

AUSTRIAN PEASANT EM-
BROIDERY. BY A. S.
LEVETUS.

LAST year I spent Whit Sunday at
Hungarisch-Hradisch, a small market town
in Moravia. It was a glorious day, and
quite early in the morning, even before

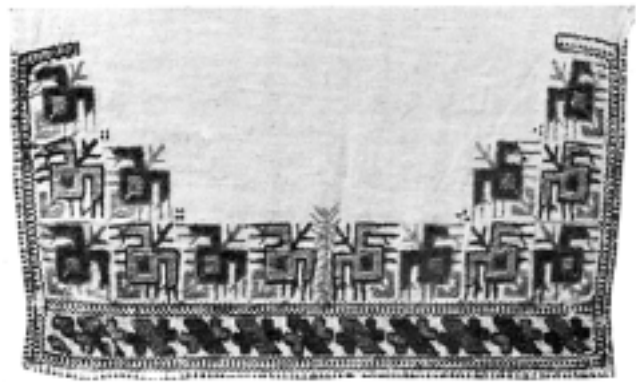


FIG. I.—PORTION OF HEAD-DRESS HERZEGOVINA-DALMATIA
EMBROIDERED IN WOOL 18TH CENTURY
(Property of *Vitus Vuletic-Vukasovic, Ragusa*)

Austrian Peasant Embroidery



FIG. 2.—SHIRT EMBROIDERED IN WOOL
(Property of Feldkurat Lukasek, Zara)

FROM ZAGROVIC, DALMATIA
19TH CENTURY

showed them to me with pride, and in time she will, no doubt, be buried in them, perhaps as an atonement for the evil she is supposed to have done. Some pieces, however, are regarded as heirlooms; for instance, the women's head-cloths; and it would be hard to find a woman who would part with one. These head-cloths are made of long strips of linen about

different districts can easily be distinguished by the shape of the head-dress, the pattern of the embroidery, the men's hats, even by the very way they stick flowers into them. Even a stranger soon learns to distinguish some of these local peculiarities, while the countries vary so considerably in their characteristics that one can immediately recognise the differences. But everywhere there is this fine feeling for form and richness of colour, a feeling which is inborn in the inhabitants.

There was a time when every peasant woman's marriage-chest was filled with treasures of embroidery, but first the museums bought specimens, then private collectors became eager, and the people being poor their marriage-chests and cupboards were ransacked and numerous old pieces changed hands. Nevertheless, many have kept their treasures; while those who have parted with theirs have provided themselves with new ones which they have made during the long winter evenings by the light of a candle or small lamp. I have seen rare bits in the marriage-chest of an old woman reputed to possess the "evil eye"; she



FIG. 3.—SHIRT EMBROIDERED
IN GOLD AND BEADS
(Rudolfinum Museum, Laibach)

FROM CARNIOLA
16TH-17TH CENTURIES

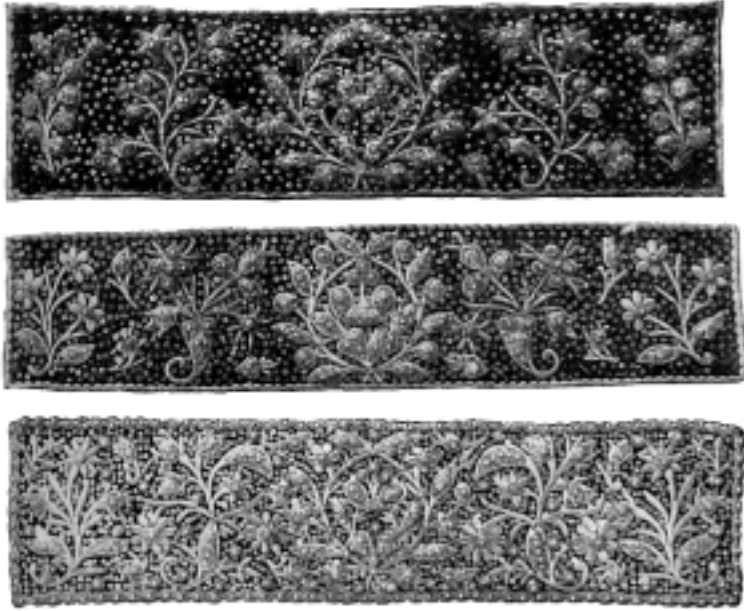


FIG. 4.—SLOVENIAN
HEAD-SCARF
(Olmütz Museum)

FROM LANDSDORF
MIDDLE 19TH
CENTURY

three quarters of a yard wide and two and a half long. The ends are embroidered in silks, sometimes for half a yard or even more. The design is very intricate, the

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FIGS. 5, 6 & 7 —EMBROIDERIES IN
GOLD AND BEADS, AND GOLD AND PEARLS
FROM CARNIOLA, ETC.
18TH & 19TH CENTURIES
(Property of Herr Jos. Sadniker, Stein, Carniola)

usual "motives" being flowers, scrolls, leaves and hearts, and sometimes the patterns are so close together that the material on which the embroidery is made is entirely covered.

Among the women of Hannak these head-cloths play a peculiar part; the mother always presents hers to her eldest daughter on her wedding day, on her return home from the ceremony. It is only used at christenings, when a second one is provided for the infant. This is a sacred office, and such a head-dress is regarded as a holy thing, and, children failing, it is often presented to the church as an ante-

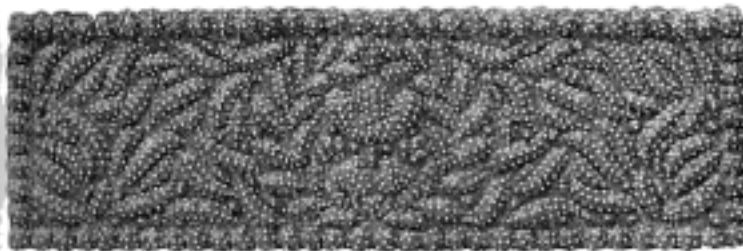


FIG. 8.—RAISED GOLD AND PEARL
EMBROIDERY FOR A CAP-BAND
FROM ZIRNAU, CARNIOLA
A.D. 1800
(Property of Herr Jos. Sadniker)

pendium for the altar. The work is beautifully done, and it is practically impossible to distinguish the right side from the wrong. The cloth is bound round the head, and tied in such a manner that the two embroidered ends fall gracefully one over the other. Figs. 1 and 4 show portions of two such head-cloths. The Slovenian scarf is bordered by lace, also made by the same hand as the embroidery, and of coloured silks to harmonise with it. It will also be seen that there is in it an insertion of drawn-thread work forming a kind of border. This is a peculiarity of the Slovenian embroidery, as also is the use of silk, whereas



FIG. 9.—LACE WITH COLOURED
SILK EMBROIDERY FROM UNGARISCH-HRADISCH
(Property of Herr Kretz)

in Herzegovina and Dalmatia (Fig. 1) they work with wools dyed of a rich colour, and there is no lace or drawn-thread work. In some parts of Moravia these head-cloths are worked in chrome-yellow silks, and though the "motives" may be the same, the designs are so manifold that one never sees two alike. As a relief

Austrian Peasant Embroidery

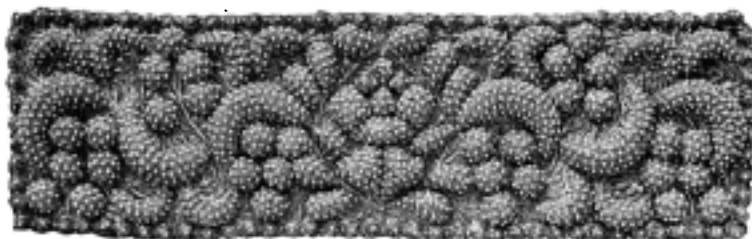


FIG. 10.—RAISED GOLD AND PEARL EMBROIDERY FOR A CAP-BAND
(Property of Herr Jos. Sadniker)

FROM LAIBACH
DATE 1775

to the yellow silk, black silk is used, but never obtrusively. What is the exact meaning of this mixture of black it is difficult to say; some think it is used as a charm against the evil eye.

The Wallachians and Slavonians make use of different forms in their embroidery, though the stitches may be the same. The former may be easily distinguished from the latter because their designs are untaught studies from nature, whereas the latter always use geometrical forms. There is also a difference in material, the Wallachians embroidering on net, mull muslin, or other fine materials, and the Slavonians on

coarse linen. The Wallachians are fond of embroidering in silks, etc., in relief and of drawn-thread work; the Slavonians use the richest colours, their stitches are more varied, such as cross, satin, or what is called "plaited" stitch. They use primitive frames, made of the rings of sieves upon which the material is stretched and made fast with a strap or screw, and square frames of modern times have found their

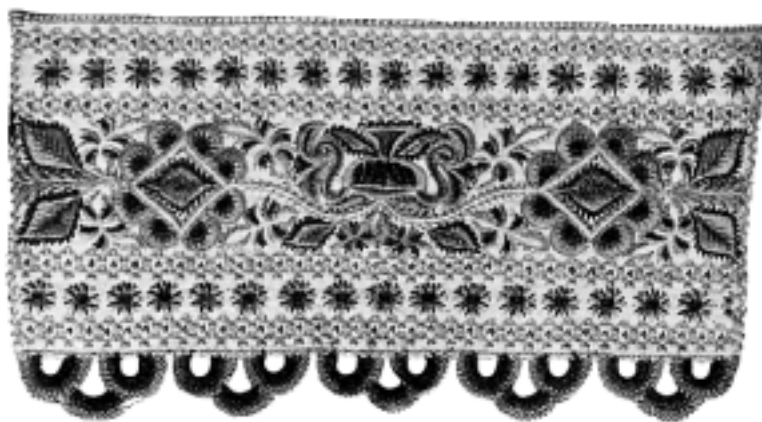


FIG. 12.—EMBROIDERED CUFF FROM EGERLAND, EARLY 19TH CENTURY
(Imperial Austrian Museum, Vienna)

way into use. The design may be an original one, apparently executed in haphazard fashion, but none the less skillfully, for both eye and hand are sure, or it may be transferred from some other piece of work in the same way as children do pictures, or transferred to the linen by rubbing it with a spoon, or it is done by holding the original to the window, placing the material to be embroidered over it and marking the pattern in ink. Of course, this cannot be done when the linen is thick, but most of the women trust to eye and hand as their only guides.

In Moravia the peasant women's embroidery is almost a fine art, for nowhere



FIG. 11.—SILK EMBROIDERED CUFF FOR A BLOUSE
(Property of Herr A. Quantus, Eger)

FROM EGERLAND

Austrian Peasant Embroidery

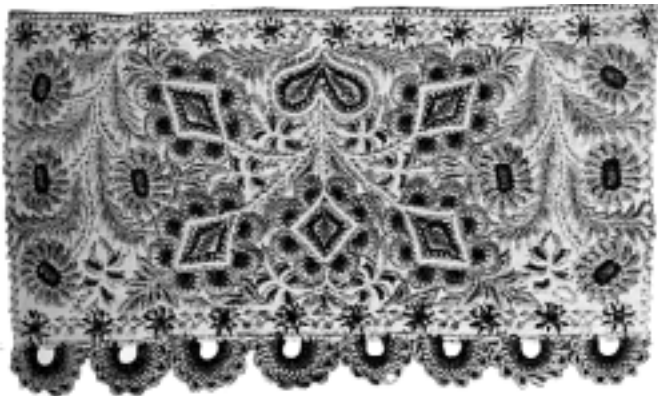


FIG. 13.—EMBROIDERED CUFF

FROM EGERLAND
EARLY 19TH CENTURY

(Imperial Austrian Museum, Vienna)

is it more beautiful than in this land of magnificent colours. No stitch is too difficult for the workers, no task too hard to be overcome; as much trouble is taken with the wrong side as with the right, and no detail is neglected. Not even the finest trained embroiderers could vie with these daughters of the soil in the beauty of execution. They use home-spun linen, and the patterns show a love of nature—among flowers, the pink, cornflower, thistle, and clover leaf (by preference the three-leaved) are most in vogue, while of the birds the pelican seems to be the favourite, though the dove often figures as a symbol of peace. Of fruit, the apple lends itself best to their fancy. Everything worn by these peasants is embroidered except the short dress skirt, which is made extremely full and often pleated in knife pleats. The aprons are of various bright hues or black, but no matter what the colour is all energy and art has been brought to bear to make it a thing beautiful. The head-dresses, chiefly in the form of closely fitting caps, are marvels of beauty and their study alone a matter of great interest. The men's costumes are also exceedingly handsome. Their zouave jackets they as a rule embroider themselves and are proud of it. Their shirt fronts and short sleeves likewise cost much time and thought to make them things of beauty. Sometimes they are worked in relief, as are the gold-worked caps of the women;

at other times they are worked in simple satin stitch. In Moravia and also in Carniola, where there is equal richness in attire and colouring, only different to that in Moravia, the shirts are sometimes worked in gold threads and beads, as in Fig. 3, which was worked by some devoted hand at the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth century. The colours are very fresh, and considering that each peasant dyed his own with vegetable dyes we can but wonder at the knowledge displayed. Another variation of the shirt is shown in Fig. 2; this came from another

land of colour, Dalmatia. Nowhere can one observe better the beauty of a national costume than here, where little change has taken place in the course of ages, for the women weave and spin just as in bygone times, and adorn their work with all the art which has descended to them from mother to daughter throughout many generations. Each article of clothing has its own characteristic design, and how this originated it is now

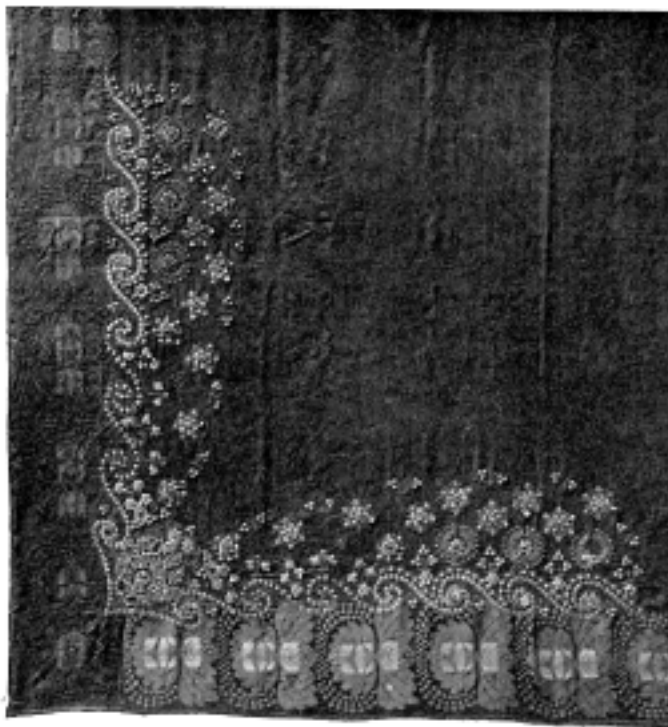


FIG. 14.—GOLD AND TINSEL
EMBROIDERED SILK NECKERCHIEF

(Ethnological Museum, Vienna)

FROM ENAS
UPPER AUSTRIA

Austrian Peasant Embroidery



FIG. 15.—SILK-EMBROIDERED
SHOULDER-STRAP
(Property of Herr Quentus)

FROM EGERLAND
18TH CENTURY

impossible to say, but there it is in beauty rarely to be met with. As in Moravia, as much care is taken in decorating the men's attire as the women's, perhaps even more, for here the latter are the workers.

In Croatia there is a preference for cross-stitch and other forms of embroidery in bright colours; in Carniola, too, embroidery was in former times a fine art. The natives were fond of conventional designs taken from nature; but, owing to the trade in linen done with Italy, geometrical forms made their way, and the women employed them in everything that could be ornamented, working their patterns in plait or cross-stitch, and preferably in black wool or silk (that done in blue or red is of a later date). With this form of embroidery there arose another: that of working in gold relief (see Figs. 5-10; these are bands for caps). This gave opportunity for the invention of new stitches and methods, and it is indeed wonderful to think what these simple peasants have achieved, untaught and unlettered, and with hands coarse from years of labour in the fields, and only able to devote the winter evenings to this refined labour. In Istria and other of the southern lands of Austria such gold embroidery is

also to be met with; in fact, we find it wherever the inhabitants still keep to their national costume. Here, as in all the provinces, an enormous amount of labour is spent in beautifying their garments, as also in beautifying their homes, for with these peoples it is not mere outward show. In Bohemia the favourite colours are deep blue with a veining of orange-yellow. In the old city of Eger, and in various parts of Egerland, the national dress is still worn. As a rule the border to Bohemian embroidery is formed of thick buttonholing, though it is rare even in this to find two of exactly the same pattern. Those shown in Figs. 11, 12, and 13 are good examples of the work done in this district. The material is home-spun linen, and it is embroidered in two shades of fine blue silk, with veins of yellow. Both sides are alike. Fig. 15 shows another kind of Egerland embroidery, viz., cross-stitch, the



FIG. 16.—EMBROIDERED CHALICE COVER
(Salzburg Museum)

SALZBURG
17TH CENTURY

Austrian Peasant Embroidery



FIG. 17.—CHALICE COVER EMBROIDERED IN SILK AND SILVER, WITH GOLD POINT LACE
(*Ferdinandeum Museum, Innsbruck*)

TYROL, EARLY
18TH CENTURY

heart as a symbol of love has its place; this is surmounted by what seems to have been meant for a cross. This is an extremely delicate piece of work which has been done by hard and coarse hands. Fig. 17 shows another chalice cover from the Tyrol. The design is widely different from the preceding one. Mary the Mother is in the midst of a chorus of angels, surrounded by rich pomegranates and other costly fruits. Here, perhaps, is shown the difference of worship in the two nations; both are eminently pious, but their piety is not expressed in the same way.

design being the favourite vase of flowers of the Bohemians, together with geometrical forms. Fig. 14 shows a very fine piece of embroidery on red silk. Here much care has been shown, for it is part of a neckerchief worked in silk, gold, and tinsel, a style frequent in these parts. In many districts tinsel, beads, even coloured stones are worked into the material, always with a sure eye both for colour and design.

With all their labours for gain and for self these peasant women have also found time to work for their church. Fig. 16 shows a chalice cover from the province of Salzburg, with the traditional stag leaping along over bush and tree; in the corners the

of ornamentation. This is expressed in their belts, which are worked in peacocks' feathers and tinfoil. Each man makes his own—it is his particular pride, and he is as proud of it as the women are of their achievements, perhaps even more so; in fact, nothing is more characteristic with these peoples than their love of adornment, though it never exceeds the bounds of good taste and always is in harmony with the particular land inhabited by them. Only in some of the provinces has the national garb been discarded, and not, perhaps,



FIGS. 18 AND 19.—MEN'S EMBROIDERED BELTS FROM OLD STÖRZING AND PERTIS, TYROL
(*Ethnological Museum, Vienna*) 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES



FIGS. 20 AND 21.—MAN'S
BELT AND WOMAN'S GIRDLE
FROM UPPER AUSTRIA
(*Francisco-Carolinum*
Museum, Linz)

factory chimneys darken the horizon, the people rejoice in blue skies, and nature around them being always decked in glorious hues they still keep their national garb, for any other would be felt to be out of place. In Upper Austria and the Tyrol the national costume is more sober; it harmonises, too, with the sublime greys of the mountains with their snow tints decking their hoary heads. Those who know these regions will understand the differences and wonder at the inborn feeling for tones and harmonies displayed by these peoples, who, though of the great world, are still apart from it. What a wealth of ideas, what a power of endurance, and with what joy they seem to have triumphed over their almost insurmountable difficulties can only rarely be realised, for it is not often that such exhibitions are offered to us as that held at the Austrian Museum this spring, when the opportunity was given to see the national art of the Austrian provinces and judge of the artistic qualities of their inhabitants. A. S. L.

to the improvement of the people. But it does seem a little out of place in smoky towns to see the inhabitants dressed in what at first sight looks like spoiled finery; and here modern dress has become the order of the day, not because they do not respect ancient traditions, but because it has become a matter of necessity. Only in distant villages and in the eastern provinces can the wealth of ornamentation be seen; there the air is pure, no