

GOLD AND SILVER SMITHS

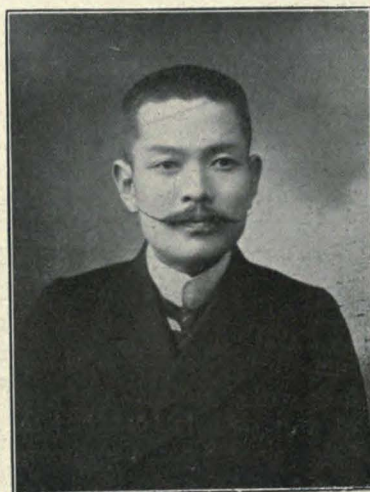
MR. BIHO FUJII

(Maker of Damascene)

The art of making inlaid work of gold and silver is known in Europe and America as damascene work. It is chiefly used for ornaments and jewellery.

There are several sorts in Japan, but "Zogan," or the inlaid work of gold and silver is worth while mentioning. When Buddhism was introduced into Japan from Korea, which came there through China, during the reign of the Emperor Kinmei, large temples with high towers were built. Buddhist idols and paraphernalia of the temples were choice specimens of elaborate workmanship. In the Fujiwara and Kamakura period, the court nobles, indulged in all sorts of luxury and extravagance, and fine art made steady progress. Later on when the Ashikaga family took the reins of government, it created offices by order for traders and manufacturers etc. in the estates of tutelary shrines, and Buddhist temples etc., the arrangement of which worked somewhat like to the modern patent system. Under this and other protective measures, fine art such as inlaid works of gold and silver, raised lacquer work of gold and silver, and engravings on metallic plates etc. reached a high state of development.

Mr. Biho Fujii whom we have pleasure to introduce here is a celebrated artist in all sorts of inlaid works of silver and gold. His house for many generations has enjoyed renown as the producer of inlaid work of first rank. Early in life, he trained himself in this art, which led him to perceive the fact that there was ample room for further improvements and developments. Long experience and careful study gave him the skill and knowledge by which he could perfect the art, but Kyoto in those days was quite conservative, so that it was practically impossible for him to carry into practice the results of his investigation. He left home, and came to Tokyo, the centre of learning, when he devoted himself to the art for a number of years, and finally succeeded in introducing valuable improvements. It was in 1902 that he obtained a patent from the Imperial Government. In 1909 a second patent was granted him. His damascene work being made mostly from designs drawn by Prof. Bisei Unno of the Tokyo Fine Art School, they well meet the taste and requirements of the time.



MR. B. FUJII.

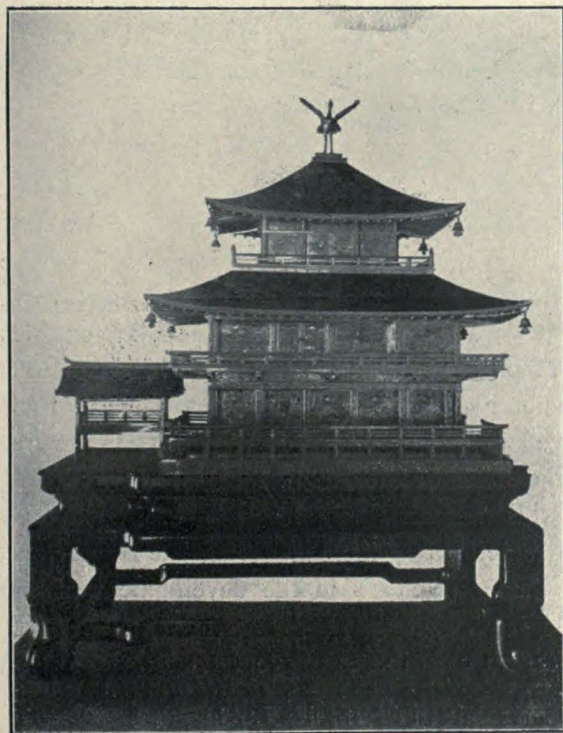
In many exhibitions, industrial, competitive etc. first class medals have been awarded him for his exhibits, and to his great honour his works has been purchased by the Imperial Household.

The number of men employed in the Fujii factory has reached over 200, while his productions are sought not only by Asiatic countries, China, India, etc. but also by countries of Europe and America, and the demand is steadily increasing now; the principal articles exported consist of broaches, scarf pins, cuffs, coat buttons, bracelets, necklaces as well as card cases, cigarette cases, match boxes, writing set, flower-vases, cabinet and other decorative articles.

In fact, his inlaid work stands conspicuous among similar productions of Japan.

The damascene work made by his special skill, the miniature of the Kinkaku-ji Kyoto reduced to $\frac{1}{50}$ of the original, took him four years to complete and cost him 15,000 yen. This has been sent to the Anglo-Japanese Exhibition.

When Yoshimitsu Ashikaga brought the whole country under his sway in 1390, he established himself as the Dajodai-jin or the prime minister. He thought that he had enough of his military exploits and there arose in him a burning desire to satisfy his extravagance. He built a villa in Kyoto in which he went so far as to gild its walls and pillars. This is none other than Kinkakuji a building well known to all. The architecture



DAMASCENE WORK OF KINKAKUJI TEMPLE

savours of the Zenism sect which was then in vogue among the refined circles, so that the building is representative of the fine taste of the time, and looked upon now-a-days, as typical artistic architecture.