

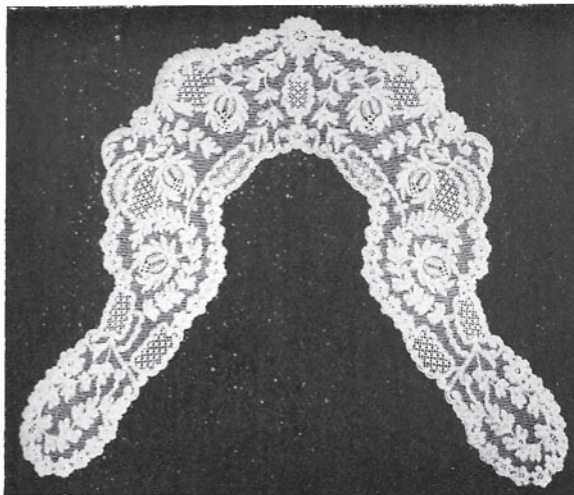
Bucks. Lace

THE decline of the English lace industry during the second half of the nineteenth century and its partial preservation through the efforts of the various lace associations organised by charitable ladies is fairly well understood by most people interested in lace. What is less well understood at the present time is the extent and nature of the revival which is taking place and the practical difficulties connected therewith. I am speaking now of the Buckinghamshire lace district, which comprises parts of Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, and Huntingdonshire, though much of what I say may refer also to the Honiton lace district in Devonshire.

There is a considerable body of women throughout the district who have never given up lace-making, and there are a very great number who have taken to lace-making again during the last three or four years, not having worked at it since their girlhood. These latter are considerably astonished at being told that they must make what they call the "old-fashioned lace," which means the point-ground made by their mothers and grandmothers, instead of the Maltese which they learnt as children in the lace school.

We now come to the younger generation, the real difficulty of the situation. During the last few years a good many young married women with time on their hands have been learning lace-making from their mothers, but not having been trained as young children, they cannot make much headway with the fine close point-ground laces. There are a few brilliant exceptions, but most of them want to do coarse, easily-made laces, and the prices of these in consequence tend to drop. It is impossible to train the children as they were trained in the old lace schools, because they are obliged to go to the village elementary school. It is impossible to keep the girls at home and teach them lace-making when they leave school, as it will be so long before they can earn enough

to keep themselves. The industry is an excellent one for married women in their spare time, but is not good enough for untrained girls before marriage. Since we cannot go back to lace schools, would it not be possible to effect a compromise? Dare we suggest giving up two hours a day of school-time to teaching girls lace-making, with the idea that they could take it up as a trade after their marriage, or if compelled for any reason to stay at a home? Would county education committees ever consider such a possibility? Is this beautiful art of fine point-ground lace-making to disappear in the interests of very elementary education?



BUCKS. POINT-GROUND COLLAR FROM AN OLD DESIGN



LEAF FROM A FAN IN BUCKS. POINT-GROUND LACE MODERN DESIGN