

## Victorian Fans

For Victorian ladies, the fan spoke a secret language of love and was *the most elegant accessory a lady could carry*. The flutter of a fan was sometimes an elaborate code with definitions as precise as the Victorian language of flowers. At other times, its messages were sent in little gestures that punctuated the most conventional remark, would hide a blush or added something for a seemingly innocent glance. These fans were made of lace, silk, leather, feathers, leaves, paper, ivory and wood.

The fan had been a means of conveying intimate thoughts. The flutters were described as the timorous flutter, the confused flutter, the amorous flutter, and even an angry flutter. Fluttering a fan at different speeds could indicate anything from rage, to interest, to the most languid indifference. A folded fan that was touched to a lady's chin, told a gentleman that she found him attractive; touching the tip of a folded fan to one's lips was an unspoken declaration of love. Even the way a fan was closed could send a message. Snapping it shut was a curt dismissal; flickering it shut was a sudden slap to the palm and ended all conversation with it warning that one was being watched!

### The Language of The Fan

In the past, hand fans were used not only as cooling instruments, but also as convenient communication devices, mainly for transmitting more or less furtive love messages.

A language of the fan, which is today completely forgotten, was widely used. For your amusement we have recovered a set of messages pertaining to this language, which we include here:

The lady shows up briefly at the balcony, slowly fanning herself, and returns inside, shutting the balcony:

#### **"I can't go out"**

If she appears briefly at the balcony, excitedly fanning herself, and quickly goes inside, leaving the balcony open

#### **"I'll go out soon"**

Resting the fan on her lips:

#### **"I don't trust you"**

Fanning herself with her left hand:

#### **"Don't flirt with that woman"**

Running her fingers through the fan's ribs:

#### **"I want to talk to you"**

Slowly fanning herself :

#### **"Don't waste your time, I don't care about you"**

Quickly fanning herself :

#### **"I love you so much"**

Moving her hair away from her forehead.

#### **"Don't forget me"**

Passing the fan from hand to hand:

#### **"I see that you are looking at another woman"**

Hitting her hand's palm:

#### **"Love me"**

Carrying the fan closed and hanging from her left hand:

#### **"I'm engaged"**

Carrying the fan closed and hanging from her right hand.

#### **"I want to be engaged"**

Quickly and impetuously closing the fan:

#### **"I'm jealous"**

Dropping the fan:

#### **"I belong to you"**

Resting the fan on her heart:

#### **"My love for you is breaking my heart"**

Half-opening the fan over her face:

#### **"We are being watched over"**

Hitting any object:

#### **"I'm impatient"**

Hiding the sunlight:

#### **"You're ugly"**

Looking closely at the painting:

#### **"I like you"**