

About Fans.

BY MAJOR L. RAMEL.

IF we may believe the great Chinese essayist, Pin Ching Lung, the idea of the fan was hit in the beginning of the Kiang dynasty, some 5,700 years ago, at a feast of lanterns, where the beautiful Kan-si, daughter of Blue-Buttoned Mandarin of the Loo Kong district, found herself so hot that, contrary to etiquette, she was obliged to take off her mask, with which partly to hide her blushes, partly to cool her heated face, she commenced upon herself the process now known as "fanning." The action was seen and admired by Kan-si's young and fair companions, and at once, says the eloquent and truthful Pin Ching Lung, "ten thousand hands agitated ten thousand masks." Other writers, among them the learned and quaint Froissard, have discovered the origin of the fan in the necessity felt in all hot climates for keeping off flies, whether from the sacred offerings in temples or from the hands and faces of officiating priests or from the persons of noble distinction. In China and India the original model of the fan was the wing of a bird, and an admirable fan can be made from two bird's wings joined by a strip of ivory or wood.

The fans of the high priests of Isis were in the form of a half circle, made of feathers of different lengths. Such, too, were the fans carried in triumphal processions, and which, among the ancient Egyptians and Persians, served as military standards in time of war.

The Sibyls are said to have been in the habit of fanning themselves while delivering their oracles, the fan being evidently not regarded in those days as in any way connected with frivolity. The fans carried by the Roman ladies during the Augustan age were not like the most ancient Chinese fans, made in one piece, whether of paper, gauze, or silk, but were composed of little tablets of perfumed wood, specimens of which can be seen at the museums of Florence and Naples.

The ladies of high rank and fashion were followed by fan-bearers, or *flabelliferae*, whenever they went out promenading or visiting, and guests of either sex were fanned by slaves at dinner.

The earliest reference to fans by a classical author occurs in Euripides' tragedy of "Helen," where one of the characters, a eunuch, relates how, according to the ancient Phrygian



HAWTHORN (THE MAY).

custom, he has fanned the hair, face, and bosom of the beautiful heroine.

The fans of the middle ages were worn in good society, suspended by gold or silver chains fastened to the girdle, and were usually made of peacocks', ostrichs' and parrots' feathers, and sometimes, also, of pheasants' feathers. They were sold in large numbers in the markets of the Levant, whence they were sent to Venice, and from there to other parts of Italy.

The fan was introduced in France by Catharine de Médici, where it was quickly adopted by the belles of the period and also by effeminate fops. Thus, Henri's notorious minions habitually carried fans.

Under the "*Grand Monarque*," and also under his successor, Louis XV., the art of painting fans was brought to great perfection.

Among the celebrated artists who have not disdained to employ their talents in the artistic decoration of the fan, Watteau and Boucher must first be named.

In our own time, Diaz the great colorist, Eugene Lami so well known by his marine pictures, Hamon the painter of scenes from ancient Roman life, and Gaverni, celebrated as a caricaturist, but who has exercised his talents in almost every department of art, have all painted fans. The most famous sculptor and decorator of fans in the present day is Froment Meurice, a jeweler and goldsmith, but who is in fact a great artist: he displayed at the last Paris Exposition the most beautiful collection of fans ever got up, and which

received the most flattering praises of artists, connoisseurs and critics.

Parisian fans are esteemed all over the world for their artistic beauty and workmanship. The leading manufacturers and dealers are Messieurs Susse Frères, Place de la Bourse, M. Henri of the Magasin de la Pensée, Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré, and M. Chardin, in the Rue du Bae in the Quartier Saint Germain. A visit to any of the above places will repay the lover of art, for he will see there some of the most beautiful specimens of that elegant appendage of feminine attire.

The French Fanmakers' Company was established by edict in 1683, when to be received into the corporation or guild, it was declared necessary to have served four years' apprenticeship, and to have produced a "masterpiece."

The masterpiece, however, was not required of the sons of fanmakers nor of apprentices who had married fanmakers' daughters. A great number of processes are employed in

fanmaking, and each girl or man have separate parts to make, such as cutting the frame, shaping, polishing, trimming, engraving, inlaying painting, gilding, and riveting. The web has to be printed, gummed, colored and retouched. Yet, after passing through so many hands, fans are sold in Paris at one *sou* (one cent) apiece. This is the lowest figure, and the highest I have seen was one lovely one at M. Henri's, which was offered for two thousand francs (400 dollars). Some fans have cost a great deal more than that, for instance one made by the Messieurs Susse, for the lovely Ex-Empress Eugénie, and on which Boucher lavished all his talents, cost 12,000 francs (\$2,400), or that made for the Princess of Wales by Chardin, cost 8,000 francs.

Fans are generally divided into two classes, those consisting of one web of paper or silk, and those which are made up of several pieces of ivory, wood, or other materials. The former are held to be the best for fanning, and the latter for skuffling, or for the little *manœuvre* known as "flirting" the fan.

It was during the reign of Elizabeth, about the year 1570, that fans were introduced in England, and they soon became "fashionable," if we may judge from the innumerable portraits of the belles of good Queen Bess' court at Hampton Court. They are said to have been imported from Italy, but it is more probable that they reached England from Paris, where they were the "furore," during the reign of Catharine de Médici.