

EDITOR'S TABLE.

EDITORIAL CHIT-CHAT.

WHEREIN JAPANESE ART IS SUPERIOR.—The superiority of Japanese art, in delineating birds, insects, foliage, etc., is now universally conceded. Dr. Dresser, in his able work on Japan, attributes this excellence partly to the love which the Japanese all have for nature, and for birds and animals especially, and partly to the fact that they use the brush, and not the pencil, in making their drawings.

This latter habit originates in the Japanese method of writing. Characters, as we know, are used as the signs of the written language; and these the child has to draw with a brush, holding the paper, which is absorbent, in his hand. Thus the whole arm works, motion being got from the shoulder, the elbow, and the wrist alike. From the first, therefore, the Japanese child in learning to write is unconsciously learning to draw with a free hand. Here, in the United States, he would learn to write with a hard pen or pencil; and with the same hard point he would make his first attempts at free-hand drawing; and only after he had become accustomed to the hard point would he have the yielding brush placed in his fingers. By the Japanese method the child learns the value of touches with a thoroughness impracticable under any other system, and the admixture of solid black with outline-drawing imparts an effectiveness and life to much of his work which is wholly lacking in many of the productions of our art-schools. On this point no one who will examine the extremely beautiful examples given by Dr. Dresser in the first chapter of the second part of his valuable volume can remain in any doubt.

But it is not only in the freedom of their drawing that the Japanese excel: they surpass us also in the art of coloring. They do not hesitate to employ, and with the most brilliant effect, the strongest hues: red, blue, green, white, gold. The greater part of the space to be covered is broken up by patterns interlacing each other often with astonishing intricacy; but some broad mass of leading color is always interposed unbroken at definite intervals to impart solidity to the whole. It would not be too much to say that the magnificence of the Sainte Chapelle of St. Louis, at Paris, that wonder of Middle Age coloring, is but poor in comparison with the splendor of some of the greatest Japanese temples; and for majestic and solemn impressiveness, so far as we refer to color, the advantage, according to Dr. Dresser, would rest altogether with the latter. We have to imagine the elaborate paneled vault of the ceiling soaring a hundred feet above us, while the overhanging roof, extending nearly to the railings of the balcony surrounding the shrine, softens the intensity of the sunlight, the light which ultimately reaches the ceiling being all reflected from a floor of black lacquer which has received the highest polish.

As our readers well know, however, the Japanese excel in other things, beside the mere drawing of birds, animals, and foliage. Their bronzes, in their way, are wonderful; and so is their decoration of porcelain, their lacquer, etc., etc. This superiority is owing, in a measure, to the fact that the Japanese workman carries his work himself through every one of its stages, whether his task be that of working in metal or lacquer, of preparing woven fabrics, or of pottery in any of its branches. Each workman thus looks on his work, while it is going on, as on a child that he loves. It is his creation, in the same sense in which a poem or a picture is the creation of a poet or a painter; and the feelings which it excites in him are not less strong. He is striving

after beauty in every shape, not after money. In Japan, the merchant, Dr. Dresser assures us, has no status whatever, though he be as rich as Croesus. Money alone, he adds, buys no position, and a prince will spend hours in conversation with a skilled workman, while the richest merchant would be beneath his notice. As a rule, the wife of the Japanese artisan attends, not only to the household, but even looks after the sale of her husband's work. The workman, therefore, can give his whole time—as it were, his whole soul—to his work. In this way there has been developed, in Japan, not merely a patience altogether marvelous in the most minute and complete finishing of every detail, not merely a mechanical excellence seldom equaled and never surpassed; but a power of delineating life, especially the life of birds and beasts, which places the Japanese in the front rank of the artists of any age or country. It is strange to see in drawings which exhibit great defects of general perspective, portraits of animals which actually live on the canvas or the paper. We may look at a parliament of storks, each in a different attitude, all studied with the most affectionate care—all made, we might say, to show their thoughts without imparting to them in the smallest degree the appearance of exaggeration or caricature. At the Centennial Exhibition, several screens were exhibited, with processions of grasshoppers delineated on them, that were absolutely wonderful.

THE COLORED PATTERN in this number is one of those expensive affairs only to be found in "Peterson." Each color has to be printed separately, and consequently the cost is very great. These patterns are as useful as they are beautiful. They are a proof, with many others, that "Peterson" always gives the best of its kind, no matter at what outlet.

THE ARTICLE INQUIRED ABOUT by our fair subscriber, M. A., was advertised in our advertising department, last month. A careful perusal of those columns would render unnecessary hundreds of similar questions addressed to us. There is scarcely anything which a lady needs that is not advertised in our advertising department.

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EVENING PARTIES, at this season of the year, at least in the country, and at seaside and other resorts, are so frequent, that we devote our colored fashion-plate, this month, entirely to evening-dresses suitable for such assemblages.

CHAIR-SEATS.—Brown linen, embroidered in coarse crewels, in two or three shades of one color, in a small set pattern, is very durable; also serge cloth.