



OF THE

## DETROIT MUSEUM OF ART

January, 1907

DETROIT, MICHIGAN.

Number 12

### JAPANESE LACQUERS.

It is in the manufacture of lacquered objects that Japan has attained her greatest distinction in the industrial arts. This noblest of Japanese crafts, purely native in origin and development, has become world renowned, and just as China has given its name to all porcelain, so we never see anything that has been lacquered, but we speak of it as japed. Japan gives its name to every lustrous black surface or preparation of the nature of a lacquer. Foremost among the wares for which Japan has become celebrated, and in the manufacture of which she is pre-eminent among nations, lacquer has been one of her chief industries beyond the knowledge of men, or the historical records.

Wood is the usual basis for lacquer articles, and the following notes upon the manufacture, gleaned from books in our library, are given to help in the proper appreciation of the collection in the possession of this institution.

The pieces of wood of which an article is to be made are often no thicker than a sheet of paper. The grain of the wood and joints are then primed with powdered stone or chopped hemp. It is needless to say that the wood is thoroughly dried and seasoned, and that this is well done is evident from the fact that hardly ever is a piece found which is warped. Boxes made two hundred years ago are as perfect in this respect as they were the

day they issued from the maker's hands. After the fitting of the pieces the joints are ground down with a whetstone and covered with a mixture of burnt clay and varnish, which when dry is again smoothed down with a whetstone. The article is then covered with a hempen cloth or paper pasted on with the utmost care. Then from one to five more coats of the varnish-clay mixture are applied, after which it is ready for the lacquer.

Lac, a gum resin extrated from the trunk of the *Rhus vernicifera*, contains seventy per cent of lac, four per cent gum arabic, two per cent of albumen, and the rest water. The water is evaporated and gamboge, cinabar, acetous protoxide or other coloring matter is added.

The lacquer is laid on the object first with a spatula, afterwards a brush of human hair, and polishing, drying and laying on of the different layers of lac are gone through until it is a smooth lustreless, dark gray surface ready for the decorator.

The most oft recurring form of lac is that in which the ground is gold dust covered with coatings of transparent lacquer.

The name hira-makiye is applied to all lacs where the design is not raised above the surface more than the thickness of the lines; taka-makiye to those which are raised.

Since 1876, when Japan made really her first effort to

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BULLETIN OF THE  
**Detroit Museum of Art**

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE  
**DETROIT MUSEUM OF ART**

Jefferson Avenue and Hastings Street

Incorporated February 16th, 1885

**OFFICERS**

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 Secretary and Treasurer, FRED E. FARNSWORTH  
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FRED K. STEARNS	-	-	-	Term Expires 1910
JOHN M. DONALDSON	-	-	-	Term Expires 1910
MARVIN PRESTON	-	-	-	Term Expires 1910

Trustee meetings are held on the second Saturday of July, October, January and April, at 4 p. m.

**Hours of Admission.**

The Museum is open to the public FREE every day in the week from 9 a. m. to 4 p. m., except Sunday, when the hours are from 2 to 4 p. m.

**Catalogs.**

Catalogs and souvenir postal cards are on sale at the entrance and in the galleries.

**Classes From Schools.**

Teachers with classes from the public schools will be assisted by the attendants at the Museum in the study of any department, upon request. It is asked that such requests be made before the visit.

**Membership.**

An Annual Membership has been organized, the receipts from members to be used as a fund for the purchase of pictures for the Museum. The annual fee is ten dollars. Applications for membership may be addressed to the Director.

Annual members will receive all publications issued by, as well as invitations to all exhibitions, receptions and lectures given under the auspices of the Detroit Museum of Art.

**Gifts and Bequests.**

The Detroit Museum of Art receives endowments and gifts of money to be applied to the general or specific purposes of the Museum, and gifts and loans of paintings, sculpture and other objects that come within the scope of the different departments.

**Bulletin.**

Copies of the Bulletin, to which all visitors are welcome, may be obtained at the library and at the entrance of the Museum, or they will be mailed regularly to any address upon the receipt of postage.

**Contribution Boxes.**

Contributions placed in the boxes in the Statuary Court will be used as a People's Fund for the purchase of objects of art. Visitors desiring to show their appreciation of the work done by the Museum may do so by placing here any sum they see fit.

**Library and Print Room.**

The new library is on the third floor and contains works of especial value to students of art and those interested in the Museum collections. The librarian is constantly present to give information to readers. A collection of drawings, prints and etchings is also in the charge of the librarian, and will be shown to visitors upon request. The photograph collection contains several hundred photographs of painting, sculpture, architecture and miscellaneous subjects.

**Copying.**

The Detroit Museum of Art desires to give every facility to the art student, designer or mechanic who wishes to study or copy, objects in the Museum collections. There are hundreds of objects which would suggest form or design for articles of utility and beauty. Application made to the attendants in charge will receive attention.

**LECTURE ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

The following list of topics will be used by Director Griffith for the lectures, given each Sunday afternoon at 3 o'clock.

January 6—Berlin and its environs.  
 January 13—Dresden and its galleries.  
 January 20—Strassburg and the storks.  
 January 27—Holland and the Dutch.  
 February 3—Amsterdam and Rainbrandt.  
 February 10—Haarlem and Franz Hals.  
 February 17—Delft, the Westminister of Holland.  
 February 24—The Maid of Orleans.  
 March 3—Picturesque Switzerland.  
 March 10—Switzerland and the Swiss.  
 March 17—Out of the way places in England.  
 March 24—Scotland and the Scotch.  
 March 31—English painters and paintings.

The Saturday afternoon talks, illustrated with the stereopticon, will be resumed January 5th, with a study of Holland. The speaker cannot make known the topics at this time, but they will be announced in the daily papers each Friday.

January 25th, at 8 P. M., will be given the second of the Archaeological lectures by Prof. Fairbanks.

**Acquisitions.**

**Fine Arts Department:**

Mr. Thomas Pitts lent an oil painting by Lendall Pitts, entitled "The Slope of the Jura."

James B. McKay lent an oil painting by Robert Hopkin.

Mr. Ambrose Petry added to his collection, oil paintings by the following men: J. Von Severdonck, Jean Antoine Gros, George Jamesone, Wm. Bradford, John Pettie.

**Collection of Gems:**

Mrs. Fitzhugh Edwards made some additions to her collection in the gem room.

**Department of Ethnology:**

Mr. Charles Willim gave eighteen arrow points in glass, flint, agate and obsidian, made by himself.

Mr. Ambrose Petry lent seventy-one rare specimens of Indian baskets.

Library: Miss Clara Dyar gave a volume, "Composition," by Arthur W. Dow.

Frederick Mueller gave an illustrated catalog of the W. C. Robinson collection.

I. H. Butterfield gave a book, "Growth of Industrial Art."

Mrs. Crapo-Smith gave one volume, "Likeness of Christ," by Thomas Heaphy, and six volumes "Historical Costumes," by Racinet.

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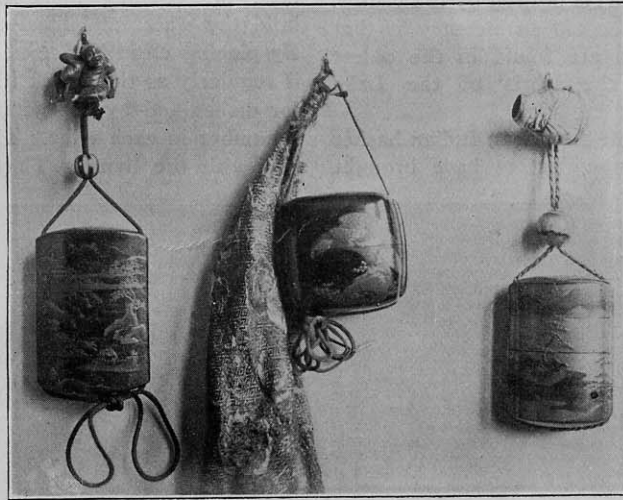
let the outside world know of her resources, the art of that country has created a vast amount of interest, and it has been carried to all corners of the civilized world. This interest and great demand gave rise to the manufacture of commercial works of art simulating those of ages past, when Japan locked within herself worked for the results of beauty and truth,—when her industrial art workers made things because they loved to make them,—but which are in every instance inferior to the genuine pieces of two or more centuries ago.

Mr. Frederick Stearns, well and widely known as a collector, visited Japan before the workman began to feel this western commercial influence as it is felt today, and his collections, as a rule, represent a purer type of Japanese art than the collector of this day would be able to secure.

or sash. These have come into disuse now, and Mr. Gilbertson writes upon them as follows:

"One cannot do better than select inros as the most desirable object. If the netsukes are added, there is no question what his choice should be. As illustrations of the history, mythology, and folk-lore of the country they are hardly so rich as the metal work or the netsukes, but as regards that extremely interesting branch of Japanese art in which they stand and have always stood absolutely supreme,—the art of working in lacquer,—the inro is of surpassing value. It is there one must look for the most perfect examples of lacquer work of every description. A wonderful harmony of both color and composition are often combined with a minuteness of detail that makes one wonder what sort of eyes and hands the lacquerers possessed."

From the number and variety of inros in Mr. Stearns' collection it would seem that he has recognized this



INROS, OR MEDICINE CASES.

Frederick Stearns Collection

In his collection of lacquers in the Detroit Museum of Art, are displayed some of the finest pieces of those periods up to the end of the 17th century, which connoisseurs name as the golden period of the art, and in it by way of showing the superior quality of these, he has placed some of the more modern lacs, such as are easy to procure today. This is a characteristic of Mr. Stearns' collecting. His method of education is by placing the commonplace pieces alongside of those of better quality, and teaching by contrast, the superiority of the one over the other.

Cake boxes, picnic boxes, trays, fans, and sake cups all have their places in this collection; and in the case devoted to Japanese writing materials are several long-shaped boxes which look like and might be used as glove boxes. Their use is however as letter carriers. A letter was written, folded and placed in this box, and the box tied around with a silken cord; much stress being laid upon the selection and tying of this cord; the box was then carried to its destination by a servant who sometimes had his mouth covered, it is said, that he might not breathe upon it. The answer was returned either in the same box or one as beautifully decorated and tied, belonging to the recipient.

But no article of Japanese lacquer is equal to the inro or medicine case in wealth of decoration and beauty of workmanship. An inro formed a necessary part of a gentleman's attire. It consists of usually four small trays fitting with precision one to the other, and held together by a silken cord. A netsuke was attached to the cord by means of which the inro was suspended from the girdle

superiority of work of which Mr. Gilbertson speaks. About forty specimens are in the collection and it is to them that all visitors turn when studying this branch of Japanese art. In the accompanying cut three of the best specimens are shown. The first in five sections of gold dust lac is in the maka-ye (flat decoration) showing a Chinese garden. The netsuke is a drunken Oni or mischievous imp carved from bone. The second, lustrous black, is decorated in kirikane and taka—maki-ye (cut metal in relief) and is 18th century work. The third, in four sections is of fine smooth gold lacquer with two rats, symbolic of abundance, as a decoration, and a carved wood rat as netsuke.

The attendance during the quarter just passed and during the year 1906, shows an increase over that of last year. In October nine thousand four hundred and seventy-six persons visited the Art Museum. In November, owing to the Sunday lectures, there were fifteen thousand five hundred and seventy passed through the turnstile and the month of December shows an increase even over this last figure, though we have no record as to the exact number, the turnstile having to be removed on Sunday owing to the large crowd. On Sunday afternoons during November, there was an attendance of from eighteen hundred to twenty-five hundred each Sunday. From our partial records and approximations, we find that there were fully one hundred twenty-five thousand visitors during the year 1906. This is for eleven months, the museum being closed in July for cleaning.

## INDIAN BASKETS.

By A. H. Griffith.

Among the many things brought together by that really great collector, Mr. Frederick Stearns, in the Detroit Museum of Art there are a number of Indian baskets, very beautiful in color, and form.

Within the past few weeks Mr. Ambrose Petry has added some fifty specimens as a loan to this collection. These cover examples of the various baskets made and used by the different Indian tribes of the west and south-west.

To describe them as they should be, would require more space than can be afforded in a single number of the Bulletin, but the following will serve to call attention to the collection, and the attendants at the Museum will be glad to answer questions or supply, through the medium of the library, such information as is desired by the visitor.

Basket making seems to be as old an industry as that of pottery making. Fragments are found in the oldest Egyptian tombs and among the debris of the Lake Dwellers in Switzerland.

Of late years the beauty of the American Indian basket has been recognized and many collectors have brought

purpose of the water jar, with this advantage, that they were lighter in weight and not breakable as the earthen jar. Then the strong quijo which the Indian squaw found so useful in carrying the enormous burdens that they sometimes take upon their backs would also rightly come under the head of basketry. In both of these, the decorative quality entered into the weaving, and though done in a bold manner, greatly enhanced it.

Often the wealth of the family was computed by the number and beauty of the baskets they owned. The high-virtue of a squaw was her ability to produce them.

As has been said these baskets answer every conceivable purpose. Those with the large hole in the bottom served to hold the corn as it is ground into flour by a pestle in the hands of the kneeling squaw. Some are used for cooking utensils. Being closely woven they hold the water and meal that is to be made into mush. By placing clean hot stones into the mixture and stirring it regularly as they cook it. The flat trays are used both for dishes and by the gamblers of which there is always a number in each tribe. The uses of the basket does not end with the living. They are connected with the last



A GROUP OF INDIAN BASKETS.

Ambrose Petry Collection

together splendid specimens. Unfortunately the aboriginal artist has also recognized their market value and good examples are hard to procure. Instead the market is flooded with baskets made after the old manner with the care and labor left out. The old method of coloring permanently the grasses and fibres which enter into their composition by vegetable colors has given way to the damnable aniline dyes of modern commerce. So the Indian baskets on the market today are as brilliant as Joseph's coat of many colors, but they lack the charm and richness that seems to linger in the old ones. Really the old worker in basketry was a botanist, colorist, weaver, designer and poet, all in one. Filled with the traditions and symbolism of her tribe, the squaw found them an endless inspiration and they are forever cropping out in the curious and quaint designs, which she wrought with such loving care. That peculiar quality inspired by storm cloud, lightning, sunrise, river, mountain and sky, and the

effect which the human figure and her gods with other heavenly beings, all is lost in the modern basket made to catch the eye of the buyer.

While some of the Indian baskets were for ornament or were intended as receptacles of some treasured object, most of them were made for household use. And how splendidly they were adapted to the various uses to which they were put. Great urn-shaped baskets covered on the inside with repeated coatings of pitch answered the sad rites of burial and are often placed in the grave or left beside it loaded with eatables for the red man on his long journey to the happy hunting grounds.

But one must see and study these baskets to grasp their real worth and beauty. Like all other things in life we appreciate that most which we understand best, and in the collection now at the Museum are many rare and curious baskets varied enough to make the collection well worth the hour spent with it.

## Museum Notes

The Federation of Clubs held a meeting in the Auditorium of the Detroit Museum of Art November 6th, at 2:30 P. M. Rev. Lee S. McCollester read a paper on Emerson, illustrated with the stereopticon, and A. H. Griffith, Director of the Museum, gave a talk on American Art. Miss Edith De Muth furnished the music for the afternoon.

The Arts and Crafts Society held a preliminary meeting at the Detroit Museum of Art November 7th. Plans for the permanent exhibition and sales-room, now located at 121 Farmer St., were discussed.

The Social Conference Club, an organization which in a manner takes up the work of all the charitable societies of Detroit, was held in the Auditorium November 22. "Housing Conditions of Detroit" was the subject discussed by the speakers, Rabbi Leo M. Franklin and Rev. Wm. R. Forbush. Significant pictures were shown by means of the stereopticon.

"Some Early Christian Communities" was the subject of the lecture given by Prof. Wm. K. Prentice of Princeton University before the members of the Detroit Archaeological Society in the Auditorium of the Museum, December 4th.

The annual report of the Detroit Museum of Art for the years 1905 and 1906 is now printed and ready for distribution.

An illustrated catalog of the permanent collection of pictures has been compiled and is in the hands of the printer. Since the issue of the former catalog a number of years ago, a great many additions have been made to the permanent collection of pictures which makes this catalog necessary. It is believed that by a careful study of this in connection with the paintings, the educational value of the Museum will be enhanced. The price has been put at the small sum of ten cents.

The Collier collection of original drawings and paintings by distinguished American painters and illustrators, will be on exhibition during the month of January. The exhibition includes over three hundred works, hundred works.

"Regarding the general quality and average excellence of magazine illustration there is no more exacting public than the American public. In this, as in certain other matters, what is good enough for Europe is not invariably good enough for America.

It is through the work of Gibson, Pyle, Remington, Parrish, Frost, Smedley and others, that America owes her acknowledged pre-eminence in the field of contemporary periodical illustration.

With the exception of Messrs. Brangwyn and Hatherell whose work is well known to every student of English illustrated journalism, and the wider field of English painting, the artists represented in this collection are American. It is true that a few, notably Mr. Reuter-dahl and Mr. Leyendecker, were born on the other side, but their work is thoroughly American in spirit, in subject, and in handling.

While the examples shown in this collection have been drawn from one periodical, in range of subject and variety of treatment they may make fair claim to being representative."

Selected exhibitions of the Van's Gravesende etchings and dry points will be held from time to time in the

small new gallery. In an exhibition of forty of these during the month of October, the success of this plan was proven. The collection given by Mr. Freer includes 391 of these etchings and dry points. About forty more of this collection will be hung during the month of February.

Conceptions of Christ by ten great American artists, was held in the main gallery in November. The names of such men as Gari Melchers, Kenyon Cox, Frank V. Du Mond, John La Farge and Wm. H. Low, made the exhibition of much artistic importance.

An exhibition of oil and water color paintings by O. N. Chaffee Jr., proved interesting to the Detroit public, it being the work of a student of the local art schools.

November 19th to December 6th the Fifth Annual Exhibition of the Detroit Society of Women Painters hung on the walls of the main gallery. The exhibition was a worthy one. The life of the organization was plainly shown in the great improvement over previous years.

During the month of December, two of the best exhibitions of the year were held simultaneously. An exhibition of selected water colors by American artists graced the walls of the east galleries, and what can be done with water colors in the hands of true artists was very plainly shown by the pictures in this exhibition. Landscapes and flowers are usually given to this medium, but in this exhibition, figure pieces and portraits played an important part. The Ten American Painters occupied the main gallery, excelling anything of the kind shown in this city for some time. The collection displays individuality as well as originality. The work is sane and sincere and justly representative of the different artists work. As a collection, the pictures of each man are singularly fitted to each other. The number of landscapes by Hassam J. Alden Weir, W. L. Metcalf, and Edward Simmons are interspersed with charming interiors and figure pieces by Tarbell, De Camp, Benson, and Chase. To these Robert Reid has added his decorative works and the ensemble is charming.

The annual meeting of the trustees and incorporators of the Detroit Museum of Art was held October 23, at which the annual reports of the President, Trustees, Treasurer, and Director were read approved. In these the condition of the Museum was shown to be most prosperous. Under the able executive, President Pitts, new interest was created during the past two years, and new plans for the growth of the collections have been formulated and are being carried out. The report of the trustees approved the able management of the Director most heartily.

Two new incorporators were elected at this meeting to fill the vacancies caused by the death of Hon. James E. Scripps and Hon. Wm. A. Moore, who served the interests of the Museum so faithfully during their life time. One of these, Mr. Fred K. Stearns, is the son of the well-known collector, Mr. Frederick Stearns. The other, Mr. E. L. Ford, is a man who likewise recognizes the value of art interests and of this institution in particular.

Mr. John M. Donaldson, Mr. F. K. Stearns, and Mr. Marvin Preston were elected trustees to fill the places of those whose term expired. The new trustee board at a special meeting, held November 2d, elected officers as follows:

President—John McKibbin.  
Vice-President—E. Chandler Walker.  
Secretary and Treasurer—Fred E. Fransworth.  
Director—A. H. Griffith.  
Assistant Director—Clyde H. Burroughs.

The director is particularly concerned, and always has been, in the ways and means of interesting the school children of Detroit in art work. No effort has been spared on the part of the Museum employees to assist schools and classes in the study of any of the collections in the Museum.

Although the articles in the collections are carefully labeled, the director and assistant director give much of their time explaining in sequence any part of the collec-

scriptions only, and the purchase of the exquisite painting "Before Sunrise, June" was made possible through the generosity of one of the subscribers who made a long addition to his subscription. This year subscriptions have at this date reached twelve hundred and fifty dollars. Believing that there are hundreds of citizens willing to aid in this movement who can not subscribe ten dollars, smaller amounts are being received and placed to the credit of this fund.

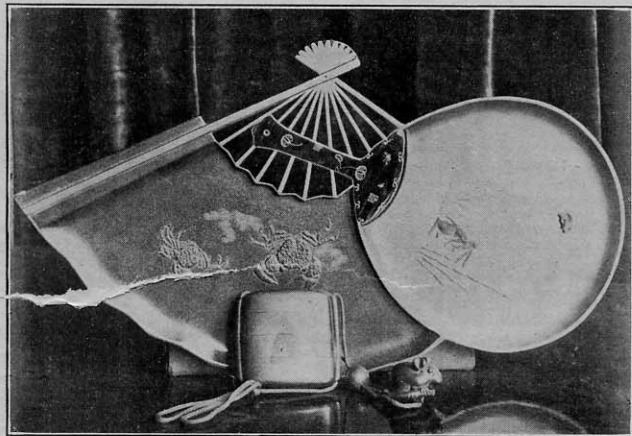


GROUP OF INDIAN BASKETS

In the Ambrose Petry Collection

tions. Material has also been lent to schools for illustration and lantern slides on art, history, and travel, of which the Museum has three or four thousand, are frequently loaned to responsible parties in the schools.

The results are apparent in the large number of classes which now visit the Museum, as well as charitable societies and social clubs who are conducting an educational course.



JAPANESE LACQUERED TRAY

Frederick Stearns Collection

While many articles of bulk or fragility cannot be taken from the Museum, it is the policy of the institution to loan suitable articles to responsible persons for school and club work. An average of two classes a week from the public schools of Detroit visits this institution during the school year.

The Detroit Museum of Art is free to the public at all times and on all occasions, such as exhibitions, lectures, etc., made so by the annual appropriation of the City of Detroit for its maintenance. Aside from this it has no income except the W. C. Yawkey bequest of five thousand dollars of which only the income can be used for the purchase of works of art. The contents of the galleries are almost entirely the gifts of the people.

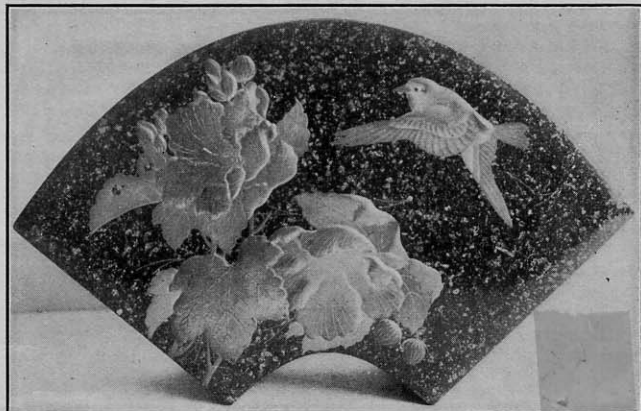
With a desire of acquiring a collection of good American art, a popular picture fund has been established, made up of ten dollar subscriptions. Last year the fund amounted to one thousand dollars through ten dollar sub-

Director A. H. Griffith opened the course of lectures, for which the Museum is so well known, on Sunday, Oct. 28. The course outlined in the last number of the Bulletin, was changed somewhat, owing to the desire on the part of the speaker to make a study of the conditions in Belgium first. Ten lectures have been given on successive Sundays and the interest manifested has been greater than ever before. It has become impossible to longer use the turnstile on Sunday afternoon because of the great number of people waiting at the front of the Museum when the doors are opened. It was likewise impossible to admit children to these Sunday lectures.

The Saturday afternoon talks inaugurated primarily for the pupils of the public schools have been well attended. They have proven so successful that it has been gratifying to the assistant director who has charge of these, and enough so to the trustees to insure their continuance during this season. These lectures along the same lines as those given on Sunday and illustrated by stereopticon views, are attracting the attention of adults as well.

A list of the topics of the Sunday afternoon lectures will be found under the lecture announcements on page two.

A brief history of the Museum, to be issued in pamphlet form, is now under preparation. Since the incorporation of this institution in 1885, Col. Fred E. Farnsworth has been secretary continuously. He is therefore well qualified to write a history which will be of unusual interest.



A CAKE BOX—DECORATION IN RELIEF. Frederick Stearns Collection of Lacquers