

transparencies made of paper or stuff and painted with ornaments and the characters denoting complimentary messages.

In no other country has the wood-cut developed to such a degree of perfection as in Japan. It is not only used for the fine art "Hokusais" and "Utamaras" but often also for small advertising matter. It is the cheapest means of making good reproductions of advertisements in large editions. It is the custom in Japan that every business man should present his customers with some small souvenir at New Year. This usually takes the form of a colored wood-cut of medium size—the subject varying according to the prevailing fashions for women and children.

When European civilisation made its way into Japan and the masses began to read newspapers and magazines, business men found a far wider field than hitherto open to their advertisements. From this time on, Japanese advertising adapted itself entirely to European methods. From year to year it became more intense, competition in high-class advertising became very keen and every possible opportunity was taken advantage of. It has now become the fashion to advertise in as "American" a manner as possible. Unfortunately, real advertising artists are lacking in Japan, and therefore commercial art is by no means so good as it might be. Before European influence became so marked in Japan, Japanese art was employed for advertising of every kind. Business houses instituted prize competitions in order to obtain good advertising designs. But the encroachments of European influence also caused a gradual revolution in the realm of advertisement and European models are

now imitated to the smallest detail. The result is neither Japanese nor European. It is a faulty and tasteless mixture. But Japan is going through a transition period and we may well expect that in its future development, Japanese commercial art will work its way out to a style of its own.

Trans. by E. T. Scheffauer.



Two examples of modern poster art in Japan