at Nottingham', she reports.

Mrs Palliser's *Descriptive Catalogue of the Lace in the South Kensington Museum* was re-issued in 1873, with fourteen illustrations, and remained the basic and popular authority. Arising out of the interest aroused by the International Lace Exhibition the Arundel Society brought together a number of photographs of specimens of ancient lace. The volume was prefaced with an historical introduction by Alan S. Cole, who later enlarged a third edition of the *Descriptive Catalogue*. She had written herself out on the subject which accident, rather than intention, had become her speciality. However, she celebrated her seventieth birthday in 1875 with a third edition of *A History of Lace*. She wrote no more on that subject, but reverted to other interests.

She had been a regular contributor to the *Art Journal* and the *Academy* on various topics. Her first publication was *The Modern Poetical Speaker*. This collection of modern (i.e., nineteenth-century) poems apt for recitation, had evidently developed in the Pallisers' growing family. It was published in 1845. In 1869 she brought out *Brittany and its Byways*, a guide to the country's antiquities. In 1870 Mrs Palliser reprinted from the *Academy* her series of papers on the *Historic Devices, Badges, &c* and in 1872 she followed with *Mottoes for Monuments or Epitaphs, selected for study*. The volume had illustrations by Flaxman and others.

In 1871, Mrs Palliser whose interest in porcelain had been life-long, produced *The China Collector's Pocket Companion* of which a second edition appeared in 1875. Translations from the French testify to her unflagging curiosity about medieval arts and crafts. Her last task was a translation of A. Jacquemart's *History of Furniture* which appeared in 1878, the year of her death at the age of seventy-three.



MRS BURY PALLISER's name was well known on the Continent, and her writings were in circulation in France and Italy. Although the French translation of her *A History of Lace* did not appear until 1892, the English edition was in circulation. The effectiveness of her influence in Venice is evident from the catalogue of the publisher, Ferdinand Ongania. Besides advertising Mrs Palliser's *A History of Lace* he was inspired to produce a series of facsimiles of the early Italian pattern-books. This was one of the most significant results of Mrs Palliser's work. There can be no doubt that, owing at least, to the accessibility of her *List of Pattern-Books* (published in the Appendix to *A History*) Ongania was led to venture upon the programme of his series of facsimiles. Reproduced by photo-lithography in the size of the originals, they reached what was for the nine-

teenth century a high standard, however crude they may appear to eyes habituated to the first-class collotype of the twentieth century. Ongania began his series in 1876 with, as the first volume, Cesare Vecellio's *Corona delle nobile et vertuose donne* in the edition of 1600 (the first was published in 1591). Vol. XIII, issued in 1879, was Giovanni Antonio Tagliente's *Esemplario nuovo* in the last edition of 1531.

It needs to be said here that the Ongania facsimile, made from the Berlin copy, suffers from two handicaps. The Berlin copy, the only known copy of this last edition, is badly printed like all the extant copies of Tagliente's pattern-book. Secondly, Ongania's lithographic process is faithful to the point of reproducing all the faults of the original. In consequence, the reprint fails to express the richness of the original designs. The blocks are obviously very difficult to treat on the printing press. If any printer ever succeeded in achieving a fine result no copies have descended to the present day. As explained below, it is the present printer's intention to give Tagliente's blocks the kind of presentation which they merit, the artist's reputation justifies, and the rarity of the first edition necessitates. The final reason why the present edition has been taken in hand is that the Ongania reprint is unprocurable. No copy has come up for sale within living memory, since the published edition was limited to 100 copies and these were probably incorporated into the libraries of three generations ago. It follows that today the facsimile is only to be met with in the principal institutions of the learned world. That the facsimile was in fact made in 1879, and that Ongania reproduced a whole series of pattern-books is additional justification for the abundant space here given to the career of Mrs Bury Palliser.

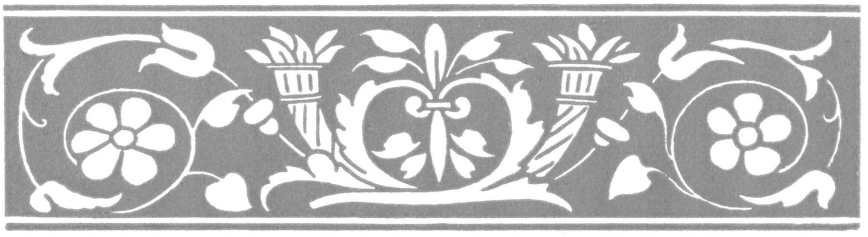
It remains to note that the bibliography of this subject passed to another stage with the paper entitled 'Early Pattern-Books of Lace Embroidery and Needlework' which Edward F. Strange (then an assistant in the Library of the Victoria and Albert Museum) prepared for the Bibliographical Society on March 17, 1902, in whose *Transactions* (Vol. VII, pp. 209–245) it duly appears. Strange, having explained that 'the subject has been exhaustively studied by Mrs Bury Palliser', proceeds to list all the pattern-books which he could trace. Thus he notes from Brussels a 1528 edition of Tagliente. Strange was inspired to make this list by the appearance in 1902 of the fourth edition of Mrs Bury Palliser's *A History of Lace* enlarged by Miss Jourdain and Miss Dryden.

MRS BURY PALLISER, as has been noted above, died in 1878. Her place was filled by a new recruit, an aristocrat. She was Marianne Margaret, Viscountess Alford (1817–1888) generally known as Lady Marianne Alford, the daughter of Spencer Compton, Marquis of Northampton, and wife of John Hume Curt, Viscount Alford. An able painter, gifted designer and versatile craftswoman, she was also industrious and methodical and wrote well. Lady Alford was energetic. In the seventies she abandoned painting and drawing for embroidery and needlework. Towards the end of the decade she interested Queen Victoria with the object of creating a centre for the tuition and practice of needlecraft. In 1874 the Royal School of Needlework was founded at South Kensington. For it Lady Alford wrote a small *Handbook of Art Needlework* (London 1880). Six years later

she produced the sumptuous royal octavo *Needlework as an Art* (London 1886) in which she embodied the results of her reading in French, English, German and Italian, of studies and monographs on the history of needlework and embroidery. Lady Alford was more interested in the archaeology than in the bibliography of patterns and makes only the slightest reference (p. 206) to the German and Italian pattern-books.

The book is a notable achievement. 'Dedicated by permission to the Queen', it is remarkable as a specimen of book production. Apart from 29 line woodcuts in the text, there are 85 plates in litho and photogravure; the whole 446 pages are carefully printed and bound in bevelled board with all four edges set off with the finest quality gilding. The publisher who executed this commission was the house of Sampson Low (London 1886). The Royal School of Needlework, still flourishing in its beautiful house in Kensington, is Lady Alford's memorial. Her book should still be remembered.

In 1881 Alan S. Cole, who had revised and enlarged the third edition of Mrs Bury Palliser's *Descriptive Catalogue of the Lace at South Kensington*, read four lectures on lace-making to the Royal Society of Arts. Cole was then an official of the Board of Education (ultimately an Assistant Secretary) and later the author of the magisterial article 'Lace' in the Cambridge edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* published in 1911. Cole's section on the literature of the subject is by no means a bare list, but a running commentary, and remains the best introduction to the study of lace. The present *Britannica* (1964 printing) article, contributed by Frances Morris of the Metropolitan Museum of New York, comprises a superior treatment of the application of machinery to lace-making. The completeness of Cole's article makes superfluous here any further mention of lace literature published after 1910. The most important addition to our knowledge of pattern-books is Arthur Lotz's *Bibliographie der Modelbücher* published in 1933, which will be mentioned immediately.



THE CASE for study and practice of ornament having been argued, and the justification for the study of the archaeology and bibliography of pattern-books having been attempted, and the reasons for making the present reproductions from the first Italian pattern-book having been explained, it remains to say why the present book has been given its specific and unorthodox form. As it varies substantially from standard bibliographical practice in the presentation of a facsimile some remarks are necessary.

Scientific bibliography requires a straightforward photographic reproduction with an apparatus comparing the contents of all available editions and an historical and technical introduction. It is reasonable, therefore, in the name of bibliography, to ask why this has not been done in the case of the first edition, not hitherto reproduced or fully described,

of the first Italian pattern-book. There is, indeed, every justification for reproducing the complete contents of both the 1527 and 1528 editions of Tagliente's book of patterns even though this would entail many duplications. The limited purpose of the present partial illustration of Tagliente's designs is to emphasize the fact that in terms of decorative value they deserve recognition and appreciation irrespective of their rarity and bibliographical interest. That the 1527 and 1528 editions have only lately been recorded is a fact less significant, however, to the purpose than the fact that they are intrinsically worth knowing, i.e., for the sake of the richness, individuality, ingenuity, versatility and beauty of the patterns. The Ongania photo-lithographic reproduction (made in 1879) of the 1531 edition of Tagliente, while partly satisfactory for elementary bibliographical purposes, completely fails to convey the splendour of the designs.

It follows that the present production should be viewed as a first and belated recognition of the distinctively high quality of the decorative skill of one of the most talented Venetian craftsman working in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. Giovanni Antonio Tagliente's exceptional skill as a calligrapher has been acknowledged, though probably insufficiently. His comparable excellence as a decorator has passed unnoticed and his name, in this connection, been given no more than honourable mention. His outstanding efforts in popular education have hardly been noticed. In sum, therefore, the object of the present work is to furnish the basis for a correct estimate of Tagliente's versatile skills and especially to illustrate his ability as a decorator. It is hoped that his example may encourage, in twentieth-century London, the artist-craftsman at work in less congenial conditions than those which favoured his forebears in sixteenth-century Venice. It is hoped, finally, that this albeit elementary and pioneer account of Tagliente's accomplishments may be judged by the critics as entitling him to consideration in a future history of the minor arts during the period of Titian and Tintoretto.

In the concluding pages of this essay it is just for the writer to recall instruction and assistance given me in the history of printed ornament and pattern-books by the late Dr Peter Jessen and the staff of the Kunstgewerbe Museum in Berlin between the years 1923 and 1933. The means for a systematic and methodical study were so inviting, the facilities for direct access to the shelves so ungrudgingly given and the readiness of Jessen and his chief assistants, Hans Loubier and Arthur Lotz, to instruct so helpful that I acquired a grounding in the bibliography of printed calligraphy-books and pattern-books. It was from these men and by these means that I learnt that Arrighi was a printer as well as a scribe and that Tagliente was a decorator as well as a calligrapher.

At this time and long after, Arthur Lotz was at work on his bibliography of pattern-books. He was an exact, tireless and generous scholar, ready to impart notes of new findings. I knew Tagliente's pattern-book from the library copy of the original edition of 1531. Lotz showed me one day in 1924 that Tagliente had first published a pattern-book in 1527 and 1528, only four years after Schönsperger of Augsburg had produced the *Furm oder modelbuchlein* which, the first of all pattern-books, was certainly known to Tagliente. Both of these early editions of Tagliente, in unique copies, were at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Their existence had only recently become known to

Lotz as they were kept in the department 'des Estampes' and not among the 'Imprimés'. Lotz gave me the details of title dates (1527 and 1528) and collations.

I suggested that we should make a facsimile of one or both of these unique items. Lotz was agreeable. Meanwhile other work which had taken precedence in my calendar relegated pattern-books into a minor place. Lotz, however, continued with his bibliography. It was not until years later that I inspected, in Paris, these two earliest editions of Tagliente's pattern-book.

The beauty and versatility of Tagliente's designs were badly compromised by the slovenliness and botching of the printing upon cheap and thin paper. The result of the heavy impression is a damaging 'show-through'. A magnificent and sumptuous set of patterns executed by one of the greatest of craftsmen, completed with descriptive and instructive text, composed in his own chancery type (not used in the 1531 edition) is badly smudged in the impression. The two editions differ in several minor respects, and the 1528 edition on better paper contains one or two additional blocks. A collotype facsimile could only exaggerate the original's defects and result in little more than a bibliographical record, the purpose of which would be equally well served by the notice in Lotz's *Bibliographie der Modelbücher*. This finally appeared in 1933. As the format of Lotz's book precluded his illustrating specimens with more than an identifying title-page greatly reduced, the desirability of reproducing some at least of the specimens, by no means well rendered by Ongania, remained.

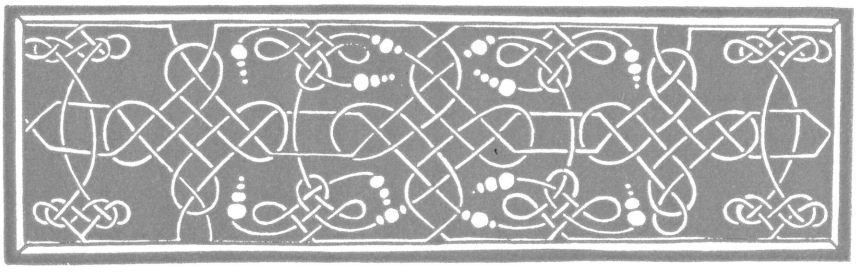
It was not an easy matter to correct the careless printing and consequent smudging of Tagliente's originals. With inexhaustible patience and infinite skill my friend Mr Victor Lardent worked over the photographs of the worst printed specimens, in order to produce the result to be seen in the illustrations of this book. The retoucher has limited his skill to intelligent restoration. He has revitalized broken or weak lines, deleted blotches and smudges, and generally cured all the effects of the printer's over-inking and exaggerated excessive impression.

It would be wrong to expect that in so great a mass of such difficult retouching there would be no error, as there must certainly have been when the originals were first engraved. In the present instance it may reasonably be accepted that such errors are few and slight, and that the blocks here presented express the originals to the highest degree of fidelity.

THE SATISFACTORY SOLUTION of the problem of reproduction laid the basis for the needed technical description. The early pattern-books were primarily offered to the increasing market of individual weavers and embroiderers of cloth and other textiles; secondly, for workers in lace and incidentally for the use of architects and masons.

Hence, as Tagliente's publisher sought the longest immediate sale his pattern-book is addressed to needleworkers. It is the most highly developed of all the early needlework pattern-books. A writer was required who possessed a sound knowledge of the essential tools and material operations involved. Tagliente specifically addresses his manual to the ladies, and there can be no doubt that now, as then, the art of this particular

application of ornament is, as it was, their preserve. Survey of the literature of the subject proves that the study of the subject, like its practice, is a feminine speciality. It was fortunate, therefore, that the Bibliographical Society's Transactions (*The Library*) should have printed in 1959 two papers by Mrs Esther Potter on the knitting-books of the Victorian period. The subject was original and the treatment accorded with the Society's standards. Particular attention was given to the needles, tools, threads and techniques. The present work is indebted to Mrs Potter for undertaking not only the technical but the biographical portion of the text and for enumerating Taglenti's other works. Thus, for the first time, Tagliente is treated not only as a decorator and calligrapher but as an educator.



A FINAL WORD of justification may be considered appropriate in these functionalistic days for the printing of as ornamental a book under the present imprint. The Royal College of Art originated on the recommendation of a Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament on 'Arts and Manufactures'. The Committee deliberated in 1835–6 and recommended that money to be spent upon the creation of a 'School of Design' which should give training in what was defined as 'Ornamental Art'. Definitions have changed since 1836 and the School of Design has become a College of Art. The definition of 'Design' given authority sixty years later is still acceptable. 'Design is to plan or execute (a structure, work of art, etc.); to fashion with artistic skill or decorative device; to furnish or adorn with a design'.

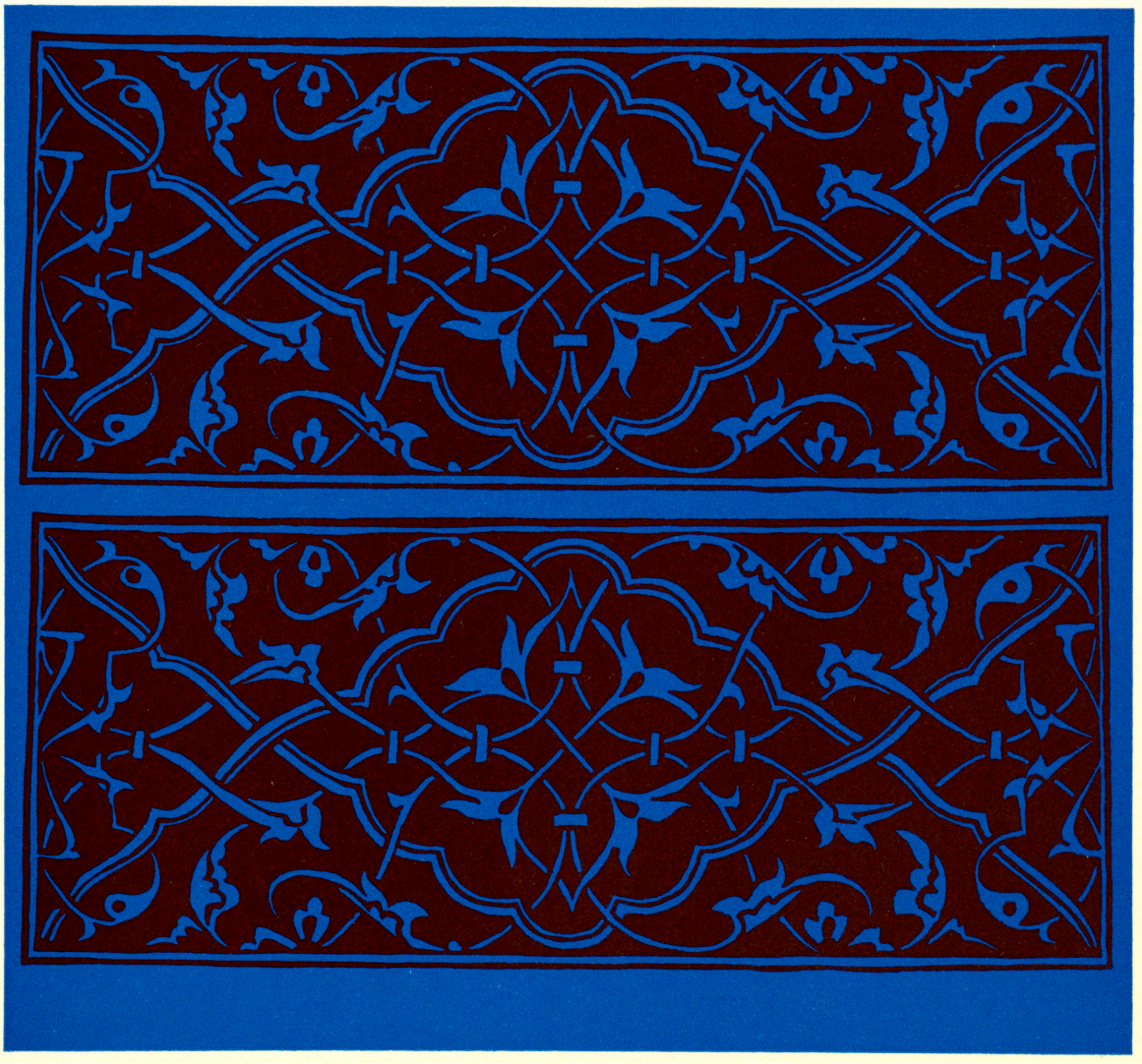
For Sir James Murray (the editor of the Dictionary for volume D—published in 1897) it is essential to 'Design' as used in the present sense (Murray provides definitions of fifteen other senses which the word may bear) that it shall mean more than an assemblage of lines, parts, figures or other details unified by an implicit intention to record, signify, symbolize or convey. To be a 'Design' the arrangement of lines needs to be fashioned with a degree of artistic skill that will confer upon the work a certain grace which may be indefinable but is meaningful. This is a definition which, it appears, accords with Lethaby's several dicta on the subject.

It is well therefore that while early Victorian phrases such as 'Art Manufacture' and 'Ornamental Art' have fallen into disuse, the department of the Royal College, of which the Lion and Unicorn Press forms part, is appropriately known as the School of Graphic Design.

The constituent design group has co-operated to produce the present piece of

workmanship. It is believed (by the present writer at least) that the makers have produced a work which, in its respect for ornament and decoration would not have been found unacceptable by Bezalel, Moses' chief architect; he who was chosen as excelling in every kind of handwork and not least in 'embroidery worked by the needle in threads twice dyed in scarlet, purple and blue'. These colours, unfortunately, were not available to the brothers de Sabbio who printed the original edition of the *Essempio di recammi*. They are, fortunately, amongst those used by the Lion and Unicorn Press who have printed this work to the honour of its author, Giovanni Antonio Tagliente.

Giovanni Antonio Tagliente
*c.*1465–*c.*1527 by Esther Potter



His life and literary remains

CONSIDERING the excellence and versatility of Tagliente's work it is to be regretted that so few particulars of his life have come down to us. His quality as a professional calligrapher and pattern-maker, outstanding in an age of superb craftsmanship, entitles him to the fullest degree of recognition, but the fact is that almost nothing would have been known of his life but for his industry as the compiler of elementary pedagogical books. Their subjects are sufficient in rank and in number of editions to yield a few details of his career as an educator.

These books were first mentioned (incidentally rather than brought together) in Giacomo Manzoni *Studii di Bibliografia Analitica* (Bologna, 1882). This discursive collection of notes on sixteenth-century books describes the work of Pacioli, Fanti, Verini and other writers of formal lettering, and Arrighi, Palatino, Tagliente and the practitioners of chancery cursive as well as the engravers such as Ugo da Carpi, Piero da Carpi, and Eustachio Celebrino. Manzoni is the first modern writer to dissertate on the bibliography of the manuals of lettering and writing printed in the sixteenth century. Although he concerns himself principally with lettering and calligraphy, he does mention Tagliente's pattern-book, the *Essempio di recammi*. In the course of his remarks he assembles the few details that emerge from the prefaces to Tagliente's books.

In 1882, but after the publication of Manzoni's *Studii*, R. Fulin published in the *Archivio Veneto* for that year the text of the request by Tagliente for the privilege for his writing-book of 1524, thus adding another detail to our knowledge of his career. A more important document was forthcoming when Lazzarini published in the same *Archivio* for 1930 the text of Tagliente's Supplication to the Venetian authorities. In 1949 J. Wardrop published in *Signature* a facsimile of the holograph original from the Venetian archives and a translation and commentary upon this Supplication.

In it he lists the few sources of our meagre knowledge of Tagliente's life and career. The Supplication was given to the Doge and Council of the State of Venice in 1491.

The Supplication presented to the Doge and Council of the State of Venice in 1491, stated that Giovanni Antonio Tagliente was a citizen of Venice by birth, and had taught writing not only in Venice but up and down Italy. It was when he settled with his family in Venice in 1491 that he petitioned the Doge. He offered, in return for a salary, to teach the relatively new papal diplomatic cursive to the young scribes of the Venetian Chancery, while reserving the right to give private lessons for a fee of two ducats for each of the several hands he taught.

The Doge himself proposed that Tagliente be appointed at a salary of fifty ducats. Nevertheless the request was rejected at the council meeting of July 30, 1491. But when Tagliente's maternal uncle, Priamo del Biondo, relinquished the sinecure office of seneschal in the Fondaco dei Tedeschi the next year, and Tagliente applied for the vacant post, he was appointed at the council meeting of September 19, 1492 on the terms named in the previous petition.

Tagliente at this time will have been still quite a young man, born perhaps about 1465. It seems that he held the post of writing-master to the Chancery for at least thirty-two years. In the writing-book of 1524 he refers to himself as 'provisionato [recipient of a stipend] dal Serenissimo Dominio Venetiano' the title which his relative Girolamo Tagliente gives Giovanni Antonio in the arithmetic book of 1515. This suggests that the rest of Giovanni Antonio's working life was spent in Venice; certainly all the references to him after 1492 connect him with that city. He collaborated with Girolamo [Hieronimo] Tagliente, a teacher of arithmetic in Venice, in an arithmetic book published there in 1515. Bernadino Spina of Perugia, a sixteenth-century scribe who travelled extensively in Italy, records in his specimen-book[1] that he met Tagliente in Venice; and the series of handbooks which Tagliente published in 1524 and the next few years were all printed there.

The only member of the family of whom we have mention beside the uncle (to whom he owed his appointment in the Chancery) and Girolamo, (the teacher of arithmetic whose degree of kinship is nowhere precisely stated), is Pietro. He was Giovanni Antonio's son. His assistance is acknowledged in the preface to the writing book of 1524 and in the valedictory paragraph of the *Libro maistrevole*, 1524.

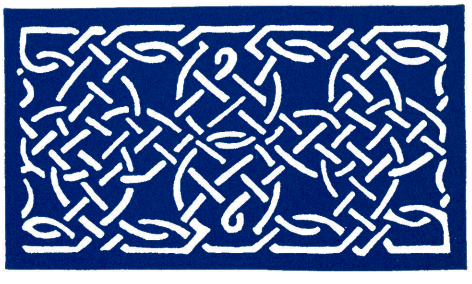
[1] Described by James Wardrop in the *Harvard Library Bulletin*, Vol. VII, No. 2, 1953, pp. 224–225.

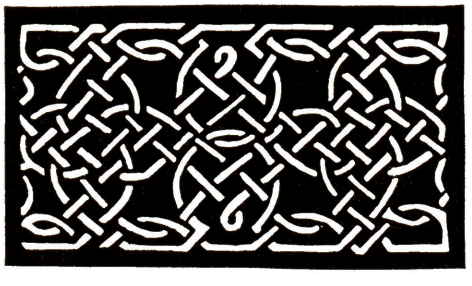
DATE OF TAGLIENTE'S DEATH

The date of Tagliente's death is unknown. In the petition of 1524 he refers to himself as already an old man whose expectation of life must be brief. If we suppose him to have been in his middle twenties in 1491, he would have been approaching sixty years old in 1524. But whatever his age he was still active; between 1524 and 1527 he produced an impressive series of school textbooks and popular handbooks of the 'teach yourself' order.

First, there was the arithmetic book compiled in collaboration with Girolamo. Next came a volume of handwriting models, a grammar, a treatise on book-keeping, two guides to letter writing —one of general range and the other of models of love letters. Finally, there came the pattern-book here illustrated. A notable feature of these books is that several occur in two versions—a longer and serious study and a shorter and popular work. The writing book appeared in three forms: two quartos and a short version in oblong format for which some of the quarto blocks were cut in half.

There is no proof that Tagliente was alive after 1527. Modifications were made in successive editions of the writing book and of the pattern-book down to about 1531. These are such as could have been made by any editor. With one or two exceptions the plates added to the pattern-book in later editions were below the standard of the first edition, and the way in which supplementary strips of incongruous ornament were crowded on to existing pages does not suggest that Tagliente himself was consulted. Hence, if his death is tentatively dated within a year or two of 1530, it will probably be close to the fact.





Tagliente is best known as the author of one of the finest Italian writing books and if, in the esteem of most present-day commentators, he takes second place as calligrapher and typographer to his more famous contemporary Arrighi, his position as a specialist in the chancery cursive is nevertheless one that was equally distinguished and more versatile. The great value of Arrighi was his very superior merit as a formal scribe and illuminator. Tagliente never attempted the writing of a missal; nor did he set up as a printer. In the writing and teaching of the chancery cursive and other hands his style was more florid than Arrighi's. His calligraphy was admired by his contemporaries. Bernadino Spina says:

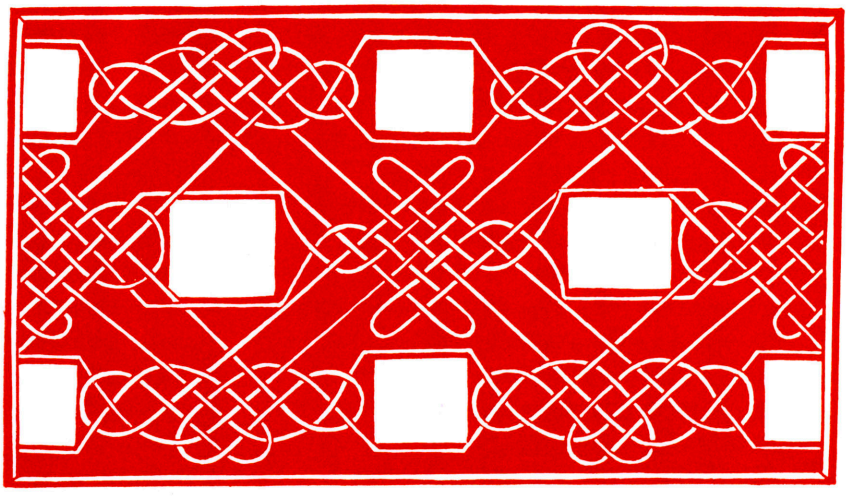
> Venetia dove i fra molti altri maestri teneva il Principato un maestro giovanni antonio tagliente et andatolo a visitare mi monstro di bellissimi scritti proportionato finiti et condotti con somma diligentia.

As writing master to the Chancery he doubtless influenced the calligraphy of a whole generation of Venetian scribes.

While none of Tagliente's many printed books have been

original in conception, their diverse range of subjects and treatment, with an individuality and attention to detail, influenced the development of popular handbooks. The early editions, printed as they were in the calligraphic italic designed by Tagliente, are a technical achievement and possess artistic value as works of typography.

They were produced, so far as may be reasonably conjectured, within very few years. As has been seen he may have been born about 1465. He was certainly practising as a calligrapher in 1491 and writing his books by 1515.



Thesauro universale

HAVING reached the age of fifty or so, we may reasonably presume Tagliente began, perhaps after some hesitation, to think of adding to his income, while still an official of the Venetian Chancery, by engaging in elementary instruction. He may have conducted a school like other professional writing-masters.

A system of education was in process of being established. The old monastic schools and universities, with their emphasis on Latin literature did not meet the needs of the merchant community. Even before the end of the twelfth century schools opened in the trading centres of Europe, where practical tuition was available to boys destined for a commercial career. When the vernacular took the place of Latin in business documents, textbooks for the commercial schools naturally came to be written in the local language. During the early part of the sixteenth century arithmetical textbooks and models for commercial letter-writing were printed in Italian in considerable number.

Giovanni Antonio Tagliente's first association with a school

textbook was the arithmetic entitled *Thesauro universale* printed in Venice in February 1515. Its author Girolamo [Hieronimo] Tagliente, a citizen of Venice, makes handsome acknowledgement in the preface to the help of his eminent kinsman and also teacher 'Meser Iouanni Antonio taiente prouisionato per sue virtu dal Serenissimo dñio Venetiano'. Girolamo goes on to say that the book will be useful to monks, priests, students, scholars, gentlemen, artisans and, most of all, to boys whose fathers want the best for them. In the preface to a later edition (the *Componimento di arithmetica*, 1525) Girolamo says that he had revised the book in collaboration with his partner Alvisse dalla Fontana as a textbook for their pupils, from which it may be concluded that Girolamo and Alvisse dalla Fontana conducted a commercial college in Venice.

The book is a small octavo composed, as was commonly the case with vernacular books, in round gothic type and illustrated with small woodcuts. It is divided into three sections of which the first and longest deals with arithmetic. The exercises are of a familiar kind; if a galley with 40 oars reaches Candia in 18 days, how long will it take to get there with 36 oars? A cask has two taps; one will empty in it four hours, the other in six. How long will it take to drain the cask if both taps are opened? The arithmetic is followed by a shorter section on geometry and some notes on rates of exchange. Like a host of other arithmetic books of the day, the *Thesauro universale* drew heavily on Paccioli's *Summa de arithmetica* of 1494. After a slow start, it became the standard textbook of its time; it ran through a large number of editions and was reprinted as late as 1586.

The publishing history of the *Thesauro* may briefly be summarized. The first edition is dated February 1515, Venice. The title page is a woodcut. The upper third consists of the word *LIBRO* in large white interlaced capitals on a hatched ground. A space is left in the centre for the rest of the title which is printed in roman type. The lower third contains the abbreviated words *cũ grã* in large gothic letters again cut in wood. The verso is occupied by a woodcut of a master and pupil. It is followed by the preface quoted above in which Girolamo explains how the book came to be written and outlines its contents. The paragraphs of the text are numbered.

There was a new edition in 1520. This was an octavo of eighty leaves, with the text enlarged by a few pages of practical information about merchandising, e.g. nutmegs should be round, smooth and shiny. Another edition followed in 1523. There is no reason to believe that Giovanni Antonio Tagliente was directly involved in the production.

Componimento di arithmetica

Girolamo then produced a work entitled *Componimento di arithmetica*. An edition of 1524 is known by its title only, but two issues dated 1525 have survived. While its preamble recalls the circumstances in which the *Thesauro universale* came to be written it announces that the demand for an improved edition was being met by Girolamo and his colleague Alvisse della Fontana. In fact the *Componimento* follows closely the scheme of the *Thesauro universale*. For the most part the same problems are used, sometimes with different figures and slightly different wording. Some of the material is rearranged. The illustrative woodcuts are taken from the 1515 *Thesauro* but there are some omissions. The most striking feature of the *Componimento* is its title page, which is a woodcut with the title in white on a black ground in an elegant chancery hand. It is tempting to attribute its design to Giovanni Antonio Tagliente notwithstanding his production in 1526 and 1527 of a rival work.

Ragione di mercantia

THIS RIVAL work has the title *Opera nova che insegna a fare ogni ragione di mercantia*. The text is essentially that of the original *Thesauro universale* with some rewriting and rearrangement which is independent of Girolamo's *Componimento di arithmetica*. The same woodcuts are used as in the two previous versions. Typographically, however, the 1527 edition is much more distinguished than its predecessors. It is a quarto of 52 leaves, printed in roman type and bears the imprint of Bernadin de Vidali at Venice. On the verso of the title page is the handsome woodcut of a man using a quadrant which appears in other works by Tagliente.

I have not seen the 1526 edition described by Prince Boncompagni, whose accuracy is beyond question, as containing 16 leaves. It is, therefore, a much shorter work than the 1527 edition. We shall see that simultaneously with the full text of the writing book and the work on bookkeeping Tagliente issued a shorter and cheaper handbook. It seems likely that he adopted the same practice in his arithmetic book.

When this book became popular a decade or so later, its editor chose none of these revised and improved versions for reprinting, but turned to the original *Thesauro universale* with the additions made in 1520. The reference to the two Taglientes is cut from the beginning of the preface, and at the end of the book is a short address to the reader by the editor, Giovanni Roccha.

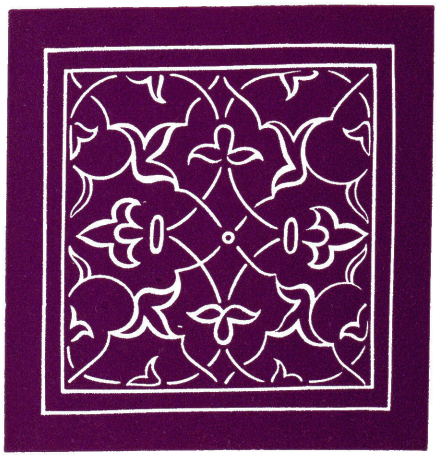
The edition printed in Venice in 1541 by Venturino Roffinello is representative of the large number of editions printed in Venice and Milan down to 1586 or later. It is a small octavo of 80 leaves printed in gothic type. The title page has been recut. The word *LIBRO* in interlaced capitals still occupies the top third of the page,

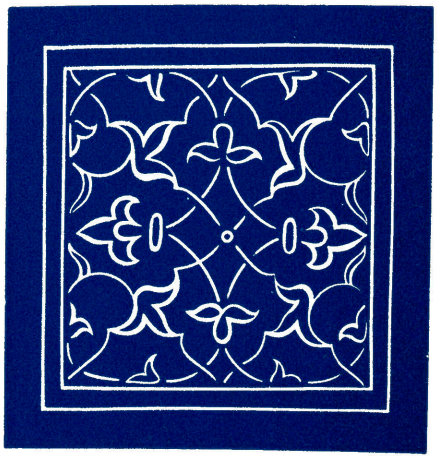
followed by the rest of the title, typeset as before, but this time printed in red (instead of black). The privilege note at the foot is replaced by a woodcut of two mathematicians, Pythagoras and Ptolemy. On the verso is a different cut of a master with pupils; the small woodcuts have been redesigned though they still illustrate the same problems. On the last leaf is a woodcut of a multiplication square signed: *opus lucha ãtonio uberti fe ĩ vinetia*, i.e., Antonio de Uberti, a noted Florentine engraver who worked in Venice and whose more usual signature, L.A., appears on the title woodcut. There is no evidence that he was responsible for the rest of the woodcuts. The Milan editions copy the Venice woodcuts without the signature.

The Venice editions were printed first by Venturino Rofinello, then by Giovanni Padoano and later by Francesco de Leno. The Milan editions bear the imprint of Io. Antonio da Borgho and later of Valerio Meda. There were also many reprints without date or imprint.

If the *Thesauro* made the name of Tagliente famous, at least in bookselling circles, it must be regretted that he did not live to see and reap the benefit. Even so, during Giovanni Antonio's lifetime, the first book with which he was associated was an encouragement to him to proceed with other educational books.

On November 15, 1524, Tagliente was granted a ten-year copyright for the printing of four books; a writing book, *Lo presente libro insegna la vera arte de lo excelente scrivere* (about which more will be said later); a grammar entitled *Libro maistrevole*; a letter-writer's manual called *Componimento di parlameni;* and a treatise on bookkeeping, *Luminario di arithmetica.*





Libro maistrevole

THE SECOND work mentioned by Tagliente in his petition of November, 1524 was also published the same year. It is the *Libro maistrevole*, a masterpiece of a book, he says, which will teach anyone to read in about a month, more or less, according to the intelligence of the pupil. The only recorded edition is a quarto of twenty leaves, printed in Tagliente's calligraphic italic. It is dated 1524 and was printed in Venice. The help of Tagliente's son Pietro is acknowledged in the concluding paragraph, as also in the preface to the writing book. Tagliente claims to dispense with the old method by which the pupil spent years studying the traditional works of grammar, and to have devised a system which demands serious application for only an hour a day.

What in fact he gives is so elementary that it does not include anything on syntax. He starts with the letters of the alphabet, taking special note of the vowels, and proceeds through syllables, syllables of two letters, syllables of three letters, syllables of four letters, to complete words. He then gives a series of model letters with the proper form of address and ending, such as would be useful to a schoolboy—several versions in reply to letters from his father and from his mother, letters to a brother, to a friend and so forth. It concludes with three pages of moral precepts by way of copy book exercises, and finally reproduces, as a space-filler, one of the plates of *lettera bastarda* from the writing book. (Reproduced in O. Ogg, *Three Classics of Italian Calligraphy*, Dover Publications, 1953, page 78).

Componimento di parlamenti

THE PETITION of 1524 also mentions the *Componimento di parlamenti*, a volume of models for letter-writing. The work was fairly described by Tagliente as containing models of letters from persons of all walks of life, with appropriate replies and the proper form of address and ending. There was nothing new in the idea—manuscript collections of specimen letters have survived from the middle ages—but Tagliente treats the subject in the grand manner. The earliest letters deal with personal matters—a merchant writes to his son away at school to reprove him for not writing home—and they proceed to cover, in a comprehensive way, matters of business, correspondence between scholars, affairs of church and state at all levels, including letters from the Apostolic Nuncio to the Pope and an exchange of letters between the Kings of Spain and England. At the end of the volume is a collection of draft speeches, briefer and more formal than the letters, but the situations are conceived with the same breadth of imagination. The preface is headed *Inventione di Giovanni Tagliente con l'aiuto delli suoi amici di virtu studiosi.*

The work seems to have been originally intended to be uniform

with the writing book and the *Libro maistrevole* and was presumably published at about the same time, and in any event before 1527, because it is referred to in the preface to a collection of love letters printed in that year. We know of a Venice edition of 1535[1]; an edition printed in Toscolano in 1538; Venice editions of 1541 and 1564; and one printed in Brescia in 1589. These are plainly cheap reprints and it seems likely that there were others.

The *Componimento di parlamenti* was followed by a collection of love letters, *Il rifugio di amanti*, which contains models of love letters with suitable replies. Each pair is preceded by a brief notice of the circumstances which prompted it; e.g., Iacintho da Rimino, a young man of twenty, in love with the beautiful Cesarinna Donzella, eighteen years old, and no longer able to endure the pangs of love, writes the following letter: and so forth. It was the first model letter-writer to specialize in love letters.

There was a quarto edition, which may have been the first, printed in Venice by Bernadin di Vidali in 1527. The title page is printed in Tagliente's special italic with a white on black entrelac border similar to the borders on folio a iv verso of the pattern-book. The rest of the book is in an ordinary small italic. There is a short preface by Giovanni Antonio Tagliente. Several later editions are known—all small octavos.

[1] Recorded in *Archivio Veneto*, xxiii, p. 204, on the authority of the Pinelli catalogue IV, p. 372.

Luminario di arithmetica

THE LAST work mentioned in Tagliente's application for copyright is the *Luminario di arithmetica*, a work on book-keeping. As with the writing book, he produced two quite separate works on the subject, both published in 1525[1]. One is addressed to small retail traders, *artesani le quali fanno le sue marcantie ne le loro botege*, and teaches book-keeping by single entry, *tenere ordinatamente el detto conto del suo libro Ugnolo;* the other is a treatise for merchant princes, *nostri magnifici gētilhomeni & adaltri mercatanti*, on double entry, *el laudabile modo de tenere conto de libro dopio.*

The first is a quarto of 16 leaves printed throughout in Tagliente's italic. After a brief address to the reader, Tagliente defines a rule at the top of each page, and gives an example below it. (One of the rules is reproduced in the writing book to illustrate the *lettera fiorentina bastarda.*) The *Luminario* is of importance as being the first to differentiate between book-keeping by single entry and by double entry. It is the only early work to give guidance on keeping simple books of accounts to small traders whose business did not require elaborate book-keeping.

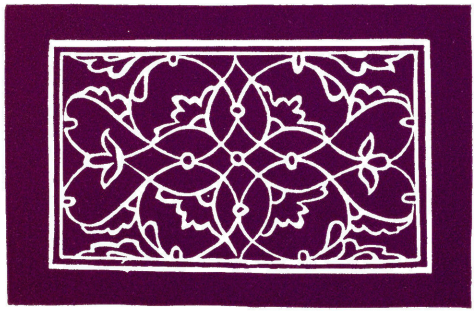
[1] The bibliographies do not distinguish between the two works and tend to regard them as two editions. There is a short and clear account of them in A. H. Woolf: *A Short History of Accountants and Accountancy*, London, 1912, and a detailed description of them in Pietro Rigohon: "Di Giovanni Antonio Tagliente Veneziano e della sue opere di ragioneria", in *Ragioniere*, Serie II, Vol. X, Milan, 1894.

The work on double entry is a quarto with 24 leaves of which the first and last are printed in Tagliente's swash italic. The rest of the book is in a small italic. There are two issues of the 1525 edition and an octavo reprint of 1533. The work was written in collaboration with Alvisse della Fontana, who had a hand in Girolamo Tagliente's revision of the arithmetic book. It is more than probable that the authors were familiar with Pacioli's treatise on book-keeping,[1] which is the first printed work on the subject, but they do not follow his scheme. Pacioli's work was largely theoretical; Tagliente's was the first to give practical examples of double entry.

The above account of Tagliente's published writings cannot claim completeness because so few editions have survived in more than one or two copies, and some editions have evidently perished entirely.

The achievement that emerges from what has survived is a remarkable one—a whole series of school books, on a wide range of subjects, eminently practical in scope and successful in the result, was produced in the course of a few years. Two at least of the series, and probably more, were issued in both elementary and advanced versions; and, as we shall see, they were composed and printed with a care and elegance that would distinguish an important work of literature and are quite remarkable in quality for a popular handbook of that date.

[1] Printed in Part I of his *Summa de Arithmetica*, Venice, 1494.



The writing book

THE WRITING BOOK is Tagliente's best known work. It consists of woodcut examples of different hands and a long typeset passage of instructions about the selection of paper, the way to cut and hold a pen, how to form the letters and so on. The main emphasis both in the illustrations and the text is on the chancery cursive. The work is prefaced by a dedication to M. Hieronymo Dedo, grand secretary of the Venetian Chancery, Tagliente's superior officer. It was first published in 1524, and although the two editions of that year are without printer's name or place of printing, they are composed in the highly distinctive swash italic which occurs only in his own books, printed in Venice by the brothers Nicolini da Sabbio or Bernardin de Vidali. The type is described below.

Two editions of the writing book, dated 1524, are two materially different versions of the work. One is a quarto (as are all editions of the work except one) of 24 leaves. On A 1 recto is the woodcut title with the date MDXXIIII which—with a change of date each time—serves as a title for almost all editions of the writing book. On the verso is a woodcut of writing implements, followed by the dedication (2 pages), 28 pages of examples and 15 pages of text. The verso of the last leaf is blank.

The other version has 44 leaves. A 1 recto is a sort of half title set in Tagliente's italic which reads: *Opera di Giovanneantonio Taiente che insegna a scrivere di molte Qualita di Lettere Intitulata Lucidario*. The woodcut title is on the verso and the writing instruments on the recto of the last leaf; the verso is blank. The dedication to Hieronymo Dedo occupies three pages, the examples 56 pages, and the text 25. Most of the extra examples are of two alphabets of *textura* and *rotunda* adapted from Sigismondo Fanti's work on inscriptional lettering;[1] this is the only early edition in which they occur.[2]

[1] *Theorica et practica de modo scribendi*, Venice, 1514.

[2] *Essling* describes as No. 2183 a variant of the longer version without the printed half title. The woodcut title is on the recto of A 1 and the block of the writing implements on the verso.

The shorter version has generally been regarded as the earlier, but there are some clear indications that the edition with the longer text is the first. In the first place it has a typeset title on the first page which, as we shall see, is characteristic of a Tagliente first edition, and it is the only edition to have it. It is easy to see why the more spectacular woodcut title was promoted to the first page in the second and subsequent editions, and is less easy to explain why it should appear on page 1 in the first edition, be transferred to page 2 in the second, and then restored to page 1 in the later editions. The woodcut title offers to teach the various hands *per geometrica ragione*, which can but refer to the alphabets taken from Sigismondo Fanti, and occur only in the longer version. Most significant, however, is a passage in the shorter version on the writing of the chancery hand which begins: *Sapi experto lettore come io te potrei amaistrare per unaltra regola, secõdo lordine di unaltra mia opera al presente stãpata di uno maggiore volume . . .*[1] otherwise: 'Know then skilful reader that I can teach you by another rule according to the method in another work of mine now published in a larger volume . . .' This makes it clear that the longer version precedes the shorter version. But the other must have followed quickly since both are dated 1524. It is also plain that one is not a revised version of the other, but a substantially different work on the same subject.

In the two versions of 1524, much of the text is identical. The principal difference lies in the instructions for writing the chancery hand. In the longer work, Tagliente goes through the alphabet giving each letter a short description of how it is formed. In the shorter work he explains the principles governing the different hands. The styles of writing vary according as they are based on a square :: , a rectangle :: , or a quadrilateral with an acute angle *::*, that is to say such letters as a, o, e and the bowl of b and d can be described within one of those figures. The last, of course, is the basis of the chancery hand.

Four editions of the writing book appeared in 1525. The first two conclude with a cartouche containing the inscription in white on black: *Intagliato per Eustachio Cellebrino da Vdene*, plain evidence that Celebrino cut the blocks for these editions of Tagliente's writing book.

The other outstanding Italian calligrapher of this period, Arrighi (Ludovicus Henricis Vicentino) published his writing book three years before. *La Operina di Ludovico Vicentino* is arranged in two parts: the first, dated 1522, was printed in Rome from blocks cut by Ugo da Carpi; the second, *Il modo di temperare le penne*, dated 1523, was printed in Venice from blocks cut by

[1] Folio E 3 verso.

Celebrino, as the colophon states, who was, at this time, working on a book of his own teaching the *merchantescha* hand. This he published in Venice in 1525. Its small format was a novelty. This effort seems to have been the occasion for a breach with Tagliente, who then replied with a much abbreviated version of his writing book, in small oblong format.[1] The 16 leaves of the only recorded copy (which is imperfect) include some of the original blocks, cut in half. He also used two cuts, found also in Celebrino's book, one showing a hand holding a pen and the other a pen and knife. In Celebrino's book both blocks are signed with his name, but in Tagliente's version the signatures do not appear. So far as is known this is the only edition of the very short version, but Tagliente's thin oblong format subsequently became standard for writing books. Still later in the same year, 1525, Tagliente published another quarto edition of his full writing book. The page of white and black Roman capitals clearly shows the break in the block where it was cut in order to print the lower half in the oblong edition.

Also in 1525, Ugo da Carpi, an artist and an engraver, but no calligrapher, published in Rome on his own account, the *Thesauro de scrittori*. It consists mainly of copies by Ugo da Carpi of some of Tagliente's writing examples; pages from the second part of Arrighi's manual; and a few original blocks cut by Ugo da Carpi for the second part of Arrighi, but never used.[2] A copy of the title page of the Tagliente manual opens Ugo da Carpi's book, after the title and dedication. Hence, imperfect copies of the *Thesauro* are sometimes mistaken for Tagliente's book. They can be distinguished by the ascenders in the woodcut title, which are seriffed in Tagliente's version and swashed in Ugo da Carpi's.

Of the first two 1525 editions of Tagliente's writing book little need by said. One of them contains 24 leaves and was described by Mr A. F. Johnson (1950) from the British Museum copy, which was destroyed in 1941 by bombing. The other edition, described by Essling as no. 2184[3] is now in the British Museum. It is printed in Venice and consists of 28 leaves in fours with Celebrino's cartouche on the recto of the last leaf. The text is a synthesis of the two 1524 versions. It contains almost all of the passages that are peculiar to the shorter work; a somewhat abbreviated version of the passages peculiar to the longer version and all the text common to both

[1] Reproduced in facsimile by J. M. Wells, Chicago, 1952.

[2] I am indebted to Mr Graham Pollard, who has sorted out the complicated story of the 1525 editions and their relation to the *Thesauro de scrittori*, for allowing me to use his notes.

[3] Where it is mis-described as containing 40 leaves and being printed by Antonio Blado in Rome.

with some slight omissions. It does not contain the alphabets of *textura* and *rotunda* taken from Fanti and the other woodcuts are re-arranged. The cut of the writing implements faces the page of text which it illustrates. This version of the text and the selection and order of the woodcuts is the basis for succeeding editions.

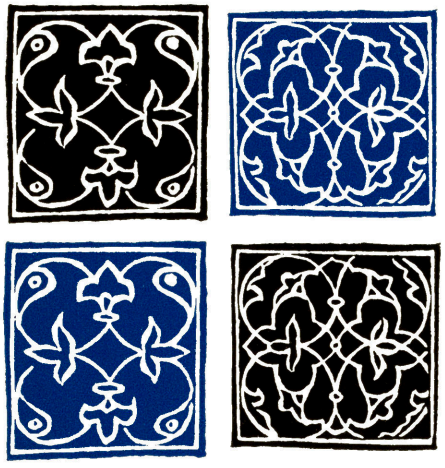
The oblong edition of 1525 contains snippets from the dedication re-addressed to the reader, a selection from the text of the shorter 1524 edition and some of the original blocks printed half at a time. The other edition of 1525 is a quarto and, like following editions, is based on the 28 leaved quarto described above.

The 1531 edition establishes a new make-up for the book, a single gathering of 28 leaves, the first 14 of which are signed A-O. The text is shortened by omitting sentences and phrases here and there rather than by cutting out whole sections. This version of the text is copied with minor verbal alterations in future editions. The last page of the dedication was, perhaps, engraved for some earlier edition[1] for it occurs here among the pages of engraved examples, its original purpose forgotten; the same passage also appears typeset in its proper place.

In 1533 the blank verso of the last leaf was filled by a very worn woodcut of the siege of the city of Rhodes by the Turks. This edition, like one or two others around the mid-1530s, has 4 extra unsigned leaves in the middle containing the alphabet of gothic *rotunda* from the longer 1524 edition, and the handsome white on black woodcut of the sacred monogram from the 1528 edition of the pattern-book, shortly to be described.

After 1536, the use of Tagliente's swash italic was abandoned. The smaller italic which replaced it occupied so much less space that the gothic *textura* alphabet could be incorporated as a permanent feature without enlarging the 28-leaved gathering. The woodcut of the siege of Rhodes on the last page was replaced by the astronomer from folio a i verso of the pattern-book. It appears to be the same block, but the crescent moon in the sky above him has been cut out and replaced by a blazing sun. The last recorded edition is 1568. In 1545, 1546, and 1550 three editions appeared in Antwerp with copies of Tagliente's blocks and much of the text cut on wood. Except for these editions and the *Thesauro de scrittori*, the original blocks were used throughout.

[1] Apparently the same edition which served as a model for the 1545 Antwerp copy (see page 43) since the setting of the page is identical.



Essempio di recammi

The early history of patterns

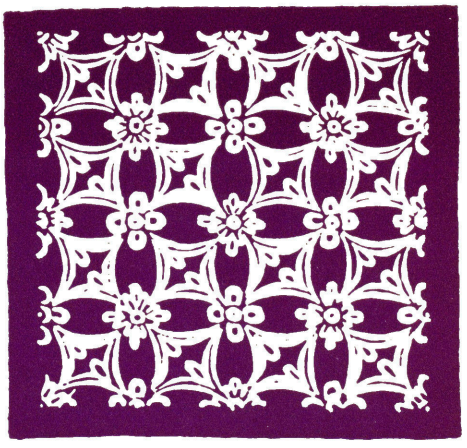
WHEN probably sixty years old Tagliente accomplished the publication of the first and finest Italian book of patterns of his time. The idea was new in Venice, and though less new in Augsburg, it had been a medium of dissemination of design, familiar in Italy and elsewhere. It cannot be doubted that the professional embroiderer from early times kept by him records of designs which he entrusted to his assistants, probably members of the family, and that these family groups merged at times and on occasions with trade guilds which shared access to collections of patterns. The exceptional ability of women as embroiderers was early recognized. Their skill in the art, which they were destined to make so largely their own, is mentioned in the Book of Exodus and Moses, no doubt, had knowledge from Egypt of these skills.

The earliest surviving fragments of embroidery date from the 4th–5th century B.C. but the art was certainly practised much earlier. Yet, although there are a few references in medieval documents to the art as practised in England, Germany and Italy, it is not until the fourteenth century that a treatise on the technique is first recorded.

Cennino d'Andrea Cennini (about 1370–1440) refers in his treatise on painting, *Il Libro dell' arte*, (written *c.* 1400) to the practice of requiring an artist to provide a design for embroidery, and gives instructions for tracing, as the first step, the pattern on to cloth. S. Muller-Christensen has discovered an unfinished embroidery of the eleventh century in which tracings are left. This is no doubt the ancient rule. That copies of such designs were kept and re-used and handed down may be taken as certain. The use of patterns was current practice in all the medieval arts and crafts, and was greatly stimulated during the Renaissance. It emerges clearly from Benvenuto Cellini (1500–1571) that when a goldsmith was commissioned to make a high grade piece it was usual for an artist to provide him with drawings. Cellini quotes the

sculptor Bandinello as saying: 'For these goldsmiths one must make drawings for such fine things as that;' and he notes, as evidence of his own superior standing, that his patrons usually allowed him to prepare his own designs.

The main centre of embroidery in Italy was the rich city of Florence, where great artists bestowed their skill on designs to be executed by skilled craftsmen and, certainly, craftswomen. Antonio Pollaiuolo, Piero della Francesco, Squarcione, Sassetta, Paolo Veronese and others are named by Vasari as designers for embroidery. These are pictorial subjects. Among the workshop sketches of Pisanello (1395–1455?) and his associates are some rough designs for textiles, and Cellini refers to a certain Giacopino della Sciorina who 'had formerly been a designer of patterns for the cloth-weavers in Florence'. There was nothing new in this practice.



Linear designs are, naturally, simpler, more economic and, therefore, more frequently required. Borders and strips in conventional floral elements occur with considerable frequency, and it is these, therefore, that are likely to be met with when patterns reach the stage of multiplication by printing.

Embroidery, it is necessary to remember, is a form of needlecraft in which the design, created out of various coloured threads, is applied by stitches to the ground of linen, cotton, wool or silk. The material, therefore, is a solid or uniform surface made up of stitches.

The natural offspring of embroidery is lace, but the two are radically different. Lace is an openwork fabric. It is made by the plaiting, knotting or twining of a thread of linen. The craft was practised in the fifteenth century. Perhaps the introduction of the steel needle was partly responsible for its vogue. Early in its career the craft of lace-making found its best adepts in Venice.

Artists engaged in embroidery and lace-making naturally kept sketch-books of the designs they made. That all such workers were eager to disseminate their designs is obviously not the case. The design printed for the easing of the task of the craftsmen is late in appearing. No doubt single prints of patterns were in circulation among craftsmen and craftswomen long before such single sheets were collected into fours and stitched into pamphlets or books.

The earliest extant book of patterns (intended principally for workers in textiles), was Hans Schönsperger's *Furm oder modelbuchlein* printed in Augsburg in 1523. It was followed by *Ein new modelbuch*, also by Schönsperger, published in Zwickau in 1524 and again in 1525, 1526, 1527, 1529, 1532 and many later editions, followed by his *Ein new gedruckt Model Büchli* of 1529. All these were variations of Hans (Johann) Schönsperger's original edition

of 1523. Obviously the market for this kind of book was worth entering into. Peter Quentell's *Eyn new kunstlich boich* first appeared in Cologne in 1527, and was frequently reprinted. Remarkably it was also issued in an edition in French under the title, *Liure nouveau et subtil touchant l'art et science tant de broderie &c.* printed in Cologne in 1527. William Vorsterman's *Ce est vng tractat de la noble art de leguille* appeared in Antwerp about 1527 in French, and an English edition was produced, at the same time, under the title *A neawe treatys as concernynge the excellency of the nedleworcke &c.* This is the earliest extant pattern-book for the English market. It exists in a unique copy (Paris, Bibliotèque de l'Arsenal) and deserves reproduction.

All these publications contained patterns for weaving and embroidery, and consist of title page and wood cuts, without text. They were frequently reprinted and the compilers freely copied each others' designs.

Essempio di recammi

THE *Essempio di recammi* by Giovanni Antonio Tagliente, the first Italian pattern-book, was directly inspired by its German predecessors. Tagliente must have seen an edition, either Schönsperger's *Ein new modelbuch* (of 1524), or, less likely, Quentell's *Ein new kunstlich boich* (of 1527). He copies some of the patterns to be found in both. The woodcuts on his title page depicting ladies engaged in sewing and weaving are, perhaps, too roughly cut to be directly connected with Tagliente and may, more probably, have been supplied by the printer-publisher. In any case they are also inspired by the earlier works.

It is idle to speculate upon other sources that may lie behind Tagliente's book of patterns but it is more than probable that he had access to sheets of decorations and ornaments that were in use by the Venetian craftsmen of his day, who worked for architects,

painters, engravers and goldsmiths, as well as embroiderers. Some of these sources might derive from copies of classical and Byzantine, as well as medieval and Gothic originals.

Tagliente's original contributions include: (a) a dedication to the reader; (b) a long didactic passage on the various embroidery stitches and on the methods of tracing patterns, enlarging or reducing them and so forth; (c) the introduction of arabesque and moresque designs which occupy the greater part of the book; these are patterns of general utility and not specifically for needle-work.

Tagliente's patterns and his text are imitated in later Italian pattern-books. Paganino prefaces his *Libro primo de rechami*, Venice, 1527 with minute instructions for transferring designs to cloth illustrated with vignettes of ladies engaged in this activity. Vavassore in his *Esemplario di lavori*, Venice, 1532, faithfully copies Tagliente's list of stitches—too faithfully in fact, because he includes stitches for which Tagliente's patterns are suitable, but not his own.

Although Tagliente entitles his work *Essempio di recammi* or embroidery pattern-book, he includes in his list of stitches some names which later came to be attached to lace, notably the general term for needlepoint lace, *punto in aria* (see below page 62). Hence, the *Essempio* is the forerunner of the long series of lace pattern-books and is significant as the first printed document to shed light on the early development of Italian needlepoint lace. The early history of lace is difficult to trace precisely because the data for it have had to be collected mainly from surviving examples and representation in portraits, few of which can be precisely dated. The significance of Tagliente's book lies in the fact that the evidence provided is securely dated. Therefore, although his engravings are by no means all patterns intended for lace, some were adapted for that medium, and it is to embroiderers &c, that the book is primarily addressed. It is necessary, therefore, to say something immediately about the development of lace itself.

There are two main types of hand-made lace, bobbin or pillow lace and needlepoint. Bobbin lace is made on a cushion or 'pillow' to which is fastened the strip of parchment on which the pattern is outlined. Several threads, each wound on its own bobbin, are attached to one end of the pattern, and the lace-maker plaits them by passing the bobbins from hand to hand. At the key points where the threads intersect, pins are stuck into the pattern to hold the threads in place until a length of lace is completed. It is generally accepted that pillow lace was invented in Germany and it need not further concern us here. Needlepoint lace, as its name implies, is made with a needle and a single thread. Again the pattern is drawn on parchment. Next, a thick thread is laid down

over the lines of the pattern and held to the parchment by small stitches. Buttonhole stitches are worked over the outline thread to strengthen it; loops of thread are next attached to this outline and in turn worked over to fill in the pattern. When the lace is complete it is detached by passing a knife between it and the parchment to sever the stitches which held down the outline thread. In its final perfection this form of lace is known as *punto in aria*, stitch in the air, because it is worked without any apparent foundation.

The intermediate stage between embroidery, i.e., stitches worked over a piece of solid cloth to make a pattern, and *punto in aria* or lace, is cut work, *punto tagliato* or *reticella*. This starts from a foundation of cloth from which small squares of the fabric are cut away or threads drawn out in both directions so as to leave square holes separated by a few threads. The cut edges are oversewn to strengthen them and similarly the connecting threads worked over with buttonhole stitch, then threads are thrown across the spaces to form a pattern. The early *reticella* work, being based on a foundation of square meshes is geometric in character; but as it developed towards *punto in aria* it depended less and less on the foundation fabric and the designs became freer.

Another and earlier form of lace is darned netting, *lacis* or *modano*. The foundation for this is a knotted net, like a very fine fisherman's net and the pattern is darned in. Sometimes a woven canvas, *buratto*, with twisted threads similar to the modern madras net was used instead of net for the foundation. A similar effect was achieved by drawn thread work, *punto tirato*, on a woven cloth. The pattern was left plain and threads were drawn from the background to form small square meshes, the remaining threads being oversewn to strengthen them.

These developments are all illustrated in the pattern-books of the sixteenth century. Before 1500 little had been produced that could properly be called lace. Most of Tagliente's stitches are for embroidery on cloth but he includes darned net (*lacis*) *buratto* and drawn thread work (*punto tirato*). His immediate successors continued the same type of work, but by 1550 most of the designs were for *reticella*, and in the 1560's *punto in aria* had been added.

The early German pattern-books contained designs on squared paper for *lacis* or for counted thread embroidery, i.e., geometric patterns in which each stitch is worked over a given number of threads of the foundation fabric; designs for double-running stitch (sometimes called Holbein stitch because it decorates the chemises of so many of his sitters) and floral borders. The only designs which Tagliente copied were patterns for *lacis* some which had become traditional in western, northern, central and eastern Europe. Several of these are of some antiquity. They

can be traced to sources in the Eastern and Western Roman Empire. Some of them are to be found in the fourteenth and fifteenth century German embroideries and had been current in Germany for centuries before. When the Germans overran Scandinavia in the ninth century, they carried these patterns with them and some of them are found among traditional Swedish designs for cross-stitch. Similar designs appear in English medieval embroideries, either as an embroidered background or woven into the foundation fabric.

For the rest, Tagliente turned for inspiration to the Islamic world, whose traditional designs were no less long-lived and widespread. The exploitation of the arabesque is Tagliente's outstanding contribution to the development of the pattern-book and thereby to the dissemination of the arabesque in Western Europe. Although, however, the sixteenth century gave a great impetus to arabesque, the *genre* was by no means new in the West.

The Holy Roman Empire, in the period of Roger II (1130–1154), preserved among the coronation robes and insignia (now in Vienna), a purple silk dalmatic appareled at the foot with a deep arabesque border of gold in the plain type, echoes of which design are to be found in Tagliente's *Essempio di recammi* of 1527. Roger, as King of Sicily, had established his rule over a numerous Islamic population, hence, no doubt, many Muslim craftsmen worked in the royal workshops of Palermo. Roger himself showed an example of toleration towards nationalities and beliefs; he also attracted learned Arab scholars and geographers. The use of arabesque at his Court, clearly deliberate, was probably followed elsewhere. With such sanction it could not be looked upon as

unacceptable, (except possibly in Rome or Byzantium) and thus was present on the embroidered vestments which appear in some of the paintings of Duccio di Buoninsegna (1255–1318) of Siena. By this time, therefore, it may be accepted that the arabesque motif had secured a lodgement in some regions of Italy, by a route independent of Spain.

In the East, the arabesque motif may be seen in a very slow process of development from the ninth century, from the primitive arrangement of the Western acanthus, vine and cornucopia elements, into the characteristic geometrically regulated ornament typical of the twelth and thirteenth centuries which witnessed the maturity of manuscript and architectural skill. The markets of Constantinople and their continuing trade interests with Venice naturally brought to Italy Islamic artisans who carried with them specimens of arabesque work.

These periods of Moslem influence over European art generally coincided with the political dominance of Islam. In the fifteenth century, the Ottoman Sultans restored both the political power of the Turks and with it a supremacy in the arts. In 1453 Constantinople was captured and while for the better part of a century Western Europe had good cause to be conscious of the menacing power of Turkey, Venice was usually prepared to sacrifice religious scruples to her all-important trade with the Near East.

Venice indeed, with strong oriental leanings in matters of taste, was the natural point of entry for a new influx of Islamic influence. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century trading connections were so close that the two civilizations were bound to react on one another. Saracen metal workers were employed in Venice and Italians were working in Alexandria; Oriental weavers had settled in Italy and Italians were engaged in the textile trade at Constantinople; Egyptian bookbinders were working in Venice.

The first of the oriental crafts to take root in northern Italy was metalwork. The finest period for damascened metal ware in Asia Minor and Mesopotamia occupied the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; in the fifteenth century the industry was dispersed and most workers went further east, but some settled in Venice where they produced an interesting series of brass jugs and dishes for the Venetian market, European in shape and Islamic in its style of decoration and in its technique of engraving combined with silver inlay. Side by side with the Venetian-Saracenic ware, Venetian craftsmen were producing pieces of similar shape decorated with purely European designs.

It is interesting to see how the Islamic ornament is modified by European influence. The earliest pieces, made soon after 1450, are hardly to be distinguished from Mesopotamian work of a century

earlier. But as time goes on it acquires a formality and sense of balance that springs from the Renaissance. It is true that Islamic decoration also is frequently symmetrical and often made up of the regular repetition of a unit of design, but it does not obtrude the fact as insistently as does renaissance art. Islamic art has a calligraphic quality, an air of having been drawn freehand, that is in marked contrast to the Italian work whose predominant effect is that of the regular repetition of small units of pattern. The contrast is heightened by the treatment of the background. In the early Venetian-Saracenic work it is closely packed in the Islamic fashion with arabesques; the later work, like the pure Italian pieces, shows a tendency to leave areas undecorated.

The Italians were conscious of this difference. Benvenuto Cellini writes in his autobiography:

> There fell into my hands some little Turkish poinards; the handle as well as the blade of these daggers was made of iron, and so was the sheath. They were engraved by means of iron implements with foliage in the most exquisite Turkish style, very neatly filled in with gold. The sight of them stirred in me a great desire to try my skill in that branch, so different from the others which I practised; and finding that I succeeded to my satisfaction, I executed several pieces. Mine were far more beautiful and more durable than the Turkish, and this for divers reasons. One was that I cut my grooves much deeper and with wider trenches in the steel; for this is not usual in Turkish work. Another was that the Turkish arabesques are only composed of arum leaves with a few small sunflowers; and though these have a certain grace, they do not yield so lasting a pleasure as the patterns we use. It is true that in Italy we have several different ways of designing foliage; the Lombards, for example, construct very beautiful patterns by copying the leaves of briony and ivy in exquisite curves, which are extremely agreeable to the eye; the Tuscans and the Romans make a better choice, because they imitate the leaves of the acanthus, commonly called bears-foot, with its stalks and flowers, curling in divers wavy lines; and into these arabesques one may excellently well insert the figures of little birds and different animals, by which the good taste of the artist is displayed. Some hints for creatures of this sort can be observed in nature among the wild flowers, as, for instance, in snap-dragons and some few other plants, which must be combined and developed with the help of fanciful imaginings by clever draughtsmen. Such arabesques are called grotesques by the ignorant. They have obtained this name of grotesques among the moderns through being found in certain subterranean caverns in Rome by students of antiquity.

Tagliente's arabesques have much of the formality of the Turkish; they are tightly drawn; they show clearly the geometric pattern on which they are constructed and display great ingenuity in putting together from a very few simple forms a range of diverse patterns without monotony. A comparison of Tagliente's pattern-book with that of Pellegrini will illustrate the point. That Tagliente should be particularly influenced by Turkish tradition

is not surprising. The trading connections were particularly close between the Levant and Venice. There were Venetian manufacturing colonies along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, and a Turkish quarter, the Fondaco dei Turchi, in Venice. There were ample models among contemporary arts and crafts showing the Islamic form of the arabesques adapted to a wide range of techniques.

It has been seen that Tagliente's immediate successors copied faithfully his dedication to the ladies and his needlework instructions. They also adapted a good many of his arabesque patterns, re-drew and sometimes distorted them. But on the whole the Italian pattern-books of the 1530's are more strongly influenced by the earlier German books. By the middle of the century the enormous demand for Venetian lace inspired a host of designs for *reticella*.

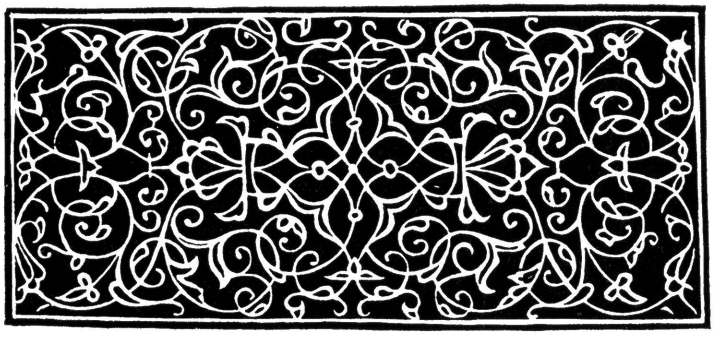
In Paris the impact of the arabesque on design, and hence upon the pattern-book, was stronger and more lasting. French pattern-books follow Tagliente's precedent in exhibiting patterns for general application and not, like Quentell, exclusively for needlework; and also in their enthusiasm for arabesque designs. By far the most sumptuous, Francisco Pellegrino's *La Fleur de la Science de Pourtraicture et Patrons de Broderie facon arabicque et ytalique* (Paris 1530) is the first pattern-book to be devoted solely to arabesque design; it is without text and its title is not specifically reserved for needlework. Pellegrini came from Florence; there is no evidence that he had seen Tagliente's work,for there is no direct copy of any of Tagliente's designs. Pellegrini's patterns, like, but independently of, Tagliente's, are built up creatively from the common motifs of Islamic art. Both Tagliente and more so Pellegrini, represent a westernized variant of the eastern scheme of decoration.

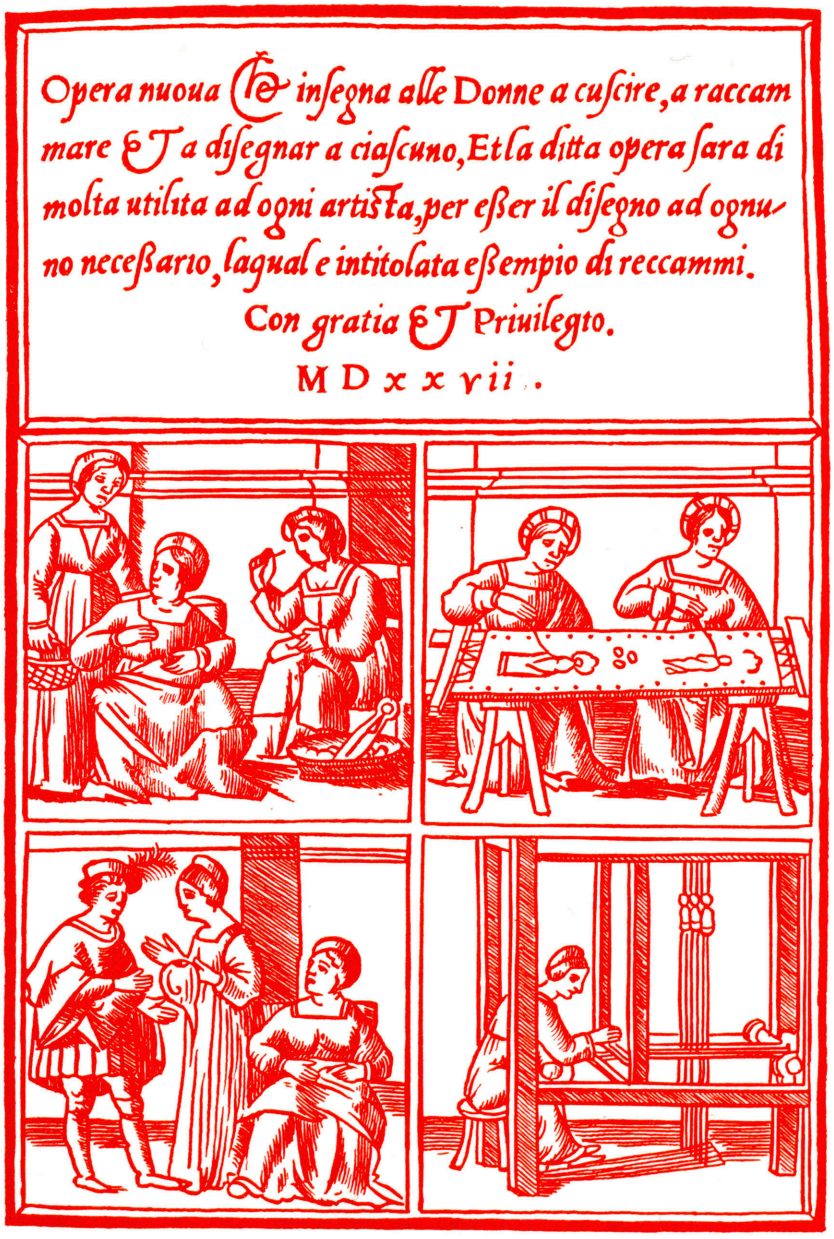
The cult of the arabesque coincided with the finest period of French bookbinding. The magnificent bindings done in Paris about the middle of the century for some of the greatest book collectors, Grolier, Mahieu and Thomas Wotton, are decorated with interlaced strapwork and arabesque designs built up from single leaves and flowers. All the leaves and flowers in Tagliente's narrow arabesque borders are to be found among the tools used by the great French bookbinders, The small knotwork motifs such as were used on Egyptian and Spanish bookbindings from the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the narrow borders were formed by the repetition of a single stamp; but the use of tools with single leaves and flowers to build up a panel of ornament seems to have begun in France near the middle of the century. It spread rapidly to Italy and England. Intricate arabesque borders decorate the title pages of many sixteenth-century books, especially those printed in Lyons.

The proliferation of arabesque designs in the pattern-books for needlework led to their use by painters and engravers, rather than by contemporary weavers and needleworkers. The exception is in Spain, where the Moorish tradition, independent of later Venetian and Parisian precedent, remained strong. There is much sixteenth-century Spanish work with arabesque shapes which are cut out in silk and applied to velvet with the stems and outline of the leaves couched in gold thread.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century the historical interest in needlework described in the Introduction, brought into existence a series of facsimile reprints of many sixteenth-century lace books (published by Ongania in Venice). Tagliente's interlaced strapwork alphabet was copied with proper acknowledgement in a classic encyclopedia of needlework and one of the women's journals referred to his designs for macrame in the 1531 edition—evidence, if it were needed, of the practical value of the work since its first publication in 1527.

Tagliente's pattern-book, it may be repeated, while being the pioneer of arabesque ornament printed for the use of embroiderers, lace-workers and others, was not a compilation of slavish imitations of eastern work. The *Essempio* does contain straightforward copies of Persian and other oriental bindings and ceramics. The majority of the designs, however, are western and personal adaptations. It is due to him to recognize that far from being a mere imitator of eastern precedents, Giovanni Antonio Tagliente was an original, independent and ingenious exponent of the intricate, geometrical and brilliant style of which, until the publication of the *Essempio*, the Orientals were the principal, if not the sole, masters. The *Essempio* was a splendid climax to the career of a remarkable craftsman if, as would appear, this was his final production. It is his chief memorial even allowing for the conspicuous and versatile merits of his manual of scripts.





The contents

THE BOOK is a small 4-to with the collation a–h³. The title is printed, in the same italic as the rest of the book, on the recto of the first leaf and below it is a poorly drawn engraved woodcut, in four compartments, showing ladies occupied with sewing, embroidery and weaving. On the verso is a better quality woodcut of an astronomer using a quadrant; its function here is that of a space-filler. The dedication and text occupy the whole of the next leaf, some parts of the following leaf and the last leaves from the recto of g² to the verso of h³. The last leaf is blank. The rest of the book is filled with woodcut designs for needlework or other handicrafts

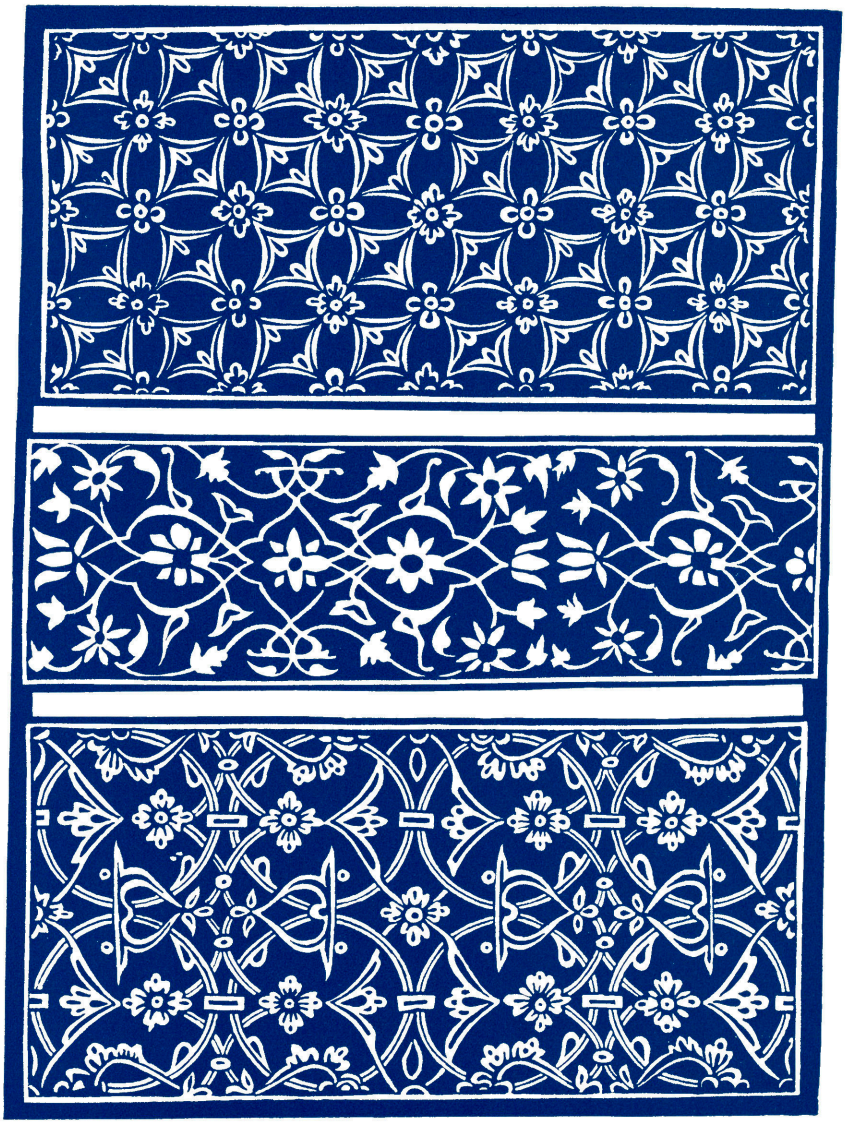
except for one woodcut on the verso of g^1 depicting drawing instruments. It is on the whole a neat and well designed production. The blocks are arranged with some attempt at symmetry and the text, which is set in Tagliente's italic, is embellished with an occasional initial of appropriate design.

The sole extant copy of what seems to be the first edition was printed in 1527. It was reprinted with some few additional designs in 1528, 1530 and 1531. Only two or three copies at most have survived from any of these editions and it is possible that other reprints have entirely disappeared. It is not even certain that the copy in the Bibliothèque Nationale is the first edition though there is little space in the crowded timetable of Tagliente's publications between 1524 and 1527 to admit of an earlier edition of the pattern-book.

The request for copyright of November 1524 was concerned with four books—the writing book, itself a major undertaking which appeared in two versions in 1524 and two more in 1525, the *Libro maistrevole*, also of 1524, the work on bookkeeping of which two versions appeared in 1525, and the letter-writer published in 1527 or earlier. In addition two versions of Giovanni Antonio Tagliente's arithmetic book were printed in 1526 and 1527.

The pattern-book can hardly have appeared before 1524 since its text was printed in a type that was plainly designed for the writing book; and any plans for a pattern-book were apparently not sufficiently far advanced for it to be included in the petition of November 1524. It is difficult to see how the preparation of the blocks and the printing of the book can have been completed much before 1527.

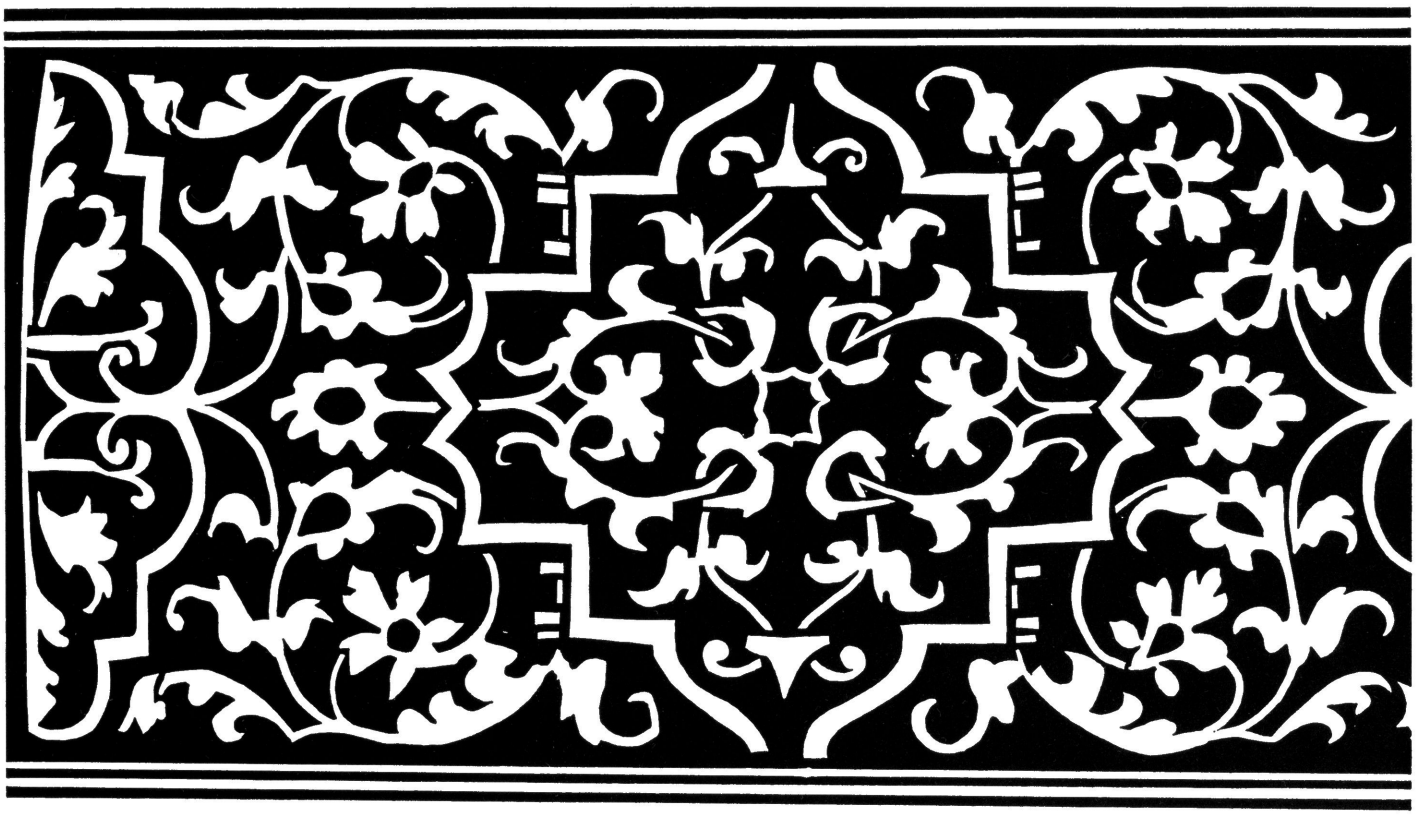
The text sets out with the dedication of 'Giovanni Antonio Tagliente to all noble and illustrious ladies and other gentle and candid readers'. He had often thought, and informs the gentle ladies and honoured gentlemen whom he addressed, that 'a practical book addressed to your noble and accomplished selves would enable you to get a name for good work as well as being a praiseworthy help for others. So I resolved after much study of the theory and art of drawing to gather together many beautiful kinds of patterns designed by the most eminent masters; which, with their co-operation are clearly reproduced in the present work. I have no doubt that by this means I shall be able to show noble ladies and all other damsels, as well as men and boys who would like to learn, how to draw, to sew, and to embroider with silks of various colours, with silver and gold wire, or with threads of different kinds. My drawings and the lively patterns here presented will instruct you from the beginning as far as need be. There are ornaments such as borders, marvellous circles, moorish



knots and arabesques, &c.,&c. The study of these will make it possible to sew and embroider in any way that pleases'. Moreover, Tagliente proceeds 'if there is any truth in the noble sentiment of famous philosophers that virtue is more brilliant and of greater worth than precious stones, then I trust that by the aid of this new accomplishment elegant ladies may become yet more elegant and beautiful ladies may be for ever honoured for their beauty'.

He then proceeds to his first lesson. As a beginning he says, 'I will draw many kinds of very beautiful patterns to teach you in due order to sew, to embroider, and to draw'. In the first place he draws the easiest knots and sprays 'since whoever wishes to learn to sew, to embroider or to draw must learn the easy designs first,

and then the difficult ones'. Having given many beautiful and elegant patterns 'the student can apply them with ready skill as occasion arises'. He insists that accurate drawing is based on 'the studious copying of the patterns, and is the foundation of success'. Examination will disclose groups of stitches some of one kind, some of another. These should be mastered if it is wished to make an 'exhibition piece'. His words on the 'variety of things', which is naturally fascinating, must be reproduced: 'These stitches have various names, some of which I should like to mention: and first one can sew with the stitches called *damaschino, punto rilevato, punto a filo, punto sopra punto, punto ingaseato, punto ciprioto, punto croceato, punto pugliese, punto scritto, punto incroceato, punto in aere, punto fatto su la rete, punto a maglieta, punto disfilato, e punto di racammo.* Many other kinds of stitch could be mentioned, but these will be enough, since by practising and exercising your latent talents you will become perfect in this art. And always keep it in mind to learn to count the stitches when you are working on *burato* or on canvas or other cloth. As you work you will learn from the patterns how to adapt each group of borders and circles'. This, he says, 'may be a large piece of work, sewn with coloured silks, with silver thread, with gold thread, or all sewn with black silk, as for example,

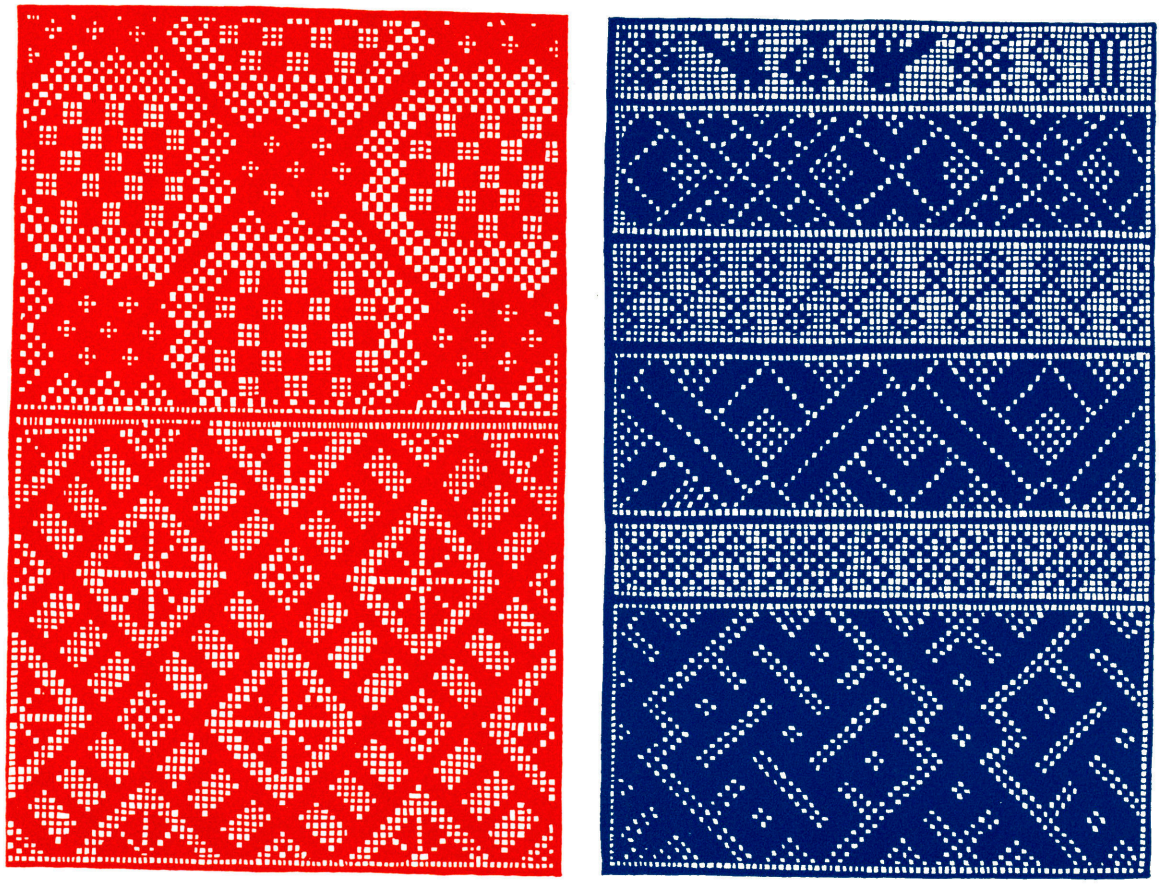


collars for gentlemen or ladies, insertions in the front of ladies' bodices, borders for bed coverlets, pillow-covers, borders for surplices, coifs or any other work that may take your fancy or desire. Look straightaway in this book where you will find various kinds of beautiful designs from which you may pick the one you like best.' If one knows how to stitch well but not how to draw well, it is possible to have a chosen design drawn by a designer on linen or silk cloth. In this connexion Tagliente had in mind for the convenience and delight 'ladies of high birth as well as gentlewomen of other degree', but he was a man who firmly held that 'everyone should have some facility in drawing'. 'There is no doubt that a person who does not know something of drawing cannot accomplish a piece of work to proper perfection'.

Cautions follow: 'those who wish to practise or learn any craft or trade they wish, and have not the aid of the right tools for the trade, will never be able to start, let alone see through to the end a worthy piece of work; and this is why it is necessary that you should see that you possess those implements which are illustrated on the last page of the drawings I have done for you. These are their names: first, you have pens, penknife, rulers, compasses, plummet, set square, pigments, scissors, ink.'

The author next addresses the reader on the subject of designing: 'The patterns alone should be reasonably adequate for any student, if with pencil in hand and other copying instruments he reproduces them, or any other drawing he wishes to master, and copies them over and over again until he can do them well. This is my advice to anyone who wishes to master the art.'

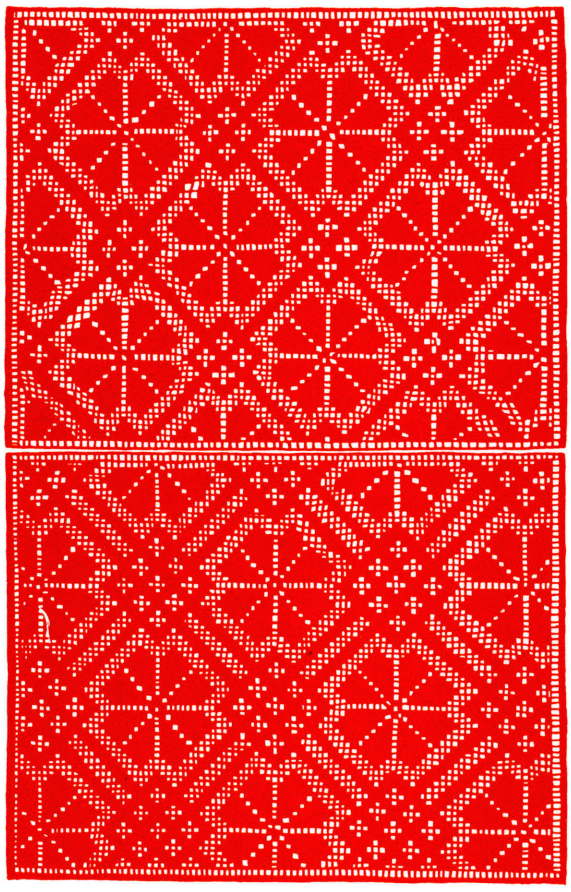
His directions for transferring the pattern to the cloth are precise: 'If it happens that you wish to make a border, a circle or a square, you should mark on the paper the size you want, and fold the paper several times—you can fold it in two or four for borders; the squares and circles can be folded in eight. You

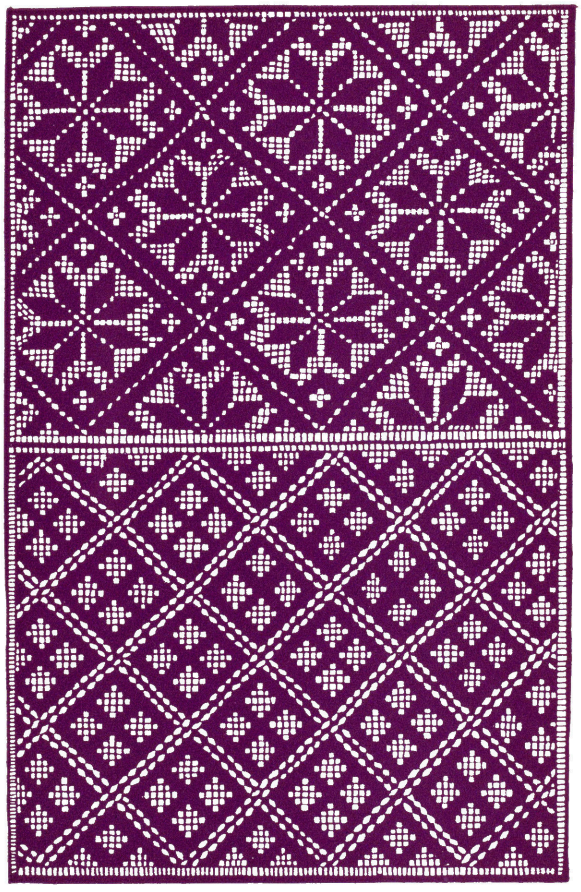


should notice that if the paper is folded once your tracing will be half the square (or whatever design you have chosen), and when you open the paper after pricking it, it will appear whole . . . You will prick the design on the folded paper, and when you have pricked it, open the paper and you will find the work complete, in proportion, duly divided and accurate. You will then be able to pounce through this pricked design on to anything you desire, whether you want to sew, to embroider or to paint.' This concludes Tagliente's 'practical' instruction.

The instruction does not call for extensive comment. One of the more interesting sections of Tagliente's text, above summarized, is his list of embroidery stitches. It is not easy to identify the stitches because the application of some of the names has changed, but some of them are plain enough.

Punto appellato damaschino: damask stitch. Counted thread embroidery, producing geometric patterns resembling damask, a cloth in which the background and the pattern are woven at the same time from the same threads, the pattern being marked by a





change in the weave. It probably gets its name from a resemblance to damascened metal work.

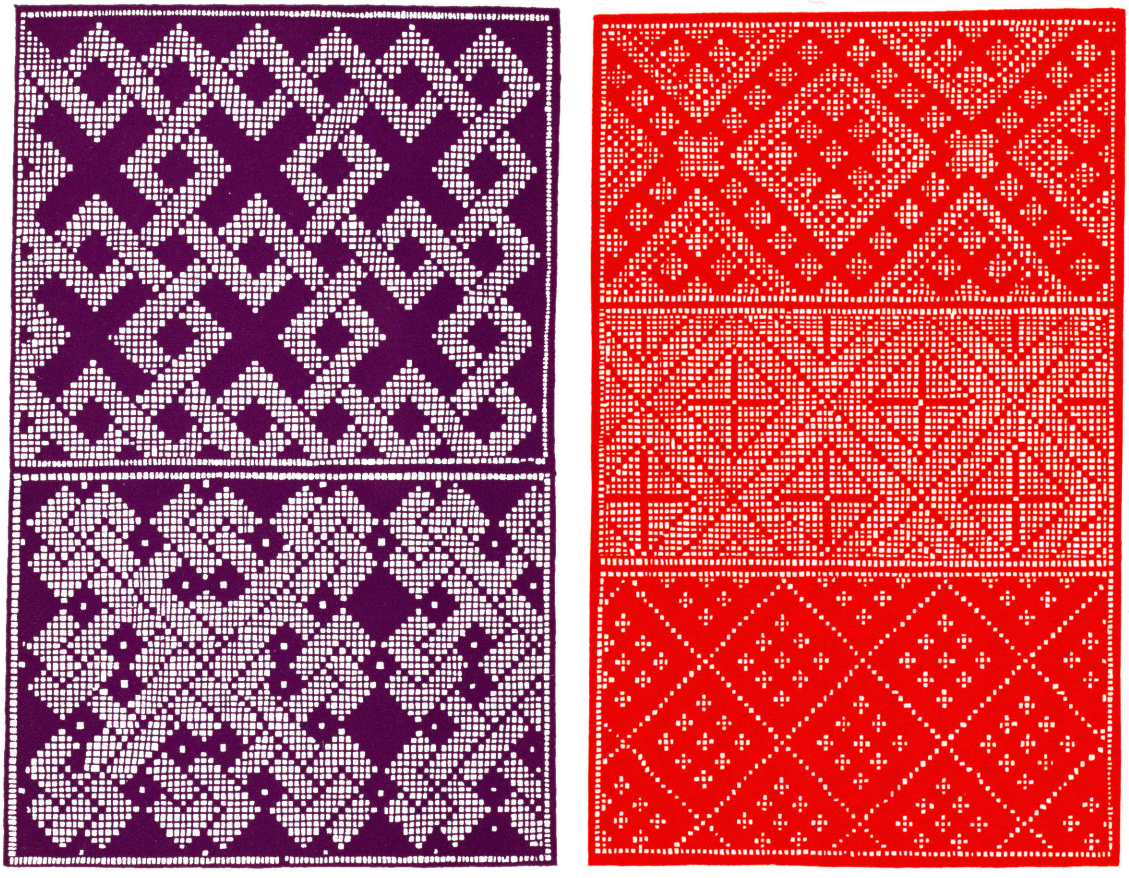
Punto rilevato: satin stitch (*punto reale* in modern Italian), i.e., a series of stitches lying parallel over the face of the cloth. *Punto a relievo* came to be used later for Venice raised point, perhaps the most handsome form of needlepoint lace.

Punto a filo: back stitch (*punto a filza*) a stitch which is imitated, on the right side of the cloth, by the ordinary stitch of a sewing machine. Its construction is of course different, but that can only be seen from the wrong side. It was much used in contemporary Italian embroidery for outlining the pattern.

Punto sopra punto: curl stitch (*punto riccio*). Each stitch overlaps the previous one: it was frequently used for embroidery on cloth which was also trimmed with *reticella.*

Punto ciprioto suggests a Levantine source for some of Tagliente's expertise. *Punto ingaseato* and *punto pugliese* have not been identified.

Punto croceato and *punto incroceato:* cross stitch. Two forms of



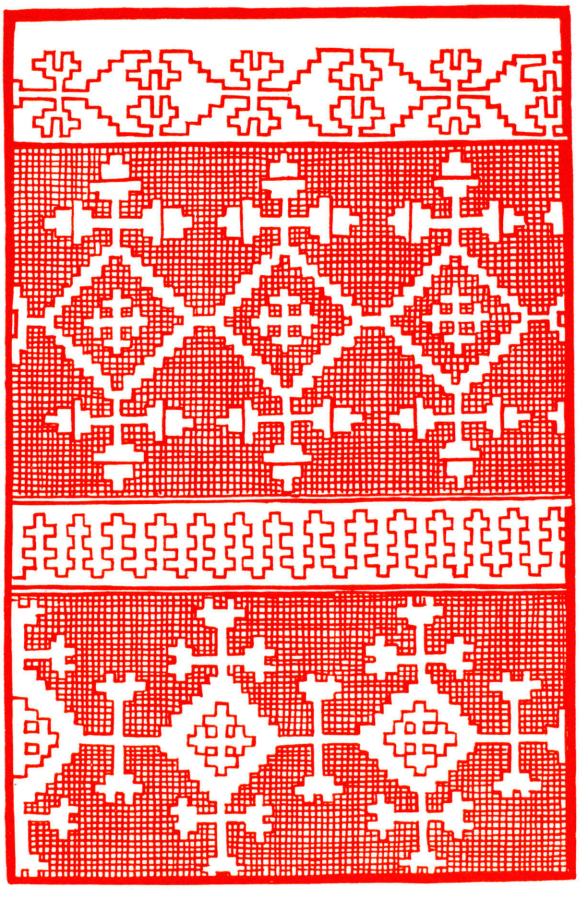
cross stitch are found in Italian embroidery of the sixteenth century—Italian cross stitch and long-armed cross stitch. They were commonly used for filling in the background.

Punto scritto: double running stitch, which looks on the surface like back stitch but is differently constructed. It, too, is used as an outlining stitch.

Punto in aere: It is too early for it to refer here to *punto in aria*, the general term for needlepoint lace. It must be used in this instance for the device in embroidery of working a leaf or similar shape above the surface of the cloth without piercing the stuff except round the edge of the leaf to hold it down. It is essentially the same technique as *punto in aria* except that the foundation fabric remains as part of the finished work.

Punto fatto su la rete: darned netting (*modano* in Italian, *lacis* in French). A form of lace in which the ground consists of a knotted net (like a very fine fishing net) and the pattern is darned in.

Punto a maglieta: similar to *lacis*, but worked on a woven canvas with square meshes rather like the modern madras or leno net.



This canvas was woven from linen or silk yarn and was known as *buratto*.

Punto disfilato: drawn thread work (*punto tirato*). An effect rather like *lacis* or *modano* is achieved with a foundation of cloth by drawing out some of the threads from the background to form a network of small square meshes. The remaining threads are worked over and the pattern is left plain in the solid cloth.

Punto di racammo has not been identified.

This list of stitches is followed by a brief mention of the various embroidery threads: coloured silk thread and gold and silver thread (which consists of narrow strips of sheet metal wound round a core of thread—or just a fine wire). Then, as now, gold and silver threads were used principally, but not exclusively, for ecclesiastical vestments. As they cannot easily be drawn through cloth they are usually laid on the surface and secured with small stitches in fine matching silk thread, a process known as 'couching'.

Tagliente also mentions 'work stitched entirely with black thread' which is rather surprising because 'black work', i.e.,

embroidery in double running stitch (Holbein stitch) in black silk on white cloth was not common in Italy though very popular in Germany and throughout northern Europe. There are lots of designs for it in the early German pattern-books, and Tagliente includes one in the 1528 edition though not in the first.

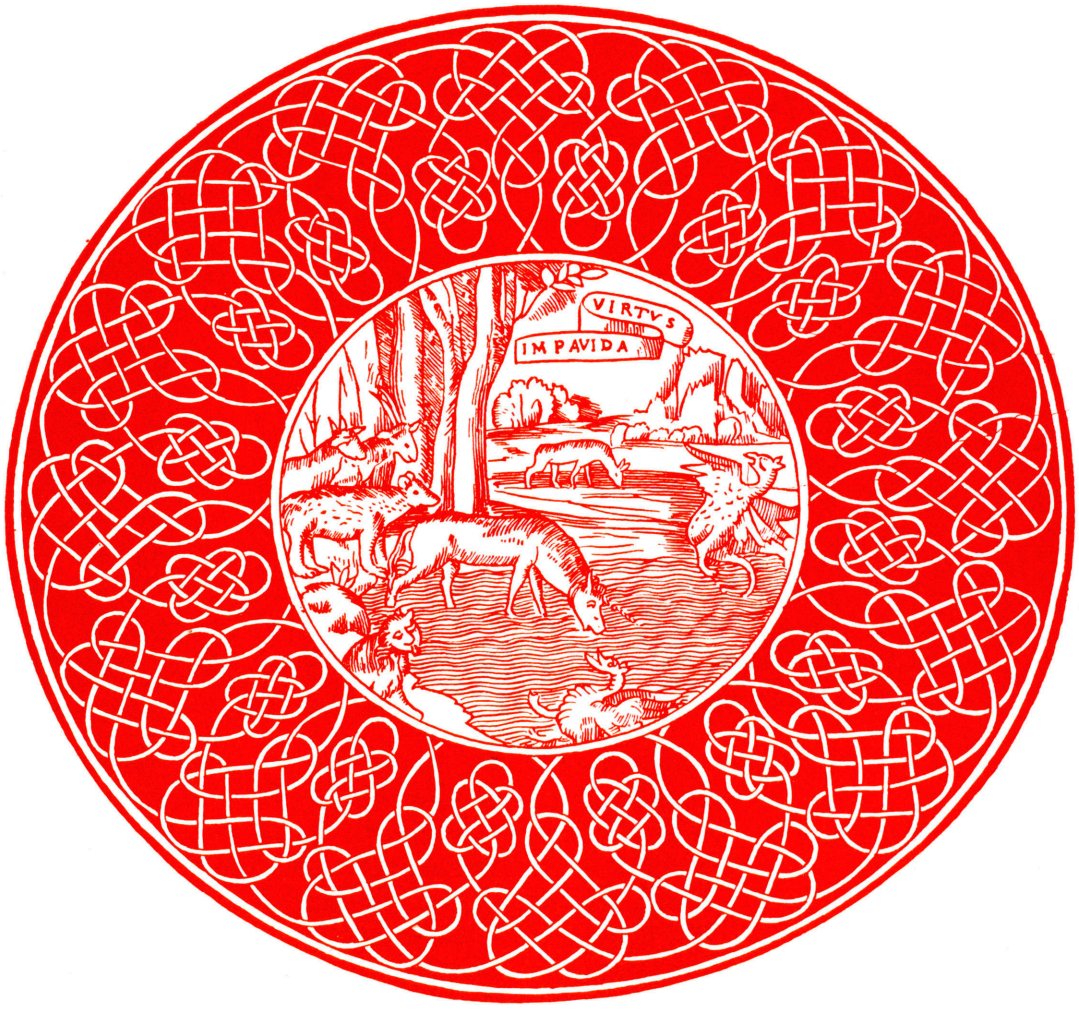
The next section deals with the rudiments of drawing. It begins with a list of the essential implements: pens (the quill pen and the calamos, cut from a reed, were both in use); penknife (for cutting the pens); ruler; compasses; lead style (Cennini, the fifteenth-century writer on drawings, describes the lead style as made of two parts lead and one part tin.[1] It served as a pencil); try square (for drawing right angles); pigments (for mixing colours); scissors and ink. It is essentially a calligrapher's outfit—and does not include charcoal or brushes which are important items of the artist's equipment. We then have Tagliente's favourite lecture on beginning at the beginning and starting with the easiest and so forth; it occurs in various forms in nearly all his books.

The easiest patterns in this book are the single leaves and simple interlaced knots reproduced on the cover of our present book. Tagliente expounds the principle to be followed in constructing all interlaced knots, however intricate, namely that the cord should pass alternately over and under intersecting strands. Incidentally this observation holds good for Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci and Dürer as well as the Irish, Italian and Persian schools of manuscript illumination.

After observing that the designs for borders can be adapted to any length by making as many repeats of the pattern as necessary, Tagliente goes on with instructions for tracing the pattern on to the cloth. There are two methods of copying a pattern. If it is a design on squared paper for *lacis*, *buratto* or something of that sort the needlewoman will work from the squared pattern, one square of the design representing one mesh of her net or canvas. This is the significance of Tagliente's injunction on folio g ii verso 'always remember to count the stitches [of the pattern] and the threads [of the canvas] when you are working on buratto or canvas'. He repeats it at the foot of folio g iii recto '. . . keeping to the rule of counting the stitches and threads.'

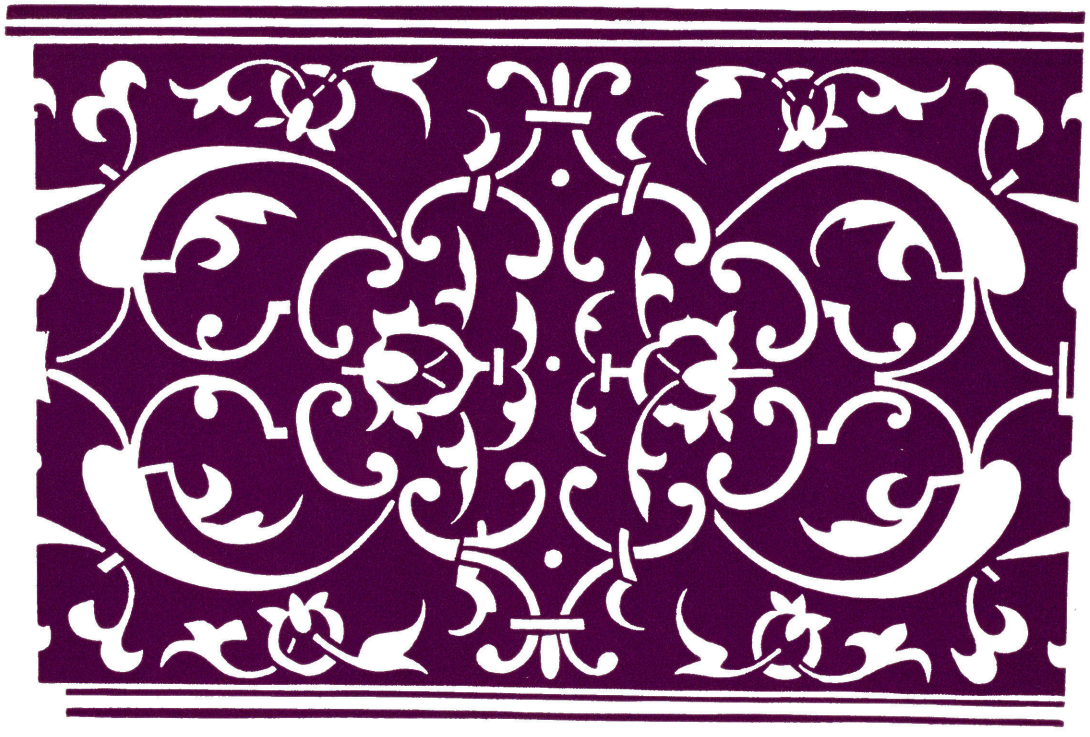
Other patterns have to be transferred to the cloth. The first step is to trace the pattern on to paper, but if the pattern is symmetrical the draughtsman can save himself trouble by tracing only one section. The paper is then folded accordingly, and pricked all along the outline through all thicknesses of paper, so that when it is opened out the whole design has been pricked. It is placed on the cloth and pounced through the holes. Finally the draughtsman

[1] *The Craftsman's Handbook*, New York, 1933.



goes over the outline with ink since the pounce would rub off. It is essentially the process described by Cennini. Taglinete's prose style lacks clarity but the meaning is obvious enough. He concludes the work with some lofty sentiments on the value of drawing.

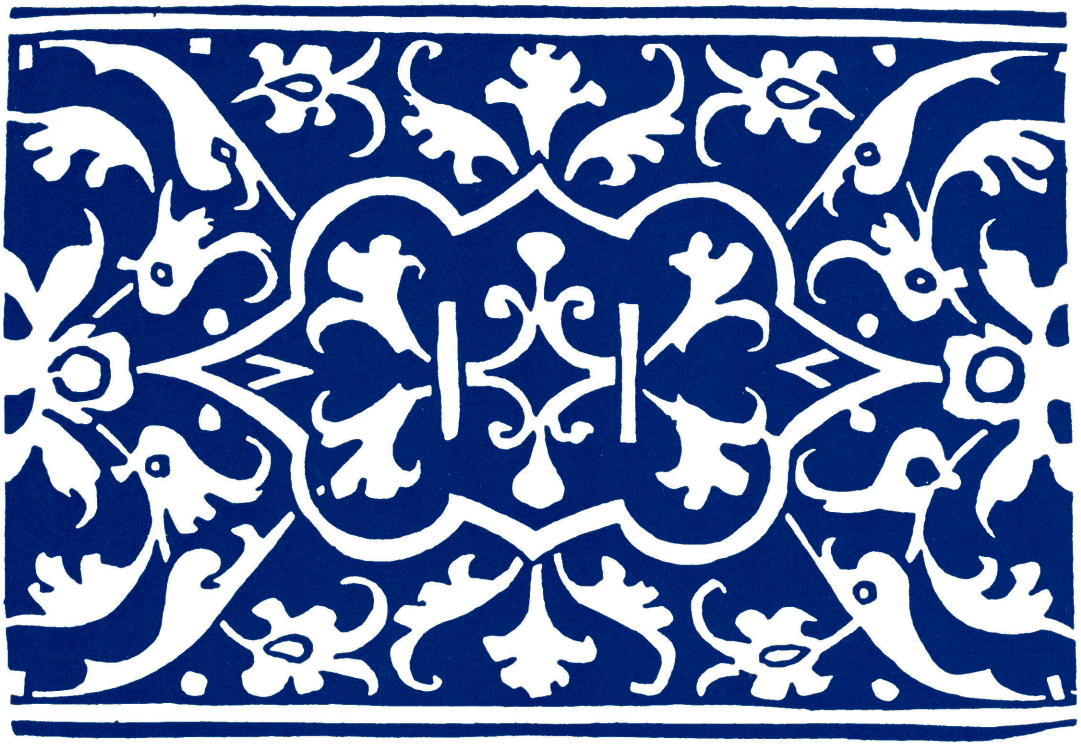
There was little change in the text in subsequent editions. One of the patterns added in the 1528 edition was the turtle supporting a wreath and an explanatory paragraph was added. The design was repeated in 1530 and 1531 without the note. The paragraph of the introduction headed 'first lesson' is also omitted from the 1531 edition, apparently to save space.



The Patterns

THE DESIGNS show a remarkable fondness for a white on black method of reproduction. For *entrelacs* it is highly effective, but the white outline of the arabesque designs does not give them their full value. Some of them show to much better effect when they appear in other pattern books in black on white; and much of the beauty of Pellegrini's book depends on the brilliance of the solid black printing of the designs.

Most of the patterns are repeated in the 1528 and later editions, and an appreciable number of new patterns have been added. The blocks have been re-arranged and there is a tendency to crowd more designs on to a page. It is a curious fact that new blocks were cut for the 1528 edition for nearly all the designs that had been in the 1527 edition. We shall probably never know why this was done: the blocks were no better and not usually as good as the originals; the 1528 edition was not a piracy like the *Thesauro de scrittori;* it was printed by the brothers Nicolini da Sabbio, Tagliente's regular printers who were responsible for the first edition; they used Tagliente's italic for the text and the original blocks of the astronomer folio a i recto and the writing implements folio g i recto. These are not reproduced in our pages. We can only suppose that the original blocks of some or all of the needlework patterns were accidently destroyed. It was the 1528 blocks that were used for the 1531 edition.



Most of the blocks were copied exactly, so exactly that it is not easy to tell that they are not original. Some of the borders, however, are adjusted to show more or fewer repeats of the design. The scale of the patterns is not changed, and there are no alterations in the design, though the engraver sometimes misunderstood the purpose of a pattern and put borders round designs that were intended to be repeated.

The principal additions in the 1528 and later editions are common strips of woodcut ornament such as were used in printed books and blind-stamped bookbindings of the period. There is the large and handsome picture of Orpheus; the device of the turtle supporting a wreath which was a favourite conceit of Italian sculptors; a bookbinding in the Persian manner; a page of flowers to match the birds and animals on folio f ii verso and folio f iii recto and another of fishes, insects and reptiles; and some woodcuts that are also used to pad out later editions of the writing book, including the fine representation of the sacred monogram. There are no more arabesque patterns, and little to suggest that Tagliente was responsible for the new designs, which impair the unity of the work and, with one or two exceptions, add nothing to its usefulness. They are no more than a printer might add to justify the advertisement of a new and enlarged edition.

The number of the engravings in the original 1527 edition is 82.

Our author acknowledges his indebtedness to others: 'I, Giovanni Antonio Tagliente, by prolonged study and with watchful care have designed the greater part of this book. Some I have taken from classical models, the rest from various compositions by skilful masters. I have set out the discipline and rules for learning this craft for noble ladies as well as for all other honourable people of all ranks and both sexes. I have now expounded in sufficiently expert fashion this noble and admirable art of the mastery of sewing, drawing and embroidery; and this brings my discourse to an end. If I have left anything out, or if by a slip of the pen or by obscure instruction any errors have crept into my text, then I pray that I may be forgiven for them.'

Tagliente concludes his *Essempio di recammi* with a doxology in which he expresses the hope that 'My small and I hope not unworthy efforts shall be accepted as witnessing the glory and honour due to the Supreme Giver of divine grace, in whose almighty and certain judgement is hidden all lengths of days in this life; and in the life to come is granted the heavenly gift of everlasting bliss.'

To this prayer the present-day reader will gratefully respond with an equally fervent 'Amen'.

Tagliente's typographical style

MANY of the books by Tagliente that appeared between 1524 and 1536, including the 1527, 1528 and the first pages of the 1530 editions of the pattern-book are printed in a beautiful current, i.e., strongly cursive 'swash' italic belonging to the class associated with the name of Arrighi (see below) and nowadays designated as 'Chancery Italic'.

Tagliente's chancery italic is not used except in his own works, and was evidently designed by him. Apart from incidental mention in *The Fleuron* (volumes for 1924–1926), Tagliente's typographical experiments pass unrecorded and undescribed. Their merits, however, were not unnoticed or unappreciated. It is acknowledged in the *Tally of Types* (Cambridge), privately printed in 1923, that the standard italic cut for the 'Bembo' roman by the Monotype Corporation in 1928, was derived from Tagliente. Moreover, it is emphasized that the first modern chancery italic is that cut by George T. Friend and Edward Prince for Count Kessler's Cranach Press, after the design of Edward Johnston. The design was made in 1912 and the punch-cutters began their work at that time. The war interrupted the enterprise and the type eventually appeared in 1926. Other details are given in the *Tally of Types* (pp. 42–44) which need not be repeated here.

There is one detail of importance which needs to be added. Recently, Mr Alan Fern of the Library of Congress, obtained for his personal collection from Miss Priscilla Johnston, a photographic print of a page of Tagliente's writing book experimentally reworked as the basis for the Cranach Italic. Johnston later drew the letters approximately two inches high, and it was from these that Prince and Friend cut the punches.

It is appropriate, therefore, that a volume intended to honour the name of Tagliente should give some account, however brief, of the contribution which the pattern-maker and educator made to the art of typography.

When Aldus commissioned the first italic, based on the current book cursive (itself influenced by the chancery script) of his day, he was aiming to produce a condensed type which would make possible the reprinting of classical texts in cheap editions. A type for fine or original editions was not contemplated. The invention was intended to benefit the greatest number of readers. The type was first used in 1500–1501.

In the 1520's several other founts of calligraphic type, based more directly on the chancery cursive (not the book cursive), were designed for handsome editions. The pioneer in the chancery cursive in its typographical form was Ludovico Vicentino degli Arrighi, writer of apostolic briefs and compiler of the first Italian writing book.

A chancery cursive in a moderately plain cursive state was designed by Arrighi for the press of Antonio Blado, printer to the Apostolic Camera. A highly swashed italic would be inappropriate for official and often urgent work for the Roman Curia. The sequence of Arrighi's italics is not accurately known, but it is clear that Blado was using a plain chancery italic in 1523.

In 1524 Arrighi was already printing with a highly calligraphical chancery type with long curved ascenders and descenders. He kept the rest of his lower-case relatively plain. His capitals, however, are flourished. Nobody at this time thought of slanting the capitals of an italic fount and Arrighi was the first, with the assistance of the renowned engraver Lautizio Perugino, to cut the punches and cast the type for a 'swashed' chancery italic. Tagliente reversed Arrighi's plan by retaining plain capitals and swashing numerous lower-case letters. It is impossible to establish the exact priority of italic as between the commissioning and cutting of the Arrighi and Tagliente chancery cursive types with swashes. Neither was a punch-cutter. Only Arrighi was a printer. Both chancery italics appear in 1524.

The chancery cursive in swashed state was a 'literary' type, used by Arrighi for the verses of highly placed ecclesiastics. As such it was influential in propagating the elevated version of the chancery script then in its early career. Tagliente's swashed italic, used for the text of his writing book, which was first published in 1524, exercises the identical function of gaining respect for an elegant chancery cursive.

It was first used in 1524 in the two versions of the writing book and in the *Libro maistrevole*. It continued in use until 1536 and has been noted in the following editions:

1524 *Lo presente libro insegna la vera arte de lo excellente scrivere* (in two editions)
Libro maistrevole

1525 *Lo presente libro insegna la vera arte de lo excellente scrivere* (in one quarto and the small oblong edition)
Luminario di arithmetica

1527 *Essempio di recammi*
Il refugio di amanti (on the title page only)

1528 & 1530 *Essempio di recammi*

1531 *Lo presente libro insegna la vera arte de lo excellente scrivere* (in two editions)

1533 & 1532 *Lo presente libro insegna la vera arte de lo excellente*
1534 & 1536 *scrivere* (in one edition each year)

None of Tagliente's books printed in this type in 1524 gives the printer's name; most of the others bear the imprint of one or more of the family of brothers da Sabbio in Venice. However, the 1527 edition of the arithmetic book (the version edited by Giovanni Antonio Tagliente) and the 1527 *Rifugio di amanti* have the imprint of Bernadin de Vidali.

Tagliente's sumptuous type required a sumptuous page and all the books printed in it were quartos except the oblong writing book of 1525. The pages of text are without any other ornament except an occasional decorative initial, and the title pages usually depend for decorative effect on the layout of the page. In the *Libro maistrevole*, the *Luminario di arithmetica* and *Il rifugio de amanti* the lines of the lengthy title are arranged to form an inverted triangle poised on a smaller block of type. The title pages to the *Rifugio de amanti* and the oblong writing book are bordered with an *entrelac*. It is not to be supposed that Tagliente necessarily made the drawings for the title page of the pattern-book, especially as it follows the German precedent of a woodcut depicting ladies engaged in needlework.

The cheap reprints of Tagliente's books that followed these elegant quartos used an ordinary condensed italic of Aldine type, and where possible reverted to the small octavo format that was usual for school books. The writing book and pattern-book had to remain as quartos to accommodate the engraved blocks.

Tagliente's type has long, curved ascenders and descenders and preserves all the 'complicated machinery of ligature and involution, the uncompromisingly calligraphic verve' of Tagliente's hand-writing. To achieve this result extraordinary trouble was needed in cutting and casting the type.

In Tagliente's application for copyright for the writing book he claims the invention of a new printing technique:

> io ho ritrovato una nova inventione, con non poca mia spesa et fatica, a metter in stampa ogni qualita di lettere che far si possono con la vivace man: non stampando pero al modo consueto, ma con novo modo che mai fo stampato in questa vostra cita, ne etiam in ni una terra di vostra Serenita.

We could wish Tagliente had been more explicit. The new invention has been taken to refer to the reproduction of calligraphy from engraved wood-blocks. But there was nothing new in his wood-engraving to justify so precise a phrase 'I have devised a new invention at considerable expense and trouble to myself'. Its application to calligraphy had already been exploited by Arrighi. It seems at least as plausible to assume that Tagliente's claim refers to the design of the type.

Though the type was highly successful for Tagliente's purpose, it appears to have been troublesome to work and can hardly have been commercially viable. Apparently its use was abandoned when the original supply of cast type ran out. The first three books to use this type—the two 1524 editions of the writing book and the *Libro maistrevole*, 1524—have an impressive display of some 20 ligatures. After that the ligatures disappear rapidly, the most elaborate ones being the first to go. It is not only that some 'sorts' are not seen again after their first two or three appearances. Those that continue in use occur only once or twice in a book printed in 1530, whereas they are used a dozen times or more in a 1524 edition. The last use of this type examined is in the 1536 edition. The peculiarity here present is that while the Tagliente type is used throughout, the last page is composed in a small common italic. As the text ends half way down the recto of the last leaf and the verso is blank, the reason for the change in type can only be that the printer had run out of type and that no more was procurable. Hence, too, the change to other italics for subsequent editions was not prompted by economy, but by the loss of type due to the breaking of so many letters that the remainder were insufficient to complete the edition. This circumstance and the gradual disappearance of the more elaborate ligatures implies that the supply of type was cast up once and for all at the beginning, in 1524.

The blocks for the 1527 and 1528 editions of the pattern-book were cut by Piero da Carpi who was, perhaps, a relative of the famous engraver Ugo da Carpi.

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