

JAPANESE FANS.



IT was a very matter-of-fact and incomplete description which Dr. Johnson gave when he said the fan was "an instrument used by ladies to move the air and cool themselves." A French poet was nearer the truth when he wrote, "The fan of a belle is the sceptre of the world."

According to Addison, "Women are armed with fans as men with swords, and sometimes do more execution with them." In

a paper in the *Spectator* this writer gives an account of an academy in which the use of the fan is taught, ladies being there shown the way to handle, discharge, ground, and flutter their fans in the most effective style. "In the flutter of a fan," he observes, "there is the angry flutter, the modest flutter, the timorous flutter, the confused flutter, the merry flutter, and the amorous flutter." As for angry fans, "I have seen," he adds, "a fan so very angry, that it would have been dangerous for the absent lover who provoked it to have come within the wind of it."

We may not be so skilful as our great-grandmothers of the days of Queen Anne, but much may yet be accomplished by careful study combined with frequent practice. In the hands of an adept, the fan, by peculiar movements, can undoubtedly be made to express love, disdain, modesty, hope, fear, and countless other emotions. If any one wishes to see fan-firtation and fan-telegraphy elaborated into a system, let him reside for awhile in Spain, or in one of the Spanish colonies of South America. Watch some dark-eyed beauty; why, she is, at one and the same time, by the gracious movements of her fan, calming the heat of summer and telegraphing to a friend at the far-away end of the room, "I shall be very glad to see you at such-and-such an hour to-morrow forenoon."

A history of fans—if an historian could be found worthy of the subject—would be curious reading. The first page would take us back to the early ages of the world, when a primitive race kept off insects, and produced a cooling breeze, by means of a few lotus or palm leaves. Upwards of 3,000 years ago the artists of ancient Egypt painted the fan on the walls of the tombs at Thebes.

The folding fan was an early invention of the Japanese, who have always been famed for their skill in its manufacture. Adopted in China, it was brought from that country into Portugal during the fifteenth century; in the next century it was in general use in Portugal, Spain, and Italy. From Spain it found its way, in the sixteenth century, into France, with the Italian perfumers in the suite of Catherine de Medici. Soon it became fashionable at court, and no toilet was

thought complete without a fan. Fans often cost in those days from £12 to £15 sterling. France took kindly to fans, and devoted much artistic skill to their manufacture. The dress-fan of a high class is now exclusively made in Paris, and in no other city does a modern fan command a price of £100.

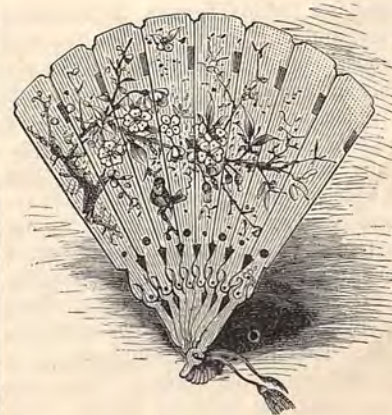
In England fans were used by the ladies in the reign of Henry VIII., and are said to have been introduced in the preceding reign. Queen Elizabeth, when in all the glory of full dress, wore a fan as part of her sumptuous attire.

The fan, it will have been seen, comes to us from the East, the home of wonders; and the folding-fan, we have told, is a Japanese invention. Even to this day the fan forms an integral portion of the national costume of Japan, and plays a large part in the everyday life of that country.

When two Europeans meet, they lift their hats by way of salutation; the Japanese content themselves with agitating their fans. It is on his fan that the rich man lays the alms he gives to the poor, and on his fan that he receives the dainties with which he regales himself. The Japanese youngster knows to his cost that the schoolmaster often uses his fan—a good stout one—as an instrument of punishment. The beauty hides her smiles behind her fan, and to see a troupe of Japanese girls dance the fandance is something worth remembering.

An almost fabulous number of fans are exported from Japan to all parts of the world; no fewer than 3,000,000 fans, valued at 90,000 dollars, were, according to Consul Annesley's commercial report on Hiogo and

Osaka issued lately, shipped from these ports in 1875. Osaka is the principal city for the manufacture of the "ogi," or folding fans, which are almost exclusively those exported, all descriptions of the bamboo kind being made there,



the figures, writing, &c., being executed in Kiyôto. The principle of division of labour is carried out a long way in this branch of industry. The bamboo ribs of the fans are made by private people in their own houses, and combinations of the various notches cut in the lower part are left to one of the finishing



workmen, who forms the various patterns of the handles according to plans prepared by the designer. In like manner the designer gives out to the engravers the patterns which he thinks will be saleable; and, when the blocks have been cut, decides what colours are to be used for each part of the design, and what different sheets are to be used for the opposite sides of each fan.



When these sheets, with the sets of bamboo slips which are to form the ribs, have been handed over to the workman, he, in the first instance, folds them so that they will retain the crease. This is done by putting them between two pieces of heavily-oiled paper, which are properly creased. The

fans are then folded up together, and placed under pressure.

When sufficient time has elapsed the sheets are taken out, and the moulds used again; the released sheets having been packed up for at least twenty-four hours in their folds. The ribs, which are temporarily arranged in order on a wire, are then taken and set in their places on one of the sheets, after it has been spread out on a block and pasted. A dash of paste then gives the woodwork adhesive powers, and that part of the process is finished by affixing the remaining piece of paper. The fan is folded up and opened three or four times before the folds get into proper shape, and by the time it is put by to dry it has received an amount of handling which Japanese paper alone would endure. When the insides are dry the riveting of the pieces together—including the outer covering—is rapidly done, and a dash of varnish quickly finishes the fan.

The sale of fans in the olden time in Japan seldom exceeded 10,000 for the whole country; times have changed, however, for the foreigner has set foot there, and the old days of seclusion and limited trade are over. The number of fans ordered for the Philadelphia Exhibition alone amounted to over 800,000, at a cost of about 50,000 dollars.

The designs for the mounts of Japanese fans are sometimes of a very interesting description, and always strikingly unlike the productions of European art. One peculiarity of the art of Japan has been pointed out by a recent critic. If a Japanese artist has any space to adorn, he does not seek out the centre and place his ornament there, for although that would be the obvious means of securing proportion, it would not satisfy a taste directly derived from a study of nature, where proportion is rather suggested than actually expressed. We find, therefore, that the Japanese artist, imitating the ways of nature, throws his design a little out of the precise balance, and trusts



to the spectator to judge of the result by an association of impressions similarly derived. The firm touch and accuracy of Japanese artistic work are remarkable, and no one can overlook the spirit of fun indulged in by the artist whenever he has the chance. The fun is the expression of the genius of the people. They are always laughing, and always ready to take a joke or to make one. But Japanese art, it must be confessed, is not what it once was. The intruding foreigner has made of late a deep impression, and since the world began there has probably never been such a thorough turning upside down of everything as that which is still going on in Japan. The worst of it is that



foreigners do not always bring civilisation and culture; it is often the very reverse. To speak only of fans, instead of encouraging native designs, they have had their fans ornamented with advertisements of patent shoe-brushes and cork-screws, and left nothing to the Japanese designer but the choice of colours.

Japanese damsels, we may remark, are not at all unattractive young ladies. Here is a portrait of one of them, just sixteen years old, described in a tale by Mr. A. B. Mitford:—"She was neither too fat nor too thin, neither too tall nor too short; her face was oval like a melon-seed, and her complexion fair and white; her eyes were narrow and bright; her teeth small and even; her nose was aquiline; and her mouth delicately

formed, with lovely lips; her eyebrows were long and fine; she had a profusion of long black hair; she spoke modestly with a soft sweet voice; and when she smiled two lovely dimples appeared in her cheeks: in all her movements she was gentle and refined." Deck this beauty out in brave array, and give her a fan in her hand, dashingly tinted in white, blue, and red, and covered with enigmatical ornaments: now, who would not fall in love with the narrow eyes and melon-seed-shaped-face?

In China the rôle of the fan is as important as it is in Japan. It is in general use among all conditions of both men and women; the rich and the poor, priests, men of letters, and soldiers have it always in hand.

During very hot weather, the head of a Chinese household takes his fan after tea is drunk, and holding it with both hands makes a bow to the company, saying, "Thsing-chen" (I invite you to make use of your fans). Every one then picks up his fan and employs it with much modesty and decorum.

JAMES MASON.