

## CHAPTER IV.

## ITALY.

"It grazed on my shoulder, takes me away six parts of an Italian cutwork band I wore, cost me three pounds in the Exchange but three days before."

*Ben Jonson, Every Man Out of his Humour, 1599.*

"Ruffles well wrought and fine falling bands of Italian cutwork."

*Fair Maid of the Exchange, 1627.*

THE Italians claim the invention of point or needle-made lace. It has been suggested that they derived the art of fine needlework from the Greeks who took refuge in Italy from the troubles of the Lower Empire; and what further confirms its Byzantine origin is, that those very places which kept up the closest intercourse with the Greek Empire are the cities where point lace was earliest made and flourished to the greatest extent.<sup>1</sup>

A modern Italian author,<sup>2</sup> on the other hand, asserts that the Italians learned embroidery from the Saracens of Sicily, as the Spaniards acquired the art from the Moors of Granada or Seville, and brings forward, as proof of his theory, that the word "to embroider," both in Italian and Spanish,<sup>3</sup> is derived from the Arabic, and no similar word exists in any other European language.

This theory may apply to embroidery, but certainly not to lace, for how could the Easterns teach an art of which they were ignorant themselves? With the exception of the Turkish crochet, "oyah," and some darned netting and drawn-work which occur on Persian and Chinese tissues, there is nothing approaching to lace to be found in any article of Oriental manufacture.

Leaving to the learned these doubtful disputations, we proceed to show that evidences of lace appear in Italy as early as the fifteenth century.

<sup>1</sup> "Industrial Arts of the Nineteenth Century," Sir Digby Wyatt.

<sup>2</sup> Francesco Nardi, "Sull' Origine

dell' Arte del Ricamo," Padova, 1839.

<sup>3</sup> Ricamare, Recamar.