

SOME MODERN AUSTRIAN
PILLOW AND POINT LACE.
BY A. S. LEVETUS.

THAT there should be an Austrian lace, as distinct from French, Flemish, Italian, Belgian, and others, is only another proof of the rapidity of progress which modern art, applied to technical execution, has made in Austria. Five years ago things artistic were at the same dead level as in the forties of the last century, but the sudden revival of interest in lace-making has affected favourably all industries in which technical skill and art are essential.

The making of lace is no new thing in the Austrian dominions. Torchon lace, which is always more or less *en vogue* in England, is chiefly made in the villages situated on the Austrian side of the Erzgebirge. Here, for hundreds of years

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peasant women have gained a living by making this particular sort of pillow-lace in winter, and hawking it about the spas and cities in summer. At the present time far more is produced on the Austrian side of these mountains than on the Saxon. Of course the art was learned from the Netherlands, probably being brought to Saxony, from whence it came over the mountains with refugees, who also taught the natives how to make "point" or needle lace.

In the Southern provinces the art of lace-making came from Italy, most likely when certain Italian provinces belonged to Austria. There was at that time frequent intercourse between the different

provinces, peasants making their way over the mountain passes which separated the then Austrian provinces of Italy from the South Tyrol and other parts of the Austrian Empire. But it was the Bohemian peasants (Austrian subjects) who introduced their method of point and pillow lace-making to the North Tyrol, for a large number of the men were employed in making roads and fortresses, and in mining; and what more natural than that their wives should take their needles, bobbins, threads, and pillows to gain money during the dark wintry evenings, as they had done in the Erzgebirge. But change of location had no effect upon the patterns, which were carried out in exactly the same way as

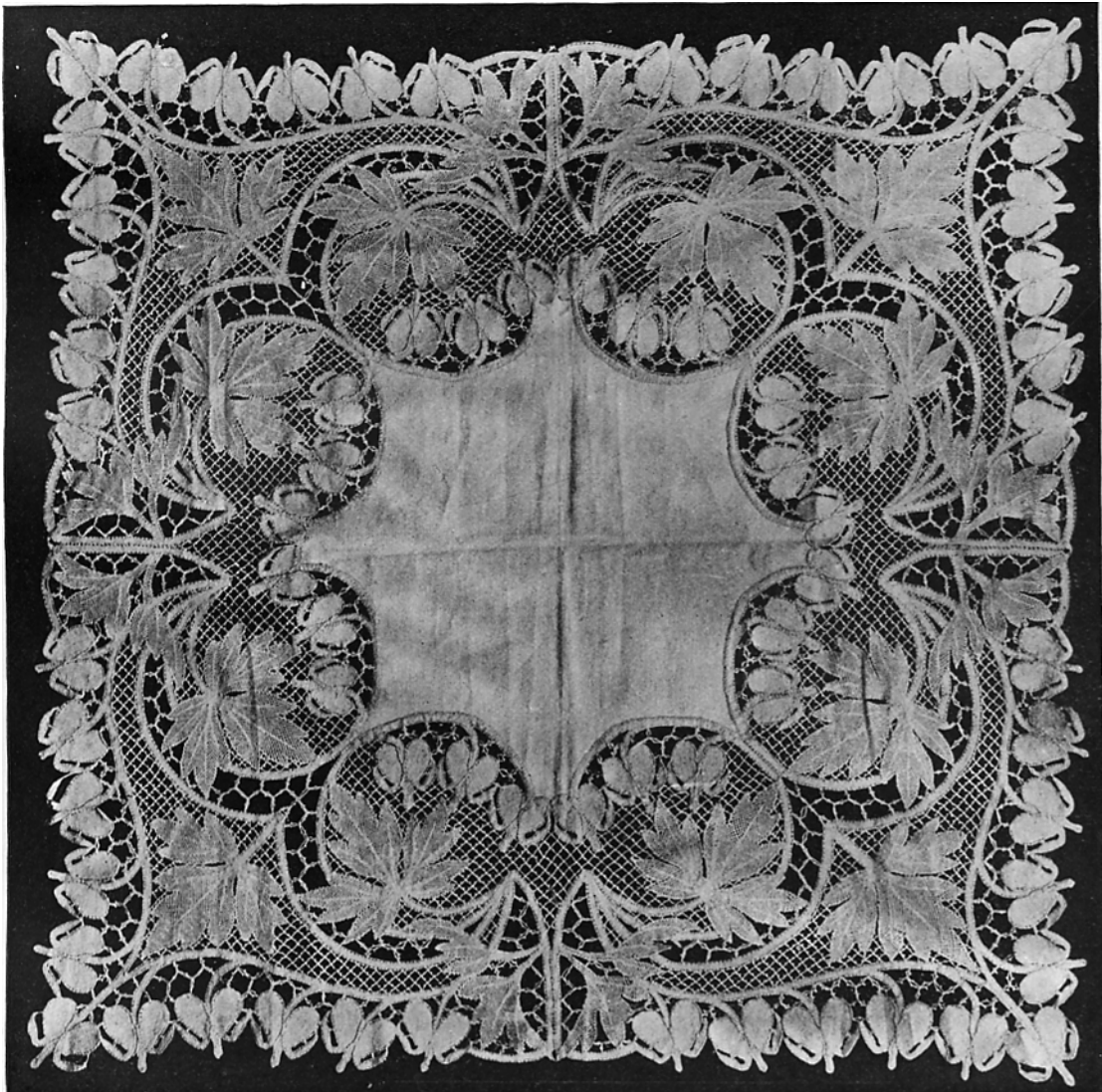


TABLE CLOTH
IN PILLOW LACE

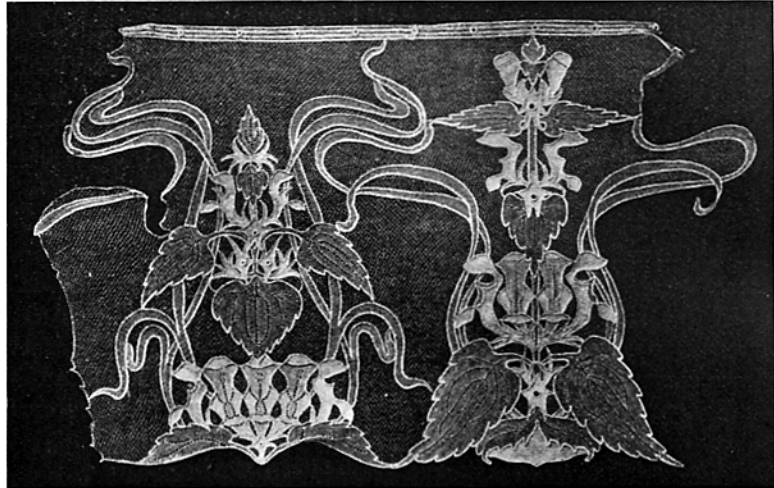
DESIGNED BY FRAU HRDLICKA
EXECUTED BY THE IMPERIAL ROYAL
SCHOOL OF LACE-MAKING, VIENNA

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in the countries of their birth. Matters continued so till the sixties of the nineteenth century, the lace being Italian, French, or Belgian in pattern, but coarser in texture and cheaper in price. With the introduction of machinery came machine-made nets to replace the hand-made ones. This was brought to Bohemia, and a prosperous trade arose in hand-made application work on this machine-made net, and did much to oust real lace; but, on the other hand, pillow lace was eagerly bought.

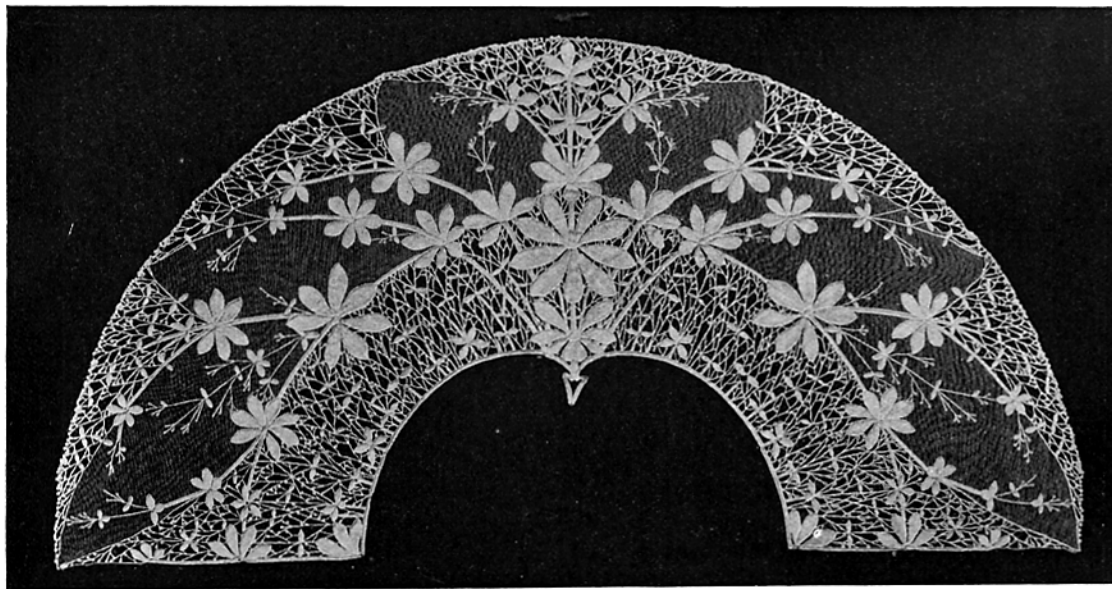
But in the sixties there was a sudden advance in trade in Austria, an advance which made the exhibition of '73 possible. This was followed by the so-called Vienna Renaissance, which not only influenced manufactures in general, but also the lace industry. Van der Nüll, the architect of the Imperial Opera House, had a very enlightened pupil, one Storck, who in the course of time became first Professor of the Vienna Kunst Gewerbe Schule (Arts and Crafts Schools), and later Director of the

Austrian Museum; and in '79 a special *atelier* was arranged for students to design patterns for lace, and peasant women were brought from the Austrian Erzgebirge to teach girls how to carry out the patterns. Now things are the other way about; the teachers are trained in the Imperial and Royal Central Lace Schools in Vienna, of which Professor Hrdlicka is the head, and then sent to the Erzgebirge and other parts of the Austrian dominions,



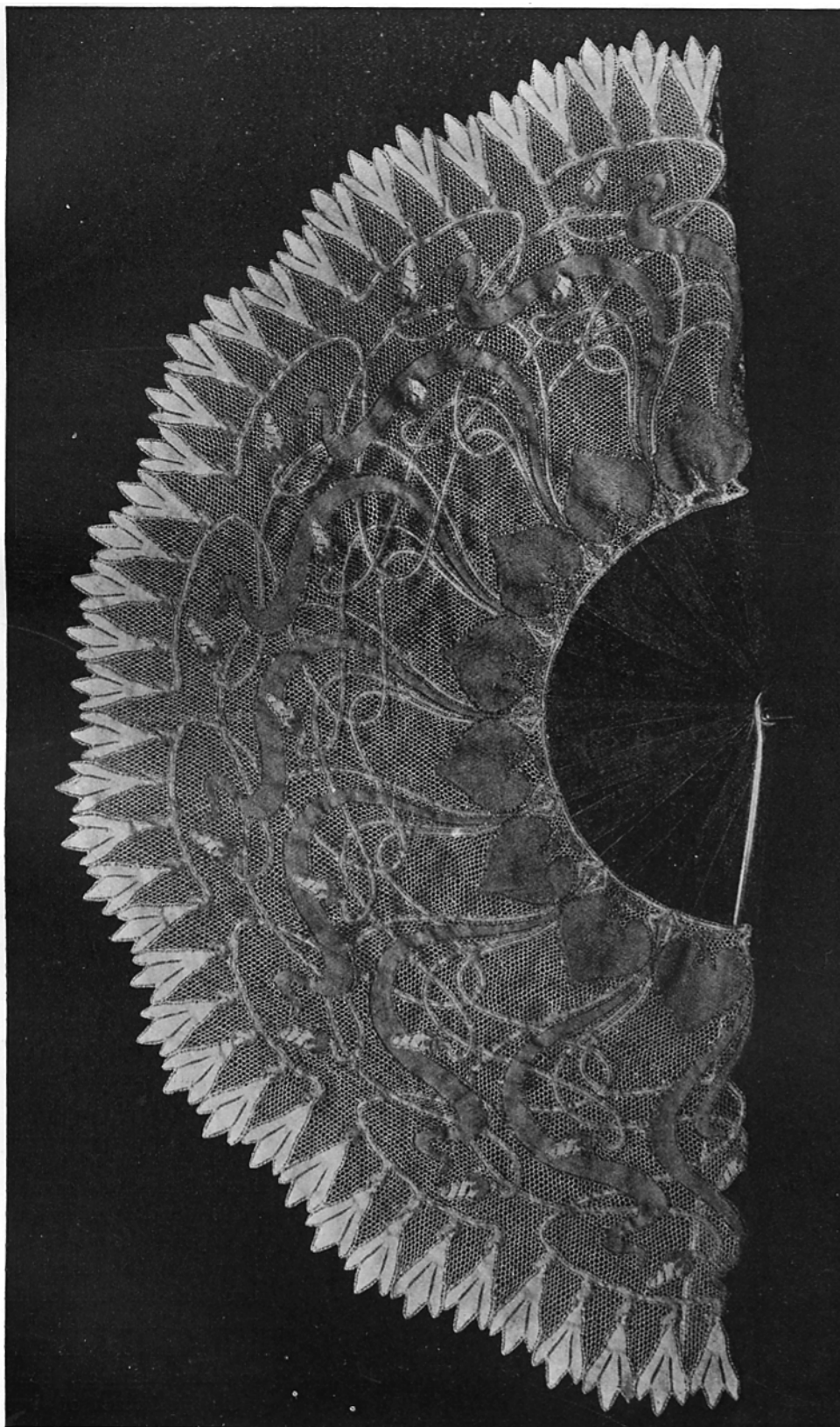
POINT LACE

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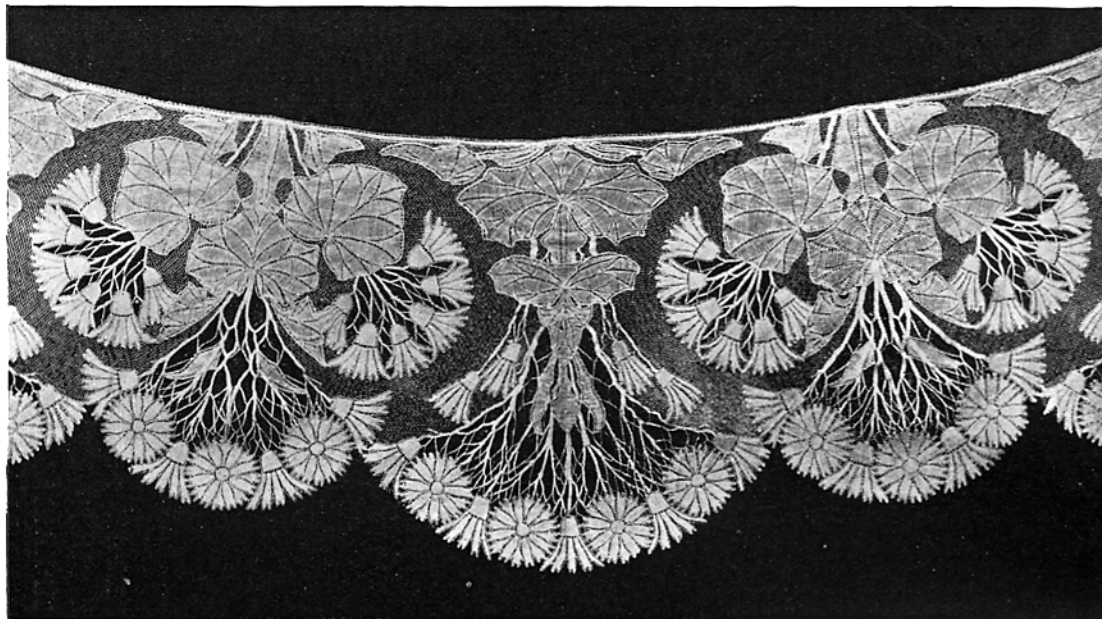
FAN IN POINT LACE

DESIGNED BY FRÄULEIN HOFMANNINGER
EXECUTED BY THE IMPERIAL ROYAL
SCHOOL OF LACE-MAKING, VIENNA



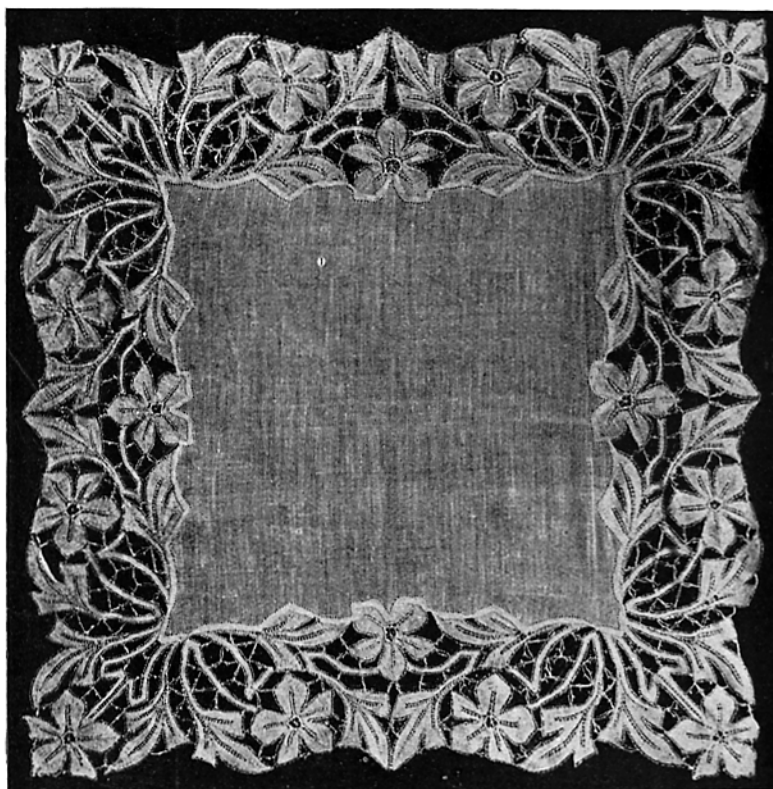
FAN IN PILLOW LACE. DESIGNED BY
V. SUCHOMEL. EXECUTED BY THE
IMPERIAL ROYAL SCHOOL OF LACE-
MAKING, VIENNA

Modern Austrian Lace



PILLOW LACE

DESIGNED BY FRÄULEIN HOFMANNINGER
EXECUTED BY THE IMPERIAL ROYAL
SCHOOL OF LACE-MAKING, VIENNA



PILLOW LACE HANDKERCHIEF

DESIGNED BY FRAU HRDLICKA
EXECUTED BY THE IMPERIAL ROYAL
SCHOOL OF LACE-MAKING, VIENNA

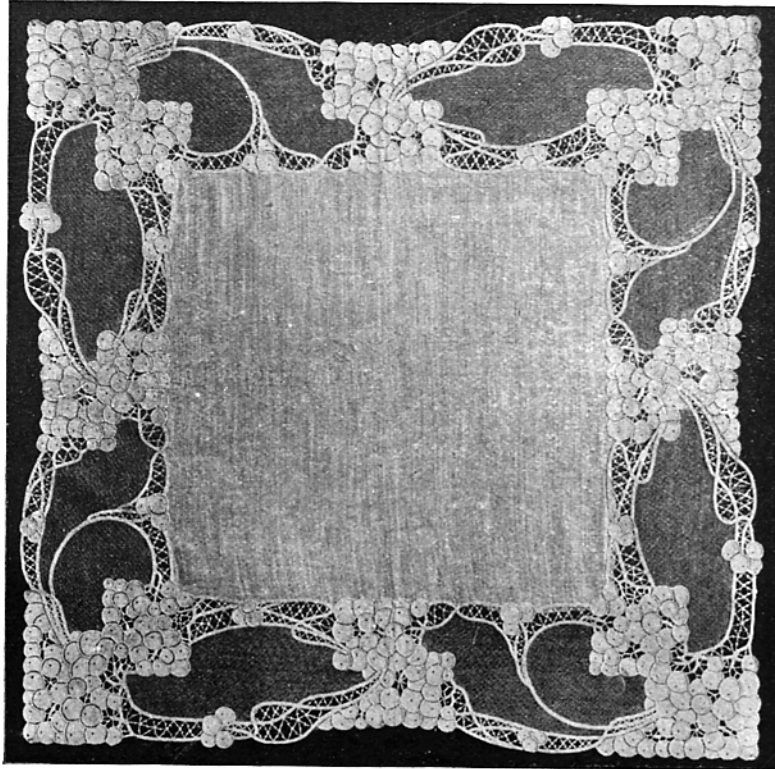
not only to practise their art, but to teach it in the Royal Schools there.

The designs made by Storck's students were in no sense what one would call modern. But as far as possible they avoided copying the French and Belgian patterns, turning to Italian as affording more change in treatment; and they had a particular liking for Venetian *relief* forms, and occupied much of their time in copying the old Renaissance style. But although Professor Storck was content for his pupils' phantasy to be applied to the past, it would be unjust to underrate the value of his work. To him is due the merit of collecting together the most beautiful specimens of lace possible, and it is to him that Vienna owes the

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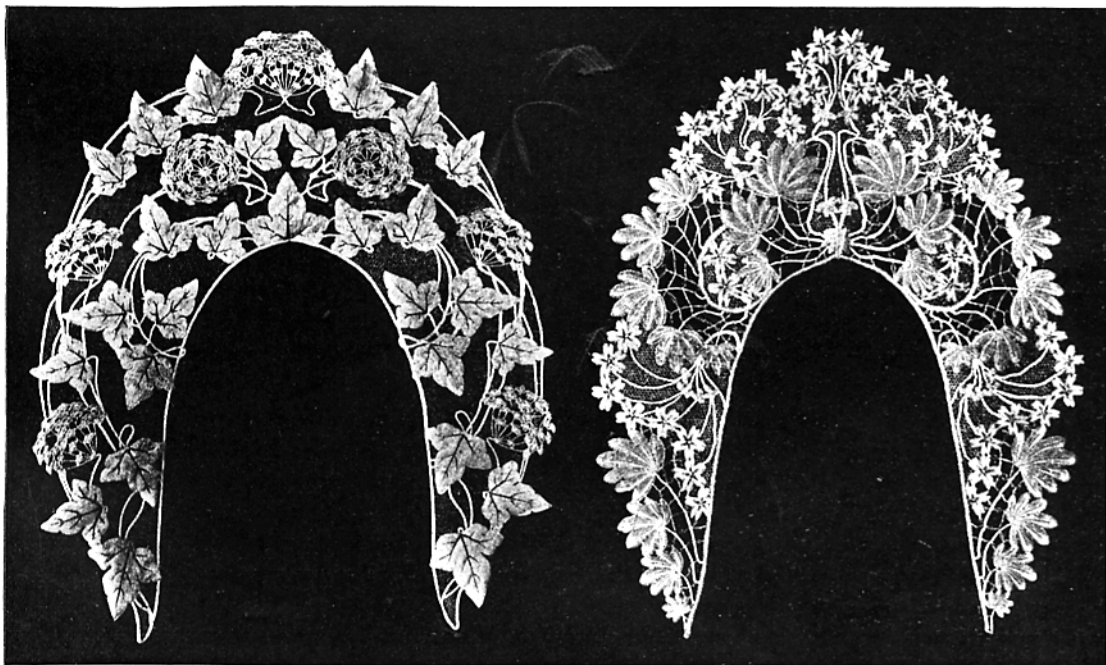
beautiful collection of lace—a collection too little known, but more varied, more beautiful, and more valuable than that of South Kensington and other Museums. No work was too arduous, no journey too difficult, for Professor Storck where there was a probability of obtaining good specimens, very many valuable ones being obtained from peasant women who had received the lace as presents from ladies who had no further use for it. The collection of lace made by Professor Storck has been further enriched by Hofrath von Scala, the present Director of the Austrian Museum, who is now busy in collecting specimens of old Irish lace.

The late Empress of Austria did a great deal



HANDKERCHIEF IN POINT LACE

DESIGNED BY V. SUCHOMEL
EXECUTED BY THE IMPERIAL ROYAL
SCHOOL OF LACE-MAKING, VIENNA



COLLAR IN POINT LACE

DESIGNED BY V. SUCHOMEL

COLLAR IN PILLOW LACE

DESIGNED BY HERR VLCEK

EXECUTED BY THE IMPERIAL ROYAL SCHOOL OF LACE-MAKING, VIENNA

Modern Austrian Lace



COLLAR IN PILLOW LACE

DESIGNED BY FRÄULEIN HOFMANNINGER
EXECUTED BY THE IMPERIAL ROYAL
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towards reviving it in Austria, as did Queen Margherita in Italy. It was they who, in their respective countries, by setting a noble example, encouraged the humble workers, not only by giving orders, but by setting the fashion; and since that time—the seventies—the fashion has remained. The Empress placed herself at the head of a committee of high-born ladies pledged to wear Austrian lace, and so set the example to others. At the present time the Archduchess Maria Theresa takes a warm interest in the art of lace-making, and helps in every way possible; though, being a widow, it is not permissible, according to Austrian Court etiquette, for her to hold any public position, no matter what the character of it may be.

But, in spite of fashion, no change was made in the patterns till five years ago, when modern art “awoke one day to find itself famous.” Professor Hrdlicka succeeded Hofrath Storck as teacher at the Kunst Gewerbe Schule, and to him is due the merit of giving the incentive to new creations, his wife, Mathilde Hrdlicka, and Fräulein Hofmanninger composing the designs for the “new school.” A special *atelier* was arranged for them in

the Austrian Museum. There they design the patterns, and there they are copied and sent to the various Royal schools in the Crown Lands and provinces of Austria under the direction of the Austrian Museum. These designs are first sent to the Imperial Royal Lace Schools, where the making of point-lace is taught by Frau Pleyer and pillow-lace by Frau Jammig. These ladies work-out the patterns, seek for and evolve new stitches, and teach them to the students in training that they may spread their knowledge. These students are at absolutely no expense for their training, all being paid by Government, and neither the “Central” School nor the sister ones can even boast a prospectus.

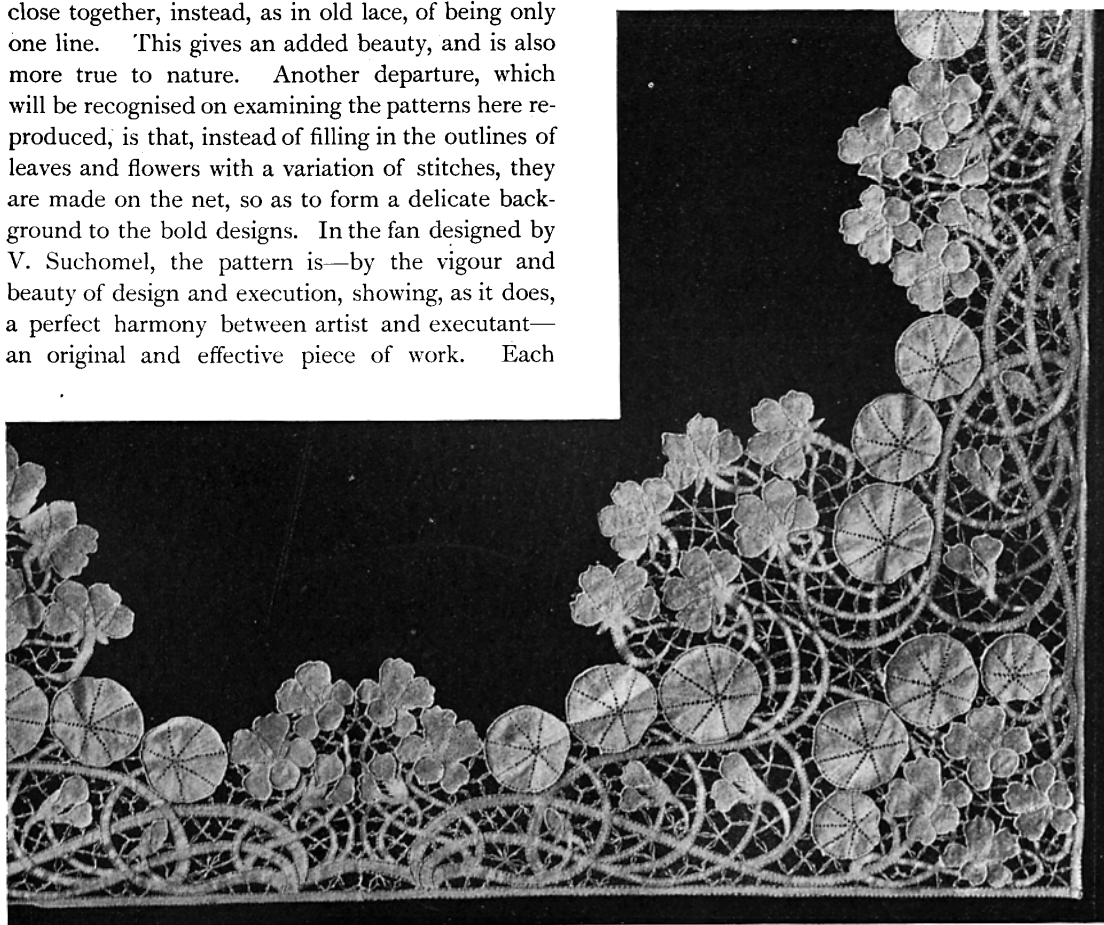
The products of the New Austrian technique in lace were seen for the first time at the Paris Exhibition of 1900, where the lace exhibited was accorded universal praise, and the *grand prix* was awarded to it.

In designing, neither Frau Hrdlicka nor Fräulein Hofmanninger are deterred by any probable difficulties in the executing of their patterns. The fan in point lace here reproduced, designed

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by Fräulein Hofmanninger, at once shows the new departure from beaten tracks. The large amount of openwork requires a very delicate and subtle hand, such as can only be met with in the best-trained workers, for they must also possess artistic feeling for the work they are carrying out, and be in touch with the designer. The holes are made in much the same way as in needlework, but with this difference: that instead of working on the pattern, cutting out the hole first, the worker has to form her holes by means of thread and then sew over on that foundation, her only guide being the traced pattern before her. The hardest work of all is in keeping the stitches firm and regular—a difficulty very few can even imagine. The veining and contour of the leaves constitute another arduous task. In old lace the contours are flat; here they are raised, the effect being gained by applying the technique of embroidery to lace—*i.e.* by working over a layer of threads. The stems are formed by a number of lines placed very close together, instead, as in old lace, of being only one line. This gives an added beauty, and is also more true to nature. Another departure, which will be recognised on examining the patterns here reproduced, is that, instead of filling in the outlines of leaves and flowers with a variation of stitches, they are made on the net, so as to form a delicate background to the bold designs. In the fan designed by V. Suchomel, the pattern is—by the vigour and beauty of design and execution, showing, as it does, a perfect harmony between artist and executant—an original and effective piece of work. Each

bud is so separated from the other that the contours can be distinctly recognised, while the firmness and exactness of the lacemaker is such as can only be found in trained workers; and much is due to the fact that the women must learn to draw and understand what they are reproducing with their needles. The lace by Frau Hrdlicka is beautifully conceived and executed; the delicate leaves are made of the very finest of cottons, and they are thrown into relief by the heavy blossoms. On examining this Austrian lace, one is struck by such regularity of stitches as is rarely to be met with. These contours are wonderfully even and well curved, never running to an irregular point or being unevenly sewn, such as is often the case in old lace. One sees this again in a fan by Fräulein Hofmanninger. The bold woodruff, standing out from the waves of fine dainty grass, is a beautiful thought; the lace-maker too has done her share; for, spite of the intricacies of the design, there is an



CORNER OF TABLE CLOTH
IN PILLOW LACE

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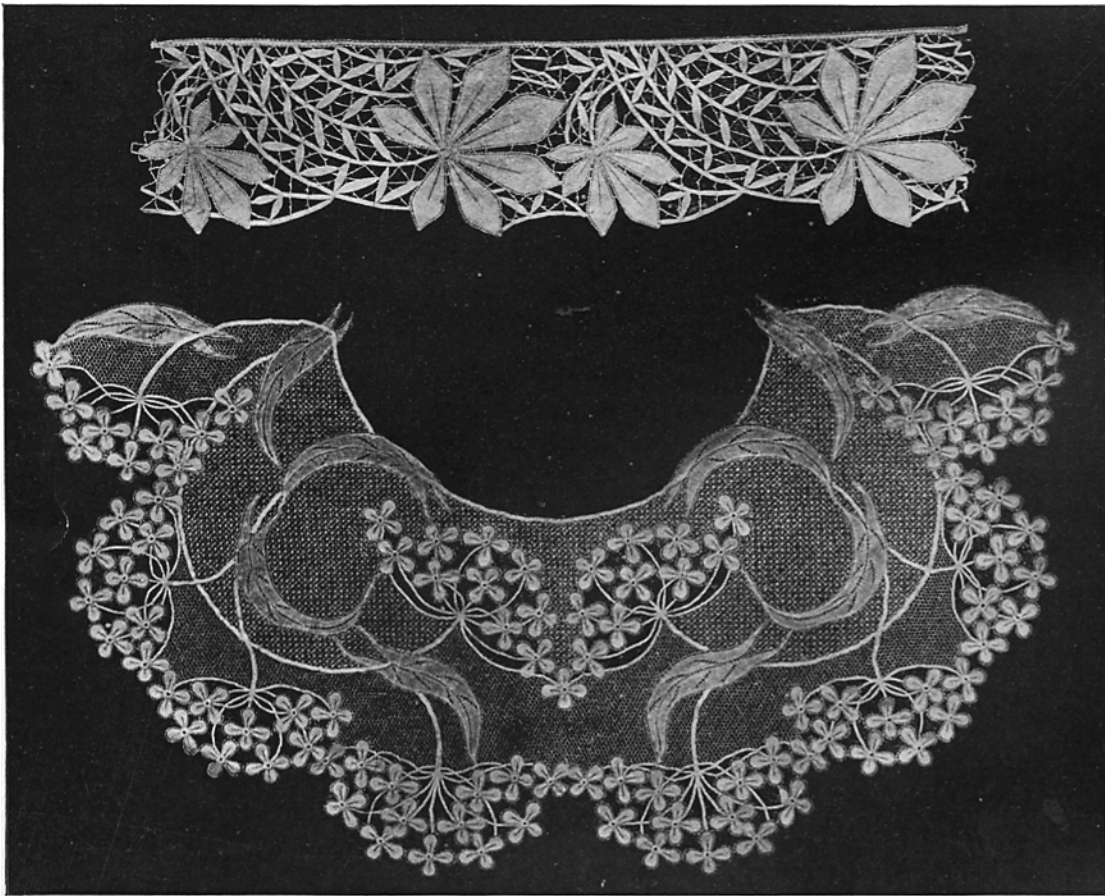
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exactitude and vigour of workmanship showing that she thoroughly comprehended the designer's intentions.

In pillow-lace, too, there is in Austrian work a great advance on the conventional patterns of bygone ages. This is at once seen in the work of Frau Hrdlicka, which displays fine technique in design and execution. In pillow-lace the greatest difficulty is the junction where the stems meet. This has been got over by a clever manipulation of the thread, thus avoiding the use of the scissors. In old lace the stems are made by running lengths of thread through the net and cutting them to the required length at either end. Modern lace can only be made by the most talented and dexterous of workers; for, not only must they be *au fait* with the technicalities of lace-making, but they must be in touch with the designer and possess a fine sense of feeling for their work. This new method of working

the stems has been evolved by Frau Jamnik, and is only to be met with in work done under her direction. She is now engaged in working out other new methods of treatment, and we may expect further developments in this as in point lace. In some of the pieces of work by Frau Hrdlicka, which are illustrated here, one sees the same variation as in the point lace. The leaves too are curved, a manipulation never to be found in fine old pillow-lace, owing to the difficulty of forming the curve, though one may meet with it in coarser kinds.

A contrast to this may be seen in designs after old patterns, though the groundwork of net, with its openwork stitches, is modern. The lights and shades are not so effective as in the modern designs. In some of Frau Hrdlicka's designs the blossoms are rather too heavy; though there is no question as to the beauty of the lace-maker's work. Frau Hrdlicka's tablecloth (page 165) in



PILLOW LACE

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heavy thread is very bold in treatment ; and the daintiness of the handkerchief, illustrated on page 168, forms a strong contrast to it. The corner of the tablecloth is very rich in design and phantasy.

Of course in so short a time it has been impossible to produce either a large number of designs or much work. This branch of modern art is in its infancy, but we may expect much from these promising beginnings. The Government is doing its best to further its development, and the training of the lace-makers to think for themselves instead of doing their work mechanically, as is only too often the case, is a step in the right direction. Crochet lace is now receiving much attention, and we may also expect some further advance in this branch of lace making.

A. S. LEVETUS.