

# Beauty in Art for the Hand of Beauty



*The Famous Fans of the Time of Louis XV.*

*Depicting Rural Enjoyments Water Color Scene on Ivory Shade*

*Scenes of Convent Life*

SOME very beautiful fans have been produced by the makers' art as a result of the recent renaissance of that important aid to woman's coquetry. It is doubtful, however, if present-day fan-making genius can excel—even equal in many respects—the wonderful French creations of the half century or so immediately preceding the Revolution.

sunshade, when needed for that purpose, and its use as such may have inspired the invention of the parasol. While the dress fan was considerably smaller in size, it was correspondingly more elegant. Most of those used in England, it is thought, were imported from France.

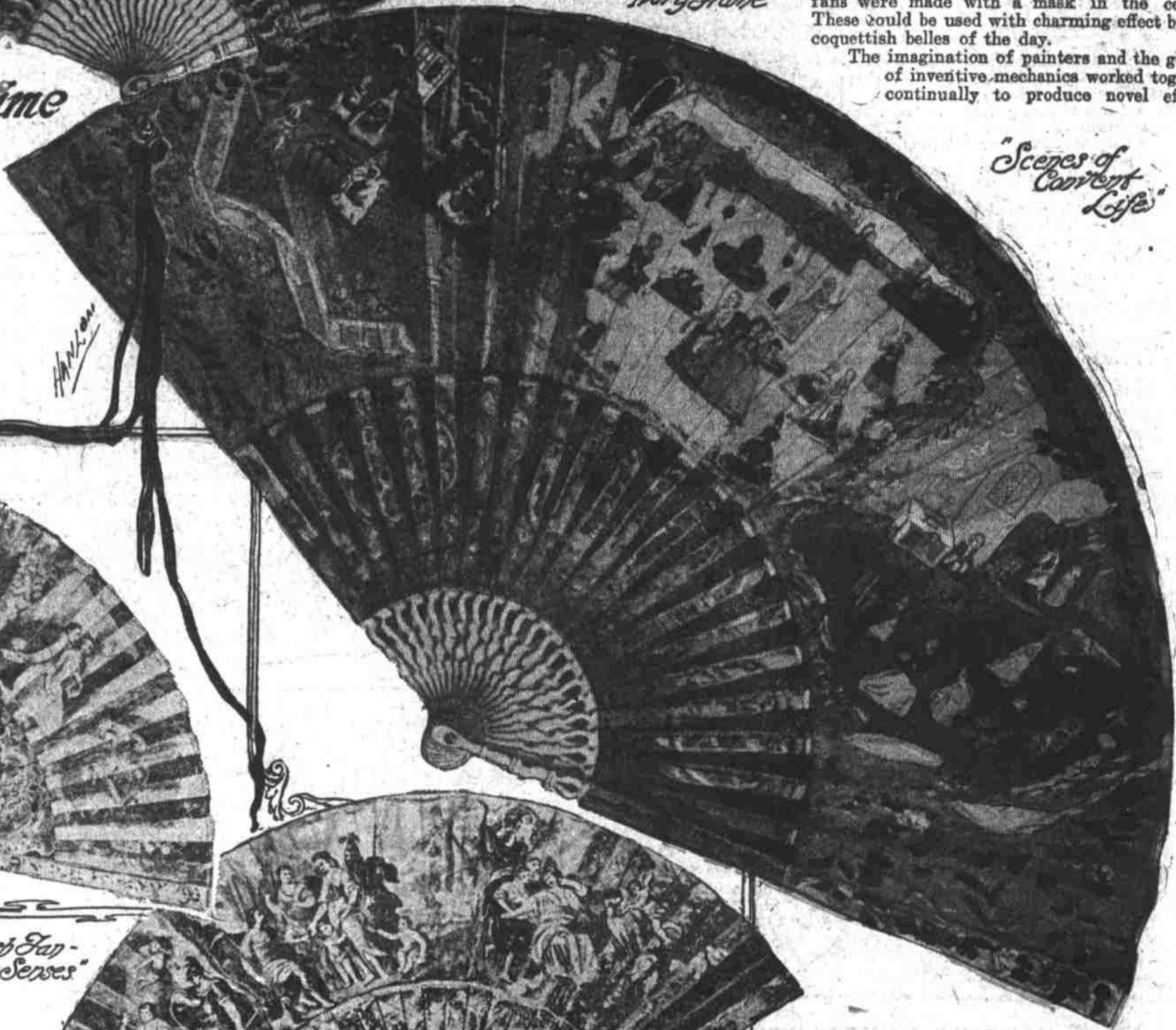
For, centuries ago, the French became famous as fan-makers. Each succeeding generation seemed to im-

Last winter this country witnessed a remarkable revival of the enormous feather or plume fans, with their handsome sticks of carved ivory. Particularly were they in evidence at operatic performances as pleasing adjuncts to costly gowns and sparkling gems.

But the belles of the day of Louis XV. had made for them fans calculated to delight by their beauty the heart of woman in any age. Collections of these in European museums are among the most highly prized



*"The Shepherd Fan - The Five Senses"*



*Presenting Mythological Subjects*



*The Coquette's Choice - The Mask Fan*

of the relics of the past, and are certainly among the most beautiful.

Perhaps it was the inspiration of rare June days that lit up the art genius of those old fan-makers—who, by the way, formed one of the earliest trusts of history—as pastoral scenes and outdoor enjoyments formed the major part of the decorative schemes employed.

FROM out the remote antiquity of the East came the fan, to be the delight and companion of the women of succeeding centuries.

As far back as history reaches, the Hebrews, Egyptians, Chinese and the miscellaneous population of India could be found with the fan "in their midst."

From the collection of Egyptian antiquities in the British Museum, the fan, as an article of feminine taste and luxury, is found to be as old as the agricultural implement.

In fact, it is quite probable that Mother Eve, on warm summer days, discovered the palm leaf to be almost as useful in the first household of the world as was the fig leaf.

From Roman usage the fan was handed down to the ladies of France, Spain and Italy, and from those countries it crossed the channel, as did the early Christian missionaries, into England.

In those early days there were walking, or outdoor, fans as well as those for use on dress occasions. An enormous affair, usually, was the walking fan; it was large enough to serve as a

prove in the art, until, by the middle of the eighteenth century, the beautiful creations such as are now preserved so carefully in museums were evolved.

At that time the master fan-makers zealously guarded their trade. There was a guild of such workers, who formed an exceedingly close corporation. In 1753 this select class numbered only 150 members, and their monopoly was a profitable one.

In the decorative schemes of the period pastoral scenes and the human figure occupied the principal place.

Themes were treated with more or less boldness, according to the prevailing sentiment of the day, the strictness or laxity of the moral code.

Naked beauty was frequently presented in an atmosphere of sensuality that good taste had a right to reprove. In those days the right was not frequently exercised, however.

The pastorals were often decidedly more terrestrial than celestial in suggestion. The gods and demigods were generally exiled from the scenes.

There were scenes of lovers' meetings, of romances in the parks, of romping children and shepherd maidens, of see-saws and swings and playing fountains, of water nymphs and gnomes, of fairies, sprites and, sometimes, of angels.

Beautifully done in water-colors upon specially prepared parchment, many of these creations indicated artistic genius of a high order.

When stitched upon a framework representing the highest expression of the ivory carver's skill, a fan of this kind could well become the prize possession of a queen.

From the ideal, artistic fancy, in time, swung to the chimerical, and the imagination of the artists was extended throughout the range of the great human families, and even into the animal kingdom.

Alongside pretty shepherdesses with their crooks were to be found Chinese, with pointed caps, drooping moustaches and queues falling to the heels.

There were doves in these schemes of ornamentation, and there were monkeys metamorphosed into

be done by one painter, perhaps one of more than ordinary distinction, while the reverse, on back, would be the product of another and, perhaps, rather mediocre genius.

For such work the prominent painters of the day were paid good prices, at least for those times.

But the world has always craved novelty, and, in time, the dandies and grand dames whose patronage contributed to the prosperity of the fan-makers, demanded something more than mere beauty.

Pastoral scenes, cupids, shepherdesses and other such ornamental devices were all right in their way and pleasing enough to look upon, but, after all, there was a monotony in gazing continuously upon a mere panorama of nature.

Accordingly, mechanical genius was called to the aid of art. In imitation of certain entertaining pocket watches of the period, it became the custom to conceal mechanism in the handles of the fans, by which small figures in the face of the fan were given motion and made to do amusing stunts.

### GENIUS EVOLVED NOVELTY

In the decoration of the fan, for example, a lover might be seen in the act of serenading his sweetheart. By pressing a button, the beauty for whom the serenade was intended could be made to appear at a window, or on a balcony, with true Romeo-and-Juliet effect.

Or, the picture might show a shepherd leaning against a well and mournfully playing a flute. A touch of a spring, and a pretty shepherdess would arise from the well, with a smile of welcome on her face and a bouquet in her hand.

Sometimes the fancy of the artist would depict the interior of a convent, showing the somberly garbed sisters in meditation or some quiet pursuit—possibly to impress the more frivolous-minded among the young women of the world.

For the mask balls so popular at that time fans were made with a mask in the center. These could be used with charming effect by the coquettish belles of the day.

The imagination of painters and the genius of inventive mechanics worked together continually to produce novel effects,

and that they succeeded is shown by many specimens of their combined skill that have survived.

Relations of cause and effect were well demonstrated by the popularity of fans in France during the gayest era of that country's history. Their widespread favor aroused the makers to their best efforts, and the beautiful products of their skill made such fans all the more in demand.

Indeed, the woman who went out without her fan was regarded as having failed to recognize the most elementary notions of good taste.

Favart, a famous Parisian actor of the middle of the eighteenth century, was a noted authority on fans and was skilled in their manufacture. It was fortunate for him that such was the case.

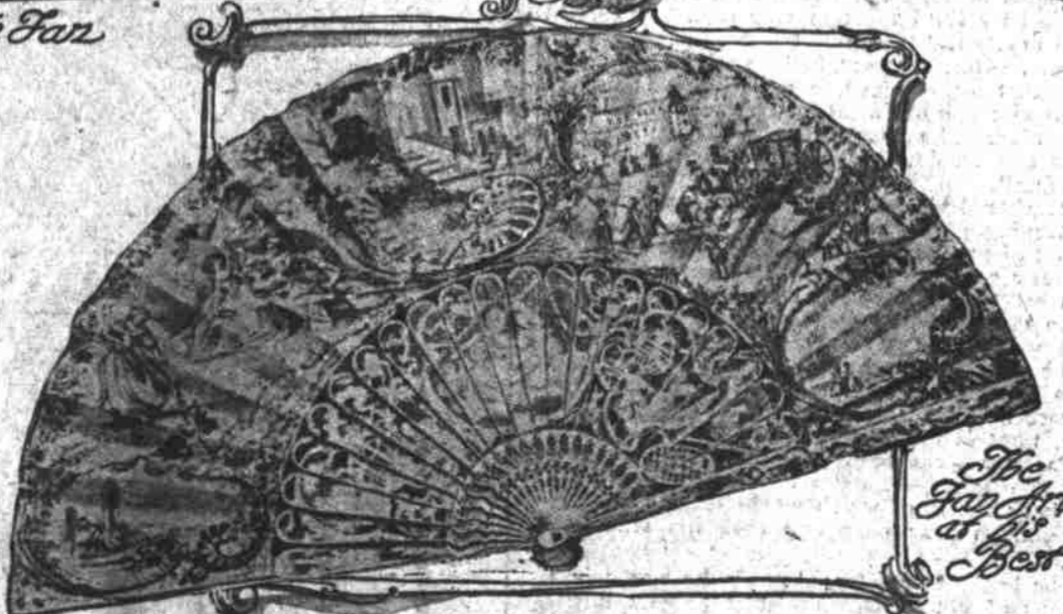
Domestic difficulties brought him under the displeasure of the powerful Marshal Saxe, and the actor was compelled to conceal himself in a cellar. There, for a long time, he managed to secure enough money for his needs by painting beautiful fans by the light of a lamp.

men; there were serpents, too, but civilized serpents, graceful in appearance and seemingly willing to be charmed by the melody of the shepherd's pipe.

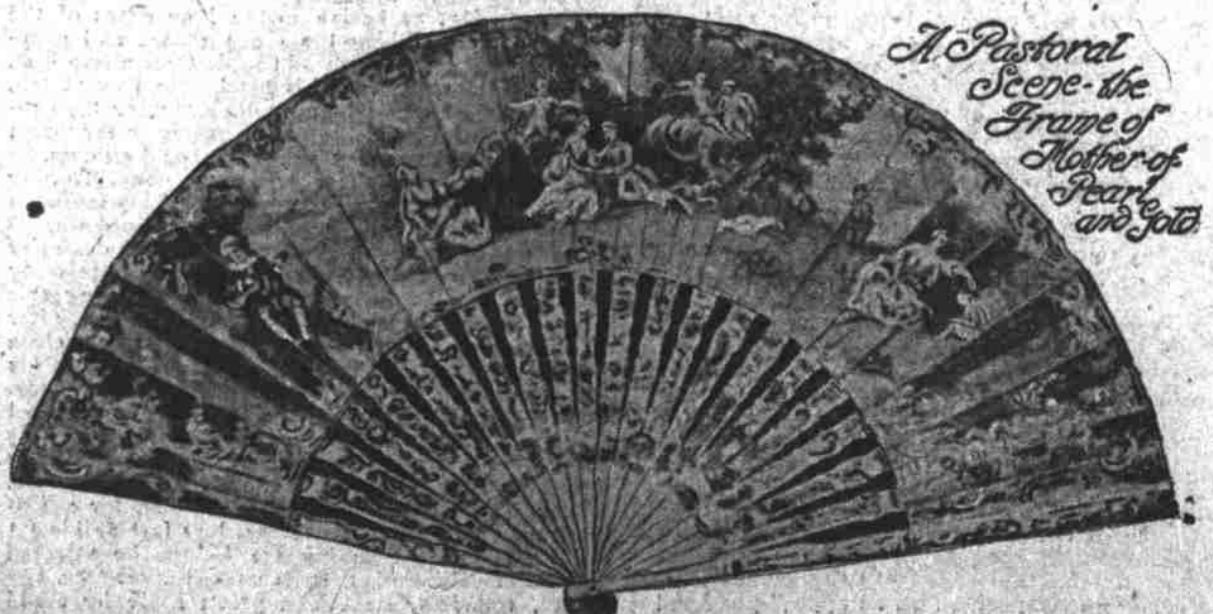
Of course, flowers, garlands and bouquets were used liberally by the fan-makers, and many of the delicate picture effects were beautiful in the extreme.

In fact, some famous painters used to give their best efforts to these tasks, painting in water-colors. Frequently the medallions would be by an eminent artist, while the border and other ornaments were by a different hand.

Sometimes, too, the face of the fan might



*The Fan Artist at his Best*



*A Pastoral Scene - the Frame of Pearl and Gold*