

with a piece of Flanders lace<sup>2</sup>—an offering not to be resisted. Lace appeared at baptisms,<sup>3</sup> at marriages, as well as at burials, of which more hereafter—even at the Old Bailey, where one Miss Margaret Caroline Rudd, a beauty of the day, tried for forgery, quite moved her jurors to tears, and nigh gained her acquittal by the taste of her elegantly laced stomacher, the lace robings of her dress, and single lace flounce, her long pendulous ruffles, hanging from the elbow, heard, fluttering in her agitation, by the court; but, in spite of these allurements, Margaret Caroline Rudd was hanged.

Every woman, writes Swift,<sup>4</sup> is

“In choosing lace a critic nice,  
Knows to a groat the lowest price.”

Together, they

“Of caps and ruffles hold the grave debate,  
As of their lives they would decide the fate.”

Again, he says:—

“And when you are among yourselves, how naturally, after the first compliments, do you entertain yourselves with the price and choice of lace, apply your hands to each other's lappets and ruffles, as if the whole business of your life and the public concern depended on the cut of your petticoats.”<sup>5</sup>

Even wise Mrs. Elizabeth Montague, who wrote epistles about the ancients, and, instead of going to a ball, sat at home and read

<sup>2</sup> In “The Recruiting Officer” (1781), Lucy the maid says: “Indeed, Madam, the last bribe I had from the Captain was only a small piece of Flanders lace for a cap.” Melinda answers: “Ay, Flanders lace is a constant present from officers. . . . They every year bring over a cargo of lace, to cheat the king of his duty and his subjects of their honesty.” Again, Silvio, in the bill of costs he sends in to the widow Zelinda, at the termination of his unsuccessful suit, makes a charge for “a piece of Flanders lace” to Mrs. Abigail, her woman. Addison, in “Guardian,” No. 17, 1713.

<sup>3</sup> “In the next reign, George III. and Queen Charlotte often condescended to become sponsors to the children of the aristocracy. To one child their presence was fatal. In 1778 they ‘stood’ to the

infant daughter of the last Duke and Duchess of Chandos. Cornwallis, Archbishop of Canterbury, officiated. The baby, overwhelmed by whole mountains of lace, lay in a dead faint. Her mother was so tender on the point of etiquette that she would not let the little incident trouble a ceremony at which a king and queen were about to endow her child with the names of Georgiana Charlotte. As Cornwallis gave back the infant to her nurse, he remarked that it was the quietest baby he had ever held. Poor victim of ceremony! It was not quite dead, but dying; in a few unconscious hours it calmly slept away.”—*A Gossip on Royal Christenings, Cornhill Magazine*, April 1864.

<sup>4</sup> “Furniture of a Woman's Mind.”

<sup>5</sup> “Dean Swift to a Young Lady.”