schools and convents along the Riviera, derived from the "punto a groppo," and carried to great perfection at the Albergo de' Poveri at Genoa. It is almost the first employment of the fingers which the poor children of either sex learn. This art is principally applied to the ornamenting of towels, termed "macramè,"[92] a long fringe of thread being left at each end, for the purpose of being knotted together in geometrical designs (Fig. 33). Macramè at the Albergo de' Poveri were formerly made with a plain plaited fringe, till, in 1843, the Baroness A. d'Asti brought one from Rome, richly ornamented, which she left as a pattern. Marie Picchetti, a young girl, had the patience to unpick the fringe and discover the way it was made. A variety of designs are now executed, the more experienced inventing fresh patterns as they work. Some are applied to church purposes. Costly specimens of elaborate workmanship were in the Paris Exhibition of 1867. These richly trimmed macramè form an item in the wedding trousseau of a Genoese lady, while the commoner sorts find a ready sale in the country, and are also exported to South America and California.[93] The making of macramè has of late years become a favourite employment.

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[92] A word of Arabic derivation, used for denoting fringe for trimming, whether of cotton, thread, or silk.

[93] This custom of ornamenting the ends of the threads of linen for household as well as for ecclesiastical purposes was from the earliest times common, and is still occasionally met with both in the North and South of Europe. "At Bayonne, they make the finest of linen, some of which is made open like network, and the thread is finer than hair."—

Ingenious and diverting Letters of a Lady's Travels into Spain, London, 1679.

There is a painting of the Last Supper at Hampton Court Palace, by Sebastian Ricci, in which the tablecloth is edged with cutwork; and in the great picture in the Louvre, by Paul Veronese, of the supper at the house of Simon the Canaanite, the ends of the tablecloth are likewise fringed and braided like the macramè.