

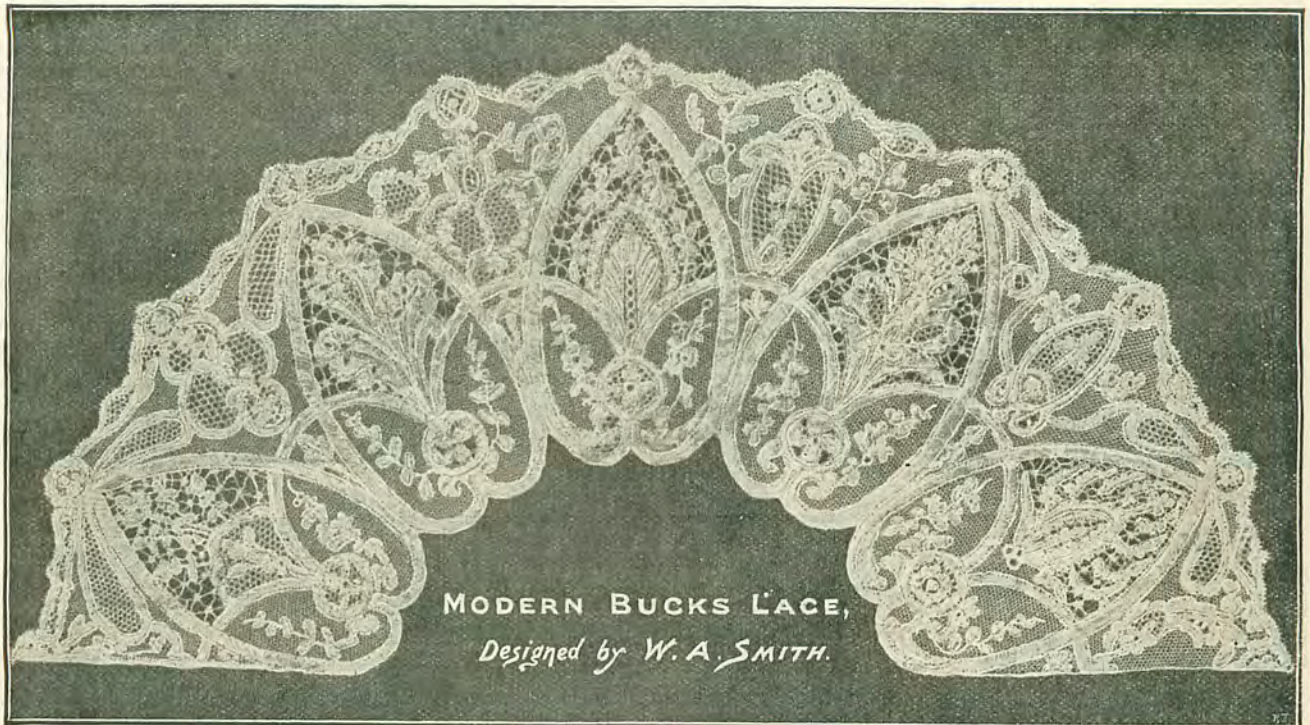


In responding to a kind request that I should write a short article on Buckinghamshire lace, I cannot refrain from remarking that it seems curious that while so much is being done to better the condition of the English labourer, few attempts are made to encourage cottage industries for women; yet there are various ways in which women could earn two or three shillings a week, and, when one considers that the wages of the men in many places only amount to about twelve or thirteen shillings a week, this would make a considerable addition to the earnings of the household, and with it many little luxuries could be procured.

One of these industries is pillow-lace making. This flourished in several parts of England, such as Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Nottinghamshire. Schools for teaching the art used to be found in nearly every village in these counties, and there are old women living who describe how they used to be sent to them, with their "pillows and stools," as soon as they were five years old. For the first year or two they earned nothing, later a trifle, and eventually, as they became expert, they obtained the full price for their work. Besides lace-making, they were supposed to be taught a certain amount of reading and writing, but their education, in this respect, was hardly up to what an inspector of these days would require to be taught in the lowest standards of the schools in his district.

There is no doubt that to become a successful lacemaker, one can hardly begin too young; otherwise, although the different stitches can be learnt and fine work can be done, the fingers never acquire that suppleness so necessary for quickly manipulating the bobbins, without which good wages cannot be earned, owing to the length of time taken to complete even a short piece. Of course, however, as in everything else, there are some who never attain great proficiency in the art.

The expense of "setting up" a pillow is not great, the pillow itself costing about eighteenpence, the bobbins about sixpence a



dozen, the thread a mere trifle, and then only a packet of fine pins and a parchment (or "eitch" as the people call it), on which the design is pricked, are required to complete the outfit.

In Buckinghamshire the learner was and is generally started on a pattern called "Jittle bud." This, in spite of being one of the simplest designs made, is extremely puzzling to a beginner until she has got over some of the difficulties of the various intertwinings of the bobbins necessary to make the different stitches. It is wonderful how quickly children usually manage to learn, and how soon they are able to get on alone.

After they have quite mastered that pattern, and can join broken threads and put on fresh bobbins, they are given a rather wider

and more complicated one, and this change is repeated until they can do quite wide laces, in which are to be found all the various stitches used in Buckinghamshire lace, such as "cat stitch," "five pin," "clothie," "French work," etc.

Unfortunately the Buckinghamshire workers have done themselves much harm by going in largely for making a kind of Torchon lace, and as this can be so well and cheaply made by machinery, they are unable to obtain a satisfactory market for it. Another great drawback has been that they have got into the habit of using too thick thread, which, combined with poor designs, makes their lace look heavy and coarse. The inability of many of the workers to use fine thread has, probably, been caused by a fault in their early

teaching. As children they were allowed to use common strong cotton, not easily broken by a jerk of the bobbins. This got them into the bad habit of handling their bobbins roughly, with the result that when they attempt the finer thread it keeps breaking, and they cannot get on. Then they assure you "that the thread is quite rotten," and the work becomes covered with joins and uneven stitches, owing to their clumsy efforts.

The bad designs appear to have been introduced about thirty to forty years ago. Before that Buckinghamshire lace showed that its origin was principally Flemish, for some of the good specimens might almost be mistaken for Low Country lace. Then it began to imitate Chantilly, and in some cases has degenerated into a mixture of the above



with Maltese and Torchon, all of which styles are sometimes found in one pattern.

Very few of the fine old horn parchments are preserved. If inquired for the answer generally given is: "Oh, I had a lot, but was tidying up the other day, and I threw all my 'itches' into the fire, because I thought they were just rubbish."

In order to prevent the art of lace-making becoming quite extinct, some small classes have recently been started for children in two or three places in Buckinghamshire. These are well attended, but as a teacher cannot properly instruct more than twelve pupils at one class, there are always two or three children eagerly looking out for a vacancy in it. The little pupils are most painstaking and industrious, some, who have pillows of their own, getting up early in the morning to do some lace-making on their own account before starting for school. Much of their work is really wonderfully creditable considering their

age, and that they have only been learning from twelve to eighteen months. A length once finished finds a ready sale, for many kind people are willing to buy a piece made by a little worker of eight or nine, and do not criticise it too severely.

An objection made against teaching pillow-lace is, that the pay earned is so small (from three to five shillings a week), that girls will not find it worth while to go on when they grow up, but will go out to service and forget it. Yet can this be called a drawback? Surely it is better they should go out to service, and as lace-making once learnt is not easily forgotten, they will always be able in later life to earn a little pocket-money for themselves, or to help their husbands if they marry.

Even in this economical age there must be some who are willing to encourage an industry which promotes the welfare of our labourers' homes by giving a few pence more for lace which is handsome. Should they do

so, they would find that not only would they benefit the cottagers, but they themselves would not be losers in the long-run, for it is a well-known fact that hand-made goods last nearly twice as long as those made by machinery, and this is especially true of lace. Let us give up buying cheap goods, and help our cottagers to help themselves, and we shall all be able to regard our purchases with more satisfaction.

In conclusion, let me draw your readers' attention to the four illustrations accompanying this article. The first and second of these are good specimens of old patterns, while the third and fourth are entirely new, and recently worked from very beautiful designs, specially prepared and drawn by Mr. W. A. Smith, clearly showing that our people can and will take up new patterns, and work them successfully too, if only anyone can be found with the necessary willingness and ability to design for them as Mr. W. A. Smith has so kindly done.

THE HEALTH IN SPRING-TIME.

By "MEDICUS."



HERE in all the wide world, or rather in my little corner of it, am I to seek for inspiration to write an article on spring on such a day as this. So dark, so gloomy, so "doure!" Doesn't it make one shudder? And yet when I looked out of my window early this morning, the clouds in the south-east, where soon the sun would rise, were all aglow with his herald rays. Away in the north and west from which the wind is now

blowing the sky was blue, and high in air the rooks were whirling, though this is always a sign of storms to come. Yet my guinea-pigs were frisking on the lawn like lambskins on the lea.

Stay, I'll go out to the paddock, and bring in my favourite St. Bernard "Lassie," and right cosily she'll lie on the bear-skin rug before the wigwam fire.

The sparrows come round me in dozens. I have fed them already this morning. I will not be imposed upon even by the wild birds. All day yesterday they were busy relining their nests here, there and everywhere with soft oat straw and feathers brought from afar. They are determined, they tell me, to keep their little ones warm in cold weather. Now that the trees are all leafless and bare, bar the yews and the stately pines, one can easily see where the sparrows had their nests last summer and spring. In one wisteria tree in front of the house I counted fifteen nests, five in the climbing ivy and many more in the wall plum-tree. This close around my dwelling, but every pine has its nest very high up, even the sycamores have been requisitioned, and the

ivy that climbs around the oaks and ashes, and every knot, on any old apple tree that has a hole in it, is or has been occupied by my sparrows.

Whew—ew! How the wind blows to be sure. I gaze upwards at my poplar trees, they are ninety feet high if an inch, but they bend like bundles of fishing-rods before the wintry blast! Were one to fall on my wigwam there would be no more "Medicus" and no more "Lassie." And now it is fairer and brighter though the wind is no less. Here is a proof of its strength. I open my western door—the window is always open—and let the wind blow across the strings of my guitar, while I touch the notes, and music more soft and sweet than that of the Aeolian harp falls on my listening ear.

Well, it is hard to be practical on such a morning as this, but presently I will try to be. Hullo! Here is cock robin at my window again. Three times he has been here before.

"You'd better go, Cockie, the cat's here."

He edges back a little and sings defiance at me.

"What care I for the cat," he says nodding viciously towards my hammock in which the great half-Persian Linton Lowerin is fast asleep.

"Well," I answer, "here is a sugar-coated pill for you; or rather, Cockie, it is a ferruginous tabloid with a little aloin in it. I've no more food for you, so you must have physic."

I place the tabloid on the window ledge, and next moment Cockie has flown away with it. Now I love that bird, and so I repent at once of my folly. Why, there is enough iron and aloin in that tabloid for a grown man, and surely too much for even the sturdiest and cheekiest of robins. But my fears are soon laid at rest. He stations himself on a post and proceeds to dissect it. The sugar tastes nice but the contents, ah! how bitter!

"A bad egg!" he seems to say as he throws it on the grass for some poor unhappy itinerant rat to eat.

Let me count now. Why! in a little time spring will be here. Long before then bud and burgeon will be appearing on hedgerow and tree; the rooks will have their callow young; many other birds will be building, the lark will be soaring and singing, the days

getting longer, and sunshine and hope everywhere.

What a happy, happy time is spring! Why, even delicate invalids who were confined to their rooms half the weary winter through, may now show their pale faces amid the greenery of the gardens, stroll slowly up and down the sheltered walks, or bask on rustic seats in the sunshine, drinking in health with every breath of the balmy spring air.

Sunshine? Oh, we don't get half enough of it, and we don't make sufficient use of it when we do get it. The ancient Romans knew nothing about telegraphs and telephones nor electric light, but they knew the value of a light far more wholesome, namely that of the sun. And they used to have sunshine baths in specially arranged rooms, that is the richer and wiser did. But in our busy days we never think of such a thing. We haven't time really, but anyhow, the invalid—you, miss, or your dear mother or auntie who has nothing to do but get well, should be out in every blink of sunshine. Because sunshine and light are tonics of rare value, especially if taken in conjunction with fresh air.

A ray of sunshine on a young girl's face is in reality nature's own pencil, held by nature's own hand and designed to make her beautiful. No girl who wishes to look well can afford to hide her face from the spring sunshine. The sun in summer may blister and burn, but in spring-time it is your dearest friend.

But while the sunshine at this time of the year is all that is desirable, spring winds are often high and cold. The east wind for instance, although bracing to those who can stand it and walk or ride against it, is often very trying to those who are subject to colds, or slight bronchitis. But I do not advise such tender morsels of humanity to keep indoors for all that. Nor to wear thick, heavy clothing. The dress should be warm but light, and of course all wool.

The corset of the invalid should just give support, but never be tightened. If it is worn tight I can assure you that your health will never improve. On a due expansion of the lungs much more depends than most people imagine. The generality of girls don't know how to breathe, or they can't do so owing to the tightness of the corset. Therefore it is