

Austrian Lace Schools

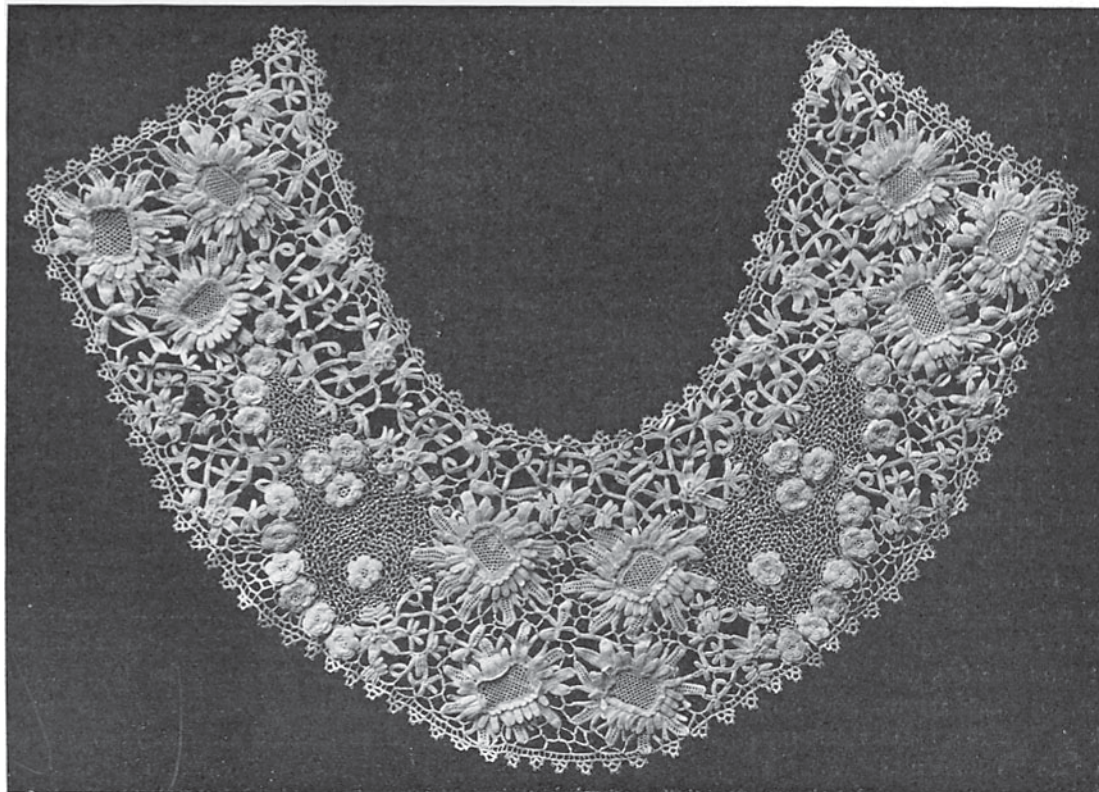
of the Austrian dominions under the control of the central government were dealt with generally. In the present article it is proposed to deal with those which have for their end the advancement of the lace-making industry, which is almost entirely carried on in the homes of the workers.

In many parts of the Austrian Crown Lands the poorer inhabitants, who form the bulk of the population, continue to be dependent, as they have been from time immemorial, on the fruits of their industry as carried on at home. There the conditions are such as to make it practically impossible for any other system of production to develop. It will be seen, therefore, that the promotion of home industries is of great importance to Austria, both socially and economically—far more so, perhaps, than in other lands. This fact is duly recognised by the government, who by the establishment of these “Fachschulen” and in other ways have done much to foster and improve these industries.

It goes without saying that the schools devoted to lace-making and embroidery stand on a different footing to the other schools. In this industry the workers are exclusively females, and there is,

THE STATE SCHOOLS FOR LACE-MAKING IN AUSTRIA. BY A. S. LEVETUS.

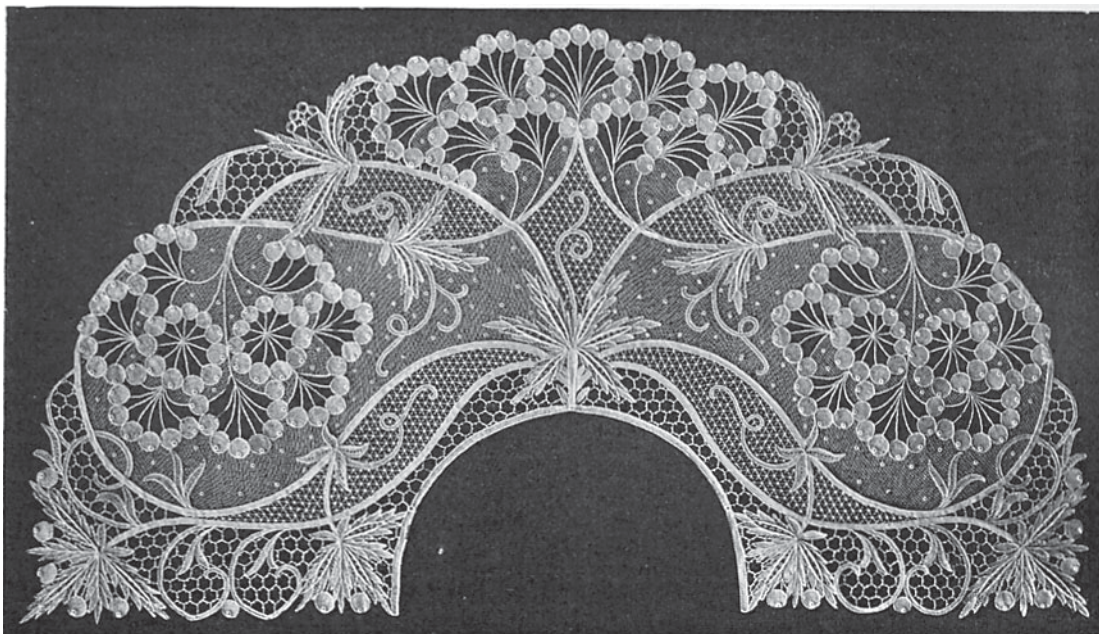
IN a recent number of *THE STUDIO* the craft schools or “Fachschulen” which exist in all parts



AUSTRIAN CROCHET COLLAR

DESIGNED BY FRÄULEIN HOFMANNINGER
EXECUTED IN VARIOUS SCHOOLS

Austrian Lace Schools



COLLAR IN NEEDLE-POINT LACE

DESIGNED BY PROFESSOR UNGER
EXECUTED BY PUPILS OF THE GRASLITZ LACE SCHOOL

therefore, strong reason for the protection and aid given them by the State. In many parts of the Crown Lands the women are practically tied to the soil by sheer force of circumstances. They rarely leave their villages, except when they migrate to the large cities in order to become servants; but these form only a small percentage of the population. As soon as the usually scanty harvest is garnered the men leave for the cities, there to gain a meagre subsistence by hawking. The women and elder children must look after the little ones and themselves. At ploughing time the men are back home again, and with the women and children go to work in the fields for their general good. It is a precarious existence, indeed, that is led by these peasant folk.

The reasons for this poverty are, firstly, the nature of the soil, which is ill-adapted for agricultural production; and, secondly, the fact that mining, at one time an important industry in many of the Crown Lands, is practically at an end, for the simple reason that the mines are exhausted.

Cut off from the greater world, then, as they are, what can these folk do? The girls have learnt no trades, for there are none to learn; they cannot work in factories, for there are none; and there is no opening for them as clerks. The tilling of the fields and the reaping of the harvest only occupy them a few weeks in the year: they must have enough to eat all the year round, and this they are

enabled to obtain by their home industries. The conditions are harder in those parts where there are no home industries, or at best only forgotten ones, and the people have been accustomed to a higher standard of living, as, for instance, in the old mining districts.

Austria possesses a peculiar advantage in the number and variety of her home industries, due to the great diversity and intermixture of the races settled in her dominions. This has proved a great gain artistically, for it has brought about unconsciously much diversity of thought in the arrangement of designs. This is particularly to be seen in the different embroideries met with, about which I propose to speak in another article. Again, the races learn from one another, and consequently help one another; for when one fashion in needlework dies out—say for instance cross-stitch—they are able to turn to other forms of embroidery; for it is surprising how great their resources are with the needle. On commercial grounds, too, there is need for co-operation on the part of the State; for it is important that, if the inhabitants are not to suffer hunger, home industries should be brought to districts where there are none, and new ones taught where old-established ones are in danger of disappearing owing to the caprices of fashion. Only in this way can such suffering and misery be avoided as was occasioned in the North of France by the *reséau* lace going out of fashion. Bohemia

Austrian Lace Schools

is composed of two nations, the Czechs and the Germans; the women of the former make réseau lace, the latter guipure, so that whichever kind of lace happens to be in vogue, Bohemia can supply it; the women learn from one another, and are kept in fairly constant employment. In former times the profits were reaped by the middleman, but since the State has taken the industry under its control he has been practically eliminated and the earnings of the workers have consequently increased. It must be remembered that the women are not competent to regulate matters of trade for themselves, and before the State stepped in they were often obliged to barter the lace which they made in winter for the necessaries of life and materials for work. In the course of time the general dealer became a lace merchant; for the women got into debt, to discharge which they had to make lace at starvation wages, the middleman reaping all the benefit. The State manages things otherwise; and also prevents competition between one Crown Land and another by regulating the prices.

Of late years the lace industry in Holland,

Belgium, France, and Austria has been in a flourishing condition, which seems likely to continue. In Austria the industry received a great impetus at the beginning of the present century, when the examples exhibited at the Paris Exhibition surprised all by the beauty of their designs and the method employed in carrying them out, which earned for them the Grand Prix. At St. Louis also a like honour was bestowed on Austrian lace. The government, encouraged by these results, forthwith took steps to regulate the industry, and provide suitable teachers; for it was at once seen that here was a means of helping the workers. But it was first of all necessary that the teachers should be trained, and the question was, who should train them? For this purpose a few good lace-makers were induced to come to Vienna to teach the future teachers. The Central Spitzen-Curs at Vienna became the executive of the department. The success of the undertaking led the authorities to take further steps. Branch schools were established in the different districts peculiar to lace making. Seeing in this a new means of subsistence, they established schools in other districts.



AUSTRIAN CROCHET COLLAR

DESIGNED BY FRAU SCHÖNAWECK
EXECUTED IN VARIOUS SCHOOLS

Austrian Lace Schools



PILLOW-LACE COLLAR

DESIGNED BY FRAU HRDLICKA

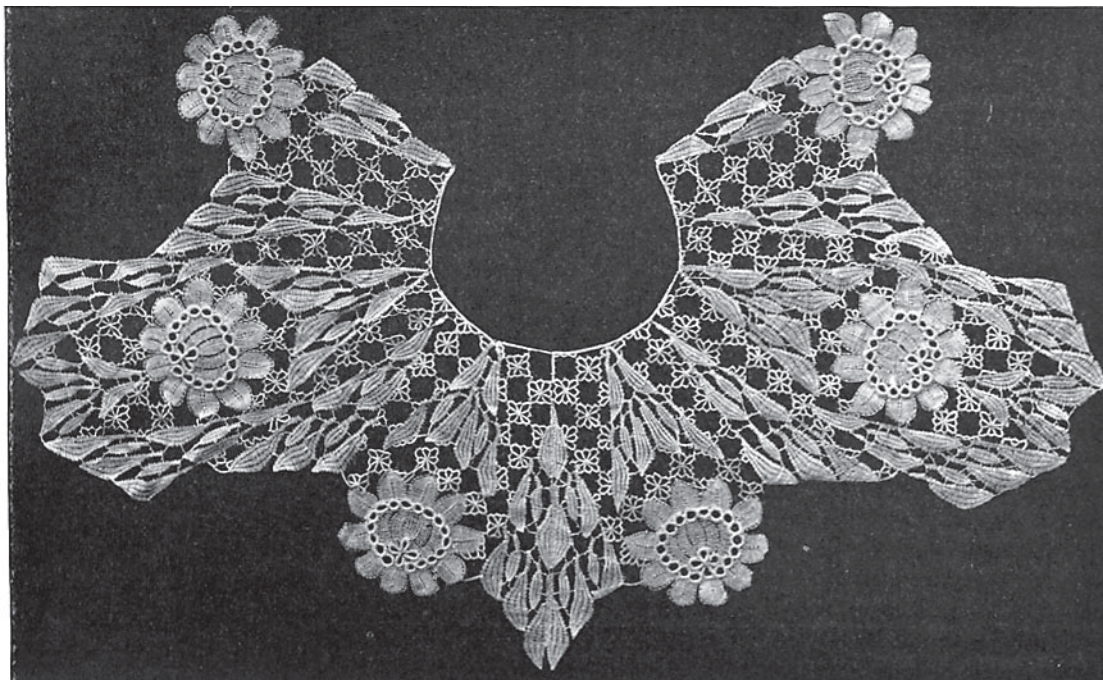
Under the name of the "Verein zur Hebung der Spitzen-Industrie," a society for the encouragement of the lace industry was called into existence, with the Archduchess Marie Theresia as patron. This is a purely private society; and, though it works hand-in-hand with the Central Lace Schools, it is quite independent; its aim being to further the movement and increase the earnings of the lace-makers.

All the lace schools are under the direction of the Central Lace Schools. Inspectors appointed by the State are sent on circuit to visit the branches and report, and all the teachers are sent from Vienna. The aims are manifold and varied, and may be summarised as follows:—(1) didactically, to train workers who are able to produce more and better work; (2) by continually providing new patterns and exhibiting new methods of working to

rouse the women to a sense of artistic beauty and feeling, and interest in their work; (3) by providing a centre for the sale of the work to encourage the home and export trade; (4) the elimination of the middleman. Though but little over four years have passed since the commencement of the movement, all these objects have been attained; and Austrian hand-made lace is in great demand, not only in her own country, but in foreign lands. At present there are thirty schools, and it is proposed to found others from time to time as circumstances demand.

The work of these schools is far from being uniform. It must not be forgotten that to obtain dexterity in work, the girls must begin when they are seven, eight, or at latest ten years of age—that is, while still attending school. In Gossengrün I saw them being instructed in lace-making after the

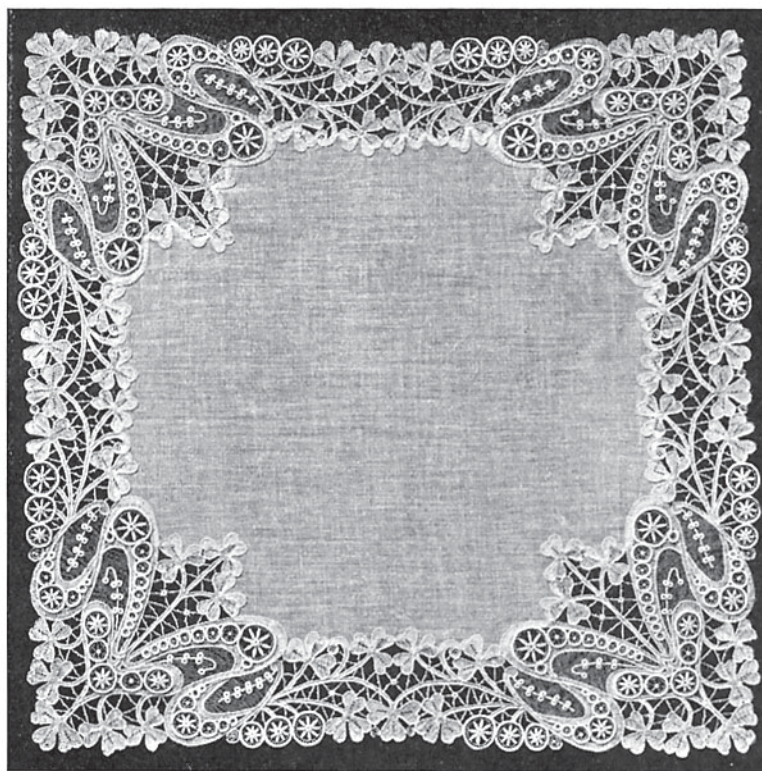
Austrian Lace Schools



PILLOW LACE COLLAR

DESIGNED BY FRAU HRDLICKA
EXECUTED AT THE GOTTESGAB SCHOOL

Kindergarten method, while sitting in the garden and inhaling the sweet breath of nature, for in summer this is a glorious spot. The children are soon able to learn a few simple patterns and so to earn money. Before the existence of the special schools, the mothers taught their little daughters; but with these hard-working people time is indeed money; so as soon as the children knew two or three patterns they were expected to earn something—this being the aim of the instruction. As a consequence there are now hundreds of workers whose efforts are limited to the two or three particular patterns they learned from their mothers, who likewise acquired them in the same



POCKET HANDKERCHIEF

DESIGNED BY PROFESSOR UNGER
EXECUTED BY FRÄULEIN PLANER (GRASLITZ SCHOOL)

Austrian Lace Schools



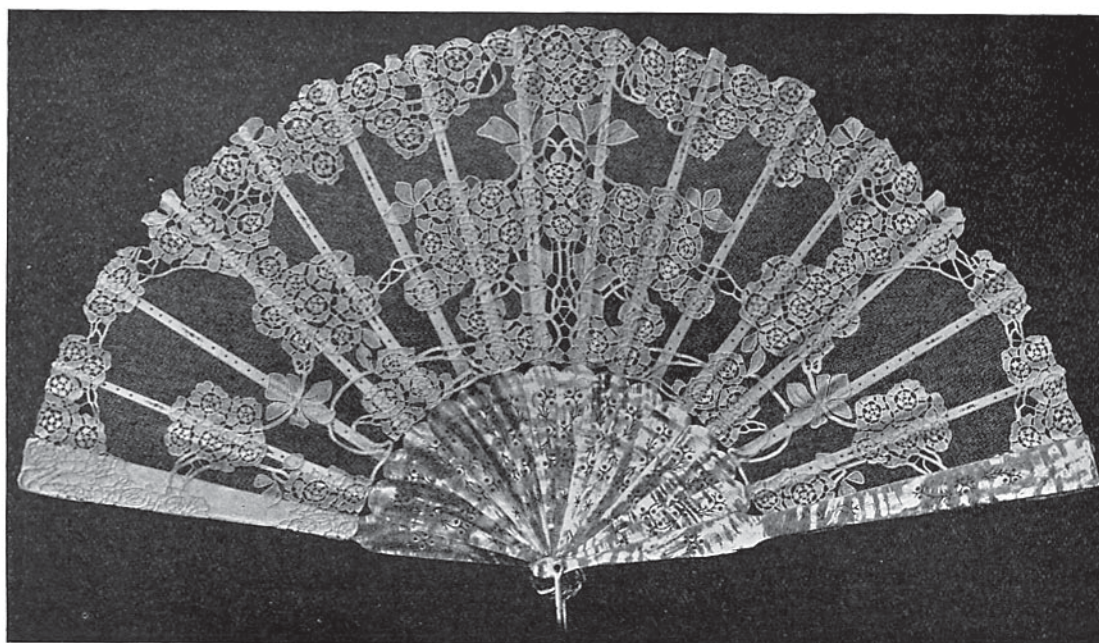
EMBROIDERY FOR BLOUSE

DESIGNED BY FRÄULEIN HRDLICKA
EXECUTED AT CHRUDIM SCHOOL

way. The market has become flooded with these patterns, causing a glut, and the scanty earnings of the workers had, at the time the State stepped in, almost arrived at the vanishing point. The mothers are not able to realize what lies behind the present, but the State recognizes this ; and as

the earnings of the little maidens are of great moment, it pays the children during the time they are learning rather more than they would earn under the old system. In this way competent and intelligent workers are being trained, for no one would question the influence for good on the children's minds. And being thus able to earn money at school they are not obliged to go to work in the fields, and this ensures them those delicate hands which are most necessary for the finer and better paid work.

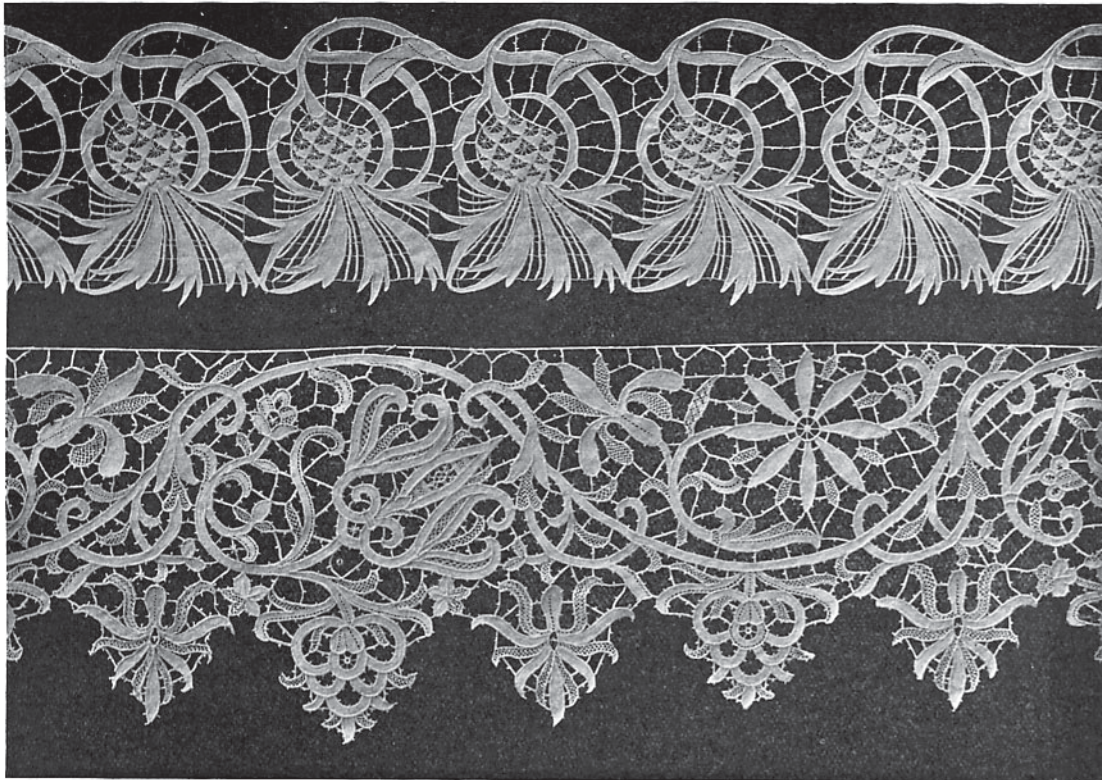
Instead of the middleman, the above-mentioned Verein zur Hebung der Spitzen-Industrie has its agents, who are sufficiently paid, and who take orders, which are delivered to the central schools, whence they are distributed to the different schools in the provinces. The teachers in their turn dis-



NEEDLE-POINT LACE FAN

DESIGNED BY FRÄULEIN HOFMANNINGER
EXECUTED AT THE GOSSENGRÜN SCHOOL

Austrian Lace Schools

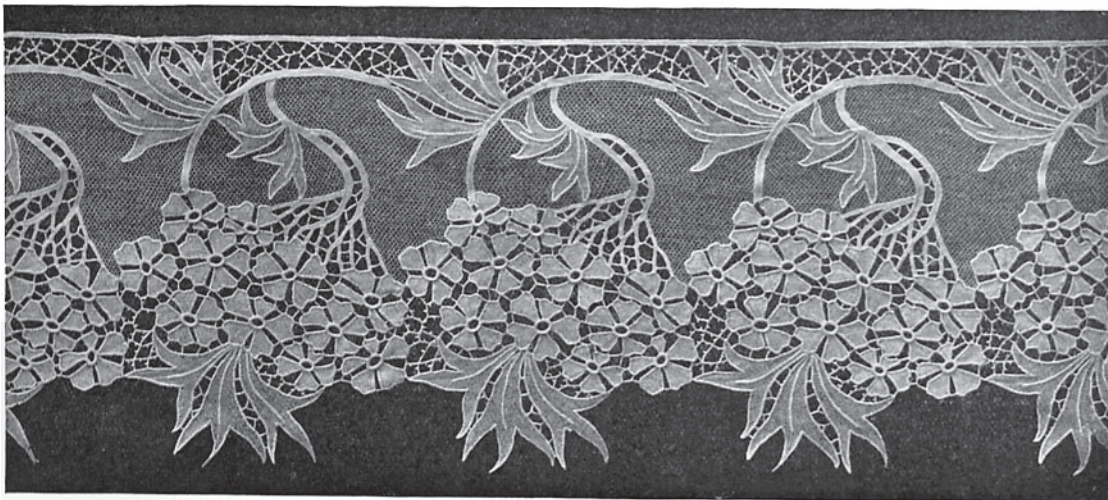


(1) MODERN NEEDLE-POINT
DESIGNED BY FRAU HRDLICKA

(2) COPY OF ANTIQUE NEEDLE-POINT
EXECUTED AT THE GALICIAN SCHOOL

tribute the work among their scholars, who go to work at the schools just as others go to factories—that is to earn money—and also among the married women, who are the real home-workers and who attend the schools as “Hospitantinnen,” a

term applied to the occasional students and outsiders permitted to attend classes at the schools and universities in Austria and Germany. A special feature of the system is that the teachers themselves take the work to



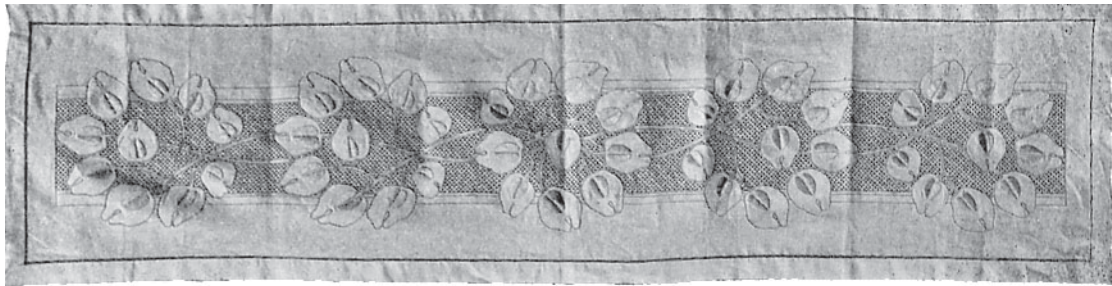
NEEDLE-POINT LACE

DESIGNED BY FRAU HRDLICKA
EXECUTED AT THE GOSSENGRÜN SCHOOL

Austrian Lace Schools

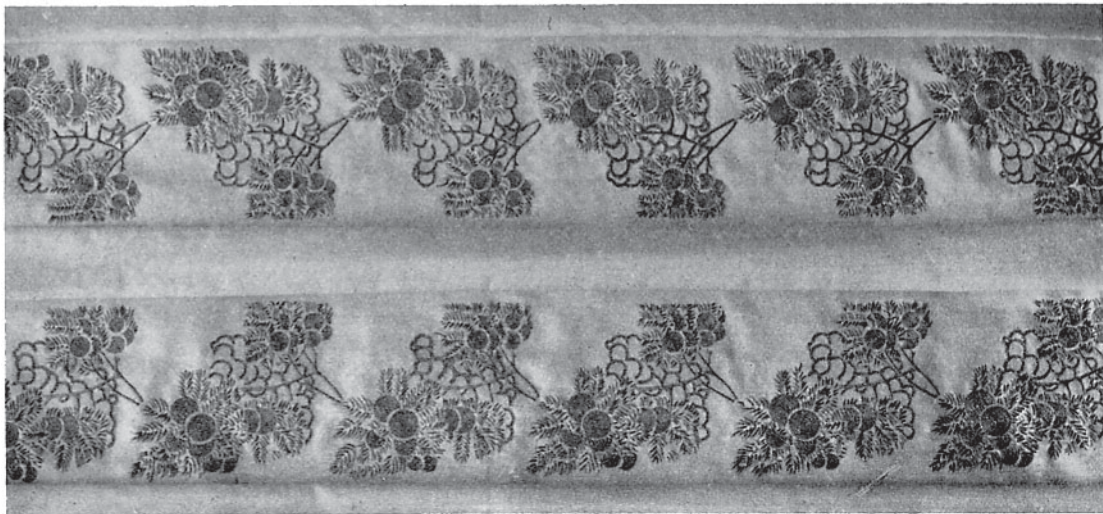
these women, and thus mutual interest and understanding are aroused; for they enter into conversation and learn much from one another. A tactful teacher is a great boon, for she is at the same time a sort of district visitor, and can give valuable hints on hygiene and other matters, in which she herself has been trained. She must, however, in herself possess the power of unconsciously winning over the mothers to her way of thinking. The State recognizes that these qualities are necessary in a teacher, and has undertaken to provide a home for them where they can learn something beyond the art of lace-making or embroidery. This home was opened in September, 1904. Till then the Central Lace School was only a higher technical institution for the training of intelligent makers of point and pillow lace and white embroidery. Now it is an institution for the training of teachers. The students are chosen from all parts of the Crown Lands, and as some of them do not

know German they have to be taught it. Great care and judgment must be taken in finding out the best and most intelligent material, since the success of the undertaking in any particular district depends on the merits of the teacher. The students are not only instructed in the fine art and technique of lace-making, but also in drawing from nature, technical designing and kindred subjects; as well as in political or national economy, commercial subjects, pedagogy, the value of materials, and everything connected with their profession both from an artistic and material point of view. In addition to these subjects they are also instructed in first-aid, vegetable, fruit and flower gardening, the breeding of poultry, and practical housekeeping. There is also a practical school in connection with the home. The matron is a woman of culture, and the home, though small, is a refined one, situated in the Erocagasse. The teachers during the period of training receive



DRAWN-THREAD WORK

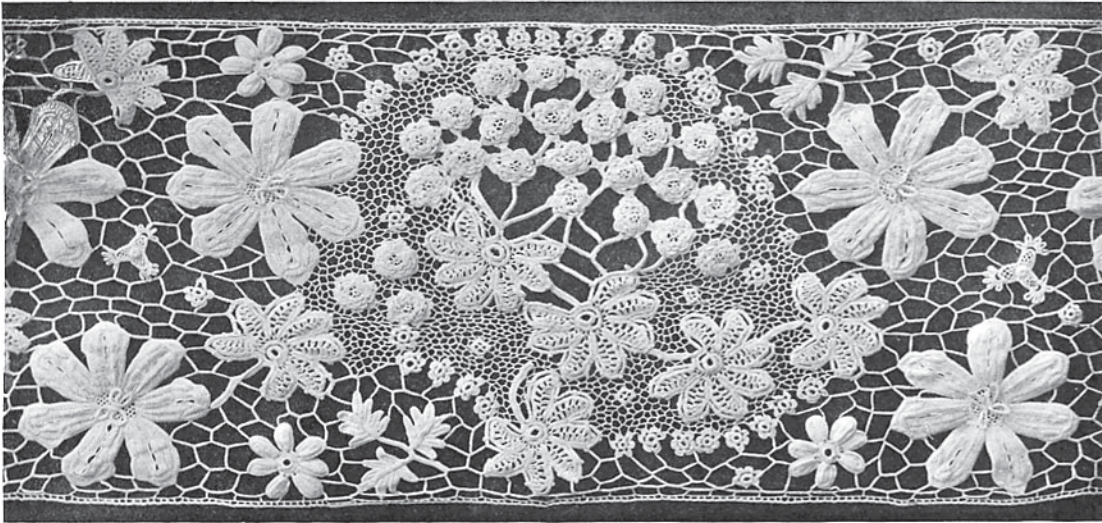
DESIGNED AND EXECUTED BY PUPILS OF THE GRASLITZ LACE SCHOOL UNDER PROFESSOR UNGER



EMBROIDERY FOR A BLOUSE

DESIGNED BY FRÄULEIN HOFMANNINGER
EXECUTED AT THE VIENNA SCHOOL OF EMBROIDERY

Austrian Lace Schools



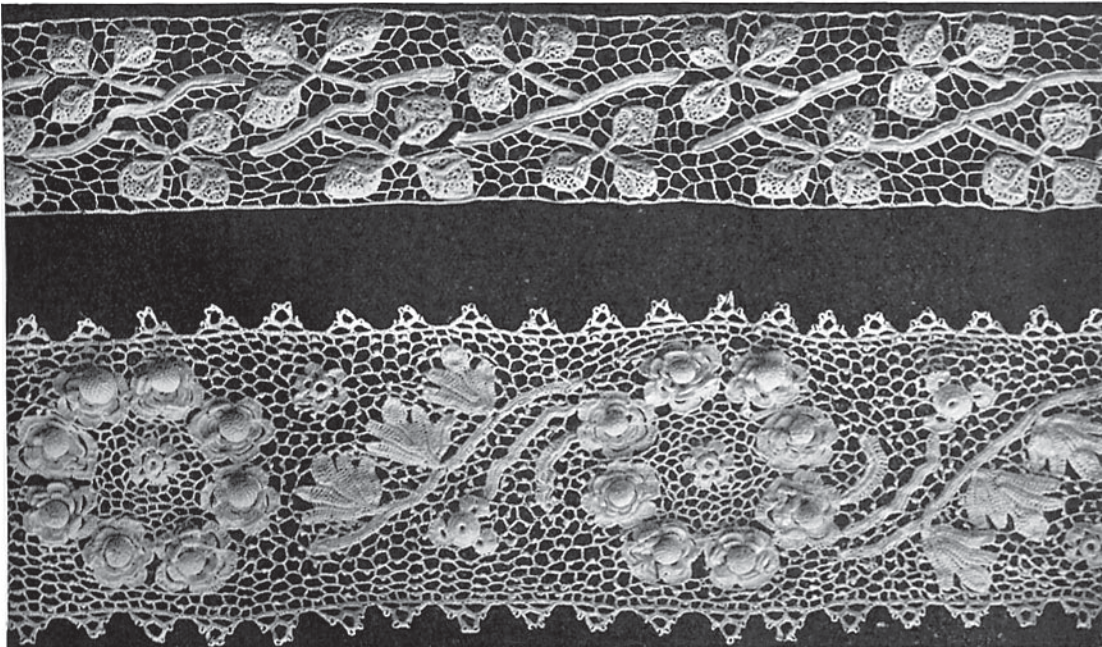
AUSTRIAN CROCHET WORK

DESIGNED BY FRÄULEIN HOFMANNINGER
FOR EXECUTION AT VARIOUS SCHOOLS

board, education and everything free, and in addition a small sum monthly.

Besides the courses for pillow-lace, needle-lace and embroidery, which are staple trades, there is also a special course where those branches are taught which change and fluctuate with the fashion, for nothing depends more on this fickle lady than lace. At the present moment Irish lace happens to be

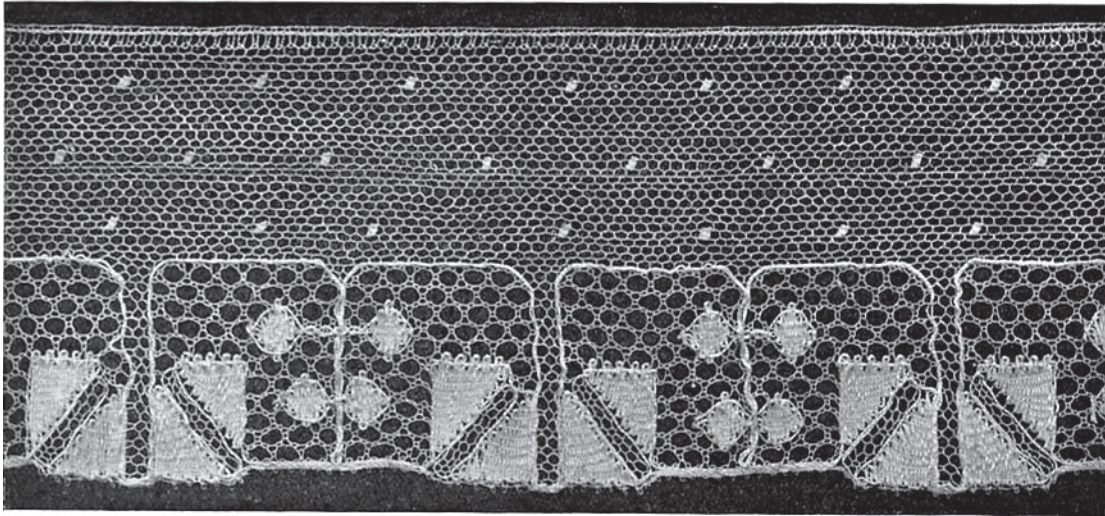
the mode, but the Austrian Irish lace has a peculiar technique of its own, and the patterns are widely different from the real Irish. More than two hundred women are working at this branch alone, putting together the different parts. Making the *motifs* gives employment to hundreds of women in various parts of the country—all women who, but for the earnest efforts of the State through the



AUSTRIAN CROCHET WORK

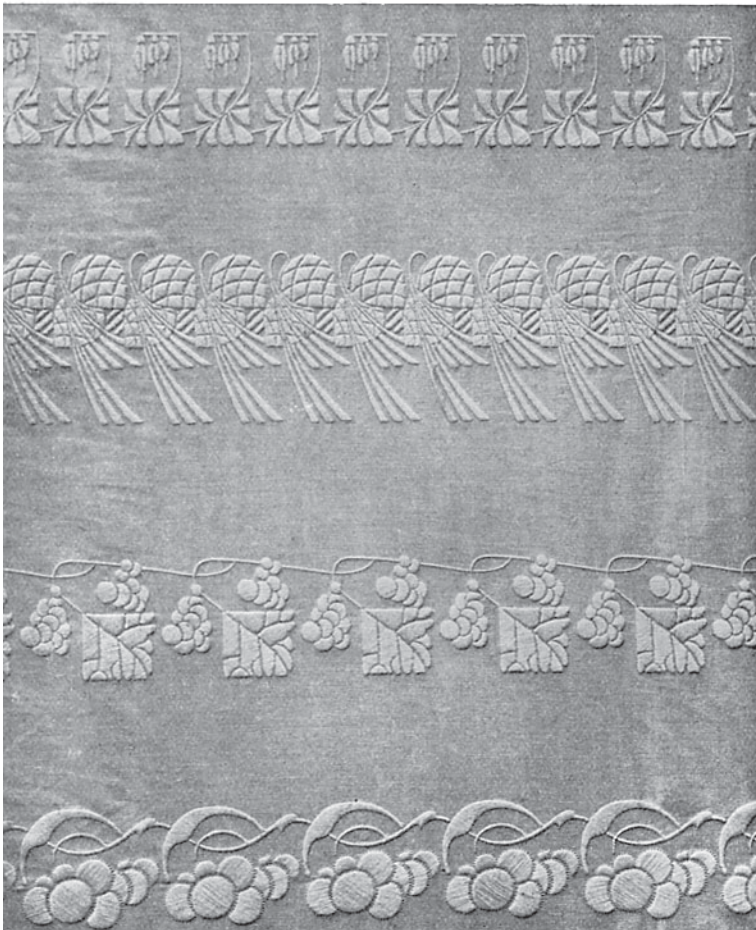
DESIGNED BY FRÄULEIN ANNA PLEYER
AND FRÄULEIN HOFMANNINGER
FOR EXECUTION AT VARIOUS SCHOOLS

Austrian Lace Schools



PILLOW-LACE

DESIGNED BY FRAU HRDLICKA
EXECUTED BY PUPILS AT KÖNIGSBERG (BOHEMIA)



DESIGNS FOR MACHINE-MADE
EMBROIDERY

BY FRÄULEIN HOFMANNINGER
AND HERR LEDNIANSKY

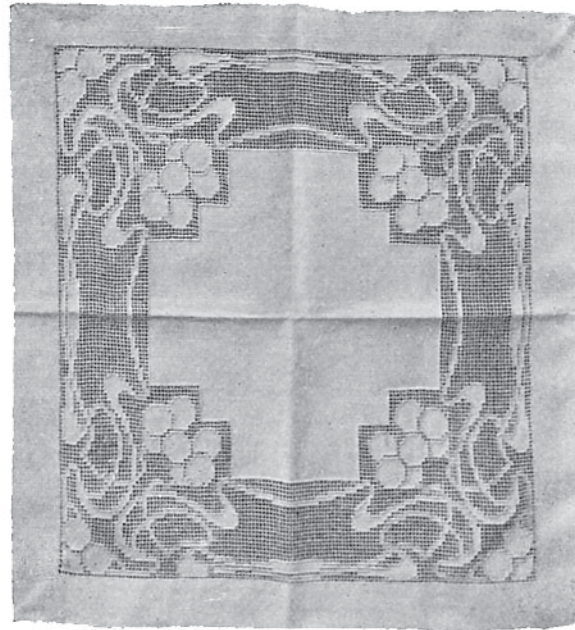
Central Lace Schools, would be numbered among the unemployed. The fashion of the hour is never allowed to interfere with the staple lace and embroidery trades of the old industrial districts—Egerland, the Erzgebirge, the Bohemian Wolds, East Bohemia, Silesia, Galicia, Carniola, the Coast Land, North and South Tyrol, and, since the lace revival, Dalmatia. More than forty thousand women are engaged in making these sorts alone. The particular kind which happens to be in vogue is taught in other districts. The authorities of the Central Schools are always on the look-out for possible changes in the mode, the teachers are eager to extend their knowledge, and their pupils are equally anxious to learn, for in this they see an agreeable and sure means of earning a living. The finished work is sent to Vienna for sale, where a special

Austrian Lace Schools

shop has been opened for this purpose, and at the end of the year the surplus, after paying expenses (which are comparatively low), is divided among the workers. The first year yielded them a nice little sum.

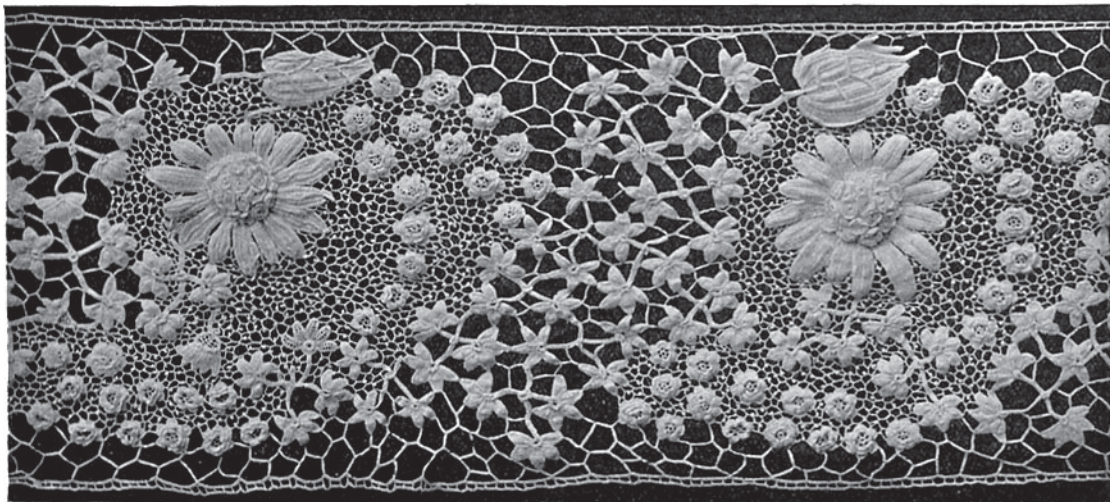
In many of the provincial schools machine embroidery is also taught, that is, when they happen to be situated in districts where this is a staple trade, for instance, in Dornbirn, the Vorarlberg, and in Graslitz in Bohemia. These schools are excellent, as also are those at Cortina in the Ampezzo Valley, and other places where hand-made lace is made. At Graslitz and Cortina good designers have already been trained, the standard of intelligence being much higher than in these towns than in the mountain villages. But at present drawing and designing play a very small rôle in the training of lace-makers and embroiderers. The designs are made in Vienna by Fräulein Hofmanning and Frau Hrdlicka, and by some of the directors of these particular "Fachschulen." These are distributed, after approval, to the teachers of the various schools, who in their turn instruct the pupils in their intricacies, and give them the right understanding for what lies before them. Naturally this requires some little time and much patience.

Modern patterns cannot be sewn in a perfunctory manner. Austrian women are experts with the needle, and famous for their good work and fineness of finish. The lace is extremely fine and delicate; nothing seems too difficult for these poor



DRAWN-THREAD WORK DESIGNED AND EXECUTED BY
PUPILS OF THE GRASLITZ SCHOOL
UNDER PROFESSOR UNGER

peasant women and girls, who are learning to take an interest and pride in things beautiful for the sake of their beauty. They feel too that they are no longer machines, but flesh and blood, and are raised morally as well as physically by the better nourishment, moral and physical, which they enjoy. And in the course of time it is to be hoped that higher things will be attained. The fact that the



AUSTRIAN CROCHET INSERTION

DESIGNED BY FRÄULEIN HOFMANNINGER
PARTS MADE IN VARIOUS SCHOOLS

lacemakers chiefly work in schools where every attention is given to hygienic requirements, where they are taught by women who have been through the same hardships as themselves, who speak their own dialects and who feel the same interest and sympathy for their pupils as was shown to them when they were students, means very much to these girls, almost cut off as they are from the outside world by mountain fastnesses. For in many places there are no railways, it is a hard climb up the mountains to arrive at the villages, and in winter it is almost impossible to get to some of them.

The initiative of the above-named society, which has for its patron the Archduchess Maria Theresa, led to the foundation of another society for the revival of the lost art of lace-making in Dalmatia. The Archduchess Maria Josefa, the first lady in the land, is at the head of this movement and takes a deep personal interest in the work. The society was only formed a year ago, but already, owing to the earnest work done, orders have been obtained, lace-workers taught and every help is being given to them. There is a practical amalgamation of the two societies, though theoretically they stand apart: the cause is a common one, the teachers are trained at the Central Lace

Schools, they live in the same home, their interests are identical.

By sending teachers from village to village to instruct in new methods, and to establish the industry where it does not exist, the Central Schools are continually extending their sphere of action. And the workers themselves are thus kept in touch with the capital, Vienna, which to them now means much more than a mere name, for it is the mother city which provides them with work, and enables them to earn bread for their little ones.

For further particulars on lace making in Austria, I refer readers to my article on this subject which appeared in the December number of *THE STUDIO*, 1902. Julius Hoffmann, Stuttgart, has published some very beautiful designs for modern lace by the best Austrian designers, Fräulein Hofmanninger, Frau Professor Hrdlicka and others. A. S. LEVETUS.