

HUNGARIAN PEASANT ART. BY ALA-DÁR KRIESCH-KÖRÖSFÖL.

THE Land of the Four Rivers (the Danube, the Theiss, the Drave, and the Save—in Hungarian called Duna, Tisza, Dráva, Száva), and of the Three Mountains (Tátra, Pátra, Mátra), the country which reveres the Crown of St. Stephen as the symbol of its unity, possesses even to this day a peasant art as full of energy, as rich in form, and as sumptuous in colour as that of few other countries in Europe. The mountains of Transylvania keep watch over many a craft in which the genuine artistic impulse of a healthy, simple people can be seen at work, and which has nothing in common with the wholesale production of the modern factory system ; and, again, on the smiling slopes of the Carpathians, where they descend into the fair, low-lying plains of the “ Alföld,” we still find communities among whom a harvest festival, or a wedding feast, with all its ceremony and astonishing usages and the brilliant yet solemn array of its participants, carries us back in thought to some Oriental fairyland of long, long ago.

This peasant art of Hungary is very diverse in its aspects—now it stands isolated, solitary, like a statue of Memnon, while at another time we find it in intimate correlation with the peasant art of Germans and Slavs. If we regard its various individual objects in detail, we shall almost invariably find kinship or even identity with the peasant art surrounding it ; but if we take it in its integrity and observe how its genius has appropriated and assimilated individual forms, often of foreign derivation, we shall become sensible of that elemental energy by which style, the living plastic language in which a race expresses its ideas of form, is elaborated.

Our purpose here is in a few words to sketch the historic progress as well as the present state of the peasant art of Hungary. We shall first of all point out those objects which are of purely Hungarian origin, and the needs they subserve. After that we shall notice all its other manifestations, be they ever so closely correlated with the peasant art of other nations, so long as they bear the impress of the Hungarian national spirit and have been assimilated by the Hungarian people as part of their own artistic practice. Here an extensive and very interesting field of exploration offers itself to those who wish to study more closely the ways in which the genius, the spirit of one nation, reacts upon that of another ; but we have now, before everything else, to do with the art product as an actual fact.

The people of Hungary, or Magyars, migrated from Asia to

HUNGARIAN PEASANT ART

the country they now occupy a thousand years ago or thereabouts. They were a warlike, equestrian people, accustomed to living in tents, and were nearly related to the Huns who, under Attila, overran Europe. Unlike almost all the other European peoples, who belong to the Aryan race, the Hungarians have sprung from the Turanian race. Whether they are nearer akin to the Finnish-Ugrian stock that has been driven northwards or to the Turco-Persian stock in the south has remained an unsettled question so far. The construction of their oral language points rather to affinity with the northern stock ; while the language of form which has revealed itself in their vital activities down to the present day is rather akin to that of the Turkish group. After experiencing many hardships they reached the country now known as Hungary, driven by a numerically stronger but kindred people, the Besenyös and the Kumanians. Later, however, in the centuries which followed, and especially after the terrible invasion of the Mongols in the year 1241, a large section of these same tribes, particularly the Kumanians, likewise settled in Hungary (which had maintained its own language for something like 150 years before this), and probably to this circumstance is due the fact that the character of the Hungarians presents two strongly contrasted types—one distinctly Mongolian, with flat nose, projecting cheek-bones, more or less almond-shaped eyes, and thick-set body ; the other more dolichocephalous, with oval face, aquiline nose, boldly arched brows, and rather taller stature. The former would correspond more to the Kumanian race, the latter to the bulk of the immigrant Hungarians. But both together represent at the present day the relatively strongest element in the Hungarian nation, and therefore our assumption is not to be taken as a definite scientific conclusion.

Now there were two factors which more than anything else brought about a great transformation in the life of the Hungarian people at the time of their migration into Europe. In the first place, from being a nation of nomads they became a sedentary people, although many indications point to their having in their earlier Asiatic home passed through a flourishing period of civilization. In the second place, they adopted Christianity.

In their newly conquered land itself they encountered races of most diverse origin, which they reduced to subjection. By adopting Christianity they entered into the closest relations with surrounding nations—with Byzantium and Italy in the south ; with Germans and Slavs on their western and northern borders. The priests who under King Stephen and his successors converted the country to Christianity were of German and Latin race, and they were

HUNGARIAN PEASANT ART

followed by merchants and colonists who traversed the entire country and everywhere founded towns beside those already existing, which were mostly of Roman origin.

The new mode of life and the new view of life which accompanied these changes brought also new needs. These new needs, however, were at first almost exclusively provided for by the hands of strangers, and consequently the impress of the Hungarian character was lacking here. Only by degrees, and even then only to a partial extent, did these needs come to be satisfied by Hungarian labour, and thereby in the slow course of time receive the impress of the Hungarian spirit. In order, therefore, to be able to picture to ourselves generally the art of the Hungarians when they had just settled in Europe we must first of all inquire into the nature of their needs at this epoch.

The Hungarians were nomads, a race of warrior horsemen, when they arrived. They were famous for their mode of fighting on horseback, for it was their custom to turn round and discharge their arrows at the enemy while in full flight. They had rather the character of a ruling race than of a race of workers, and this character they have to some extent preserved to this day. They are fond of ostentation and dignified of bearing.

Priskor Rhetor, the Ambassador of the Byzantine Empire at the Court of Attila, the King of the Huns, has in a report to his Sovereign given a striking picture of Attila's mode of life and of his Court, from which we learn much about the habits and customs which prevailed among the Huns—who were closely akin to the Hungarians—and incidentally about their artistic tastes. From his narrative we learn that the Hungarians lived in tents. As a race of horsemen they loved and cherished their steeds; they were given to hunting and to fishing, and were fond of display. Consequently we have to look for their earliest art productions of every kind in connection with these pursuits, and here, as a matter of fact, we shall find them. Their wooden architecture, which bore a certain resemblance to the tent, their weapons, their pastoral and fishing implements, and their horse harness—these are the things they brought with them from Asia and which have retained in part down to the present day the artistic characteristics they originally possessed.

The wooden buildings of the Széklers, and before all their *galambúgos kapu*—their gateways with pigeon-cots above—are in form so singular and so closely akin to Perso-Turkish models that we may justifiably regard them as the last survivals of the wooden architecture of the primitive Hungarians.

HUNGARIAN PEASANT ART

Of the ancient costume of the Hungarians the *szür* has remained to us—a species of mantle with short sleeves, the shape and ornamentation of which have nothing in common either with the art of the west or with that of Byzantium. On the other hand, we find it, as shown in our illustration on this page, on an



an ancient Persian relief, and in fact in almost entirely the same form as that still in vogue at the present time. The wearing of the *szür* gives to a man a dignity and importance which cannot be equalled.

And then again, even the poorest man among the Hungarians had his linen shirt and his linen *gatyas* (trousers) at a time when at the Court of the Frankish kings linen was regarded as an extreme and costly rarity. And we know, too, that at that time the busy hands of the women covered the surface of the white linen with beautiful patterns of divers colours, and we must therefore assume that many a design which figures in our Hungarian embroideries can trace its descent from the times of King Stephen, though, of course, the stages of its descent cannot be precisely demonstrated.

The Hungarians were especially famed for their leather work. The word *irha* for worked or finished leather has been incorporated in many European languages. The Hungarian tanner and skinner had a peculiar manner of tanning and dressing their leather; they possessed an art of their own of giving a peculiar charm to their work by the application of strips of coloured leather. This kind of ornamentation they called *szironyozás*. It is to be found on the *suba* (a kind of broad, sleeveless mantle hanging loosely and reaching to the ground) and on the *szür* even at the present day. The patterns thus cut out of leather were later often transferred to embroidery, to cloth, and other kinds of textile fabric.

Similarly the horse harness of the Hungarians has maintained down to the present day the character it had in days of yore; a character which is very different from anything western but bears a strong resemblance to Asiatic motives. The stirrups, the bridle, and the saddle had, and have, their peculiar form. The leather work, the reins, were originally never sewn but joined together by narrow strips. The *szironyozás* ornamentation was also frequently used; beautifully cut leather trappings of varied colours were worn round the horse's ears and flanks and flapped lustily in the wind when the animal moved at a quick galop.

HUNGARIAN PEASANT ART

The implements used by the herdsmen still bear the same character in many parts of the country. The fire-producing apparatus with its leather ties, the herd's whip of plaited leather strips, the carved and often inlaid crooks used by the herdsmen are even to this day almost Asiatic in form and have nothing in common with European implements. Extremely interesting, too, and at the same time characteristic as regards Hungary, are the methods which are still customary in many parts of distinguishing the young lambs and the mother-sheep. The shepherd takes a couple of small pieces of wood and carves out of them some familiar object, let us say a horse-shoe, pot, hammer, or a tripod; one of these is larger than the other, and this he hangs round the neck of the mother-sheep, the other and smaller one being destined for the lamb.

Among the weapons should be mentioned the peculiar curved sabre which is also met with among other Asiatic races; the *buzogany*, a kind of battle club, which was afterwards adopted by Western nations; further the bow and arrow, and the spear. The spear was a very short one and capable of being thrown; but the bow and arrow enjoyed more general favour. The Hungarians were famous as archers. Heavy armour they did not like—at the most a shirt of mail was enough. They preferred to clothe themselves in leather or linen.

Respecting the evolution of the Hungarian house and the influences to which it has been subject, the most diverse hypotheses have been put forward. What we do know for certain is that in the "Alföld" there still exist shepherds' dwellings, where the entire house consists of one room with a peculiarly constructed hearth in the centre, and that this room serves as an abode for animal and man in common.

In heathen times it was the custom for the Hungarians to be buried seated upon their horses, a practice to which a large number of tall grave mounds bear testimony. The custom, which has continued down to the present day, of marking a burial place by means of *kopjafák*, a kind of fantastically carved wooden stake, is also of heathen origin.

We have now put forward certain conjectures regarding Hungarian peasant art, and discovered certain sources which take us as far back as a thousand years, but as to what lies between that remote period and the present day we know very little indeed.

As already mentioned, when the Hungarians conquered their present fatherland a thousand years ago they encountered peoples of many different races, who, being split up into numerous groups, each with its rather small tract of country, fell a comparatively

easy prey to the invaders ; the conquered peoples were driven into the mountains, while the Hungarians themselves mostly occupied the "Alföld," the vast low-lying plain of Hungary ; thence they pushed out across the Danube, and later towards Transylvania.

With the acceptance of Christianity by the Hungarians, the way then became open for German colonists to settle, and as they established towns in all parts of the country, they naturally exercised an important influence on the progress of civilisation ; but as the Germans with the other foreign elements were segregated in the towns while the Hungarians, nobles as well as peasants, lived almost entirely in the country the difference between urban life and rural life was far greater here than elsewhere.

Thus Hungarian peasant art was at once exposed to many different influences and reactions. Conquerors and conquered exchanged their productions in their daily intercourse to satisfy their respective needs. It was, above all, with the peasant art of the Germans and Slavs that the Hungarian genius entered into the closest mutual relations. And to-day, after the lapse of a thousand years, it would seem to be absolutely impossible to distinguish by any method known to positive science the artistic manifestations and products of the Hungarian genius from those of other nations. And yet every one of us who travels through the country with open eyes feels convinced that there is a Hungarian national style, however much it may be furrowed and intersected by influences derived from other sources. The same form may be met with among the art products of other races, but form itself has little to do with the matter ; form, like words, may very easily be adopted by, and become the property of, nations quite distinct from one another. It is the manner in which the same form is treated that counts—the spirit, which in the course of use leaves its mark on a particular form and gives it new life—this it is which constitutes the "style" and art of a nation. And this elemental living spirit we discern everywhere in the peasant art of Hungary at the present day.

We can also recognise the influence of the so-called historic styles on Hungarian peasant art down to the present time. Thus much of the peasant jewellery shows traces of Byzantine art. Houses in Transylvania, in the Székler country and Toroczkó give indications of Romance and Gothic motives in the window casements and door-posts ; here the stone architecture of the Middle Ages is translated back into the wood technique. These are all interesting aspects, but their consideration would lead us far from our restricted task, and we must confine our attention to Hungarian peasant art as it still lives and thrives.

HUNGARIAN PEASANT ART

The peasant art of the Hungarians may be divided into three great areas, as shown in the accompanying map :—

1. Dunántul—the region “beyond the Danube”—the Pannonia of the Romans, with the counties of Zala, Somogy, Tolna, Baranya,



and the peculiar peasant art and architecture of Gőcsey, as well as Sárköz.

2. The vast low-lying plain known as the “Alföld”—in connection with which the boundary line marking the junction of the great level tract with the spurs of the Carpathian range is of particular importance. With this we include the distinct peasant art of the Matyós and of the people of Palócz and Jász, noted for its wealth of colour.

3. Transylvania, with that precious district Kalotaszeg, the extremely interesting Székler country (Székelyföld), the erstwhile mining town of Torockó—and including therewith the peasant art of the Transylvanian Saxons and Roumanians.

Two observations of fundamental significance are here called for. The first is, that the more we proceed from the East to the West, the fewer and less important are the remains of Hungarian peasant art that we encounter, so that in the Dunántul we find it still flourishing only among certain isolated communities with a more or less favourable geographical location ; while, on the other hand, in Transylvania, shut in by its mountains, it has, by comparison, remained practically intact. In the second place, we have to observe that in Hungary—likewise in a direction from east to west—a displacement of nationality—in relation to language and not to race

—has been taking place ; that is to say, the Roumanian element has advanced, from the east, especially in Transylvania, and absorbed the Hungarian element, so that a considerable proportion of the Roumanian-speaking population of Transylvania are really Hungarian by race. On the other hand, in the western part of the country, especially in the Dunántul, the Hungarians on their part have been encroaching on the German element and absorbing it, the movement here, also, being from the east towards the west. Consequently we shall find a good deal of Hungarian peasant art among the Roumanians of Transylvania, and so again we shall have to credit the German element with much that has been done in the Dunántul region where Hungarian is now generally spoken.

Let us begin, therefore, with this region of the Dunántul. The peasant art of Dunántul is, so to speak, now squeezed up in two small islands—Sárköz and Göcsej. What has otherwise remained consists principally of utensils and implements used by the herdsmen. Here, to be sure, we find many an interesting piece of work that really savours of the soil. But what has become of those romantic days when it was regarded as ignominious for a shepherd not to possess a *szűr* (mantle) ? The cost of such a *szűr* was more than a whole year's wages earned by these shepherds, and so illegitimate means—such as sheep or horsestealing—had to be resorted to in order to get one. This was the reason why the wearing of the *szűr* among the shepherds came to be prohibited and visited with legal penalties. Thus the famous *szűr* of Veszprém disappeared ; the tailors who made them migrated to Croatia, and the last of them died not very long ago in great poverty. The work-books of these tailors are of much interest ; it was really wonderful how, without diagrams or sketches, they cut out of materials of diverse kinds and colours the rich ornamentation which they used to sew on the garments.

Then along with the *szűr* there went the carved crook carried by the shepherd ; his fire-producing implement, made of plaited leather and ornamented with appliqué leather decoration (*szironyozás*) and the shin-bone of a sheep ; his embroidered tobacco pouch, also made of leather ; his *karikás* (whip) with an elaborate metal-mounted stock ; and his pipe or *dudelsack*.

Gone for ever, too, is the romantic life of the Bakony forest, the burden of many a song and story, with its robbers, who went by the name of “*szegény legények*” and the Pandours (a sort of armed police) who pursued them. Times without number have the scenes of this romantic life been pictured on boxes, mirrors, bins, sticks, axes, and other implements, either scratched upon horn or carved in wood, and coloured or merely drawn in line.

These *szegény legények*, unbridled vagrants though they were,

HUNGARIAN PEASANT ART

rarely did any harm to a poor man ; it was only the well-to-do landed proprietor that they importuned, begging a sheep or some other sort of food, and only when their requests went unheeded did they resort to violence. Usually the scene painted shows the *szegény legények* enjoying themselves at a country inn or *csárda* making merry with the innkeeper's daughter, and then being suddenly surprised by the Pandours. The girl then plays the part of rescuer or betrayer, as the case may be.

Then, again, the life of the fishermen on the Plattensee, with their simple craft and gear, offered many interesting features. These fishermen were grouped into eights, each forming a *bokor* or cluster of fisher families.

Now of all these things we have nothing left save the interesting house types of Göcsej and the rich, brilliant costumes of the people of the Sárköz. To the Sárköz belongs the series of caps illustrated in the following pages, with their extremely fine white embroidery on a black ground. The older a woman grew the narrower the embroidery on the hood had to be.

The second home of Hungarian peasant art—the great plain of the “Alföld”—is very extensive, and we must accordingly probe it to the centre in order to be able to portray in some measure its chief characteristics.

The life of the herdsmen on the Hungarian Steppe is sublimely beautiful in its very wildness. To see some hundreds of horses careering along at full speed like some storm-cloud, the “Csikós” (horse-herd) galloping behind them with his *karikás* or whip in his hand, is a sight to make one's heart beat with joy.

At the present day, as in former times, there are cattle-herds who tend their oxen and cows all through the year, winter and summer, in the open. If the poor fellows find it rather too cold for them they drive the cattle from their resting place and warm themselves there instead. In the way of clothing the garment that here plays the most prominent part is the *szür*, which shows considerable variation of colour and ornamentation in different localities, but always the same shape more or less ; and also the sheepskin or *guba*, the woolly side of which is in winter worn on the inside and in summer on the outside. The smoothed, tanned side of this garment is covered with coloured leather decoration (*szíronyozás*) or sometimes in part with embroidery in several colours. Throughout the vast expanse of the “Alföld” not a single stone and scarcely a tree is to be met with. For this reason the houses are mud-built and covered with straw or rush thatch, and a peculiar and very primitive style of mud construction has been evolved. The herdsman can find scarce enough wood for the handle of his *fokos* (hand-axe) or to carve out a drinking

cup. For seating accommodation he frequently makes use of a horse's skull; spoons and forks he shapes out of the bill of the spoon-billed goose. The fuel he uses for his fire consists of dried reeds and dung. His pottery, however, which comes from Mezőtúr, is both celebrated and beautiful, as also is the black, smoke-tinted ware of Szentés.

The horse being the herdsman's most precious possession, he sets great store upon his saddle and his harness. This also is richly ornamented with *szironyozás*, and the whole of it is of a quite original pattern, and, as already said, points to an Asiatic origin.

Let us now leave the immense monotony of the Steppe and turn northward to the hilly country embracing the outlying spurs of the Carpathians, where on rocky eminences green pastures and dark forests spread themselves on all sides; we shall here find that Nature's bountiful gifts are reflected in the artistic productions of the inhabitants. It is the "Matyó" that we have to do with here in chief measure—a splendid, hardy type of man, industrious, bold, and resourceful. He will set off quietly for America, put on the blue blouse of the artisan and go about his work. If he returns to his native country he again gets out his *szür*, his broad *gatyás* (pantaloon), his embroidered apron, his round hat adorned with flowers, and his pointed boots—and he is the same quiet, peaceful Matyó as before.

These Matyós build their houses in a way of their own. The stall for the cattle is placed nearest the road or lane, while the living apartments are further back in the courtyard. In the stall itself there used, in days gone by, to be a spacious and beautifully carved sleeping place with a hearth in front of it, consisting of a rectangular stone let into the ground, above which, suspended from the lofty wooden beams, was a kind of wooden apparatus on which bacon and hams were smoked. Here the family passed the evenings, seated round the blazing fire, singing and laughing, while the horses crunched their oats, and many a stirring story of the olden time, when the Turks still had a footing in Hungary or when the fight for freedom was being fought under Prince Rákóczy, made the past live again in the hearts of the old folk while the younger members of the family listened breathlessly.

The house of the Matyós was constructed after the form of a tent, with a stout supporting beam running up through the centre of the roof. In front, on the side towards the road, the roof formed a wedge-shaped projection, like the inverted prow of a ship, under which even when it was raining, the people could rest, on a bench usually made of earth.

The most attractive feature about the Matyós, however, is

HUNGARIAN PEASANT ART

their costume. At Easter, or some other great festival, when hundreds of them—sometimes even thousands—assemble in front of their church in the principal open space at Mezö-Kövesd, one feels as if one were transported far, far away from Europe to the middle of Persia or the Caucasus. Gay, glittering colours in endless variety move and flit hither and thither. The shrillest contrasts dissolve into one vast vibrating harmony. The old men all have their own peculiar garb. The women and girls wear the *höndörgö*, a long and very wide bell-shaped skirt which at every step flaps very coquettishly against the wearer's heels ; also closely-fitting corsets of various colours, very short, puff sleeves, and about the head and neck long, coloured kerchiefs with fringes. But the headgear of the women is not the same as that of the girls. An air of ease and pride marks their movements as they walk about in a broad and constant stream, with the men following behind. Slow and dignified, every man is a perambulating statue. The old men wear on their heads the *süveg*, while from their shoulders hangs the *suba* reaching down to the ground. The married men wear the *szür* of various colours and round hats ; the young lads do not wear the *szür* but broad white *gatyas* or embroidered pantaloons, also embroidered aprons and shirts, the latter with wide sleeves which come down over the hands, and of course boots, and their hats are decked with wreaths of brightly coloured flowers. Then the very little children reproduce in a delightful way the appearance of their big brothers and sisters—the little boys run about, if possible, in even longer sleeves and with an even more imposing floral display on their hats, while the little girls let their *höndörgös* oscillate from left to right and right to left just as their grown-up sisters do. And so with flying colours they all in solemn procession file into church, where in the mysterious illumination of the interior the charm of the spectacle and the gorgeousness of the colour display are if anything accentuated. Rarely does the eye of a modern artist chance upon such an exhilarating prospect as this.

Transylvania is the fairyland where one can imagine oneself back in the sturdy days of the Middle Ages with their exuberance of joy and energy. How long will its primeval forests, where the bear and the fox are still at home, retain their virgin splendour ? How long will the maidens of Kalotaszeg, with their red-bordered, looped-up skirts and their red embroidered blouses, continue to disport themselves in its emerald pastures like butterflies—or go gleaning the golden corn in its fields ? And these gateways of the Széklers, which serve at the same time as abodes for the pigeon population, how long will they continue to stand erect in those lonely villages situated in the recesses of the mountains ?

In what has already been said we have had to lay particular stress on this or that branch of peasant art as now existing in each region, but when we come to the peasant art of Kalotaszeg we shall find it still flourishing in every branch. Every achievement, every product of these people, is still permeated with a deeply-rooted artistic sense. By Kalotaszeg is meant a district in the county of Kolozs, consisting approximately of thirty-five parishes, all of them having the same costumes and the same daily usages. The church, too, is peculiar to the district: if it shows Oriental influence in various respects, yet in its main construction it is completely indigenous. At the very first glance one can see that it has been built for their own purposes by people who knew well enough what they wanted.

In earlier times there used to be wooden churches, such as one frequently comes across even nowadays among the Roumanians, but they were soon re-constructed in stone, and only the spires continued to be of wood—a tall spire covered with shingle and flanked at the angles by four small pointed turrets. Following the custom of the Middle Ages, the church is surrounded by a wall which frequently has several turret-like gateways. Enclosed within this wall is the churchyard. The graves are marked by carved wooden columns (in Hungarian *fejfák* or *kopjafák*) the designs of which are wholly of heathen origin. When a child or a young unmarried woman dies a branch in the form of a trident is hewn and then wrapped round with feathers and bright-coloured streamers of ribbon, and this is then placed on the *fejfa*. The Kalotaszeg peasant is an artist who can put his hand to a multitude of things—he is a “Tausendkünstler.” He builds his own house, his neighbours lending a hand, and whenever possible makes all his own utensils and implements. In the summer he is occupied in cultivating his land, and finds plenty to do in tilling the soil and looking after his cattle. In the winter, however, he puts together the loom for his wife, makes a yoke for his plough-oxen or perhaps turns wheelwright and makes a wagon or cart for himself. Many a lad will carve a distaff for the girl he is to wed, and so skilfully and beautifully and with such a profusion of ornament as only one who is prompted by love could do.

The women are occupied with spinning and weaving, with embroidery and sewing, and work late on into the night. The old custom is in vogue here for the girls to gather together in the spinning-room of an evening, usually at a different house every week. In the middle of the room hangs the lamp, and around it sit the girls bending over their work. The young men naturally look in, and singing and gossiping goes on between them, and the merry words fly backwards and forwards like a shuttlecock.

HUNGARIAN PEASANT ART

The people of Kalotaszeg have a kind of linen produced by a process of their own, which enjoys a considerable reputation—they call it *Fodorvászon* (lit. frizzled linen); but still more famous is the embroidery of various kinds which they work thereon. Many of these productions have found their way to England. The methods of working this embroidery are three-fold. The most ancient method, now very little employed, is that of making first of all a quite free drawing of the design on the linen by means of ink made from lampblack or soot, and afterwards working the pattern with red, black or blue wool in a loop stitch of a peculiar kind. The second method is that by which the design is not thus drawn, but the patterns, mostly geometrical, are formed by counting the threads of the linen foundation and the ornament is worked in various kinds of stitch. The third and last method is that in which, as in *d'jour* work, certain threads are drawn and cut away from the linen foundation to get the desired pattern.

The primitive, native character of the Kalotaszeg house has, indeed, suffered a good deal, but, nevertheless, there is much about it that is noteworthy. In particular, the numerous beautiful embroideries which used to figure on the beds and walls have had to give place to simpler linen fabrics woven with coloured yarn, while many a beautiful old jug or plate has been carried off to a foreign country. The arrangement of the house is shortly as follows: The house stands with its narrow side to the road. Through a covered outer hall or portico—usually approached by a flight of steps—one reaches the kitchen with its large half-open hearth constructed of green tiles, the faces of which are painted red. Leading out of this are two rooms, one to the right and another to the left—one, therefore, looking on to the road and the other on to the courtyard. In the front room we find fixed another large stove for cooking and heating. Opposite the door in the corner by the window is a broad carved bench, and in front of it a big dining table, which frequently still shows Gothic forms. In another corner is the bed, with a large receptacle in front of it for clothing. In former times the beautifully embroidered linen used to be arranged along two of the walls, hanging from poles close under the ceiling, and the bed itself was well appointed with richly embroidered pillows. Nowadays, however, all this has had to give place to striped linen fabrics. On the two opposite walls are racks from which hang jugs in one or two rows, like a continuous band of ornament, while above them is a row of plates with coloured patterns.

The costume of the Kalotaszeg people is probably the most beautiful to be met with in the entire country—it is completely

en rapport with the shape and functions of the body ; is, so to speak, architectonic in its construction.

The women wear a long blouse with wide sleeves embroidered in red or black and coming down over the knuckles. From the character of the embroidery one can tell at once whether the wearer is an unmarried or a married woman. The older women wear only black embroidery. The skirt, called a *muszuj*, is characteristic of Kalotaszeg ; it is dark blue or black, and has a broad band of colour all along the bottom. The skirt is gathered up in front so that the petticoat is visible. Then in front of that is the apron. The wide, gathered border varies in colour according to the age of the wearer. For girls and quite young women it is red ; for older women yellow, and for those who are quite old it is green or black. By way of foot gear they wear red boots with upturned points, precisely after the Persian style. As a rule the blouse is the only garment worn on the upper part of the body, and being made to fit closely it shows up the wearer's figure very neatly. In the winter fur-trimmed jackets of green cloth, with yellow lace by way of ornament, are worn, or at times a simple dark blue bodice—the so-called *bujjbelé*.

The men wear very short blouses, reaching just below the waist and having open sleeves ; wide *gatyas* (pantaloon or trousers), beautifully embroidered in white like the blouses ; black boots and round hats ; and in winter the *szür* or the *bujjbelé*, like the women.

On Sundays, for church-going, the grown-up girls put on the *párta*, a kind of crown made of gold lace and adorned with bright coloured ribbons. Brides have long and beautifully embroidered veils, which they continue to wear for several months after marriage when they go to church.

Nothing could be more imposing than such a church-going, when all the people—the girls, women and men—usually in separate groups, in their brilliant attire almost regal in its splendour, gather in front of the church amid the quaint, carved grave-posts, chatting and expectantly awaiting the signal to enter ; or again, when they all, row after row of them, with heads devoutly bowed, listen to the words of the preacher and then lift up their voices in praise ; or finally when at the close of the service they all with reverent mien troop forth in the order observed for generations—children and girls leading the way.

Much, too, might be narrated in regard to their customs and usages—for instance, what customs must be observed in connection with a wedding—how the bride's man (*vőfély*), the bride's parents, and the bride and bridegroom in rhymed verse negotiate with one another and greet the wedding guests ; how the bride and her belongings are fetched away, and the bread borne in front of her ;

HUNGARIAN PEASANT ART

the numerous cloths of many colours and wedding gifts which hang from the long poles in the living room ; how the wedding feast is conducted and what is consumed ; and the dances that take place thereat. All these things have their firmly-established order, from which nothing may be omitted, and, in fact, never is omitted, even in the absence of a master of the ceremonies, for the people know the whole thing by heart—it runs in their blood, as it were.

The country itself is magnificent—mountainous yet fertile ; everywhere brooks and babbling springs, and meadows gay with fragrant flowers. And a fine race of people, too, are its inhabitants, with their slender but well-knit powerful frames, the women with such graceful ankles and such well-shaped, slender hands that one cannot cease wondering how this can possibly be, seeing that they work from early till late—and arduous work, indeed, it often is. Intercourse with these people is both animating and instructive. It does one good to get a glimpse of their mental world, so harmonious and child-like and yet so rational !

It still remains for us while dealing with Transylvania to mention Toroczkó and the land of the Széklers.

Toroczkó is an ancient mining town which was founded by German immigrants in the thirteenth century. By the fifteenth century, however, the population had become completely Hungarianised, and at the present day the Hungarian language is spoken in Toroczkó to greater perfection perhaps than in any other part of the country. Naturally the people of Toroczkó intermingled with the Hungarians of the surrounding localities, so that their peasant art at the present time may be regarded as quite Hungarian, only just a trace of German influence having remained in sundry directions.

The Toroczkó people have suffered a good deal in recent times from the ravages of fire ; this is the reason why one finds among them comparatively few typical old houses, and few examples of old furniture, utensils and other domestic appointments. Yet not long ago, to the shame and injury of the whole country, the oldest house it possessed—one dating as far back as the fourteenth century—was pulled down. The Toroczkó house was, like the Kalotaszeg house, constructed of wood and covered with plaster within. Outside only the lower half, up to the middle of the windows, was plastered, the timber baulks above being left bare. There was no chimney flue. The roof was covered with a double layer of wood shingles, often artistically carved. The traditional costume of the people is, if anything, even more sumptuous and varied than that of Kalotaszeg, but unfortunately is fast approaching extinction. A beautiful costume as worn by the women represents a value of some hundreds of kronen—and the modern spirit cannot tolerate that sort of thing.

For each season and for various ages there were and are different articles of clothing—some being only worn at certain festivals or on other special occasions. The leather work of Toroczkó and also the lace produced in this town enjoy a wide reputation. Its embroidery resembles in many points that of Kalotaszeg, only it is a little harder in design.

The most noteworthy thing we find among the Széklers is their architecture. Their native costume has almost wholly disappeared, especially that of the women. The Széklers themselves also differ markedly in type from the rest of the Hungarians, and claim to be the direct descendants of King Attila and the Huns. Until 1848 they had their own laws and special privileges. Prior to that year there were in Transylvania three autonomous nations, the Hungarians, the Széklers, and the Saxons (the Roumanians played no part in political affairs).

The Székler has never worn the *szür* nor the broad, linen *gatyas*, but only tight-fitting trousers (which he calls stockings), made of a coarse sort of felt. He is renowned throughout the whole country for his independent way of thinking, his shrewdness; he will always think out a problem and do a thing in a different way to anyone else.

The Székler gateway—the so-called *galambúgos kapu*—constitutes a quite peculiar type of architecture; but of this, too, divers varieties are met with in particular localities. In its main features it consists of a wide gateway for vehicles and a gate for pedestrians, but both have a roof in common; underneath this roof is a box or loft provided with one or two rows of holes, and this serves as a pigeon-cot. The character of the woodwork, the ornamentation, and the very method of construction, all point to the Orient.

We have, in the foregoing few lines, endeavoured, to explain a few of the manifestations of Hungarian peasant art. One thing, however, lay beyond our power—that was to demonstrate the great harmony, the vital congruity, everywhere seen to exist between the land—that is Nature—and the peasant art which has sprung from it—and this indeed is the great mystery of all art. It is not merely that peasant art has made use, first of all, of those natural products which the land itself has furnished and thereby elaborated a distinctive local style—that is natural enough. No, it is the character, the soul, as it were, of the landscape itself that has wrought the most potent influence. And it is just this never-ceasing, ever-potent interaction that constitutes the vital essence of art. To set forth this truth adequately is beyond the range of any essay.