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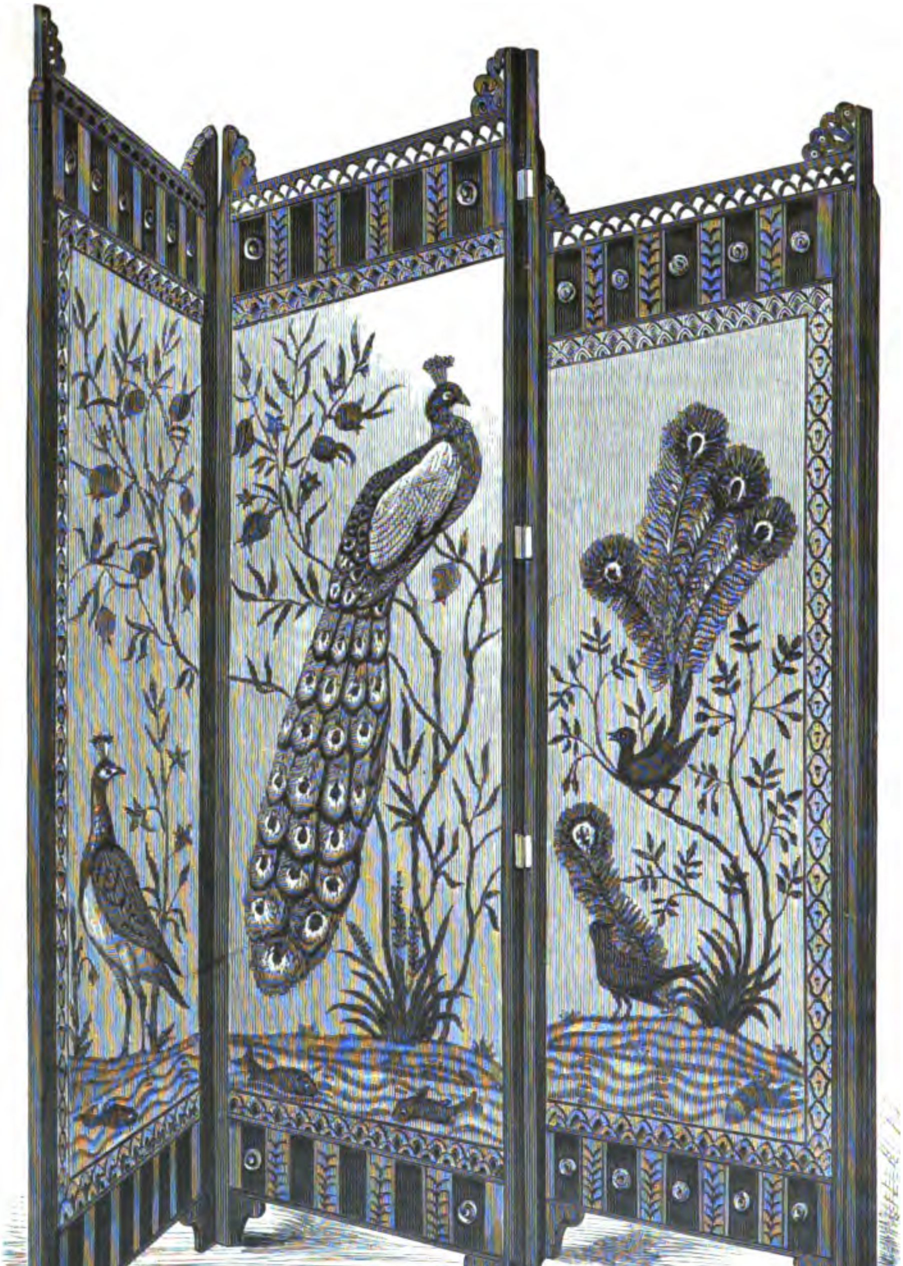

ART DECORATION

APPLIED TO

FURNITURE.

BY

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[illegible] HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
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PREFACE.

THE following chapters on the history and character of Household Furniture, originally published in *Harper's Bazar*, are reprinted at the solicitation of many readers, with some additions and emendations.

While admitting inevitable deficiencies, it is but just to say that they have been compiled with care and research, much time has passed in their preparation, and almost every known authority has been consulted—the resources of the Congressional Library, directed by the great learning of its librarian, having been placed at the disposal of the writer during the study of the subject.

Particular acknowledgment of indebtedness is made to the writings of Turner, Strutt, Palmer, Fergusson, Wornum, and Dresser, as well as to such volumes as Nash's "Mansions of England," S. C. Hall's "Baronial Halls," Chippendale's Plates, Sir Samuel Myrick's "Specimens of Ancient Furniture," Shaw's "Elizabethan House," Texier and Pullan on "Byzantine Art," Racinet on "Polychromatic Ornament," Sir William Chambers's Chinese plates, and the South Kensington hand-books, together with the invaluable works of MM. La Rousse, Paul La Croix, August Demmin, Jules Jacquemart, and Viollet-le-Duc, with many more, indeed, whose names it is unnecessary to enumerate.

For personal courtesies, for information, and for designs, the writer begs to thank, in company with others, Messrs. Pottier & Stymus, Kimbel & Cabus, Herter Brothers, and Cottier & Co., of New York; Messrs. Goupil, of Paris; and Messrs. William Morris & Co., Cox & Sons, Herbert & Co., and William Dalgleish, of London.

H. P. S.

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ART DECORATION

APPLIED TO

FURNITURE.

HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE.

I.

FURNITURE IN THE BEGINNING.

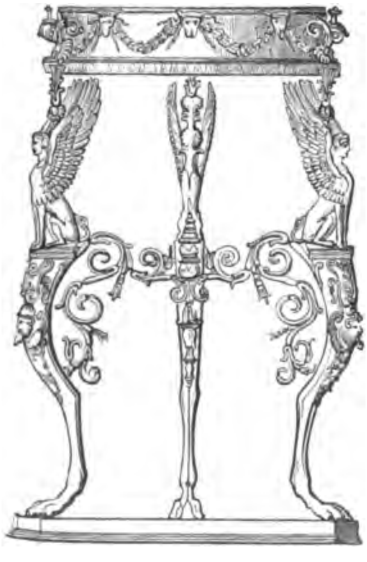
"SHOW me thy furniture, and I will tell thee what thou art," is an assertion which has in it much more than meets the eye. If we will look into the matter, we shall see that there is not a single piece of furniture of the slightest description that is not emblazoned, as one might say, with the customs of a people and the manners of a time, for one who knows how to seek for it.

Indeed, as Mr. Dresser informs us, the customs of two different peoples may be read in the mere shape of their water jars; the long Egyptian jar, for instance, with its rounded larger lower end and its single metal handle, telling that it was let down by a cord into deep water, where its form allowed it to turn and fill itself, and keep the centre of gravity right, as it was drawn up—telling of the presence of plains, of artificial irrigation, and the resulting life; while the wide-mouthed, high-shouldered Greek jar, with flat bottom and two handles, declares that it was set to catch falling water, was carried on the head without splashing, and hints at the gossip round the spring while the jar filled, and other incidents of daily life in a land of mountain streams. If so much can be learned from the suggestions of two pieces of the commonest pottery, how much more can be gained from articles upon which a much larger share of art and thought has been expended, as the designer sought to surround daily life with comfort and beauty, with charm for the body and the mind!

The story of our furniture, of our mere chairs and tables, is the story of art itself; is not only that, but the story of the race from the day of the troglodyte to the day of the sumptuous Egyptian—the story of Greek and Roman, and Arab and Goth, and the universal modern.

To say nothing of its state with the Indian and other Oriental races, with their strange sculptures and colors, their mats, divans, coffers, and tissues, art had already received great development when the Egyptian led the world; ornamentation was handled in a faithful spirit, and the intellect struggled with the senses there; science, too, held up a brilliant light, and comfort was a thing of price: thus it is not surprising that the garniture of his dwelling should have possessed some points beyond which luxury cannot aspire to-day. The Egyptian had his beds of cedar, supported on feet, carved, painted, covered with the richest draperies; he had chairs of turned wood, where the red lotus shone on a black ground; his princes and priests used tables of wood, of marble, and of precious metals; and vases, mirrors of polished metal, tripods, and other small articles of convenience, were in abundance.

The Greek, taking his civilization from the Egyptian, took from him also his art, and raised it to the pitch of the pure ideal. The Greeks, however, living so largely in public, in temples, theatres, groves, and porticoes, and holding their women and their dwellings in small esteem, had but little home life; they expended themselves on their public sculpture and painting and architecture, and cared but slightly for the decoration of their houses and the arts and comforts there. What articles of domestic furniture the Greeks had were, of course, with their subtle taste, perfect in outline, if not in idea; but they were very few, and they seem to have produced nothing new: all they did was to modify and perfect Egyptian suggestion, and drop its symbolism from ornament.


Pompeian Table.

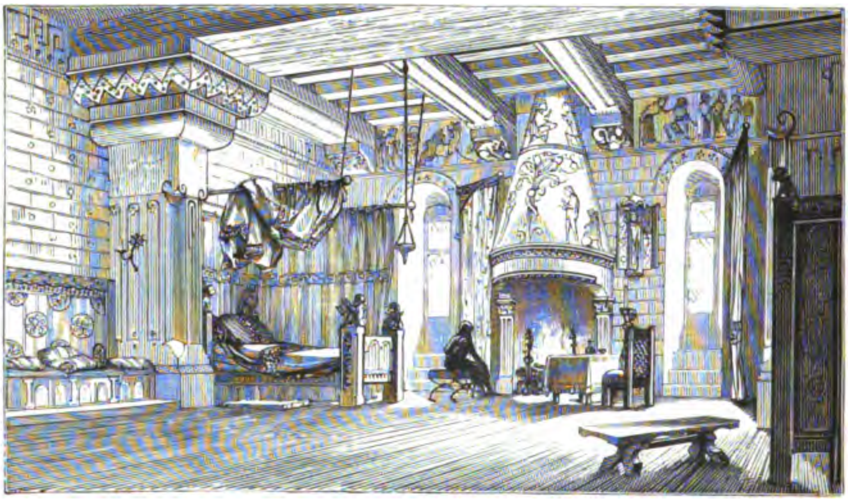
The Roman, although inheriting from the Greek, paid much more attention to household art. Poor as the position of woman was at the best, it was with the Roman an advance upon what it had been with the Greek. Having a home that he valued, the Roman made it a part of his business to render it delightful; and at his summer luxury in Pompeii and elsewhere, he was prodigal of beauty in grafting all manner of Egyptian ornament upon Greek form till fancy could go no further.

But when Rome went to pieces, such household art as had already been accomplished went with it. The barbarians, in their course of destruction throughout the Western Empire, destroyed nearly everything but reminiscence. The industrial arts no longer existed; the artisan, with no models to copy, and with the tradition of his trade broken by the absence of instruction, reverted to the rude, and nothing whatever of any moment was produced in the West of Europe for centuries. All that there was of comfort or convenience or splendor came from the East. Silks, perfumes, spices, gems, ivory, gold-wrought fabrics, and the smaller articles of furniture reached the West and the middle of Europe at first through Egypt, and afterward through a commerce established between the devout pilgrim who visited Jerusalem and the devout Arab who visited Mecca, commerce having as much to do with the double pilgrimage as religion; and as previously the barbarian had descended on a land that he knew to be lapped in luxury, so then the palmer, after another fashion, enriched his barren home from the East.

Thus it was not till the time of Charlemagne that the arts began to revive and look about them. On the rude old foundation that had been left them, a sense of Eastern richness began to work; Byzantine glories kindled the imagination and created rivalry; thought awoke, conscience came upon the scene, and slowly the interior of castle and palace began to change character and to surround the occupants with beauty—beauty that demanded preservation, preservation that demanded peace.

In all the years that had intervened—years of the Dark Ages—the troubled state of affairs, it will be seen, could lend no countenance to art or artisan. Every lord of a territory was a sovereign surrounded by foes, liable to attack. If he dwelt at home, his halls were only a military depot, where all his fiefs had entrance in the feudal family; if he went abroad, uncertain of his ability ever to return, he took his valuables with him, and they might not be too many or too unmanageable. His furniture then consisted of little but the chests that he could carry with him in his train, and which in the castle served for seat, table, bed, and treasury.

But as the times became more gentle, the suzerain could afford to increase the evidence of his wealth. No longer in perpetual danger, he did not need that everything should be either easily portable or else fixed to the castle in stone. The chest grew into the armory and the cabinet, and was enriched with carving; the bench into the chair; the bed, with its trappings, took its great corner; the hearth received its decoration; manuscripts came from the East; travelled guests were entertained, who talked late o' nights concerning foreign marvels; chivalry demanded that the women should be better cared for, with tapestries and cushions and folding screens in the great halls where the winds blew; journeys were taken; the lord came home from one of the Crusades, and brought memories of the East with him—stories of Istamboul, wonders that he had seen at Venice; and then at last the taste of the owner began to direct the skill of the maker, and the romance of the Middle Ages turned a gilded leaf. Splendor had come, and come to stay, shining more brilliantly year by year—a barbaric splendor, lacking the elements of comfort yet, but making, as its proportions spread, an attractive picture.



Chamber of Castle in Twelfth Century.

"Instead of fancying with the mind's eye," says Sir Samuel Myrick, "that we behold the stately knights and dames of old sitting within bare walls and resting their feet on rushes, instead of imagining that we imitate their greatest splendor when we confine the decorations of rooms in modern Gothic buildings to oak and stone colors relieved with a little gilding, we must now do them the justice to allow that while their tables glittered with plate and jewels, their beds dazzled with the richness of their hangings, and their seats were decorated with refulgent draperies, the Gothic carving of their furniture became brilliant by scarlet, blue, and gold, and the walls of their apartments had the most interesting as well as most effective appearance from the grand paintings or the rich tapestry that were placed among them."

II.

IN THE DARK AGES.

THE furniture of the Dark Ages, such as it was, was made upon tradition of the old Roman joinery, save where, here and there, some germ of the Gothic thought started and fitted the article exactly to its use, however rude the construction. It was doubtless adapted to the conditions of life in the stone fastnesses which were made not for pleasure, but to resist attack, and life within which was only an affair of time between battles. The one great hall served for every use. The family lived there, the vassals met there; it was dining-room, sleeping-room, and hall of justice. The bedchamber was merely a space screened off from it. If a guest came, his bed was built up, curtained, and screened before his eyes—a chamber within a chamber. It was all a grand sort of encampment.

In this vast hall, around the immense hearth where the whole trunks of trees burned, a score could sit at ease, and if the blazing fire were too hot, thrust their feet and legs into osier baskets that protected them. Torches hung from hooks in the wall, or quaint oil-fed lamps made darkness visible, and, later, sconces and chandeliers and candlesticks lent their illumination; for, long before carpenters and cabinet-makers had any skill at all, the iron and brass workers of the provinces were accomplished artists. At the upper end of the hall the flagged floor was usually raised, forming a slight platform, where the lord and his ladies sat, the ladies at their wheel and, after they had had a glimpse of some piece of Oriental tapestry, after some wandering knight had told them of its beauty, or some returning priest had advised them of its uses, at their needle-work. Around this part of the hall ran a form, a bench, after a while divided by arms and dignified with a back, already an improvement on its backless, armless predecessor. This form was evidently a fixture to the wall; for, while the front of the tall back was decorated according to the taste of the period, the back was invariably rough. There was but one chair in the hall. It belonged to the master. Sufficiently uncomfortable, a mere box, knobs at first continuing its four uprights, and afterward with a six-inch railing around the three sides, it was yet the seat of honor. If a superior visited the castle, it was relinquished to that personage; if one who was held as inferior came, the master retained his chair, and the guest took a bench. These benches were sometimes a mere plank supported by uprights; sometimes long and narrow chests where valuables were packed, inside of which other boxes were fastened or strong compartments made, certain of them very simple, others entirely covered with rich ornamentation of hammered iron-work in locks, hinges, clamps, till they were really beautiful objects, and others nothing but a whole net-work of iron over red or gilded leather. At first these chests were adorned merely with this lavish iron-work, and covered with leather stamped in curious patterns, painted and gilded; at a later period they carried armorial carvings and other emblems cut in the wood of which they were made; and as taste and the love of ease developed, backs were added to some of these as well as to the forms, together with arms, all carved very ornamentally; but the seat was still a lid that lifted, and these were the chief and, for a long time, almost the only pieces of furniture of the Middle Ages. By degrees cushions were laid upon it, stuffs were thrown loosely over it, footstools were placed before it; and then, as the small articles of value increased, it was lifted upon feet; one was superimposed upon another, the lids were changed to doors, and the chest became the cabinet. Folding-seats meanwhile were an ancient article of use in this restricted equipage—camp-stools, as they are still called—for they were a remnant of the Roman, and were, moreover, a part of the household that could be taken into the field, as any chieftain could make his throne upon a camp-stool, with men of arms holding his banner behind him.

As the Dark Ages came to an end, as chimney's were introduced, as life in the castle became a more permanent thing, and as various refinements among the neighboring clergy became contagious with the laity, ideas for the decoration of the halls were borrowed from the decoration of the churches, and their articles of convenience were imitated; the screens, that had defended the dwellers from the draughts of the doors and the windows and the great chimneys, were beautified with home-wrought tapestry or with that of Flemish handiwork, were made of splendidly gilt leather or of heavy cloth from Syria; they lined the whole extent of the wall of the room, sometimes in a heavy curtain such as now hangs before the door of many European cathedrals, sometimes in a carved wainscot extending above the head; and sometimes they divided the great rooms with wonderfully carved partitions—the portion behind being known as "the screens." Indeed, the screen played so important a part in this old life that no modern representation of a mediæval room would be complete without it, and it is no wonder that upon this feature was lavished all that skill and fancy ever attained. It stood around the huge beds that the dogs shared; before the windows; in folding-leaves around the corners of the fire, from the shelf over which hooks held some hangings that could at will shield the lady's face from the blaze.

When, at length, mats of woven reeds and of finer material were laid upon the flags, there was probably a great outcry about effeminacy; and it must have been a revolution, too, when the great table became an established fact; for it was not so many years before that people had eaten off a cloth laid upon the floor, and the free use of great cushions everywhere about the floor still recalled the custom. Probably the luxury of the repast was heightened by the strange hot and sweet spices that were brought from the East now, that cost immense sums, and were put away with the precious robes and goldsmiths' work. We read of banquets with ragouts of flesh and of fish, with fruits and sweetmeats and wines; and banqueting having become so delicious, of course the table became a place for lingering. The appearance of the table had certainly resolved itself into one of splendor; with spoil of gold and silver and jewelled dishes, and flagons from the Saracen artificer; with the rich cups and vases of the native artists; with colored glasses and rock-crystal; with bronzes and plate of all sorts, of Saxon, Scandinavian, or Burgundian workmanship. The credence, also, had been borrowed from the Church, and erected into the dresser, and on its shelves glittered the surplus of such costly plate and pottery as the house possessed. In addition to all this, garments had grown to be exceedingly rich, of silk and samite and figured Moorish stuffs, embroidered with gold thread and wrought with pearls, and they accordingly demanded other treatment than that of rude seats, or the neighborhood of spurs and swords. It is only the first step that costs; the Dark Ages were past, and the mediæval fancy, stimulated by what the Crusades had taught, or by the slow opening of the Byzantine seed long slumbering there, began to produce countless objects of interest and of use, and to turn old shapes into new beauty; carpenters became cabinet-makers, cabinet-makers became artists. The halls that they adorned were no more places for men-at-arms; the natural and necessary feudal aristocracy gave way to quite another thing; life was no longer in common; sleeping-rooms were set apart from the grand hall—hence the word apartment; the rooms of the mistress were set apart from those of her women; cabinets fit to hold her precious possessions were built in them, resting-places for her idle moments, seats that, being movable, must have the cloths, once carelessly thrown over them, now fastened on and nailed, beds of luxury, *prie-dieux;* the walls were painted above the tapestry, the beams of the ceiling were carved, the chimney was treated with honor and decorated to the last point; the windows were widened, the waxed linen and parchment of their panes supplanted by glass, their curtains made sumptuous; the rooms of the mistress became the pleasant place to loiter; the castle ceased to be a fortress, and became a dwelling. And at last, as the Middle Ages also passed, as day by day life opened into an easier and more enjoyable thing, with all the pleasures of peace about it, enervated by luxury and subdued by what it fed on, then the dwelling was ready for a different furnishing, for one that should not only please the eye, which had wearied of the simplicity of merely noble lines, but should also please the body, that, no longer under the stern necessities of war and a warlike household, could afford to indulge its languor in comfort and relaxation.

III.

WOMAN'S SHARE.

THE influence of women in bringing about all these modifications of the menage has been a powerful one. From the day when the priests succeeded in prevailing upon the Gaul—who was in the habit of making himself the husband of as many wives as he could afford to care for—to imitate his German neighbor, who was the husband of but one wife, they made the marriage ceremony a thing of splendid note with the use of their most sacred and memorable rites. They honored the woman, and made her honorable in her husband's eyes, and through her obtained the influence over her half-savage lord that they could hardly obtain otherwise. With the Teutonic tribes, of course, this was unnecessary, for the women who had been held as a sort of priests themselves in the old wild life needed the countenance of no other priesthood in order to maintain the reverence of their husbands. Receiving reverence and honor then, they received indulgence; and thus with Frank or Teuton or Saxon the woman, as a rule, had what she would.

Moreover, life under the feudal system was calculated to make it difficult to refuse the woman anything she desired. She was obliged to be the partner of her husband's affairs much more literally and extensively than the greater part of wives are in these days. The border baron off upon his raids, the mountain chieftain who is obeying the call for the arriere-ban, must leave all his interests in his wife's hands, and, of course, prior to that, his wife must be made thoroughly acquainted with those interests. As to how well she protected them, history is full of the recital; and more than one poet has sung of the gallant defence that some brave woman made, in those perilous days, of her husband's stronghold, his enemies encamped about her, laying waste with fire and sword.

Left thus so often to her own devices there, it is not remarkable that in everything pertaining to home affairs she took the lead and kept it: the weary lord was doubtless only too glad to be relieved by such vicegerency. In an old chronicle of the time, cited by an accomplished French archæologist, the life of a châtelaine is given, with exactly such duties and honors as the mistress of a similar establishment would have in the present time.

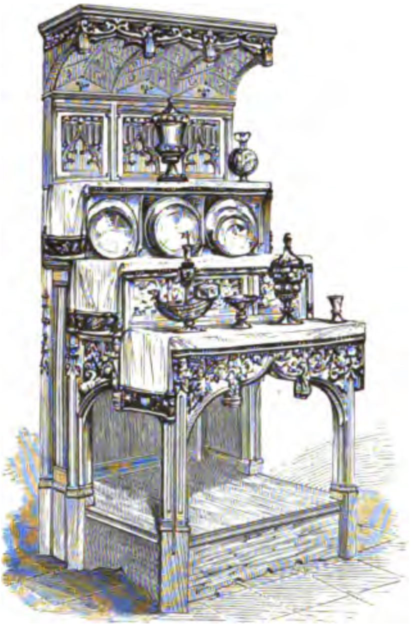
Her damsels, the daughters of neighboring lords and allies, attend her as she rises in the morning, and walks in the wood near by with her rosary in hand, and returns with flowers to the chapel and low mass, coming from chapel to be served with her breakfast of larks and chickens, and wine out of silver basins. That done, madame mounts her maidens on palfreys, and with their guests they all ride into the fields, returning to be entertained at dinner by the lord of the château, while the *jongleurs* play upon their instruments. *Benedicite* said, and the napkins taken away, madame dances with her chief guest, then spices and wine are served, and they separate for a siesta. After the short sleep, madame takes a falcon on her wrist, and they ride out again to the hunt, and, dismounting, they lunch in the meadows, and return singing gayly. Night coming on, they sup, stroll outside the walls, and play ball till dark. Then madame has the torches kindled, the minstrels come, they dance and drink wine, and say good-night. One can see that life in the thirteenth century was becoming different in its gentle pleasures from the life of but a short peperiod before.

Thus possessing the ability to manage her husband's affairs and to entertain his guests, the mistress of the place, having her way in most things not unreasonable, could easily win him to procure for her all the garniture that rumor whispered her some other lord had brought his dame from the Levant, from the Moors in Spain, or, later, out of Burgundy. And so she procures, piece by piece, her square of carpet that has come all the way from Persia to be sold in one of the yearly fairs not too far off; her flowered leather from Brabant, to hang before the high back of the great elaborately carved seat, to get which and her noble dresser made she had such ado with joiner and wood-carver a year long; her tapestry from the Saracens before the day of Arras, Beauvais, or Lille; her Constantinopolitan coffer, broken and yellow, but covered with exquisite ivory sculpture, to feast her eyes and adorn the dresser's shelf—that is laid, by-the-way, with a napkin of creamy damask, with its border of black velvet and cloth of gold, and its fringe of silk—where stands the superb dish of beaten silver from Cologne that on feast-days enriches the centre of her table, and that carries our modern *épergne* back to the days of Chilperic and Queen Fredegonde—procures all this, and is ready for the lady of the next demesne. She would not have had much difficulty, though, in her work, had her personal influence been less; for there were few nobles of any importance who, before the end of the fourth Crusade, had not made their journey into the East or into Africa, and had not become accustomed there to unheard-of splendor, had not admired and desired it themselves, had not brought home such things as were transportable; and when they had told their wives the story, it was for the women to procure the rest themselves. "It was not surprising, therefore," says M. Viollet-le-Duc, "that with the sway of feudalism the rôle of woman became important, and that she assumed in the castle an authority and influence over the matters of every-day life superior to that of the castellan himself. More sedentary than the latter, she naturally contributed more to the embellishment of the stronghold, and entered more warmly into the rivalries pertaining thereto, which already appeared in the thirteenth century, when many castles were sumptuously furnished, and rich in hangings, carpets, wood carvings, precious articles, and wealth of all kinds, the more considerable inasmuch as they accumulated unceasingly, the wheel of fashion not turning then with the velocity of later ages." And when all this was achieved, splendid garments must be had to suit the splendid furnishing; and when satin and velvet were the wear, satin and velvet must be the seat. Thus, one thing leading to another, furnitures that had not changed for centuries changed soon with every reign.

Of course there were not wanting, then as now, people to inveigh against the extravagance of the women, who relegated the castle's great armories and benches to the huts of the peasants, who ruined the good old times; and gentlemen of small means in the fourteenth century aver that they cannot afford to marry, as gentlemen of small means do in the nineteenth, on account of the expenditure of the wives. Satires are written in which the lady declares that she must have an endless catalogue of treasures—page after page filled with her demands. "Don't I see," she says, "even the low-born husbands bring home to their wives, when they have been in Paris, in Rheims, in Rouen, gloves, pelisses, rings, cups of silver, and goblets of gold? Well, then, I must have pursefuls of jewels, knives covered with carving, pins set in enamel, white camelot and broidery for my bedchamber,

"'Et les courtines ensement,
Pigne, tressoir semblablement,
Et miroir, pour moy ordonner,
D'yvoire, me devez donner.'

I must have halls, galleries, well ordered to receive strangers, and there must be beautiful beds and fine coverings, and the walls shall be hung; handsome chairs must I have, handsome benches, tables, tressels, dressers, screens, and any quantity of plate! Am I not of good family?" she asks; "and shall I go with less wherewithal than a shop-keeper's wife?" And what was the case in one country, probably was much the same in another; what one woman has, another has to have. Women taught to make themselves lovely must have the means with which to do it; women living at home must have their homes beautiful and the requisite furniture.



Mediæval Dresser.

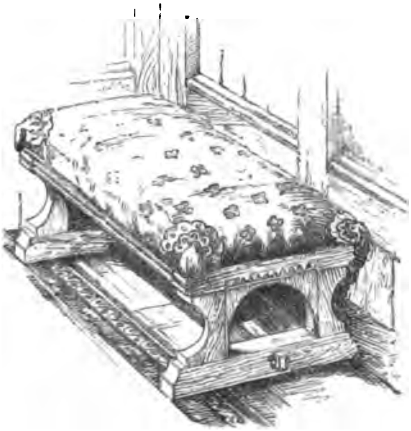
> "Pancez vous qu'elle preignent garde
> Comment l'argent se depent? Non!"

And consequently artisans come from abroad to a market that calls—for it is little that the home-born artisan can do till he learns the foreign secrets—weavers from Greece and Asia, goldsmiths from Milan and Venice. Their craft becomes common; a commerce in ivory, ebony, gold and silks, and all things rare and fine, enriches everybody who is concerned in it; and out of this extravagance the arts and the trades and the fairs flourish—flourish from year to year and from age to age—till the last of the fashions in furniture, that a daughter of the Greek emperor—lending her days to illuminate with the unforgotten glories of her father's court the barbarians with whom she has wed—brings with her in the tenth century from Byzance, is one day utterly set at naught by La Pompadour.

IV.

THE SEAT.

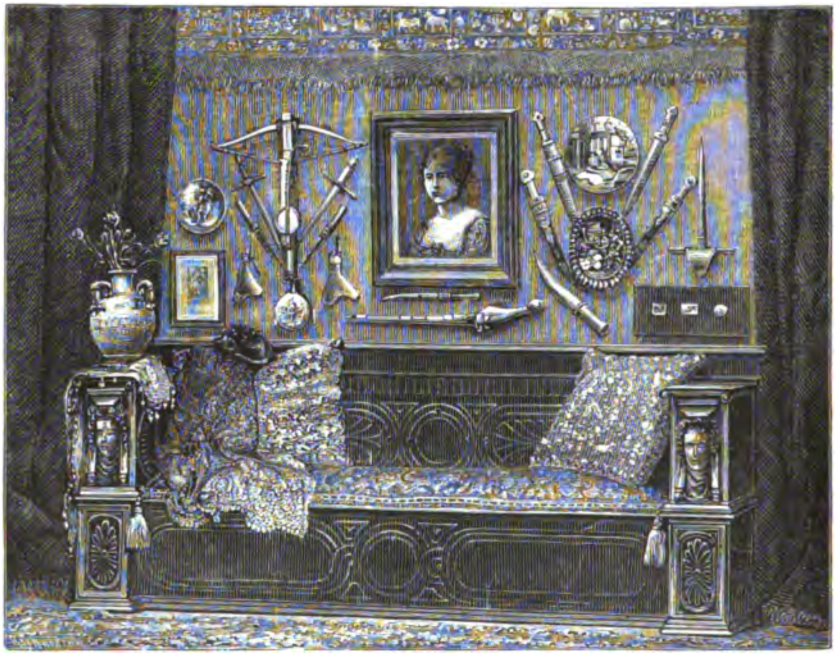
ALMOST all that we know of very ancient furniture is gathered from bass-reliefs, mural and ceramic painting, and from scattered remarks of the writers of antiquity.



Modern Gothic Dining-room Seat.

We have pictures of Egyptian throne-chairs, comfortable-looking, stately seats, rich with incrustation and mosaic, and others resembling our common wooden kitchen chair, while an actual example of one made nearly two thousand years B.C. of hard wood inlaid with ivory may be found in the Louvre. We have drawings of quaint Assyrian arm-chairs and royal seats from Persepolis, carved with the echinus, and carrying unicorns' heads in their decoration; Greek chairs also, eclipsing in lightness and perfect grace anything before or since; Roman chairs, with arms extending half-way along the side; Pompeian ones, finer than anything we can make to-day; and the curule folding-chair. It is possible that the golden chair of the Emperor Kien Long, and the other chairs of China, the rattan and bamboo ones, point backward to greater antiquity, as the Chinese has not for thousands of years been known to make an improvement on himself.

But after the extinction of the greater part of Roman splendor, and the withdrawal of the rest to the East, where day by day it assimilated itself more and more to Oriental customs, the habits of life seem to have returned to something very near the primitive. In the general desolation there was no more furniture, and, as we have already said, nobody to make it, and the European began again at the beginning. The first, and very frequently the only, seat was doubtless the chest, that its predatory owners found the most convenient to their uses, and that served for bed and seat and table too. The bench was probably suggested by this for temporary purposes, made simply as the rudest bench of to-day, with a plank and two uprights, but after a while with more care. Small

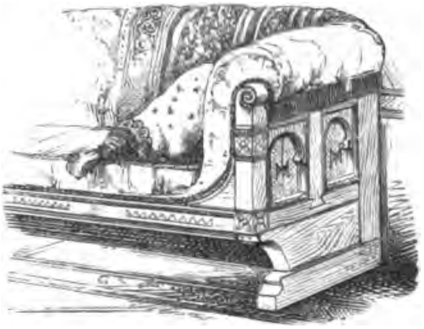


Italian Bench of Sixteenth Century; Flemish Weapons; Italian and Palissy Ware.

benches served for solitary use, and for the seats of inferiors. These were lower than the others, sometimes oblong, sometimes triangular, in shape; which people of the wealthier sort covered with a bench-cloth or with cushions. We still have it in an improved form in the little three-legged stool which many of us remember. In an old manuscript of the British Museum, Constantia, Duchess of Lancaster, the wife of John of Gaunt, is represented sitting on such a stool; and hundreds of years later the little thing reached its highest honor when, under the name of the *tabouret*, the ladies of the court of Louis Quatorze fought for it. "To have the *tabouret* was, in the old French court, a right possessed by certain persons to place themselves on this stool or on a folding-seat in the presence of the queen. The *tabouret* was originally conceded only to princesses or duchesses; but it was afterward allowed to all such ladies as occupied the first rank in the queen's household, and whose husbands had a right to an arm-chair in the king's apartment, especially when they were dukes and peers. From the reign of Francis II., cardinals, ambassadresses, duchesses, and ladies whose husbands were grandees of Spain, as well as the wives of chancellors and of keepers of the seal, were permitted to occupy them." Meanwhile the stool was a seat less dignified than the folding-seat, and that less honorable, of course, than the chair. But that was at a late day of its life.

Where there was no remembrance of the Roman chair in the provinces, these stools may have originally suggested the loftier but still solitary chair. Yet it is unlikely, on the whole, that the curule, or folding-chair, handy as it was for camp life, which was essentially the life of that period between Roman sway and modern, ever went quite out of use; and the chair may have been recalled by that, made fast and solid instead of light and folding. Nevertheless, the rumor of the chair's existence in the past could hardly have entirely died out, and the first awkward attempts may have been merely those of tradition without instruction.

But another seat, and one of intrinsic dignity, was the Roman "form," which the Church preserved, and which, like many other articles of furniture, came from the church to the house. This differed from the bench in the separation of its seats by arms, and the greater care of its workmanship. It was very heavy, and intended to be stationary; but when, as in the handsomest examples, provided with a straight back, and both back and seat covered with stamped leather, falling to the floor in front in a gold-fringed curtain, the pillared legs and the arms carved minutely, the rest of the visible frame inlaid with ivory, ebony, silver, and brass, with a narrow margin of wooden marquetry intervening between the feet and the bare flags of the floor, hardly anything could have presented a more imposing appearance.

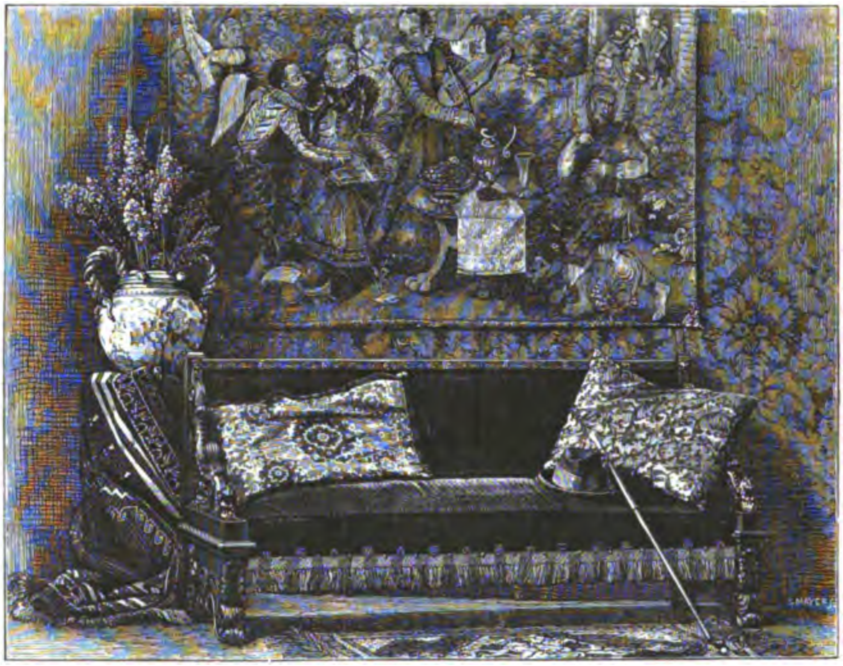


Modern Gothic Sofa.

Toward the end of the twelfth century the backs of the forms became higher, and presently they put on a dais, or wooden canopy, and assumed the full Gothic. When the Gothic dais was laid aside at length, as modifications for bodily ease took place, it is not unlikely that the modern divan, with its indications of separate seats, together with the sofa, can claim relationship with the "form."

It is not necessary, however, that the sofa should seek so haughty an ancestry as this old Roman shape; for not long after the tenth century the plain bench began to be furnished with a back, with arms hollowed out a trifle for the elbows, the wood-work carved, and cushions and quilted stuffs thrown over them. It was in that century that Robert of

Normandy, stopping with his knights at Constantinople, on his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, found the descendants of the old Roman Empire there already so Orientalized that they contentedly sat upon the ground with no benches in the audience chamber. Perhaps other evidences of a luxury and a civilization unknown to them had chagrined the Normans, and made them glad to boast of the one thing where they exceeded; for, throwing off their cloaks, they sat upon them, and when, on their departure, the Greeks ran after them with the garments, they surlily replied that they were not in the habit of taking their benches with them. It seems to have been in more courtesy than they deserved that the emperor caused benches to be built around the hall, that they might sit as they were wont during the rest of their sojourn there. A few centuries later the backs of the benches attained great altitude, and a carved dais overtopped them as it did the "forms," and the seats were boxed and used for chests. These seats were loosely cushioned in costly stuffs, the cushions shaped in divers fanciful ways to give greater ease; and from little hooks in the backs of the benches, just where the arched dais began to curve all its splendid carving, a dorsel hung over the stretch of the plain wooden back, and this dorsel is the first known ancestor of our "tidy," although

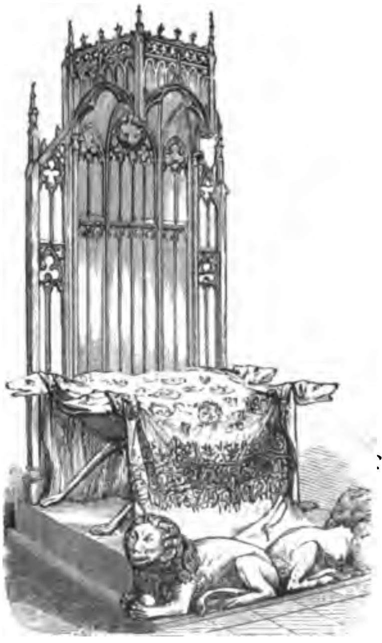


Another Italian Bench; Tapestry, Subject "The Prodigal Son."

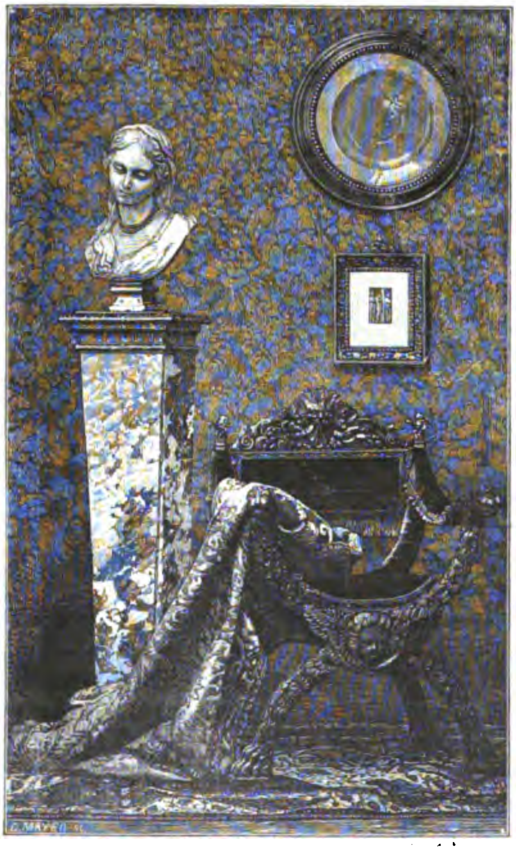
its use was not a "tidy," but a merely ornamental one. With this the bench became a really magnificent piece of furniture in the immense and lofty halls, and thus held sway till the Renaissance; and there is nothing lovelier in its way to-day than the old Italian bench of the latter era.

These were all seats of kindliness and sociability, of good neighborliness. But the chair was a thing of state. Without any doubt, it developed itself at the first from the Egyptian throne, and it remained a throne from the time when but a single chair in the dwelling announced the sovereign rights of the master and ruler of the house, while the herd gathered themselves on benches, to the present, when its use confesses the sovereign rights of the individual and the universal sacredness of personality. The first chairs of the Middle Ages had sometimes only the uprights of the stool a little extended, and now and then, instead of the rude seat, a lacing of broad leather straps with a cushion. In the fourteenth century the royal fauteuils were given back, canopy, and platform; and a beautiful one consists of an oaken back, carved quite openly in the perpendicular, that upholds with its arches a square tower surmounted by tiny pinnacles and finials. The footstool is of lion's whelps, and the seat of four racing hounds, whose heads protrude from a Persian drapery figured in bands and circles.

It was the use of this back, this raised step and canopy, which in reality made the importance of the royal fauteuil. Without them, it was a mere convenience; with them, it was the place of honor and apparent power. The canopy was, perhaps, in idea, the last remnant of the seclusion that draperies hung about the awe and mystery of rule. In the course of a hundred years the fauteuil was no longer folding. A back and stays rendered it fixed, and made of it the lovely old chair where the curved arm and half seat pass down and form the leg in the opposite curve, with fringes on the bars of the stays behind and cushions on the seat.

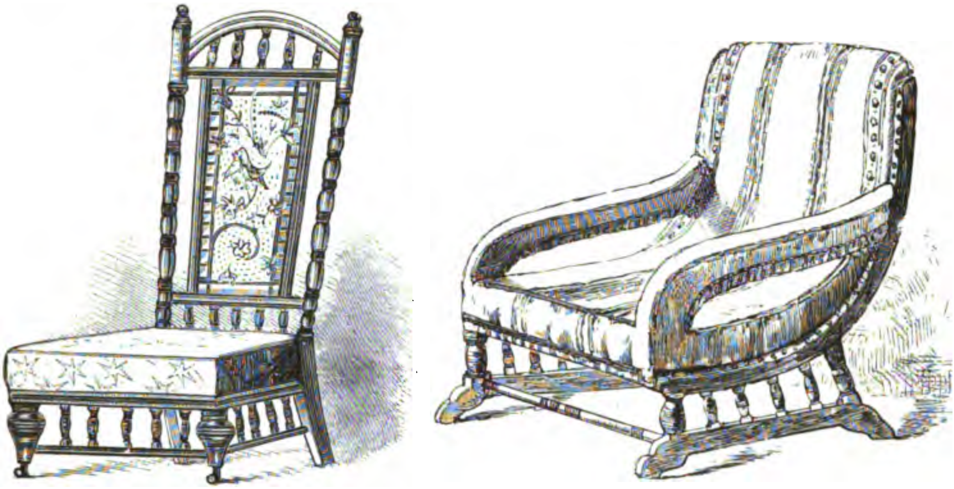

Fauteuil of Charles V., Fourteenth Century.

But while the idea of the curule chair was developing into a chair that any one might use, the chair itself was taking new forms. Square in shape, and when given a back, that back a finishing a finger's length in height, if it had not this finishing, it was sure to be set against the wall that was tapestried behind it. When arms were added, the backs became of the same height, and both arms and back rather encircled the body of the sitter. In the twelfth century, turned wood had begun to employ attention, and cushioned chairs, the arms supported by little balustrades, differing only from a chair of the period some five or six hundred years later by a slightly superior height, are frequently found.


Venetian Chair, Sixteenth Century; Bust by Jacques Sarazin.

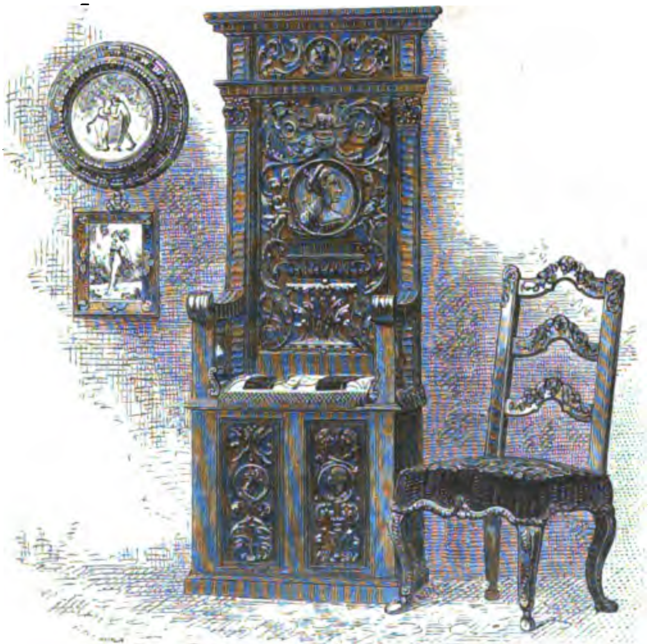
In the thirteenth century, the shapes became various, and often quaint, or, in the insular phrase, outlandish. The new voyages made Indian and Persian and Egyptian forms familiar; and we see the effect in curious polygonal chairs, where five elbow-high sides enclose the sitter, leaving only a narrow opening for the feet, but with immense room within for the garments. It was the great change of fashion in those garments, more than anything else, that produced the change in chairs at this time. Clothes had been worn in clinging folds, not too voluminous, made of soft stuffs; now they became ample, of thick brocades, velvets, and furs, which required a great deal of room in order to be well managed, and not spoiled by creasing and rumpling; and thus open and easy chairs appear, mingling finely turned wood with delicate carvings in the flat, with broad seat, high back, low arms or no arms at all, that would be enviable chairs to-day either for comfort or beauty.

It is toward the end of the thirteenth century that we find architectural details so largely introduced into chairs. The backs of many, although of course not of all, were made exceedingly high, covered with

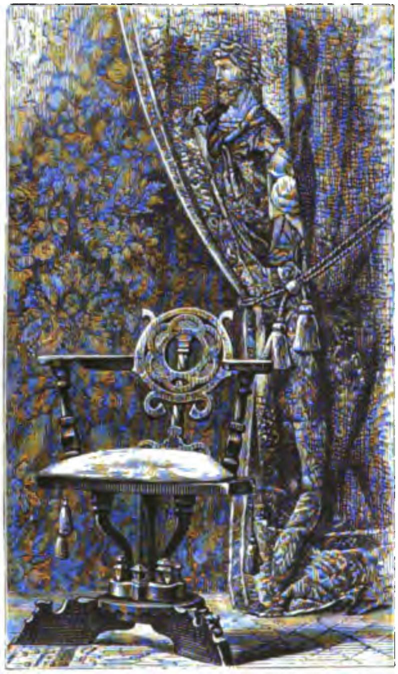


Modern Gothic Drawing-room Chairs.

wonderful carved work of armorial bearings, and crowned with dentellations, very humble chairs possessing still this crowning crest, if no other carving. But such seats were meant to remain fixed against the wall, as the wrong side of the back was usually rough, so that it is presumable

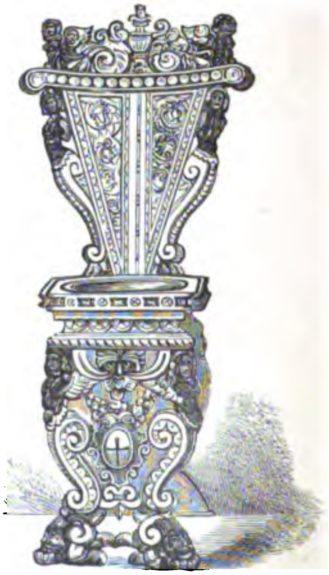


State Chair of Oak, Louis XII.; French Chair, Seventeenth Century.



Flemish Chair, End of Fifteenth Century.

that they occupied some place of honor. It is a similar chair, without the carving, moved out of place, that in the fifteenth century we find draped from head to foot with a vast hammercloth of rich material that loosely but effectively covers back and front and sides, and extends some distance beneath the feet of the person using it. Most of this cumbrousness went out of fashion in the succeeding century; the lighter rooms suggested lighter surroundings: a person wished to take up a chair and carry it to another's side, to the now more open window for the air or for the view, to offer it to a newcomer; and the moment the chair was made light enough for that, the draperies and cushions could not be allowed to make themselves a nuisance with perpetual slipping off and readjustment; they had to be nailed on. What they lost in picturesqueness they gained in the added convenience, and there was still great interest and picturesqueness in the shapes, while, so far as drapery was concerned, there was yet no lack of that in the apartments. After this, the way was open for the modern chair and the work of science there, with its stuffings, its springs, its casters, its damasks, and all the rest—the chair that in the days and the land of the Tudors and Stuarts presupposed a mighty spine in the user, that in Venice declared an alert and active race, but that in France assumed itself to be the companion of weariness and the friend of leisure, and which, taking on an unrighteous splendor in the days of the second great modern monarch in Europe, in those of his successor, Louis Quinze, adapted itself to the shape, till the body found it luxuriously delightful as a pillowed cloud might be.



Another Venetian Chair.

The greater part of these chairs, through all the many years, were manufactured in wood, but occasionally they are found to have been in bronze, in iron, and even in more precious metals—such as the famous chair of Dagobert, and such as the chair in which Don Martin, King of Aragon, was throned when, after subduing the rebellion in Sicily against his son and daughter, the sovereigns there, he returned to take possession of his own crown, and entering Barcelona in triumph, was seated in this chair, made all of silver, and wrought in the highest style of Gothic beauty. Silver, indeed, was not at all an unusual article for the construction of furniture, especially when all other freaks had wearied; there is much elaborate silver furniture still in Windsor Castle, and we read that the chimney furniture of the beautiful rooms of the Duchess of Portsmouth, one of Charles the Second's wantons, was entirely of silver, and so was the furniture of the king's room, so called because of some royal visit there, in more than one of the vast English country-houses.

V.

THE BED.

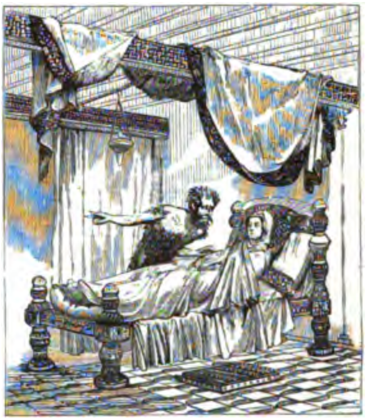
"BLESSED be the man who invented sleep!" cried Sancho Panza; and we can all of us say, Blessed be the man who made sleep so restful and delicious as modern habits find it, with elastic mattresses, cool sheets, and changing clothes. But we have been a long time coming to our present height of luxury, and have reached it only by degrees.

About the earliest data that we have concerning beds are of the Egyptian, and they are very slight. Sir Gardiner Wilkinson thinks that the Egyptians usually slept on their day couches, which were long and straight, sometimes with a back, sometimes with carving of the heads and feet of animals at the ends, made of bronze, of alabaster, of gold and ivory, of inlaid wood, and richly cushioned. Where these were not in use, mats replaced them, or low pallets made of palm boughs, with a wooden pillow hollowed out for the head. What Egypt had, the Assyrian and the rest of the world had, and the Greek, whenever he could, improved upon; and the Greek couch, judging from the bass-reliefs on many vases, was of great elegance.

The Romans, although receiving so many of their customs and so much of their art from Greece, slept very simply until after their Eastern conquests. Indeed, beds which, with their pillows, were merely hollows in a slab of stone, have been found among Roman remains. But from the period when their Asiatic dominion so increased, the Romans borrowed fashions from the conquered, as nations always do, and they developed an immense luxury, especially in the matter of beds. Examples of the Roman form of bed were still preserved in the days of Charlemagne. In the mean time, of course, in the barbaric life of Northern and Western Europe, these forms generally being lost, it was an advance in civilization when the bench became the bed, and people were fastidious enough at last to feel above sleeping on bundles of straw or heaps of skins upon the flags.

By means of their use by the Carlovingian monarchs and their courts, however, the form of certain bronze bedsteads was handed down to succeeding generations—not at all the most inviting forms either. People all but sat up in these beds, so high at the upper end were the long mattresses lifted at the head under piles of cushions there. Many of them had what we call the sofa back, and frequently, instead of other filling of the metal frame, straps of leather upheld the mattresses and cushions like the "sacking bottoms" of the last generation. In these beds the sleeper lay altogether naked, rolled in the drapery, although there was sometimes worn, as the illustrations of the old manuscripts show, a curious knotted head-dress.

Departing from the twelfth century, the bed became a different affair, made occasionally of bronze and of other metals, but more frequently of wood, carved and incrusted with ornament, sometimes inlaid, sometimes painted, and the mattresses themselves covered with richest stuffs of costly embroidery decked off with gold-lace. Curtains of a corresponding richness were either suspended from the ceiling or carried by columns over them. Lamps were always swung either within the curtained space or just outside, superstitions concerning evil spirits being more rampant in those days than the spirits themselves, and light being supposed to have some sacramental power in keeping them at a distance.


Bed of Twelfth Century, "Dream of Pilate's Wife."

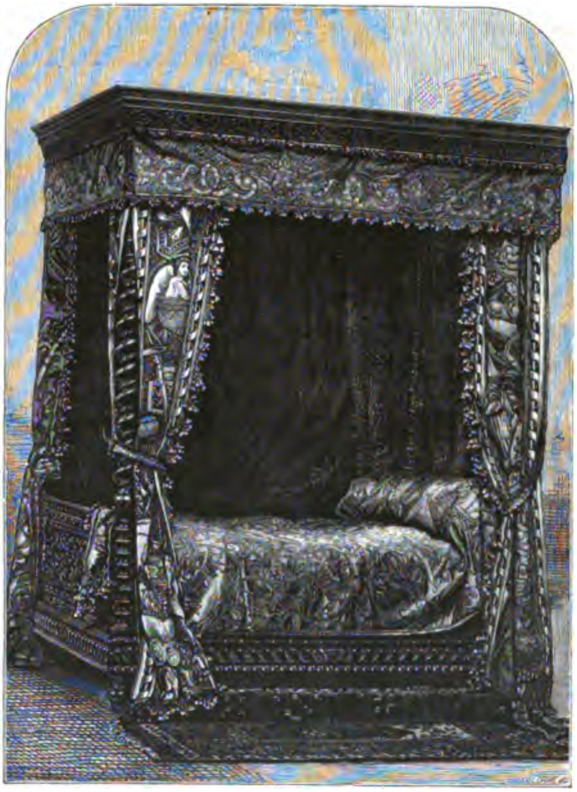
These beds seem at first to have been quite narrow, but they gradually increased till they reached the width of something like four yards. In such huge camps the parents and all the children, and sometimes the dogs, were wont to take their night's rest. It was considered the proper courtesy to invite an honored guest to share them—a custom that still obtained when Francis I. was able to do Admiral Bonnivet no further honor than by inviting him into his bed.

In the twelfth century, long before the day of this courteous king, curtains were attached to the cross-beams, with or without additional canopy between them, as the case might be, used principally as screens. At this time the bed stood out squarely in the room, with the head to the wall, and with either side free, and nobody seemed to picture the possibility of another arrangement. It was only after so many various divisions of the original great hall had taken place, and space became an object, that it occurred to their owners to set them closely into a corner—a much less healthy if more convenient fashion, certainly. To-day there is no rule in this matter, and we set the bed as we please. Before it was pushed up closely, it was customary to have an alley between the bed and the wall, an open space called the "ruelle." If one were ill, friends were received there, and to be admitted to the ruelle of the monarch's bedside was a crowning favor. It was into this ruelle and beneath the curtains of the big bed that the little cradle used to be taken at night. This cradle, by-the-way, after the child ceased to be rocked in its father's shield, was at first hollowed from the trunk of a tree, and rocked by its natural convexity; in its next shape it was an osier basket; and later the cradles were beds placed on two pieces of bent wood; in the fifteenth century, boxed and slung on pivots. We read of a counterpane for a cradle furred with minever. Little holes were to be seen piercing the sides, through which to pass the bands that held the child safely, and the child itself was bandaged like a chrysalis, according to a custom still prevalent in certain portions of the East, and as travellers will remember having seen babies bandaged in the South of Italy.

In the thirteenth century, we see the bedstead standing low on four feet, with a surrounding balustrade and a narrow gateway open on one side. The beds and the cushions were stuffed with straw husks or feathers, neither wool nor hair being then used. At this period sheets came into use, a single sheet at first rolled about one; afterward two laid flat upon the bed, and hanging to the floor as quilts hang, that is, not tucked in about the bed. The bed at that time still stood in the great hall, where the family assembled, where the serfs came to render account of their produce, where the culprit was brought for trial. Life was yet exceedingly primitive, but it loved color and general sumptuousness, and, constantly advancing to greater splendor in every article, of course did not neglect so fine an opportunity for display as this great bed afforded. In the next century the structure of the article was hardly apparent, except for the carved and panelled head-board, so utterly was it enveloped in heavy draperies. The pane, as the coverlet was styled, was of silk velvet, cloth of gold, and all sorts of rich stuffs in gorgeous colors, brocaded with silver and gold, and lined with furs; the counterpane was merely the double of the pane, that is, the original article lined; and in the complete equipment of the bed there were ciels and lambrequins, curtains, dorsels, pendants, counterpoints, mattresses, and pillows. The various pieces of a bed of Henry V.'s time are enumerated in a schedule as "a selour, a testor, a counterpointe, six tapits of arras with figures of hunting and hawking worked in gold, and two curtains, and one traverse of tartaryn," the whole equal to about fifteen thousand dollars present value. In the romance of "Arthur of Lytle Brytagne" there is an account of a bed that must have satisfied the highest aspirations of its owners. "Also there were dyverse beddis wonderfull ryche; but specyally one, the whiche stode in the myddes of the chambre, surmounted in beaute all other; for yᵉ utterbrasses thereof were of grene jasper with grete barres of golde set full of precyous stones; and the crampons were of fyne sylvar enbordered wyth golde, the postes of yvery, with pomelles of corall, and the staves closed in bokeram covered wyth crymesyn satyn, and shetes of sylke with a ryche coverynge of ermyns, and other clothes of cloth of golde, and four square pillowes wrought among the Sarasyns; the curtaynes were of grene sendal, vyroned wyth gold and azure; and round aboute this bedde there laye on the floure carpettes of sylk poynted and embrowdred with ymages of golde."

We do not find a mention of the bolster, although there were plenty of comfortable pillows, before the fifteenth century, at which time the beds assumed their most exaggerated proportions. It would seem not to have been in such common use as to suffer degradation when Milton referred to it as no poet would dream of doing at present:

> "Perhaps some cold bank is her
> bolster now."

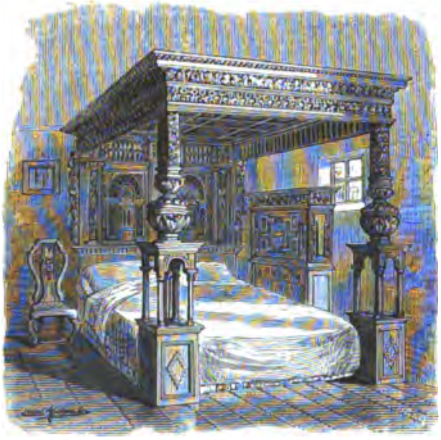


Oak Bedstead, Louis XIII., of Flemish Tapestry, Brussels, 1630–'40.

The interior of a bedroom in the early part of the fifteenth century is described as high and spacious, with a "large window at the end approached by stone steps which form capacious seats at the side. In addition to the lattice-work, there are inside shutters for the purpose of keeping out the wind and rain. The walls are covered with richly embroidered tapestry hung on tenter-hooks, and the rich arras hangings are worked with fleur-de-lis. A chair displaying novel taste in its construction, with the back and cushions embroidered, is at the bedside, and a couch well cushioned and covered with arras gives an air of comfort and refinement to the chamber."

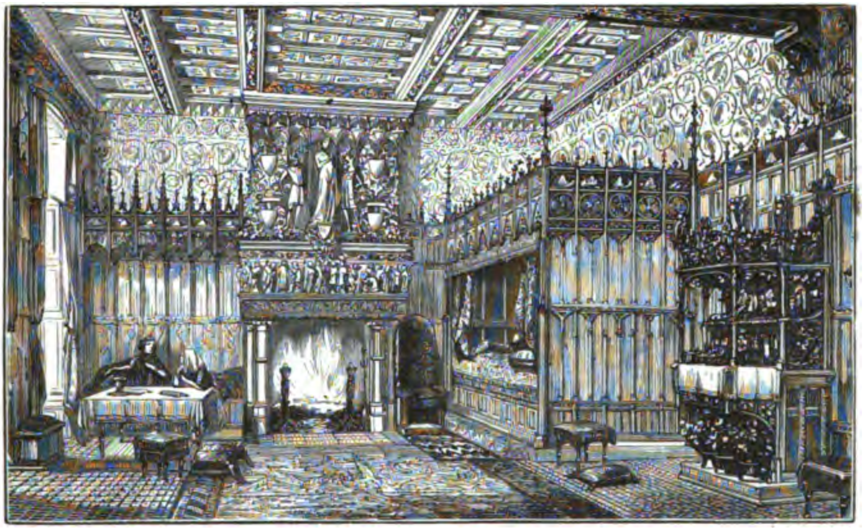
Fine as the beds of the Middle Ages were, those of the Renaissance exceeded them in wealth. If there were celers on the one, there were double celers on the other, double curtains, and we hear of them with draperies of violet satin with raised figures in gold, and curtains of the cloth of gold again, lined with stuffs as costly: cloth of gold, it should be understood, does not always mean literally cloth of nothing else but gold, but the gold filled one way of the web usually, some silken spun thread the other, as there was "cloth of gold of blue" and "cloth of gold of cramoisy." Some old chronicler complained of the luxurious fashions, that people were no longer able to sleep under simple quilts, and in the construction of the frame cedar, ebony, ivory, silver, and more precious matters came to be freely used. The sheets were perfumed. "The gromes," as an ancient direction runs, "schell gadyr for the kinges gowns and shetes and othyr clothes the swete floures, herbis, rotes, and thynges to make them breathe more holesomely and delectable."

In the sixteenth century the beds became columnar, and upheld the canopies and curtains that had previously been suspended in all their cumbrousness from the ceiling. There were beds of state used on occasions of parade then, vastly magnificent, on which sometimes the favored sat, but where no one pretended to sleep. There was always at this period one in the anteroom of the bedchamber of a royal personage; and into the room where it stood were admitted those who were not exactly to be received in the bedchamber, but were too important not to be treated with more distinction than the outside crowd. At about the same time the beds were frequently placed in alcoves, the alcove being almost always curtained off from the rest of the room in which guests were customarily received. The appearance of the bed now must have been something as picturesque as it was resplendent. Only when the many wallowed in squalor could such costly magnificence have been attained by the few. The bedroom of the Duchess of Dolfino had a ceiling of a fretwork of gold upon ultramarine; the walls, we are told, "were superbly carved and decorated. One bedstead had cost five hundred ducats, and the rest of the furniture was in keeping;" while in Prince Doria's palace at Genoa


Great Bed of Ware.

there were whole bedsteads of solid silver seen by the traveller who reports them, set with agates, carnelians, lapis lazuli, pearls, and turquoises.

To-day we have, certainly, for those that can command it—for millionnaires, merchant princes, nobles, and kings—many possibilities of grand and rich furniture, yet nothing so barbarously rich and picturesque as in the late Gothic and early Renaissance era. We have lost the secret of the gorgeous stuffs; we should not dare to use them if we had not. But where in those days there was one bed of clean comfort, there are now a thousand. There is no worthy or industrious, however humble, citizen of this country, out of all its millions, who has not his comfortable bed and his clean sheets, and who cannot enjoy his rest as luxuriously to his body, if not as delightfully to his eye, as any of the old feudal nobles could, as none of their dependents might. And if we cannot produce very vivid examples of beauty as of frequent occurrence in this line, it is perhaps because the beauty has been parcelled out at last among so many; and a world of us who in that period of the picturesque would have been digging in the fields by day and sleeping in the straw by night have now our bright and pleasant bedrooms, cheerful with painted or enamelled cottage sets, fine with rosewood or black walnut and white marble, or pretty with the old-fashioned slender "high-posters" of our grandmothers, with their snowy valances and testers, and the coverlets whose patterns grew beneath the gay fingers and glancing thimbles of the quilting.

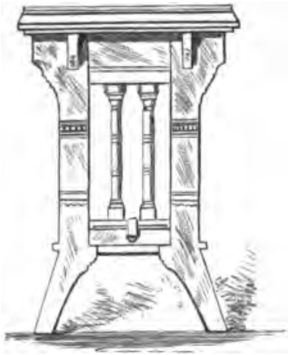


Castle Chamber in the Fifteenth Century.

VI.

THE TABLE.

THE Greeks who, before the Macedonian glory, sat at their tables, afterward reclined on couches there. But they considered it indelicate for women to take that position, or for boys to do so; and the women were obliged to sit at the circular and half-circular tables, although their lords lay on the long couches without backs, their elbows buried in the cushions, sipping the wine poured from the Massic jars, and crowned with roses.


Elevation of Drawing-room Table.

The Romans also sat at table until after the Second Punic War, when Scipio Africanus brought in the custom of reclining; the dining-room was then named the "triclinium," with reference to the three long couches about the table; and one said, "Make the beds," not, "Lay the table."

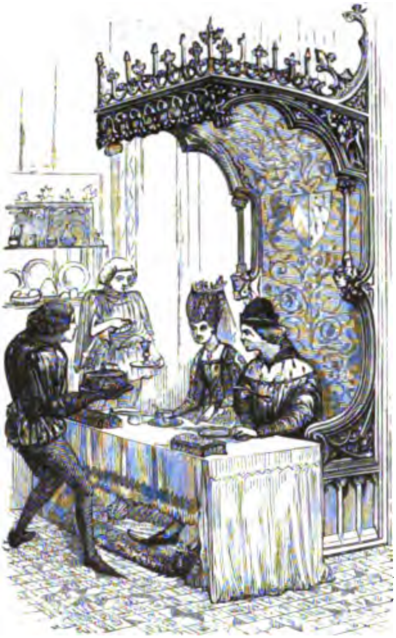
These tables, although of various shapes, were preferably round when used for repasts, as the old Egyptian dining-table was — a circular top-piece upon a pedestal. In handsome specimens the pedestal was a piece of carved work, a caryatid or the figure of a slave upholding the slab. When they were of greater size, they had several legs, but the most customary number was three, usually bending inward; sometimes plain supports, sometimes representing the various sphinxes, or else a satyr, or the beasts of whose sports and struggles the Romans were so fond—the lion, the panther, the tiger; sometimes the legs and haunches of leopards upholding sphinxes with outstretched wings; sometimes a group of centaurs. Frequently these articles were pieces of great extravagance, made of the precious metals richly damasked, of ivory, of the costly woods of luxury whose growth had been dwarfed and knotted and twisted so as to produce wonderful variegations of grain and surface, and veins of brilliant coloring. Cicero is said to have paid the equivalent of nearly fifty thousand dollars for one of these tables.

Besides these superb things, there were smaller and daintier tables both with Romans and Greeks, tripods and gueridons, and little round pieces on a column for work and flowers; and it is at such a table as one of those that ladies are represented in a picture of the fifteenth century standing and playing cards with a courtier.

But before that little evidence of luxury had been revived in the Middle Ages there were long centuries when the bench and the chest were all the table there was, save where, among the exceptionally rich and stately, the horseshoe form had been preserved from the use of the conquered Southern race, and was spread upon occasion of banquets of ceremony. The table which succeeded the bench appears to have been a broad board, or a number of boards bound together and laid upon folding trestles. It is perhaps from this that the use of the word "board" arises as synonymous with "table." The rapidity with which in the great halls of the châteaux, says Viollet-le-Duc, "one erected and took away the tables either for dining or for playing indicates that they were only made of broad panels placed upon folding trestles." The form used, whatever it was, was generally derived from the form that happened to be employed in the next abbey or monastery, for it was to the Church that was due the preservation of most of such decencies of life as had previously been wrought out. Protected from raid and rapine, growing rich on the dues paid by a superstitious horde, loving comfort and luxury and beauty, this preservation that was impossible to others was unavoidable with the beneficiaries of the Church.

In the thirteenth century, both cloths and napkins were in use. At first the cloths hung only to hide the trestles, afterward covering the whole arrangement, and the napkins coming into the receipt of great distinction, being finally often made of silk and often fringed with gold—all of which did not, perhaps, tend to their cleanliness. Certain of the ancients, by-the-way, had napkins which, after using, they always threw in the fire, they being woven of the asbestos or of some other incombustible fibre. The fire simply cleansed them by burning off the soil, and they came out white and purified.

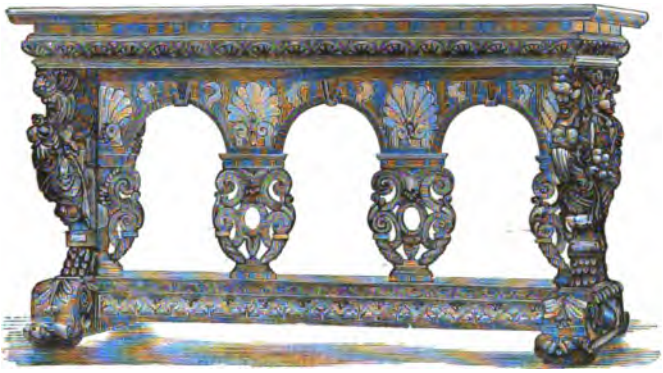
In the pictures taken from the old illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages, we frequently see the table of honor laid across the platform at the upper end of the hall. The principal personage, guest or master, sat in the middle of this table, with a canopy that usually stretched over his head alone of all present, although this was not arbitrary. Nobody sat on the other side, as there the servants waited. If there were a greater number of guests than could here be seated comfortably, they were ranged on one side of each of the two tables that ran down the hall at right angles with the first one. Very grand personages at their entertainments were wont to sit at their own table alone, a long and narrow table beneath a dais, on a floor elevated some inches above the rest, with bench and footstool; and from there they sent choice morsels off their own dishes to some of the favored guests at the other tables. In more private life, when the repast was finished, the servitors cleared it away, and the family or the guests played dice and checkers on the board —the favorite domestic amusements of the Middle Ages. Some great halls had fixed tables of stone, and a certain famous one was so large that the clerks used it as a stage for their farces and mummeries, and it was always dressed for royal feasts or public dinners of state. This, however, was no isolated circumstance, as in the time between the mighty courses—which at those vast royal feasts were sometimes served by knights on horseback—it was not at all uncommon for those who had the amusement of the festival in hand to present plays and fencing matches, and recite ballads, mounted upon these tables.


Mediæval Table of Great Personages.

The meats and wines were on buffets and credences, the servitors carrying to the table only the plate on which the carver had laid the slice as he cut it, and the hanap containing the wine which the taster had already tried. When the number of guests was very large, the great dishes and *pièces montées* were put on the board to be looked over, and then taken away to the carving-table. As one side was left "free for service," the guests were excellently waited on, and had every opportunity of taking their choice while being served; but conversation and convivial interchange of gayety must have suffered by the method of seating.

There was a great deal of splendor about these mediæval tables, and on the buffets and dressers where the draperies and the golden and jewelled cups made superb show; there were pitchers and cups and vases and bowls of gold and silver, baskets of silver, enamelled knives, forks like pincers, and the grand surtout. Goldsmithery was far in advance of the other arts, and in England the goldsmiths already stood at the head of their trade, and wonderful work was lavished on this surtout, which represented monuments, fountains, sculptures, and huge vases or craters upholding a series of smaller ones. This also was derived from the usage of antiquity, where there was a glittering centre-piece, renewed at every course, one of which is described as an ass in bronze carrying panniers of silver, from which slowly dripped some delicious sauce upon the dish below.

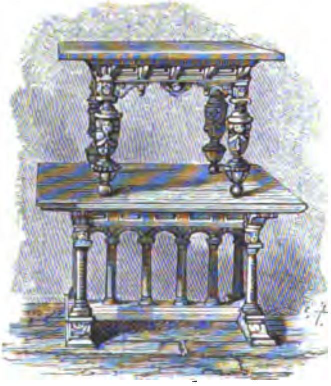
In the Renaissance more attention was paid to the beauty of the table than ever before, and such artists as Jean Goujon, Bachelier, Philibert de l'Orme, Crispin de Sasse, and Ducerceau expended their taste and skill upon its designs and sculptures. Some idea of the magnificence of the tables then, and of that of their equipment when used for dining, may be gathered from the description which Benvenuto Cellini gives of a salt-cellar that he made for King Francis, since, where minor articles are so splendid, the rest must have corresponded with them. "The manner in which I designed them," he says, "was as follows: I put a trident into the right hand of the figure that represented the sea, and in the left a bark of exquisite workmanship, which was to hold the salt; under this figure were its four sea-horses, the form of which in the breast and fore-feet resembled that of a horse, and all the hind part from the middle that of a fish; the fishes' tails were entwined with each other in a manner very pleasing to the eye, and the whole group was placed in a striking attitude. This figure was surrounded by a variety of fishes of different species, and other sea animals. The undulation of the water was properly exhibited, and likewise enamelled with its true colors. The earth I represented by a beautiful female figure holding a cornucopia in her hand, entirely naked, like the male figure. In her left hand she held a little temple, the architecture of the Ionic order, and the workmanship very nice; this was intended to put the pepper in. Under this female figure I exhibited most of the finest animals which the earth produces, and the rock I partly en-



French Renaissance Table.

amelled and partly left in gold. I then fixed the work in a base of black ebony of a proper thickness, and there I placed four golden figures in more than *mezzo-relievo*. These were intended to represent Morning, Noon, Evening, and Night. There were also four other figures of the four principal winds, of the same size, the workmanship and enamel of which were elegant to the last degree."

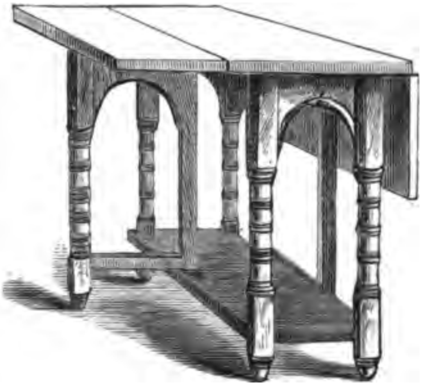
Marquetry was now profusely used to ornament the tables, and the Martin lacquer, more especially the tables of display and accommodation than the dining-tables, and they were made, again, of the exquisite old woods, and of newer and yet more beautiful ones. In the Tudor period they expanded their supports into something elephantine, developing huge globular masses of foliage, although with an ill-conceived classical intention in the custom; and so heavy were they, even those meant to pull apart and extend, that they were almost immovable by means of their own weight; while in the Quatorze period the boule-work dissipated all its power upon their ornamentation, and made them, if not so purely beautiful, yet glittering past knowledge of all that had gone before. At a later date satinwood and mahogany made the simplest structure lovely, and table-tops, as well as other articles of furniture, were decorated with the painted medallions of Cipriani and Angelica Kauffmann.



Flemish Tables.

At this time tables as well as everything else had become a base for unnecessary and ill-adapted ornament. The drawing-room tables were frequently set upon a series of aqueduct-like arches far too strong for the light weight above them, pendants were dropped from the top expressive of nothing, veneering heightened their brilliancy and added to their instability, and pieces of turned and carved wood were glued upon them, instead of the same ornament being carved out of them. In the time of Queen Anne and the earlier Georges, the Classic, having conquered the Gothic, was constantly struggling with the Rococo, and even with the Chinese; but Chippendale and Sheraton, in spite of some sacrifices to the Moloch of the hour, made a few excellent designs for furniture, among them some for tables. Several of Chippendale's that are exceedingly pretty have a little open-work gallery, something like that of the abacus—a small table with a standing rim to keep things from falling off, used by the Romans—running round the edge, probably out of deference to the love of tea and china that was just then epidemic.

To-day we employ freely whatever beautiful forms have been invented when not altogether beyond our reach; but we discard the barbarous splendor of our ancestors, and consider our plain dining-tables beautiful enough when their china and silver and glass and snowy damask are relieved by a plenty of brilliant exotics. The dinner-table at the Executive Mansion of our country, on the occasion of a dinner of ceremony, is laid with fine linen, exquisite china and glass, gold-washed knives and forks. A small bouquet and a cluster of colored wineglasses adorn each plate, and the central ornament is a great vase, running over with flowers, that stands in a long flat mirror laid down the middle of the table, and edged with smaller flowers. But what sort of a comparison does it bear, what sort of a comparison do any of the tables of our gorging, guzzling ancestry bear to the description of a Roman dinner-table two thousand years ago, as the author of "Salathiel" gives it to us? "The guests before me were fifty or sixty splendidly dressed men, attended by a crowd of domestics attired with scarcely less splendor, for no man thought of coming to the banquet in the robes of ordinary life. The embroidered couches, themselves striking objects, allowed the ease of position at once delightful in the relaxing climates of the South, and capable of combining with every grace of the human figure. At a slight distance the table, loaded with plate glittering under a profusion of lamps, and surrounded by couches thus covered by rich draperies, was like a central source of light radiating in broad shafts of every brilliant hue. The wealth of the patricians and their intercourse with the Greeks made them masters of the first performances of the arts. Copies of the most famous statues, and groups of sculpture in the precious metals, trophies of victories, models of temples, were mingled with vases of flowers and lighted perfumes. Finally, covering and closing all, was a vast scarlet canopy, which combined the groups beneath to the eye, and threw the whole into the form that a painter would love."

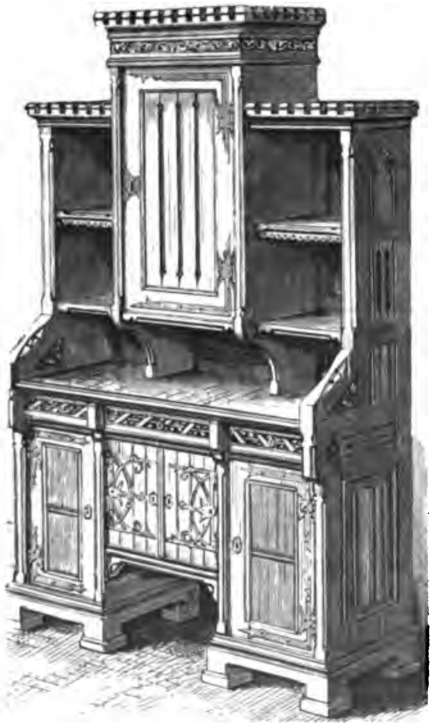


Modern Gothic Table.

VII.

THE SIDEBOARD.

FROM a little article that stood beside the altar in the churches, something which was neither a bench nor a table, being too high for the first and too small for the second, but on which were deposited the cup and bell and other articles used by the priest in offering the mass, originated several of our most important household articles. It soon became apparent that this was altogether too handy a piece of furniture to be surrendered to a single usage. It was presently transferred, or rather adopted, into the dwelling, and from this little credence, as it is called, sprung the *étagère* of our drawing-rooms, the sideboard of our dining-rooms, the dresser of our kitchens, and even the wash-stand of our bedrooms.

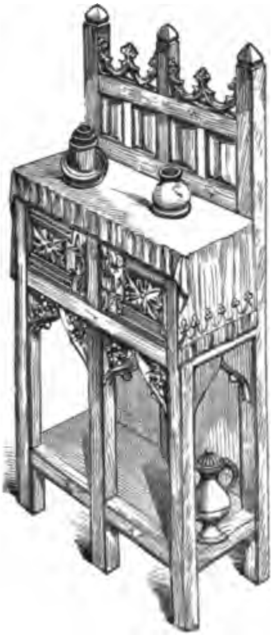


Modern Gothic Sideboard.

This article, up to the thirteenth century, was circular in its form, somewhat like a little tripod with a shelf between its legs near the floor; but later it became square and oblong, the top serving for a shelf additional to that between the legs, and under the top a small locked cupboard, opening with two doors, like that of a cabinet. This is the form in which we know the credence to-day.

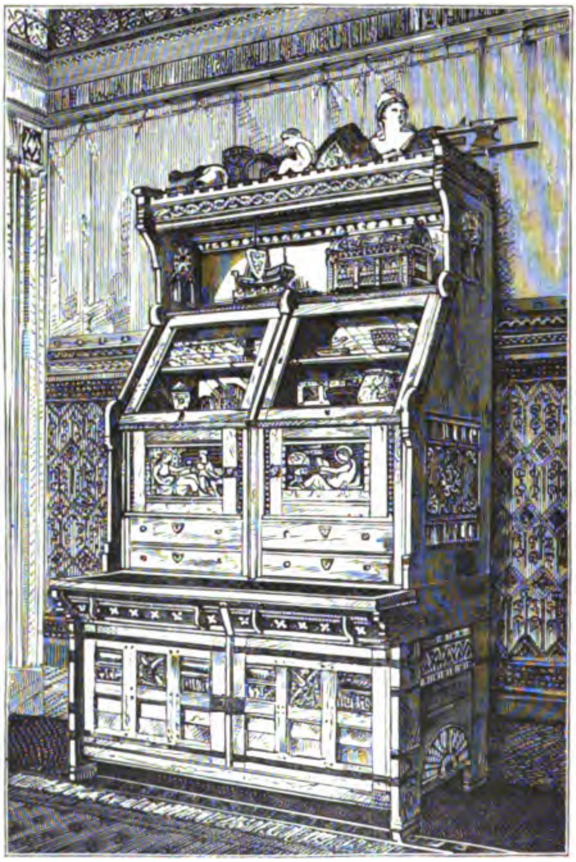
At first it was put near the dining-table, and was used for the tasting-cups that in those wicked times the servants of every lord were obliged to use before waiting on their masters, as a security against the fine art of poisoning.

A piece of furniture in the direct descent from this is the dumb-waiter, and not only the one which to-day slides up and down between the floors, but also the little *servante* which was the original credence on rollers pushed round the table from guest to guest, and carrying such things as were needed, so that one might enjoy the repast without a bevy of servants at the back, or without rising to wait on one's self. "It was at the end of the reign of Louis XIV.," says M. Viollet-le-Duc, "when a general reaction set in against the tiresome etiquette of the grand reign, that the credence became the *servante.* The gentleman who had a score of servants in his house found it insupportable to eat with three or four varlets standing by, ready with the fresh plate and pouring out the wine. He had the credence drawn up to the table, closed the door upon his lackeys, and then could chat at his ease with the two, three, or four guests at his table. Casters were put on the feet of the credence, and it took a name indicating its use. To-day the least shopkeeper who hires a man would feel dishonored if he were not waited on by him personally, and if he invites a friend, free to render the repast wearisome as at a hotel table, the lackey is sure to stand beside his chair."


Early Credeuce.

But this modest demeanor was one very foreign to the nature of the credence, which was really that of display, and such was by no means the use made of the early credence. It stood behind the master, carrying the most costly of his cups and vases, and such pieces of goldsmith's work as he possessed; and from being at first very simple and unornamented, with the growth of splendor it became a sumptuous thing itself. It was doubled and quadrupled in size, enriched with carving and with the most exquisite iron-work in the locks and hinges to its little doors, given a back on which was carved the family escutcheon, and at last over the back a dais was raised; and with that we have the complete sideboard of the present day in its stateliest guise, although we oftenest see it without the crowning dais.

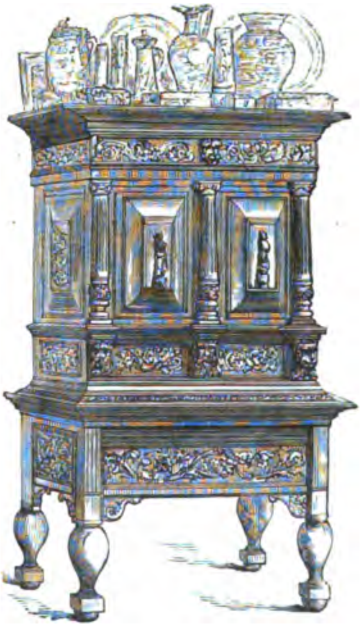
There were, however, various modifications of this shape on the way. When used merely for the display of splendid possessions in plate and jewellery, it was unprovided with the little locked cupboard beneath, those being kept in another article of furniture called the buffet, and brought out for show upon the credence, which was presently built up with two, three, or more shelves, and was exactly like the *étagère* of the modern drawing-room. This was toward the end of the fourteenth century, when the Dukes of Burgundy dazzled all France by their splendor, and every lord tried to rival his neighbor in *fêtes* and exhibitions of treasure. Meantime the buffet was really quite another thing from the article which we now call by that name. Now, it is not only the place to deposit the treasure, but to exhibit it permanently also, as the glazed buffets fixed in the corner of the dining-room of many an old mansion testify. But the real buffet five hundred years ago was a temporary affair, and the name having been at first given to the closet where were shut up the precious articles, was afterward given to the temporary erection dressed to assist in the display of a great feast. The credence, that primarily had stood behind the master's seat, after it put on several shelves and a back and top, was placed



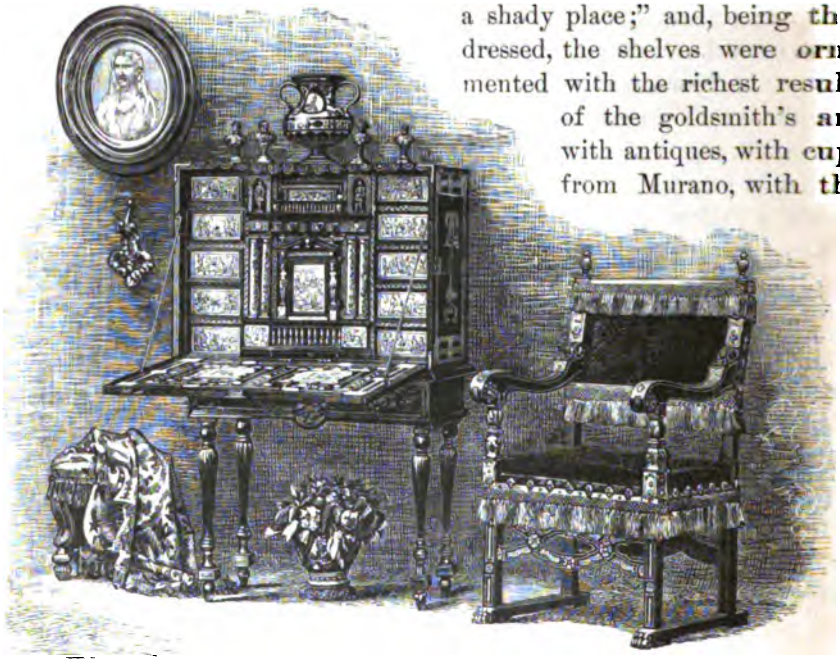
Modern Gothic Bric-à-brac Cabinet.

against the wall; but the buffet was placed in the central space inside of the table shaped like a horseshoe and frequently used at state banquets, covered with rich stuffs, usually gold-wrought, and piled step above step with gold and silver plate, cups, vases, and glasses, when by good fortune those were owned. It used to be the custom to "offer a buffet" to sovereigns and ambassadors upon their entrance of city or fortress—that is, to present refreshments thus magnificently set out—the buffet itself and all that it contained, either of viands or plate, belonging then to the person thus honored. It was from the buffet of state banquets that the squires, waiting on their masters and mistresses, took the various plates and cups for distribution, and it was there that they found the dainties and the meats and wines, and it seems also to have served as carving-table, the dishes not being placed before the guests, but after our modern custom *à la Russe.* The buffet, on the whole, would seem to have been a contingent of state display, and we have proudly transferred the name to the exhibition of whatever display we can make ourselves.

But in the rooms of the ladies, and in the halls of ceremony corresponding to the drawing-rooms of to-day, the credence, with its shelves and back, that had become the thing similar to the *étagère*, and now called the *dressoir*, was no less an object of glitter and parade. Etiquette severely prescribed the number of shelves and the shape of the back and of the dais suitable to the degree of the owner, and nobody thought of transgressing — the original credence, somewhat increased in size, answering for any one beneath the rank of a countess.


Dutch Renaissance Cabinet.

The sense of grace and color and the general aptitude for decoration in those old generations, beyond anything common with us, were never more apparent than in the decoration of this piece of furniture. In our day we are usually content to display our old china and our curiosities, without drapery, on the bare shelf or against the bare wall; but the mediæval taste knew the potency of light and shade in falling folds of splendid stuff, and never failed to make use of them where possible. Thus they hung across the back of the credence richly colored and figured cloth, when it was not made more attractive by carving, and laid on every shelf a drapery falling over the front and down the ends, bordered and fringed and exquisitely wrought, making a "sunshine in a shady place;" and, being thus dressed, the shelves were ornamented with the richest results of the goldsmith's art, with antiques, with cups from Murano, with the spice boxes, the comfit pots, the perfume cases of the day, and must have been picturesque and splendid past imagination. Some reminiscence of this drapery is found in the tiny ornamental curtain occasionally hung before some recess of the modern reproduction of the sideboard. When at length the Italian took hold of this affair, he made of it a charming nondescript, full of grace and dazzle, and almost original in character, being neither closed cabinet nor open *étagère.* He made it of ebony, and inlaid it with turquoise, carnelian, and rock-crystal, and nothing was more striking, except it were the real cabinets sprung from the locked and closed armory, one of which a Florentine traveller describes to us, "which had about it eight Oriental columns of alabaster, on each whereof was placed a head of Cæsar, covered with a canopy so richly set with precious stones that they resembled a firmament of stars. Within it was our Saviour's Passion, and the Twelve Apostles in amber. This cabinet was valued at two hundred thousand crowns."

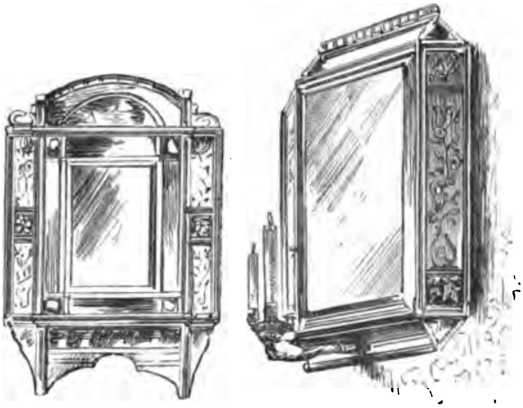


Italian Cabinet, Ebony inlaid with Ivory; Carvings illustrating Jerusalem Delivered, Sixteenth Century; Venetian Chair.

VIII.

THE MIRROR AND GLASS.

A WATER-COLOR of Alma Tadema's in the Centennial Exposition represented the former wife of one of the Merovingian kings sitting at her lattice, while the new wife, in the group without, receives the rite of baptism—sitting at her lattice, and contemplating the beauty that has been discarded, in a hand-mirror.



Modern Gothic Girandoles.

It is this hand-mirror, round and small, and with a handle, that was the only glass of the Middle Ages. And this was bequeathed to that period by the periods long past, many specimens of its sort being still preserved in the museums.

With the ancients these little mirrors were made of the various metals and their alloys—these of copper, those of silver, others even of gold, and some of gold with a face of silver for better reflection. Sometimes the case was of bronze, sometimes of ivory; always it was richly decorated, the handle itself representing a Cupid, a Narcissus, or a vaulting figure holding up the hoop through which it seems ready to spring, the hoop framing the mirror. Sometimes the mirror and its surroundings made an ornamental group; and we read of a Venus to whom a Cupid offers the glass, as if Love itself had nothing more beautiful to offer than the reflection. Seneca has declared that "the dowry that the Senate once bestowed upon the daughter of Scipio would no longer suffice to pay for the mirror of a freedwoman."

The great slabs of darkened glass and of obsidian, in the panels of rooms, doubtless served the same purpose as mirrors. But none of those, of course, could have been handed down, and knowledge of the manufacture of fine glass was nearly lost in the Dark Ages. It was not till a couple of the glass-makers of Murano, in Venice, learned the secret of silvering the back of a sheet of glass that our present mirror came into existence. These glass-makers received the monopoly of the manufacture for a score of years; and, like the flash of its own lustre, the glass mirror, in its Venetian frame of carved and gilded wood, sped over Europe, and became a coveted and treasured possession.

The first Venetians who settled in the archipelago of the Adriatic brought with them to the Dogano from the main-land the knowledge of glass-making. The glass-works were at first everywhere in the city, and the workers were extraordinarily skilful, but the smoke of the furnaces became so troublesome, and the danger of conflagration so great, that in the fourteenth century they were all transferred to the island of Murano. It was not merely mirrors, though, that the Venetians made, but innumerable other articles of glass—vases, goblets, cups, lamps, beads, counterfeit precious stones, perhaps none of them more beautiful than the old Roman glasses had been centuries before, but much in advance of any intervening work. Certainly it was not more beautiful than that Roman glass is as we have its fragments to-day, where disintegration and decomposition of the outer scales have given the once plain clear glass the most wonderful rainbow tints—one may see the same effect in the glass of the Cesnola collection—flakes of the tenderest green, the purest blue, the pearliest white, variegated with a sheen of changing flame and ruby red.

There was glass, though, before the Roman, whether we believe Pliny's old fable or not. A bead, the little bauble of a queen whose name it bears, and whose ashes have long since flown to the four winds, has been handed down to us from a time more than three thousand years past. The Egyptians had a free use of glass, we are informed, more than four thousand years ago. In some of those immemorial tombs there are even paintings of the operations of glass-blowing. Vases have been found at Nineveh, in Greece, and upon all the Mediterranean shores. The ancients were acquainted, too, with the use of the various metallic oxides in coloring the glass, as analysis of their fragments shows; and the Romans, we know, could stain it, engrave it, and work it on the lathe. They imitated gems with it, and made finely tinted mosaics of it. Pliny speaks of the murrhine glass, but that is now generally considered to have been fluorspar, or an imitation of that substance. Whatever its origin, nothing is more exquisite—as ethereally transparent and delicate as if it were solidified out of moonlight or ocean foam. A tremendous price was paid for their cups and vases by the emperors and patricians: if they were equal to the celebrated Portland Vase, they were worth it. That, an object some ten inches in height, had on its blue ground an opaque white glass superimposed, which was afterward cut away, like a cameo, in a representation of the marriage of King Peleus with the sea-nymph Thetis, leaving the white figures in relief upon the dark-blue surface—a vase which is often imitated in the blue jasper Wedgwood-ware. One of the Roman emperors is said to have put to death a workman who discovered malleable glass, as the other glass-makers foresaw the ruin of their trade through his invention, and their clamor was not to be disregarded by one who probably received their tribute; so the man and his secret perished together. When the power went to Constantinople, and with the power the wealth and the art that follows wealth and power, glass-making went too; and there are traditions of much beautiful glass-work in the city. But although some specimens seem to be preserved, they are not absolutely authentic. Doubtless it was by means of their connection with that place that the Venetians improved their own work from time to time, until the overthrow and capture of the city gave them the opportunity of appropriating all the processes with which the conquered were familiar.

In the sixth century the Persians worked fancifully in glass, and pieces showing the Oriental skill, spoken of as "Damascus work," found their way to Europe after that time; of these the glass known as "The Luck of Eden Hall," still preserved unbroken, is perhaps the most famous. It was somewhere in the eleventh century that painted glass began to be used in windows. Mosaics of small pieces of colored glass, set in simple diapered design, and stained while in a state of flux by the admixture of coloring matter, may have been used before; but the painted glass was produced by painting the design upon clear glass with certain pigments that, under strong firing, combined with the glass and became fixed like enamel. The colors of the painted glass, of course, could not compare for depth, richness, and lustre with glass stained in the manufacture; in this the separate tints were always produced by separate bits of glass, and the leads of the settings that united them formed the main lines of the drawing. The glass-painters of England in the thirteenth century stood very high; the French were working glass in the fourteenth century; and the Germans produced some very interesting examples—long straight glasses of a pale bottle-green, sometimes ornamented with enamels, sometimes with countless projecting tiny bosses: the beautiful ruby Bohemian glass was produced at a later day—after the seventeenth century. In the same century a colony of workmen from Venice was established in England, and produced many of the old bevelled mirrors now so valued. In the next century the French engraved upon a wheel very daintily; but we obtain the same effect to-day by means of a powerful acid, the hydro-fluoric, which reacts upon the surface in the desired design.

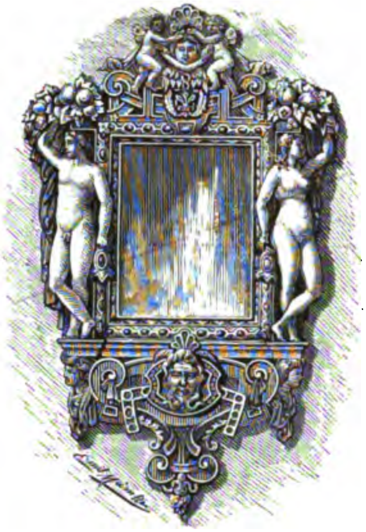
The Chinese, although long acquainted with the secrets of glass-making, have never been celebrated for their success in it, although one of their varieties slightly resembles one of the Venetian products.

The Venetians, indeed, for centuries enjoyed the distinction of being the chief workers of the world in glass. They enamelled and gilded glass; decorated it with scale-work, the scales done in gold with a tiny atom of color enamelled upon each point; they crackled it by sudden cooling and fresh expansion; they marbled it, imitating jasper, lapis, tortoise-shell, mother-of-pearl; they made mosaics called millefiori glass; they reticulated it in the pattern that seemed to be inlaid within its glazing; and they twisted it into a filigree almost as delicate as lace, and which the best modern effort has not been able to equal; they wrought it out to an exceeding thinness, and it had a lightness, also, under their hands that is not found in any of our glass in whose production lead is used. Many of the processes were kept secret, and are lost, perhaps irrecoverably, although urgent efforts are now being made in Venice to restore the manufacture to its pristine glory. But its chief beauty, after all, was in its form, glass in the blowing lending itself to a thousand shapes, according to the grace of the flowing material and the quick invention of the blower; and when to these marvels of delicacy and outline were added the marvels of color and of variegation, it is no wonder that Venetian glass should carry off the palm with the lovers of beauty. The work of Browning's Gypsies was child's play to it:

> "Glasses they'll blow you, crystal clear,
> Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,
> As if in pure water you dropped and let die
> A bruised black-blooded mulberry;
> And that other sort, the crowning pride,
> With long white threads distinct inside,
> Like the lake flower's fibrous roots that dangle
> Loose such a length and never tangle,
> Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,
> And the cup-lily couches with all her white daughters."

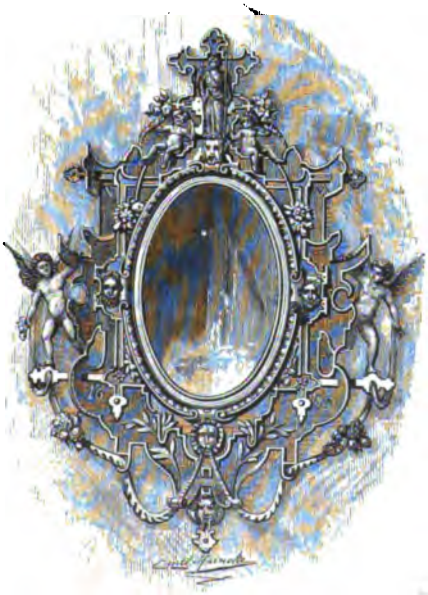
When they had reached such perfection in other glass, and the State itself took such an interest in the manufacture, it was not remarkable that the mirrors of the Venetians should soon have been equally famous. For the first two hundred years the largest were seldom more than four or five feet square; in the seventeenth century, "shaped" at the top; in the eighteenth, shaped at the top and bottom too. It was in the time of

Louis Quinze that the painted or gilded panel was let in at the top. Traceries were sunk around the edges at the back, glittering through, and the edges were bevelled, sometimes for the depth of an inch, the bevel observing all the angles and curves of the frame. This, Mr. Pollen tells us, gave "preciousness and prismatic light to the whole glass. It is of great difficulty in execution, the plate being held by the workman over his head, and the edge cut by grinding. The feats of skill of this kind, in the form of interrupted curves and short lines and angles, are rarely accomplished by modern workmen, and the angle of the bevel itself is generally too acute, whereby the prismatic light produced by this portion of the mirror is in violent and too showy contrast to the remainder."



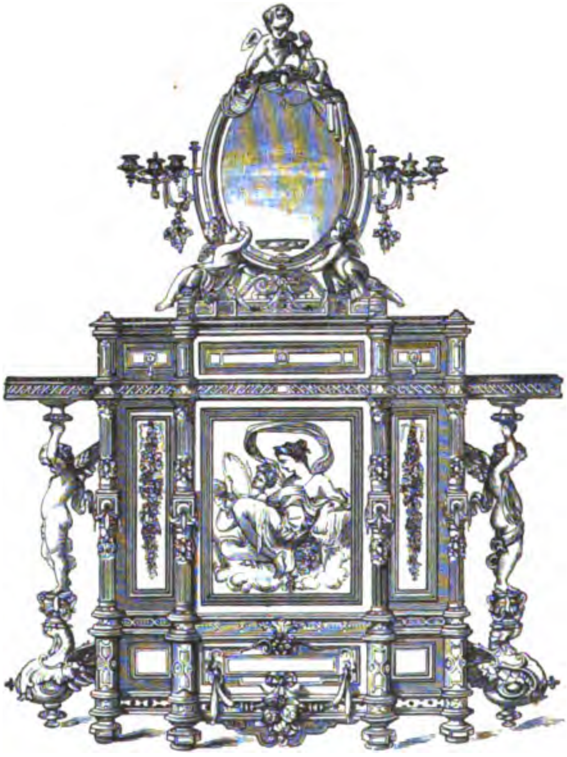
Mirror of the Time of Elizabeth.

The frames of many of these glasses were fine and bold in free carving of the soft woods, gilt. One is described of walnut inlaid with other woods, with a sliding cover to the glass, on which was carved a beautiful female head; another is entirely of iron damasked in gold and silver. There were but few mirrors in Queen Elizabeth's time, and those were not bevelled, although the frames were rich with mixed carving of strap-work and classical ornament. In Charles's reign they had become general, and were always bevelled, and the frame ornately carved. "I saw the queen's rare cabinets and collection of china, which was wonderfully rich and plentiful," writes Evelyn, in 1693, "but especially a large cabinet, looking-glass frame, and stands, all of amber, much of it white, with historical bass-reliefs, and statues with



Mirror of the Time of Charles II.

medals carved in them, esteemed worth four thousand pounds, sent by the Duke of Brandenburg, whose country (Prussia) abounds with amber cast up by the sea." At this time rooms were built entirely lined with looking-glass, including the ceiling. Both Chippendale and the Adam brothers, who flourished during the middle and last of the eighteenth century, made good designs for looking-glass frames. The Adam frames are particularly fine, in their way, consisting commonly of a profusion of delicate floral carving, without background or other support; sometimes in soft wood gilt, and sometimes in ebony. A mirror bearing the name of these brothers is an oblong panel of bevelled glass in a two-inch moulding of ebony, which encloses in an oval just touching the four sides a wreath of rose leaves and buds and blossoms, cut also from ebony, the outer moulding carrying at the foot festoons and hanging ends of the tiny roses and tapering buds. Before the time of the Adams, though, Grinling Gibbons carved frames, with natural representations of the highest degree of beauty and finish of which the natural school is capable, so that nothing of the kind has ever surpassed his work.


Renaissance Table, with Mirror.

At the time of Louis Quatorze the large looking-glasses were used to increase the effect of the splendor of the style, and the Pompeian Renaissance, as it might be called, of Louis Seize obtained fine effects with them. But the splendid side pieces that reflect one from head to foot never have the interest of romance that attaches to the little mediæval hand-mirror that, like some enchantment, lets you into the world within its magic sphere; and few large ones can compare in beauty to the smaller Venetian ones, whose frames themselves are made of the colored and tangled filigree glass, till the whole thing looks as if it were something snatched from a foam-decked wave in the sunshine.

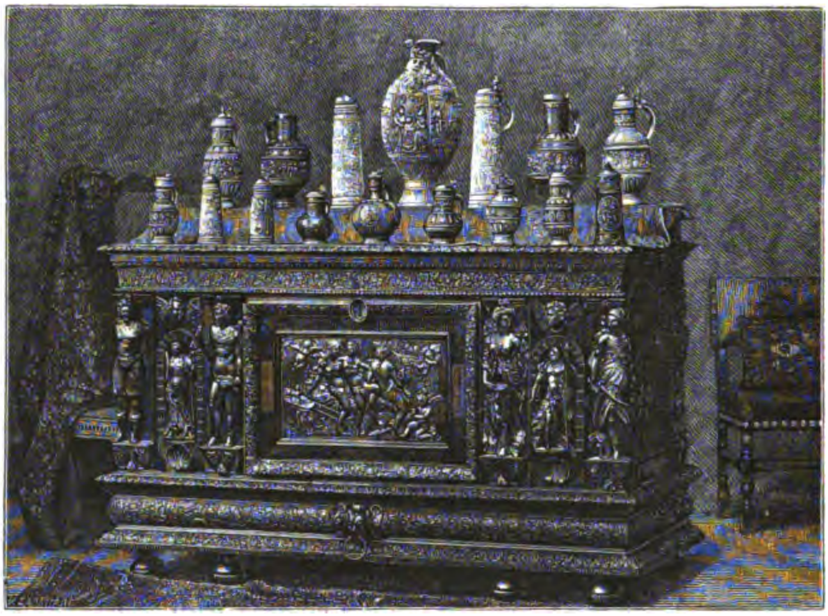
IX.

MINOR ARTICLES.

IN those sad old days which wear so much romance through the misty veil of time, it was not easy to replace an old furnishing. "It was necessary," says M. Viollet-le-Duc, "to have the wood sculptured, which took long; then to address one's self to the coffer-maker, to the locksmith; to buy stuffs in the city—and often the château was far off—to address one's self to the silk merchant, to the nail-maker, to the fringe-maker, the canvas-maker, the tapestry-maker, the carder. All that took time, care, much money—and money the feudal lords living on their demesnes wanted most, the greater part of the dues being paid in stock and service. Until the end of the fifteenth century the interior service of the château was done by forced labor. The difficulties were no less when it was thought best to transport to the residence of the castellan furnitures made at a distance. It was necessary then to claim the service of the vavasors, or of the villages and hamlets. Such a canton had a chariot dragged by several pairs of oxen; such a village or such a vavasor had only a horse and a car, or a beast of burden. The expense, the difficulty of obtaining credit, the embarrassment of having to do with all sorts of furnishers, made one take care of the old furniture, and replace or augment it only on solemn occasions."

Besides the seat, the bed, the table, the dresser, and their variations, there were, of course, many minor articles that contributed to the make-up of rooms in the Middle Ages and afterward, to some of which we have had occasion to refer, which came slowly, one by one, after long intervals of want made their requirement felt. Among these were the screens, braziers, sconces, chimney furniture, lecturns, scriptionales, and the like. The screen, insignificant as it is now, although still valued to a certain extent as an aid to beautiful ensemble, filled, as we have said, an absolute need in the old days. It was vitally important to all comfort, beauty was lavished upon it, and down to the time of the division of the great hall into several rooms it retained its supremacy, and even later, indeed. Its first form may have been in that of a hanging curtain of skins or of rudely dressed leather; its latter estate decked with the handiwork of the ladies in kings' palaces was splendid enough to make its poor beginnings forgotten. In those immense rooms of the early periods the draughts were great and perpetual; chimneys, after their introduction, were made of such size that the air was always moving toward the vent, and the screens were a necessary of life. Screens called portières were hung across the doors, and often took the place of doors; above them were lambrequins boxed in so as to exclude the lesser draught that would find entrance at the top above the curtain and its rod, and beyond all that there was frequently a sort of drum built around the door-way, with ceiling and sides and a draped opening. But besides such fixtures, there were the light movable ones whose frames were made of bronze, of brass filigree, and of wonderful carved work; and at an earlier period there were simpler ones woven of osier, some mounted on feet before the huge fire where the whole trunks of trees were burning—the fire that our ancestors so keenly appreciated. Sometimes these fire-screens were draperies suspended from the front of the chimney-piece that had a great open bay projecting round the chimney and over the hearth, and under which one could sit and warm one's feet without scorching the face. "Under the manteau" was an old phrase standing for confidential matters, and many a conspiracy was hatched and many a family compact sealed beneath the great chimney hood where a score could sit. The movable screens were single sheets stretched on a frame and standing on feet, or they were folding leaves, the valves more or less in number; and we have them so to-day. On these the gigantic figures of the arras were to be seen, or, later in the embroidery of court ladies' fingers, the king and his mistress looked history unblushingly in the face. As beautiful ones as any are to-day of Eastern manufacture—teak frames carved in involutions of dragons' tails and vast liliaceous and rose forms, enclosing segments of creamy silk on which are wrought peacocks with their spread tails, with wonderful brilliancy of color; cranes, flowers, fans, or the great folding leaves of Japanese work, where on the stout silk leaf after leaf is adorned with purple and crimson and azure in those marvellously simple yet effective designs where so few strokes of outline do such telling work. One of the seventeenth-century diarists speaks of those of his own time which he saw when on a visit to a great house in his neighborhood, describing a room with a "cabinet of all elegancies, especially Indian; in the hall are contrivances of Japan screens instead of wainscot, and there is an excellent pendule clock enclosed in the curious flower-work of Mr. Gibbon in the middle of the vestibule. The landscapes of the screens represent the manner of living and courtesy of the Chinese."

An earlier piece of furniture, though, than the screen—perhaps the very earliest of all, at any rate in the usage of the Dark Ages—was the chest. Rude enough at first, although holding all the valuables, these chests afterward were elaborated with great care — were covered with carved figures, apostles in their shrines and warriors in their stalls; a continual interlacing of leaf and bough, with symbolical carvings, much like that in the cathedrals in miniature; the man enticed by a lovely female form playing on a musical instrument, the lower part of whose body is that of a harpy; wild beasts and birds picking at the flesh of another, and representing conscience and sins; while other carvings would be merely conventional representations of leafy forms. The Venetian coffers were famous for their beauty and exquisite grace; others were vast bulky repositories, like the English "standards," sufficient, indeed, to be the hiding-place of half a dozen Ginevras. These were used in England to hold the great arras and leather hangings when the family, having exhausted the fat of the land in one grant, moved with all their possessions to another. They constituted the chief furniture of the Italians, and were made with exhaustless richness. Many of them were supported on feet, and upheld figures sculptured from the wood of the frame-work at all the angles. They also were ornamented with carving representing the story of various legends in the panels, and carried a great deal of gilding on the carving. Sometimes for certain vast rooms these chests were in sets. We fre-

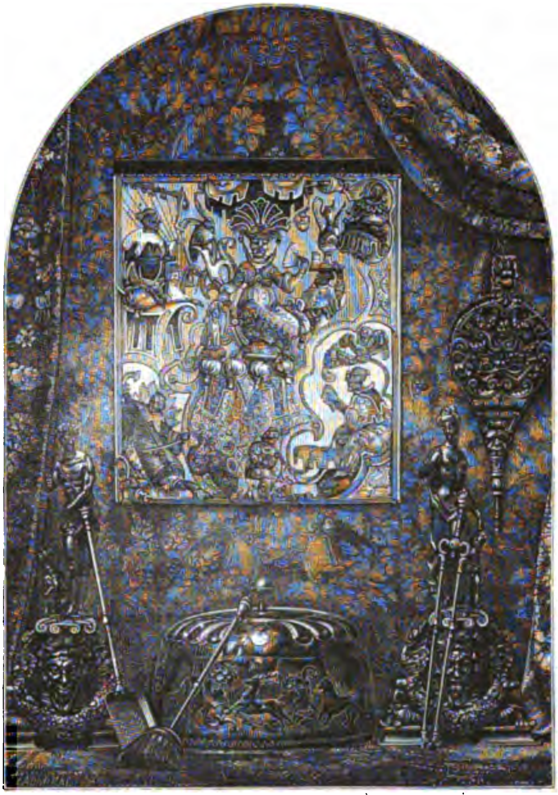

Chest in Carved Oak inlaid with Colored Wood, Norman Work, 1550.

quently read of bridal coffers. These, commonly, were huge affairs, and held small drawers, chests within chests, and countless odd places for the disposal of the customary paraphernalia of the occasion. Our immediate ancestors were almost invariably provided with rude chests, which, so late as the settlement of this country, had not gone out of use. They were elevated on short supports answering for feet and legs, adorned with some very simple carving and turning, usually with a series of plinths and pilasters in wood of another color, the chest being itself of birch or of unstained oak, the date frequently cut in the front, and on lifting the lid a little till was seen. Gradually these chests, somewhat cumbersome as they were, were superseded by other articles, and abandoned to base uses, holding the tools, or given up to the corn in the barn or the meal in the storeroom. But now everybody who has had an ancestor is on the lookout for that ancestor's old chest, to be furbished and made presentable in the hall.

There are many conveniences for the library that date back to very early days, strange as it may seem; but the manuscripts of that period were jealously guarded, after their worth, or that of their originals, had once been recognized. Before the art of printing, a hundred volumes, so called, of these manuscripts were a luxury enjoyed only by prelates and sovereigns. Twenty volumes were a goodly number for the learned, and there was made of them the most that could be made. Enclosed in precious covers, frequently of golden plates enriched with gems, or of intricately carved ivory, they were kept under lock in private receptacles; when less rich, bound in vellum or in boards, they were fastened in their places by long chains, and one might read them, but could not take them away. For the use of the scholar there was a lecturn, disposed so as to hold the book and keep it open. In the churches these lecturns were often a mere rest laid upon the back of a bird with outspread wings, most commonly the eagle, because it was considered that his flight, being the highest, symbolized a loftier ascent for the sacred song. In private use the lecturn had many shapes, pyramidal or circular, with a little ledge at the rim, around an upright support, sometimes with compartments beneath for books not in instant use. This is to-day a convenient form for the student, as the book he studies is held in place on top, and the other books to which he may constantly have need to refer, but with which he does not wish to lumber his table, are just at hand around the foot. Sometimes the lecturn is merely a double tablet sloping in both directions and meeting at the top above its pedestal. Ribbons frequently hold the book open, being laid flatly across the leaf, and having weights attached to the end swinging over on the other side. There are yet others of many sides, carrying a book on each, that wheel about; there are some made with a rack, which is hinged, having a little three-lobed hook to alter at will the inclination of the tablet; and there are others, yet simpler, to stand upon the table or desk, with a swinging shelf to be advanced or pushed away at need; while the remainder are, indeed, much richer, made of wrought metal covered with costly stuff and elaborately ornamented. Besides these, there were scriptionales—a sort of half desk to place on the table or bench where one wrote, or upon one's knee, with the inkhorn, a veritable ram's horn, suspended beside it. One of these lecturns, made of brass, with lions' feet on the supports, was taken from the lake at Newstead Abbey; and on being sent to a clock-maker for repairs, there were found, in a secret receptacle made by the hollows of the brass rods, the parchments, pardons, grants, maps, and other documents, which probably had been thrust there, and then thrown into the pond for future recovery, at the breaking-up of the monasteries.

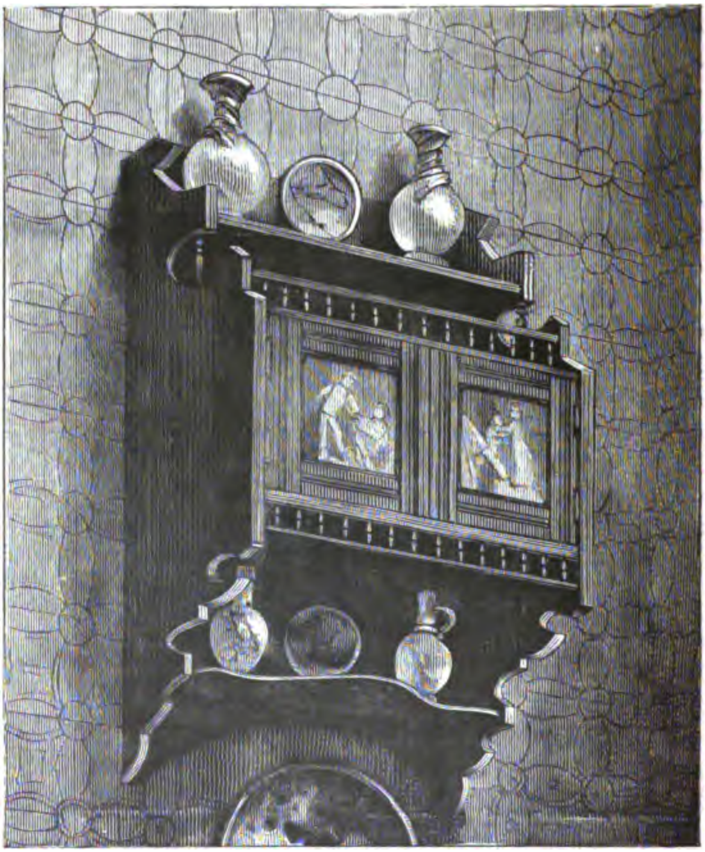
Among other minor articles is a little seat coming again into use—a square cushion, not very different from the tabouret, which was once a seat of distinction at court. This seat, the quarrel, is usually made not merely as a cushion, but slightly lifted on a frame with casters. Covered with handsome material, the handiwork of home, or some bit of foreign stuff, it can be used effectively in the modern drawing-room. It is frequently made of what seems like two cushions piled one upon another. The use of it may be a remnant of that fashion of sitting on carpets and cushions which obtained briefly in the time of St. Louis, borrowed from the Oriental fashion. The king is represented in some of the manuscripts thus seated. But this was merely a temporary fancy, for on all formal occasions a more formal seat was chosen.

There is a great deal of chimney furniture in brass-work, and in silver also, still left to us from the days before comfort became so universal that splendor suffered decrease. The *réchauds*, braziers, the sconces, the bellows, and andirons are often such as no work of to-day equals, although a portion of the bellows is usually of carved wood. The shape of the bellows, by-the-way, is something that has not changed certainly in two thousand years. In the time of the Renaissance, it being part of the appanage of the never-to-be-too-highly-valued chimney, the best work was expended upon it. It was usually of walnut wood, with masks, sirens, shields, dolphins, griffins, and all the carved ornament of the period and style; and such a one is worth its weight in gold to-day. On the andirons, too, the artist and the artisan wrought with love, the work as tender and careful when in iron as when in silver. At Knole, in England, the variety of the andirons is innumerable. They are of silver, bronze, and brass. One very quaint and unique design is that of a sunflower hanging flat to the light. It has lately been revived; and in one of the new styles of furnishing its form is often seen; and it has even been adopted into iron fences. There are beautiful specimens of brass *repoussé* in other things — the cover, tray, sconce, fender, *couvre-feu* — the design being drawn and beaten out from the back and in from the front, and touched up afterward by the graver. The sconces consist usually of a reflector of the metal, with branches for candles beneath. Some of them of the time of Louis Treize are painted with a fine imperceptible varnish, which, although it interferes with the beauty of the metal in its natural state, and is on the wrong side of art, yet has its advantages in sparing the house-maid's muscle. In others of them porcelain plaques are inserted, showing finely by the light of the tiny flames that burn below them.



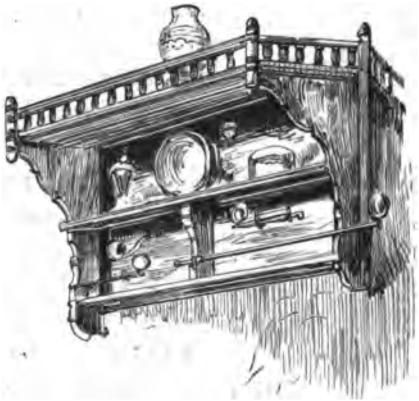
Couvre-feu, Seventeenth Century; Italian Bellows, Sixteenth Century; Italian Bronze Andirons, same Date; Gobelins Tapestry, Time of Louis XIV.

Besides all the multitude of articles thus brought into use, there are some others introduced in the time of Chippendale and Sheraton, Chambers, and the Adam brothers, when the Chinese Empire seemed to strike people as a new world. There are mahogany tea-trays, sometimes perfectly plain, sometimes as richly carved as the Renaissance bellows; there are curious little tables for turning out tea, with a rim standing up around them; there are embroidery frames and easels; and there are the hanging cabinets. Before that time, in the Jacobean style, there had been a fashion of building in little ornamental open shelves above the mantle on either side, bracketed together in the centre above, and on these stood the various *objets de vertu* of the house. This, also, is a fashion lately revived, even by those who do not care to use the Jacobean exclusively, and, if it were to be seen only here and there, might be a blessing; but bidding fair to be seen at every step, it is not unlikely that the eye may tire of it. But the eye will hardly tire of the hanging cabinets of Chippendale design, with the shelves unenclosed save by a margin of exquisite open-work, sometimes in arabesque, sometimes in Chinese and Japanese designs, and especially not of those with an open under and upper shelf, and the middle one enclosed behind two tiny doors, the doors carved, or else with a tile or plaque inserted for brightening. Sometimes, instead of tiles, plates of bevelled crystal, or even of looking-glass, are used; sometimes the whole is of ebonized wood and brass. Objects too easily soiled are here shut away behind these doors, and others are exposed upon the open shelves—little bronzes, bits of old china, antiques, curios—to balance the platter that


Hanging Cabinet.

has been drilled and hung elsewhere on its hooks in the wall, costly as any sketch of an old master. Among all the revivals, none have exceeded the usefulness and beauty of this charming little hanging cabinet.

There are other minor articles that might deserve notice, but perhaps we have spoken of such trifles at sufficient length. It should, however, be remembered that as trifles make the sum of life, so it is trifles that make much of the general effect of furnishing, and we will only add that many valuable ones may be found among the light comfortable pieces of rattan piazza furniture which have proved a blessing to our hot summers.

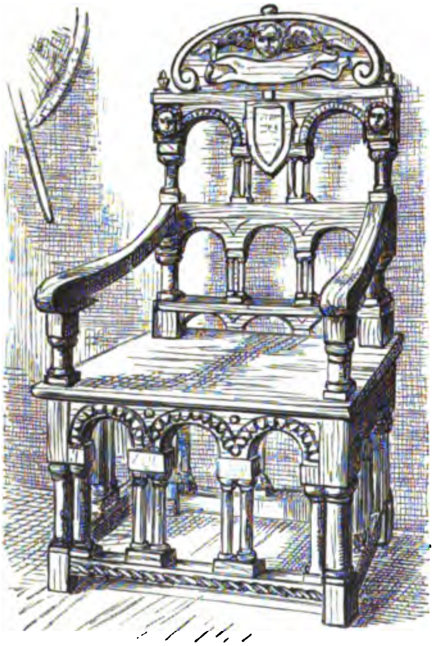


Pipe Shelves.

X.

THE MATERIAL.

THE material of which most of the primitive furniture was made, after the decadence of Roman splendor, was the prevailing wood of the country, whatever that chanced to be, usually oak, but varying through a number of the common woods — chestnut, maple, ash, pear, and cherry. Sometimes the oak was embrowned, sometimes blackened, sometimes left to its natural tint. So left, except for mellowing through seasoning and absorption of dust, it never changed tint; and those who speak of a piece of oak black with age use the term incorrectly, as oak is never black with age, but becomes black only through the application of dyes. In the absence of choice woods, recourse was had to the metals for rare work, and the most sumptuous furniture. After voyages of any length were made, and the products of other regions brought to market, new woods from a distance entered into the manufactures; many, also, which had been known to the ancients, were discovered, such as fragrant cedar and sandal, tulip, bamboo, citron — the Romans' wood of luxury—and ebony, an important article of the commerce of Tyre, and of which certain of the ancients, indeed, were used to make statues of their gods.



Chair made from the Ship of Sir Francis Drake.

The use of ebony, again, changed the whole character of the manufacture of furniture. From the moment that it re-entered the list of commodities of luxury it required special workmen, equipped, on account of its hardness, with peculiar tools; and it had to be wrought with such extreme care, and it commanded such great prices, that the term used in France for its work, *ébénisterie*, was presently transferred to all delicate and costly cabinet-making. Its blackness allowed it to set off any dressing which the fancy of the artist supplied, either of hammered brass, of ivory inlay, or of painted panels, and the mutual contrast made the article, of course, very striking. Sometimes the ebony, which came from the vast forests of Madagascar, Ethiopia, and Ceylon, was of a jet black; sometimes of a dark green streaked with dull-red veins, not unlike the heliotrope stone used for seals; sometimes—and this was as beautiful as any—of a deep violet, just escaping black. Its fine and close grain, when once well wrought, maintained the brilliant profile of its carving keen and fine forever. So very hard was it, indeed, that its mere dust, incorporated with glue, polished like the wood itself. The costliness of the wood soon occasioned its imitation; and Jean de Verona, in the fifteenth century, found out how to imitate its color so exactly—by steeping more porous wood, sometimes oak, but preferably pear, in an infusion of nut-galls and alum, or sulphate of iron, polishing it afterward with warm wax—that but for its inferior hardness it would be impossible to detect the difference. Articles thus made are sold to-day in Italy and Holland for manufactures hundreds of years old.

Teak, coming originally from Malabar, is a wood resembling ebony, although on close inspection a ruddy tint will be observed in its blackness. It is hard and heavy, and in the articles brought from the East Indies is usually seen carved in demonic shapes, dragon-like involutions, and the outlines of the elephantine gods, but sometimes in vast black roses and liliaceous forms.

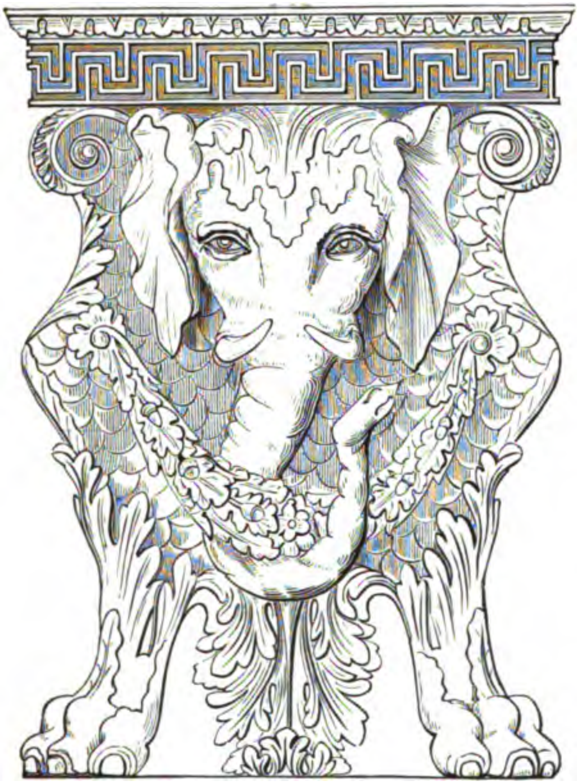
There are several other woods that take a stain looking like a choice color in the original grain. One of these is maple, which, exquisite in its native polish, is perhaps even more so when stained a delicate gray, with all its eyes and veins and cellular marks glistening under a fine varnish. It presents then an appearance of smoked pearl, lucid and full of a veiled lustre. Offset with fine specimens of rosewood, nothing can be pleasanter than its effect.

In the early part of the eighteenth century mahogany was seen for the first time in Europe. If any one too proudly displays enviable *Mayflower* or Jamestown furniture in mahogany, the reader may have the satisfaction of knowing that the prize is not genuine. A brilliant red wood used for dye, monopolized by the crown, and called in Portugal queen's-wood, had long been known, but nothing was in use of so rich a tint as the mahogany. The first logs were sent from the West Indies, as an accidental portion of cargo, to one Dr. Gibson, of London. When workmen busied themselves with them, the knots broke their tools and discouraged them, and the logs lay untouched in a garden for a long time, acquiring every day a richer depth of color. At length Dr. Gibson called a cabinet-maker by the name of Wollaston, and told him to take the logs and do something with them, no matter what. Wollaston at first refused; but the doctor, convinced of the possibilities of the material, urged him so strongly that finally, supplying himself with the fit tools, he constructed a bureau, which, made of wood already well seasoned and deepened in tone, so pleased the doctor that he displayed it to a host of admiring friends, among whom was the Duchess of Buckingham; and the latter, declaring she must have the counterpart, brought Wollaston and mahogany into fashion together. Although mahogany when new is not attractive, it becomes more attractive with every year's exposure to the subtle action of the atmosphere, acquiring before a great while the warmest hues of wine. The handsomest pieces are those of the roots, where the coloring matter is most strongly concentrated, that brought from the American coasts having at first been called amaranth-wood from its superb strength of tone. It is no wonder that so charming a material came into vogue, after the Duchess of Buckingham's bureau had been seen. It was something to feed the love of color inherent in most of us, to supply shadow in the pictorial effect of the room even while relieving the shadow with lustre and warmth, the inner fire in its dark depths shining like the glow of the carbuncle or the smouldering embers on the hearth. Everybody wanted mahogany. But mahogany was not only considered too brittle for the entire construction of solid articles, but, procured with difficulty and after a long sea-passage, it was too expensive; and thus the habit of veneering, with a thin strip of it, supplied its more massive use.

Veneering had been used by the ancients long before, for we know of sheets of ivory glued and riveted upon surfaces beneath; but veneering never ran mad as it did with mahogany at this time, and has done ever since, as many garrets full of dilapidated stuff can demonstrate.

Another very fine wood, a delightful substance when one has a good specimen of it, is the rosewood, its rose tints variegating its dark winy tints, and making a beautiful substance capable of being wrought artistically. The rosewood commonly used on our sofas and pianos is of inferior veining. The choicer pieces are reserved for delicate work, and are fuller of beauty, as bare material, than anything but the half-revealed wealth of mahogany.

There are a few other woods, such as the black walnut, for instance, in constant use. The black walnut, although offering a good base to the carver, affords no variety of tint, or suggestion of inner color, as the maple, the rosewood, and mahogany do, except in the mottled polished surfaces of the kind called French walnut. During the reign of the Rococo, furniture was made of any wood that came to hand, and overlaid with gilding and with ornament. Tables of alabaster, consoles of mother-of-pearl, and cabinets of tortoise-shell put honest but meaner substance out-of-doors, although plain deal stuck together, and, covered with gold-leaf, could always impose itself upon this princely company. It is only within the last score of years that attention has been once more directed to solidity, and we have begun again to furnish our bedrooms in the sweet and cleanly light oak, and have learned that the once undreamed-of yellow pine, when well dressed, is not only one of the cheapest, but one of the most durable and attractive woods in existence, its soft creamy body varied with stains of deeper hue darkening into rusty red.



Italian Oak Pedestal.

XI.

COVERINGS.

THE first coverings worn by furniture were very differently arranged from those which are to-day sewed and nailed on over springs. Everything was then tossed on the article, to drape itself naturally, and probably the effect was quite as luxurious, although the convenience may be a matter of question. The Romans had splendid stuffs, woven usually of wool and embroidered with gold, thrown loosely over their couches and canopying their tables; and a certain bed-covering, wrought by the needle in Babylon, was eventually purchased by Nero for a sum equivalent to eighty thousand dollars—a piece of extravagance which few of our modern magnates, with all their expenditure, will find themselves able to equal.

In the earlier years of our own era, leathers glued upon the surface, then cut in pictured outline, and the lines of the cutting filled with crude color, were the first covering, chiefly confined, though, to armory and chest. Afterward finer materials draped seats loosely without attachment; in time these were stretched partially into the shape of the article, shrouding its frame, and even extending some way in front for the feet; while as for the various furs, they, of course, have been used from the day of the first savage to the present.

It must have been at an early period that stuffs covered with embroidery were thus used, for we know what the fingers could do in the Bayeux tapestry in the eleventh century, although that was a wall drapery; but long before that the destruction of Troy was wrought upon the golden veil of Wiglaf, King of Mercia, the daughters of Charlemagne had left names famous for weaving and spinning and embroidery, and the four daughters of Edward the Elder had been no less celebrated for their needle-work. Meanwhile it must have been something deserving the name of an art already when Dunstan drew the designs for the work with which some lady of the Church was to beautify his own sacerdotal robes. The Saxons were very early known for their fine wools, and we read something of the work they did in the old verse that runs:

"And in a chamber close beside,
Two hundred maidens did abide,
In petticoats of stammel red,
And milk-white kerchers on their heads;
Their smock sleeves like to winter's snow
That on the western mountains flow,
And each sleeve with a silken band
Was fairly tièd at the hand;
These pretty maids did never lin,
But in that place all day did spin."

Walls were hung and seats were covered with the result of their work long before damask came from Damascus or diaper had its name from Ypres.*

When the next step in luxury took place it was toward cushions on the chairs and benches. These cushions were at first bags of wool or feathers; afterward, in the fifteenth century, with shapes appropriate to their particular use, thick and luxurious for the seat, round for the feet, with indentations between the corners for the elbows. Contemporary with these were the counterpanes, or *courte-pointes*, lined and stuffed draperies, quilted, or caught through from side to side and fastened at each catching with a tag, as we make mattresses, or their descendants, the "comfortables," to-day. These were replaced by cushions entirely fitted to the seat, sometimes secured by straps; and after they became the fashion, besides the softer stuffs, various ornamental leathers, already in use, were adapted to the purpose. Of these the Cordovan was the most in demand, embossed and flowered in colors and in gold, and styled gauffered leather, as all leathers are styled when thus dressed; and Flanders and Russia furnished a fine article at a later day. There were, also, daintier coverings more fit to meet the touch of the fine garments that were in wear.

As seats became lighter and more movable, the covering was for the first time during the sixteenth century fastened on securely with nails, the stuffing and buttoning of the *courte-pointe* in its abbreviated shape being transferred to it. Springs, meanwhile, do not seem to have been used in chairs and sofas till about the time of Louis Quatorze.

Silks, made in the Greek Empire, had come in with the sixth century, at first too precious for any but ecclesiastical or personal use. Afterward there was velvet and samite, which latter some archæologists presume to be the old French for velvet itself; and others insist that it was silk spun with gold—a precious material, to judge from the immemorial saying concerning a happy life, "*Des jours filés d'or et de soie*"—days spun of silk and gold.

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* Another derivation is from the old French *diaspre*, mottled jasper.

Gold-thread appeared in most of these earlier stuffs; their first epoch is entirely of gold and silver thread. Then came figured stuffs, sown with griffins, unicorns, wheels, Byzantine peacocks, tigers, swallows, apples of gold, branches of palm, lions, men, horses, and what not. Utrecht velvets followed in the fifteenth century, and brought after them the train of woollen plushes and stamped felts; and at last silks with velvet flowers were made in Venice in the sixteenth century, when bars, bands, and medallions were the choice. These were all daring in style and color: a gold griffin upon a brick-red ground, dull green on black figured with heads of fantastic birds in gold-thread, or blue scattered over with great branches of lilies in gold. But how very illuminating they must have been!

The Aubusson and Gobelin tapestries, also, were put to use in covering chairs and couches with their wonderful work; China sent satins and embroidery that for design, for flatness, for close heavy work, is not to be equalled at the present day by the most skilled of the French needle-women; while at last, during the Renaissance period, some of the designs of the figured silks grew exceedingly gentle and lovely, purified from the rude fantasticisms of early days. Cretonne, made at first of hemp, had meanwhile come in during the tenth century for such of us as could not afford these stiff golden and silken stuffs, giving the same colors and designs, wanting nothing but the lustre, and not always that; and since then reps have simulated as best they could the Aubusson and other tapestries. For the rest, hair-cloth we have always with us—a fabric in daily increasing contempt, which has no virtue that cannot better be supplied by something else—its coolness by rattan, its shadow by adaptation; for if one wishes a dark effect in any portion of a room, to set a jet-black article there is as bad a way of working as for a painter, wishing to produce an effect of blackness, to daub in the crude black. Nevertheless, those who are upholstering their gilt sofas in black satin cannot have a word to say concerning the black lustres of hair-cloth. It is not given to many of us to have chairs like Lady Blessington's, of mother-of-pearl upholstered in white velvet, on which the leading artists of the day have left their sign-manual in lovely landscapes and medallion portraits; but we need not go into mourning about it, and lumber our rooms with hearse-like monuments in dead black. There are exquisite goods to be had in the markets now, woollens of the purest tints that leave little to desire, cottons of smooth finish and pleasant pattern, cheap enough for the buyer to afford to replace them; and with these we can make our shabbiest articles of furniture so attractive—pinning the material over the shape of the article till it fits, then cutting it, and binding the seams while still pinned in place — that, if it is not the furniture of palaces, we shall never feel it, so far as simple beauty goes. And we doubt not that any of those old mediæval ladies, who set such store on their few hand-printed buckrams from Boukhara (a bit of ugly brown and red and yellow cotton buckram was preserved as a treasure by a certain Tyrolean countess who married an Elector of Brandenburg), would have given, had they dared, their best gold-threaded lions and leopards and heraldic beasts and inscriptions for any of the exquisite and dainty chintzes with which we of the present add a new bloom to summer.

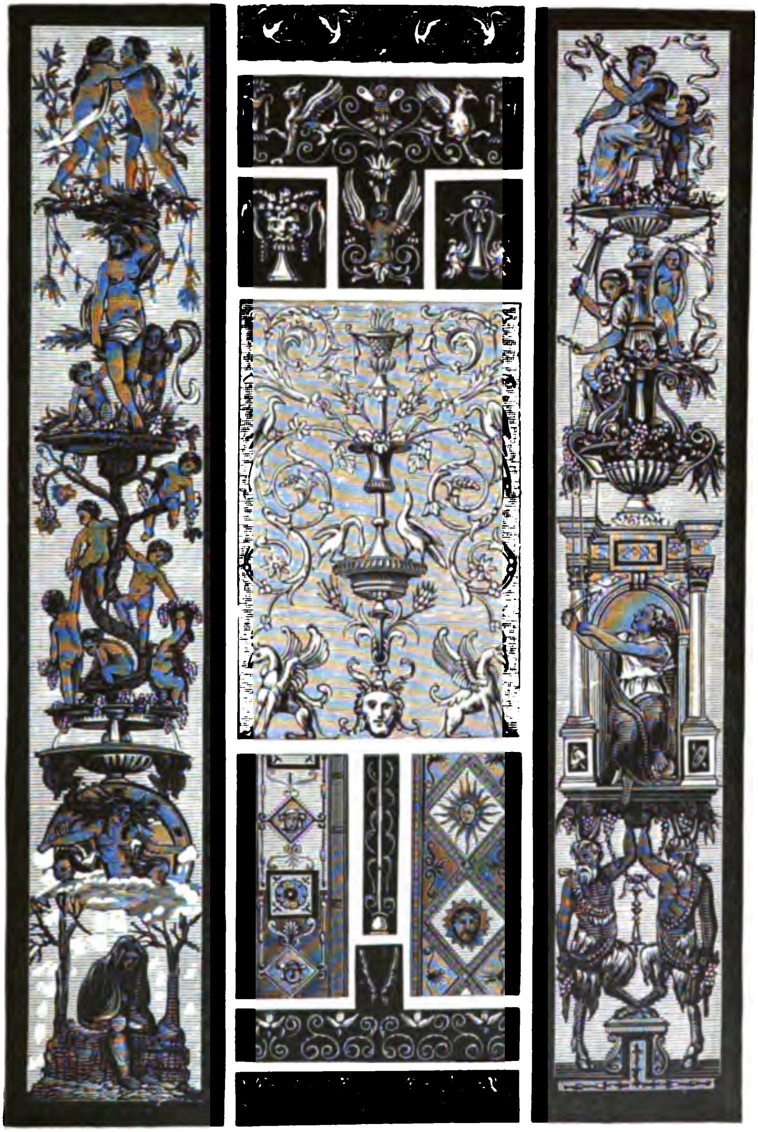
XII.

THE ORNAMENT.

NO sooner was furniture an established fact than ornament was applied to it. At first of the simplest description, it consisted of little but the hinges and locks, which, by-and-by, spread into beautiful proportions, and overlaid the surfaces with a glittering sort of embroidery. After that, panels were made, arches were formed at their top, a slice was pared off at the corner, making an initial species of chamfering or channelling, leathers were pasted over smooth surfaces, and were either painted, or, as we have already said, incised and the incision painted. The painting of the incision grew into a rich and effective decoration, and the slight modification of inessential shape grew into mouldings; into an ornament of simple lines made by rude tools; finally into carvings. After the fourteenth century there were few flat surfaces, and from that date ornament ran riot, and ended by paying no more attention to rule than we suppose a wild-blackberry vine in August pays to geometrical progression.

Yet there are certain rules outside of which ornament has no right to its being, and which have always been recognized by those of whose work the world does not weary. Thus, although ornament is always an accessory, since it is impossible that it should exist without its base, yet it is a constructive accessory, if one may so say; that is, it is never to be introduced for its own sake, but as a beautifying of the constructive design. The reason for its existence should be apparent upon its face, and every detail of it kept subordinate to the general effect.

It is considered by able critics that ornament is something to please the eye and the emotions thus affected, and not to arouse the intellect or the moral sense; and, in this view, beauty, the simple pleasure of line and tint, absolute fitness, takes rank before symbolism or the suggestion of hidden meanings; and it is claimed that the highest type of ornament, either for furniture or for any other purpose, is the purely ideal, and of this the best examples are to be found in the Grecian, the Saracenic, and the Early English. The Grecian, it is true, used symbolic ornaments, but they were only those borrowed from the Egyptian and Assyrian and elsewhere, and repeated without the least reference to their hidden meaning, the fret of



Frescoes executed under Raphael's Direction.

the labyrinth by no means suggesting here, as it did in the Egyptian, the three thousand chambers under Lake Mœris, and the egg and arrow of the echinus standing for mere effect of light and shadow, and for no type of death and the resurrection.

Next to this ideal in ornament comes that which represents an idea suggested by some object in nature, but not imitating that object, in which much India and Japanese work may be found; not, however, all Indian or Japanese. In certain provinces of India it beautifies the architecture; it is in the carving of the best of the articles in Bombay black-wood, and in fine India shawls. It is in perfection in the Japanese copper lacquer-work, centuries old, but fresh and firm as if just out of the maker's hand. After this come conventionalized forms such as the Middle Ages delighted in; and, lastly, the merely imitative.

The handling of the curve betrays the spirit of all decoration. It is not only the line of beauty, it is the line of life; the curve of the Pastoral Crook being the line, as it has been said, which the palms obey, springing at that point of the globe where the vital impulse is strongest; the line in which the ferns, the last representatives of the period when the earth teemed with lavish waste of force, uncurl to-day, and in which we see the pushing, swift-growing grape-vine reaching for its support; the line expressing the curve at the point of infinite strength. It is this line which is followed throughout all the curves of the Early English decoration. If the reader compares such lines as this and its derivatives with the lines of the Louis Quatorze and Louis Quinze styles, it will be evident how widely the latter differ from the lines of pure beauty.

All ornament lies within the province, technically, either of the "round" or of the "flat." To the round belong carving and all forms of relief; to the flat, the damascene, the diaper, and much of the geometrical design which is in reality an elaboration of the abstract principle of the beauty involved in the representation of the natural object, together with all the varying lights and shades of color, silver, and gold. In the flat also belongs a portion of the constructive order of decoration, together with inlay, such as marquetry, tarsia, precious mosaic, buhl, niello, and the ordinary veneerings. Of these, mosaic and veneering are of immemorial usage, although the antique veneering was of rich material applied in æsthetic design.

The introduction of costly woods, and the love of display rather than of solidity, brought the fashion of veneer into general use again. But while with the ancients it had been used with fine material as a further adornment to substance already fine, with the moderns it was resorted to as a falsehood to represent the structure of the article in question, for everybody desired the appearance of luxury without possessing the means to purchase luxury; and so the furniture-makers, essaying to please their patrons, saddled the world with articles that, splendid enough for a palace, had not the coherence of a house of cards. Veneering became a modern fashion as soon as it was well known again. Catherine de' Medici had the walls of whole rooms veneered; under the Louises, veneering with white and rose-colored marbles was practised, and in rosewood also. What was good enough for princes was good enough for subjects, and from the seventeenth century to the present it has been more or less in vogue. Even veneering, though, has its limitations, as every wood will not receive it; only the lighter and more porous woods, into which the glue (which is best when strengthened with brandy) can penetrate, lending themselves to the deception and flaunting in the false pretence.

Marquetry has a better right to be considered under the head of ornament, for marquetry cannot be applied except with ornamental design both in outline and color, since mere light and shade, in a certain sense, stand for color. Although it had been used by the Venetians, who had received it from the Orient, it was brought into more active use by the Germans and the Dutch toward the end of the sixteenth century, the German work being preferable, and inspired by certain old Gothic examples—rare, indeed, since marquetry was not a very favorite Gothic ornament. To-day the Dutch counterfeit those early marquetries, and sell them at high prices to those unable to detect the forgery. The early specimens represent flowers (the Dutch ones tulips), birds, and landscapes. Marquetry is usually done with wood, sometimes in geometrical traceries, sometimes in branches of foliage. The process is quite elaborate, the pattern being laid on cloth before it is applied on the surface that has been hollowed for it, where it is additionally secured by a series of firm but gentle taps. Sometimes the woods are in native colors, but more frequently they are stained, the holly or white-wood for the lighter tints, the oak and plane-tree woods for the deeper ones, acetate of copper producing green, indigo blue, and logwood, nitrate of copper, saffron, and other dyes being used. Tarsia is a marquetry in wood, chiefly pine and cypress, figures and draperies being effectively reproduced in this way by representing the angles and folds with wood laid according to the varying grain, some more prominent points afterward touched up with the hot iron. There is also a marquetry in straw, and the brilliant dyes which the straw takes, together with the lustrous substance itself, make the work quite attractive; but it is too brittle and perishable to deserve much notice. No marquetry exceeds for curiosity that which is occasionally brought now from India, known as the mosaic of Bombay, and made of microscopic cubes of wood that produce a fine effect.

Of this class of ornament the most magnificent, of course, is the mosaic in stone. Sometimes this is executed even in jewels. Florence has for hundreds of years been famous for its *pietra dura*, or *pietra commessa*, "which," says a traveller, "is a marble ground inlaid with several sorts of marbles and stones of various colors..... In one is represented the town of Leghorn." A table made of this work is described as a structure of ebony, "divided into compartments by columns of heliotrope, Oriental jasper, and lapis lazuli, which have the bases and capitals of chased silver. The work is furthermore enriched with jewels, beautiful ornaments of silver, and exquisite little figures, interspersed with miniatures and terminal figures of silver and gold, in full relief, united in pairs. There are, besides, other compartments formed of jasper, agates, heliotropes, sardonyxes, carnelians, and other precious stones."

Another choice method of ornamentation is niello-work. This is wrought upon an inlay of silver or corresponding material, the design, like a pen-and-ink sketch, being cut in. The niello is itself a powder formed of copper, sulphur, lead, and borax, melted together and pulverized. Spreading it on the design, a flame is blown over it by the blow-pipe, which fuses it, the outer particles clinging to the rough sides of the cutting; it is then finished by rubbing the surface with pumice and afterward polishing by hand. It is to niello-work that we are said to owe our possession of pictures printed from engraved plates, as it was in obtaining proofs of the design (by first filling the lines, before the niello itself was spread there, with black matter, over which a sheet of damp paper was laid and a roller passed, thus procuring an impression) that its further use was suggested to Finiguerra.

The gayest of all ornament that furniture has ever known, and at the same time one that degenerated from harmless beauty into the most meretricious, in its universal application and overloading, is boule-work. This was the invention of a French wood-carver of the name of Boule, who, living to the age of ninety, was able to carry his work under his own eye to its highest point of perfection. It consisted strictly of an inlay of brass or of unburnished gold in tortoise-shell, and afterward was extended to admit incrustation and mosaic of copper, ivory, mother-of-pearl, and colored woods, together with more costly substance of silver, lapis lazuli, jasper, precious stones, and even of enamel, upon ebony or any dark background. The designs were complicated, intended to be graceful and harmonious, and, besides the arabesques, represented animals, flowers, fruits, landscapes, battle pieces, and hunting parties. This decoration became immensely popular. The king, Louis Quatorze, was delighted with it, and gave the inventor apartments in the Louvre, made him engraver of the royal seals, and in his brevet styled him architect, painter, sculptor in mosaic, artist in furniture, engraver, master of inlay, and inventor of ciphers.

But even this ornament gave way during the reign of Louis Quinze to the Rococo mania, when decorated plaster and gilt wood — torturing the rocks, shells, and roses out of all semblance to anything either in nature or in art, its very name a corruption of *rocailles* and *coquilles*, rocks and shells—usurped the public fancy, abashed noble decoration, debased taste, and wrought havoc with design.

Rich carving in the solid, however, always remains a fit manner of decoration when its model is satisfactory. It takes the light and shade more handsomely than any gilding or burnishing. If it is done in accordance with correct principle, palaces can ask nothing more beautiful for the ornament of their furniture, even if they demand anything more showy, and if it is expensive, it is everlasting. At present a prevailing ornament, where carving cannot be afforded, is flat, smooth mouldings enclosing plaques of porcelain.

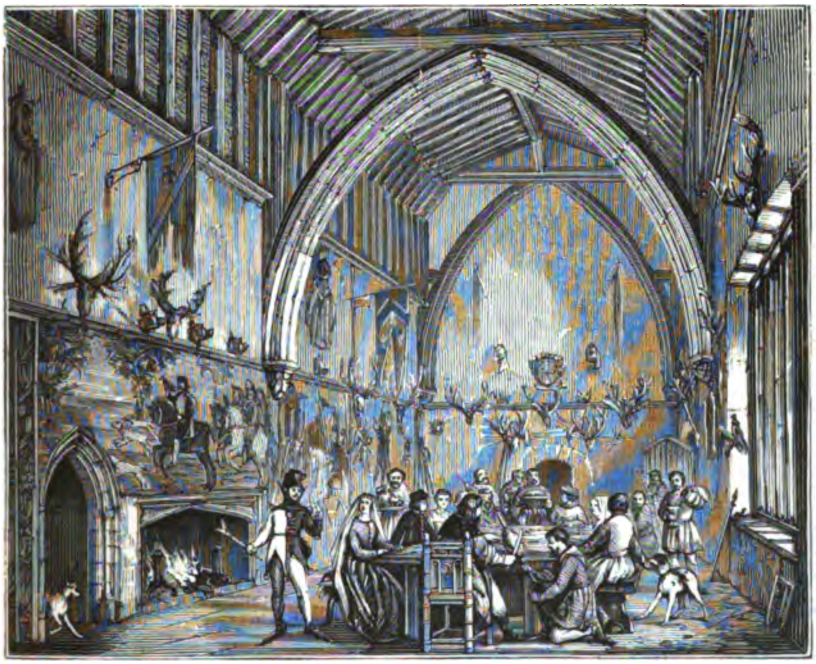
Meanwhile, to remember the character of the object to be ornamented is the first consideration—its origin, its growth, its purpose. When we turn a chair into a shell or a shell into a chair, and furnish a room, as it were, with trophies from the submarine residence of some aquatic tribe, we forget the history of the chair, prevent its development in its proper traits, and turn beauty into monstrosity. Misapplied ornament is worse than poverty, for it is also vulgarity.

For those who can afford none of these ornaments there remain certain woods always charming in their self-colors, which, when well made up, remind one that beauty unadorned is adorned the most; since the simplest article when perfectly constructed is already ornamented in a way, while no ornament at all is preferable to any exuberance and wealth of that into which the conscience of art has not entered.

XIII.

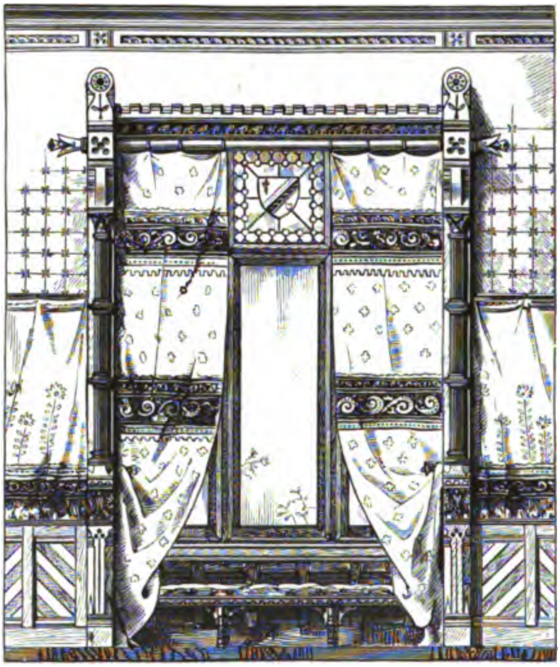
THE GOTHIC STYLE.

THE Gothic was the term bestowed in derision by the classicists upon mediæval art. Under the fascination of the Renaissance, the taste for this style declined; but of late years it has been upon the increase till the style has become a matter of universal pride and research. The Gothic, if not indigenous to England, took such root there that it became national; and such study has it received that its course is very plainly to be traced. Of course, in a land where mediæval castles crown every hill, mediæval furniture has some pre-eminent rights; but in this country it is exotic. If we did not build mediæval battlemented buildings when we had the French and Indians to fight, we can hardly build them now. Neverthe-



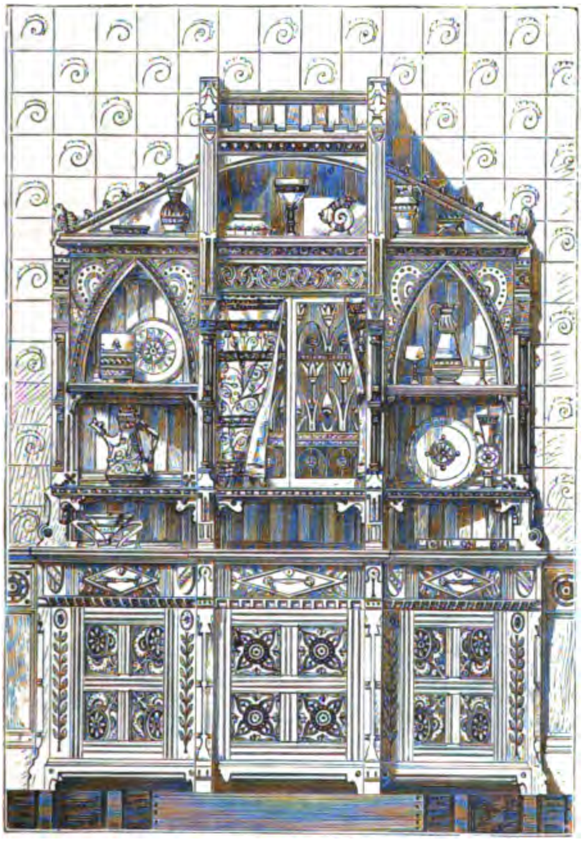
Mediæval Gothic Hall.

less, there are conditions with us that give various forms of the Gothic a right of place: the greater part of our country is so sparsely settled, and still so well wooded, that the spire is as much a landmark here as it was in the regions of its birth and early adoption; and our climate derives a good claim to the use of the Gothic from its character of shedding heavy snows and rains, and of calling down, as it were, by its many spires and pinnacles, all the sunshine there may be; for the rest, religion being free to all, if it is found that the Gothic is the best suited to any religious needs and ceremonies, the privilege of choice is as much ours as it ever was any blue-blooded Norman's. Having buildings in the Gothic, of course the furniture follows.


Modern Gothic Window and Curtain.

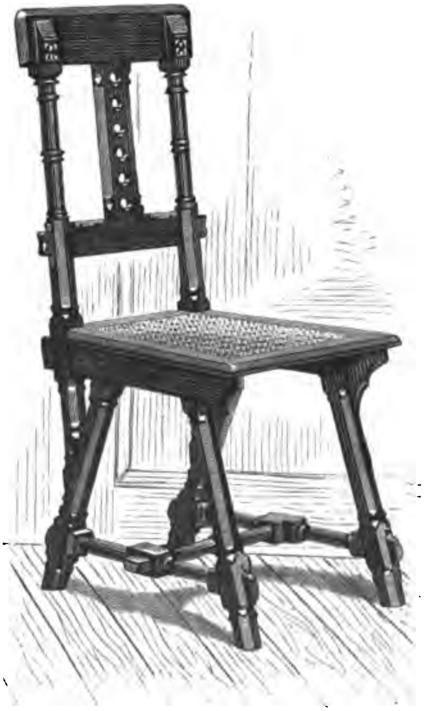
But we can urge a right to such furnishing as Gothic buildings should hold, through our ancestry and our love of old association, although we cannot hope to see that furnishing in perfection remote from wealth. It is true that it lends itself very kindly to the cheapest wood, not only because it replaced the old Saxon, which employed wood altogether, but because, when first appropriated from the churches for household purposes, with the slow adoption of civilizing forms of life—as in credence, armory, bench—it was of course used upon portable material. But the wood is to be carved and ornamented to the last degree, and the stingy and shabby has nothing in common with Gothic; a plank which helps uphold another plank may be sawed with a rough trefoil, to be sure; but that is no more Gothic than crude carpentry is cabinet-making—unless one can say that the alphabet is poetry.

If not the most beautiful, the Gothic is certainly the most picturesque of all the styles of furnishing; and its religious character, its symbolism, in which every moulding, every dentellation, has its religious meaning, does not unfit it for the uses and companionship of home. It is an arbitrary and exacting style, too, requiring to be complete, without a single archæological detail at fault; and if undertaken by those who have not made it a severe study, it is apt to be full of error. An anachronism in itself when transplanted to another era, the unlearned are liable to make its every item an anachronism too; they will give us a carving of tropical



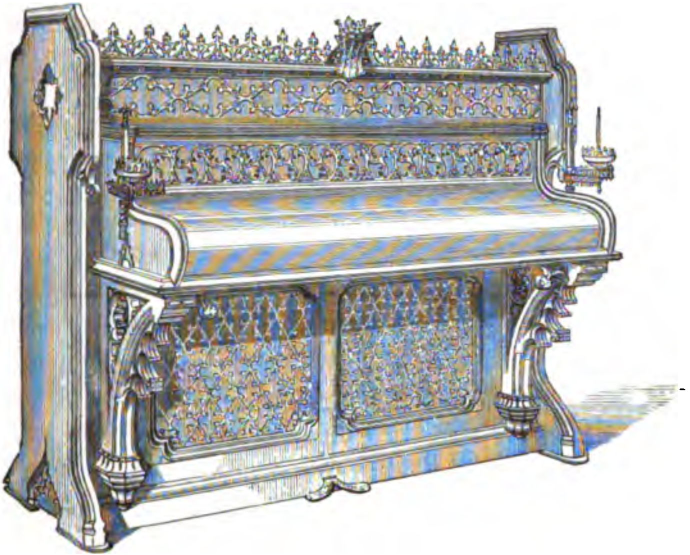
Modern Gothic Sideboard.

plants upon this Northern stem, whose essential characteristic is that it adopted into its decoration only the vegetation of its neighborhood; they will give us a modern tufted carpet with a Gothic wainscot, a buhl table underneath a Gothic window. This is almost, if not quite, the only style that admits no stranger to its hospitality. With a Louis Treize chair you may have a Cinque-cento cabinet; with a Quatorze console you may have a Japanese armory; but in the Gothic the old rule holds—if you are not with me, you are against me. It makes but a single doubting exception in admitting the Turkish lounge for those whose bones demand something less severe than Gothic *pur sang*—the Turkish showing no wood at all, and with its cushions and its general derivation being sufficiently Byzantine still to claim some affiliation of race, and have a right in a cousin's house. Cushions, and stuffed and tufted seats, indeed, are as much a part of the Gothic as chairs with tall backs finished in ogival arches, or crests and quatrefoils: they represent in this generation the old counterpane, which was a lined and quilted covering for seats as well as beds. Draperies, also, play an important part in the style, screening recesses and dividing rooms, as in old mediæval usage, where they originally made all the divisions of the one great hall. These draperies should always be of thick and rather rich material. The days that brought them into use needed them both thick and heavy; and where they used to be of gauffered leather, they were afterward of silk and wool wrought tapestry, or, as Alienor de Poictiers says, "Le velours est le plus honorable qui le peut recouvrir" (of all coverings, velvet is the most honorable). For those who cannot afford the richer varieties, come soft woollens covered with work like that of the ordinary broché shawls, in fine quaint figures, or in plain material crossed off at long intervals with broad bands of a contrasting color, that being one of the distinctive signs of the later years of the epoch; while the earlier years bear geometric forms, griffins, unicorns, basilisks,



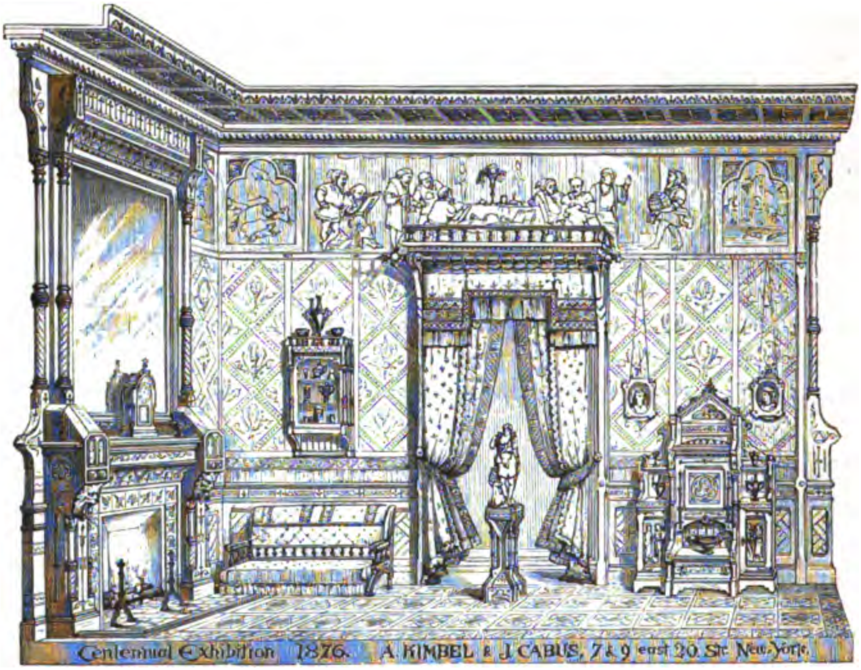
Modern Gothic Chair.

and heraldic lions framed in circles, and others show Gothic characters alternating with checks. The bands, from their constant Saracenic association, are always correct, and can in themselves contain these earlier emblems. The colors should seldom be vivid, although they may be rich, for undue brilliancy would give too new an appearance for the dingy worsteds and faded silks of the old tapestries and cloths; the brick reds, dull peacock blues, and black and golds, together with the delicate, if not dingy, ecclesiastical tints, are best. These draperies at doors and windows are often hung under square lambrequins, but they are never overtopped with cumbersome loops and festoons; the dorsels of high-backed seats hang from little hooks or buttons, but the curtains and larger pieces fall freely by means of rings running on rods. Above the drapery a frieze is frequently seen, and this, when not stencilled directly upon the wall, can be painted on canvas strips and fastened in place on slight frames, allowing one to cleanse them, or to take them down and roll them away if leaving the house for a season.



Modern Gothic Piano.

The shape of Gothic furniture is not always necessarily pointed and arched, crocketed and trefoiled, although its ornament partakes of such character. There are many articles in the Gothic, especially in the modern reproduction of it, with little ornament and little shaping beyond those of their angular construction, but whose outlines, as the French say, frankly accuse their destination. Others are full of a rich elaboration of detail, but with solidity of structure and well-balanced shadow, and with ornaments of porcelain, and hinges and scroll-work of hammered iron or of brass. The chairs are heavy, the sideboards dark and massive; little curtains, that may be as gorgeous as one pleases, provided their design is in character, shield the recesses of certain of the cabinets; the chandeliers are crowns of light; while the tables have strong supports, particularly the dining-tables, in remembrance of the huge dishes they carried in former days, when, as it has been said, life was war; and after war, jousting; and after jousting, orgy. The large mirror does not, in strictness, belong to the Gothic, which knew only small glasses and girandoles; yet it is not forbidden to its modern form, since it is as desirable to add in the right spirit as to imitate, and too insistent imitation may make one absurd as Mr. Browning's "Middle-Age Manners Adapter," from whom the flight of the duchess was inevitable.


Centennial Exhibition 1876. A. KIMBEL & J. CABUS, 7 & 9 east 20 St. New York.

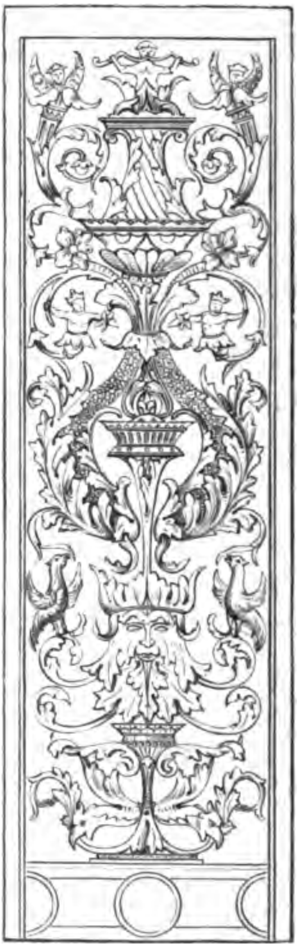
Drawing-room in Modern Gothic.

As, in adapting the Gothic to our uses to-day, we do not intend to forego the pleasures that have come to us since its earlier era, a music-room in that style may be peculiarly rich and effective. The harp has universal rights, and the organ was not entirely unknown even in the Dark Ages. We read of an organ constructed by a Venetian for Louis the Debonair in the ninth century, and there were, doubtless, others of earlier date; and although spinet and clavichord and piano can hardly claim such long descent, yet the existence of the organ makes the piano less of an anachronism than it would seem. Meanwhile the beautiful shapes of the Gothic, all its significations, emblems, and spiritual consonances, make it particularly appropriate. This style is also very well suited to the library, because of its ecclesiastical origin, and because of the preservation of books and learning by the priests and monks; while it lends a necessary air of cloistered quiet there. But in its heavy and solid forms it is, best of all, suited to the dining-room, and it has many articles of its mediæval period that answer almost as well to the needs of the present there as of the past; its sumptuous appearance, too, supplies exactly what the dining-room requires. But in the drawing-room, the Gothic is to be handled with great care, constructed of the choicest woods, and illuminated with much ornament of delicate brass, porcelain, bits of mirror, sconces, cushions, and soft draperies of the paler tints, since it needs all the lightening it can have, in order to overcome its dark and rather sombre character in a place devoted to lightsome gayety. For the rest, tessellated floors with rugs, raftered roofs, deep caissons in ceilings and windows, stained glass, coats of arms, antique mottoes, armor and weapons and foils, and any spoils of the chase, are the fit things to greet the eye of any entering a house built and furnished in the Gothic.

XIV.

THE RENAISSANCE.

THAT it has taken the historic movements of the world to produce the trivial things that constitute our household furniture—allowing that our furniture is trivial, and not as vital and necessary as temples and towers themselves—seems, at first sight, a monstrous declaration. But it is nevertheless true that the convulsions of empires and the epochs that have shaped the fate of races have also shaped the articles of our daily use; and the events that have brought about our styles of architecture have unfailingly reacted on our furniture and produced new styles there too.

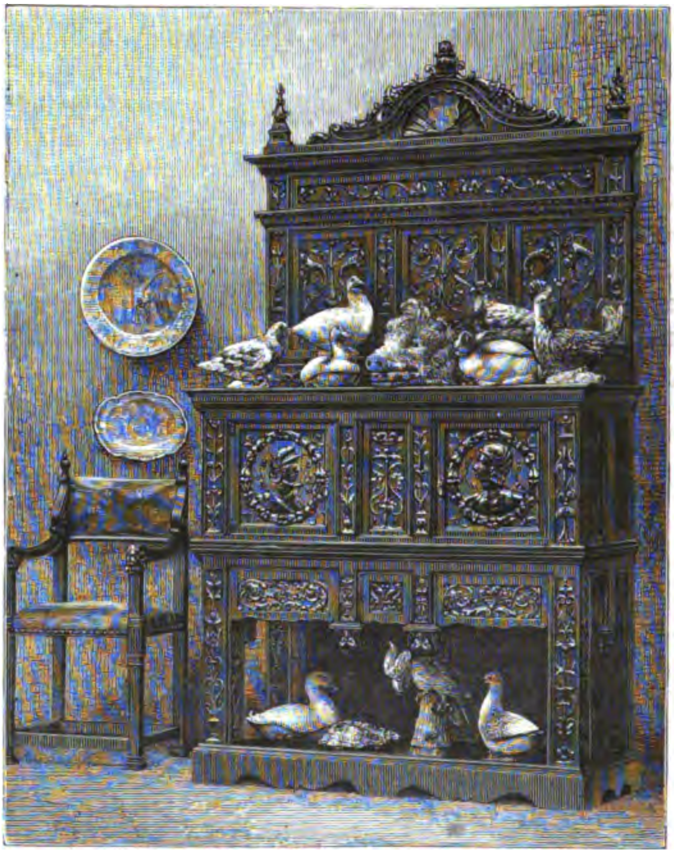


Cinque-cento Panel.

Before the barbarians had destroyed the possibility of further household art, the conversion of Constantine to Christianity had proved a death-blow to so-called profane art. Obediently to the imperial edicts issued after several milder ones had proved of no avail, the most beautiful works of antiquity were broken to fragments; whole cities waited on the word; temples were razed, gods overthrown, the lovely shapes of nymph and faun crumbled to dust in the furnaces; and such was the ruin that when the order to destroy these marvels of genius and workmanship was issued for the fourth time, by Honorius, the words were added, "if there be any."

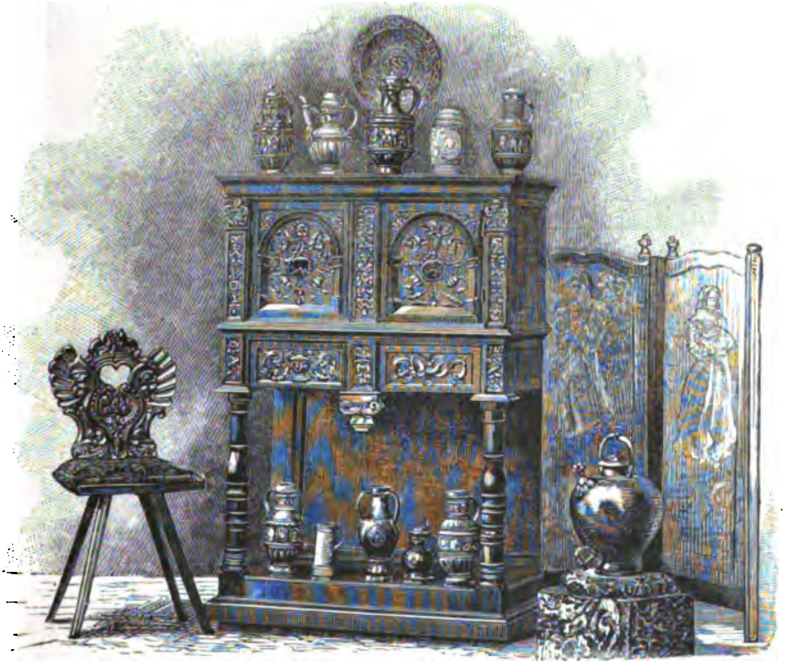
But from the ashes of an old art a new one always springs. Ancient temples being no more, others were needed; and the Christians of the Eastern Empire, remembering with affection the circular buildings, used for sepulchral purposes, of their earliest worship at Rome, built churches in imitation of them, domed them, pinnacled them, decorated them, and Byzantine art was born, with all the symbolism of its ornament—the lily, the serpent, the sacred anagram of the fish, the trefoil and quatre-foil representing the Trinity and the four evangelists, the cross composed of five circles, and innumerable others. Doubtless this symbolism was a great stimulant to thought and to fancy, made doubly so by the history it hinted and interpreted in the absence of books, and evidently it wrought with force upon the imagination of those not yet so civilized as the Byzantine builders; and wherever the old Roman shapes, or remembrance of them, existed throughout the boundaries of the ancient dominion, the Byzantine laid hold of them in the round-arched, domed, and spired Romanesque and Romance styles. The Byzantine had all the impulse of the new religion that formed it; it was thoroughly vitalized, and easily wrought its will on the decaying substance of dead ideas. As it slowly travelled on its northern and western journey, it more rapidly moved southward, was seized upon by the Saracens at the conquest of Damascus, its ornament bent to their uses, and in its new guise—from which copies of living objects were excluded—was called Saracenic, and was carried by its masters into Egypt, into Sicily, and Spain; and whether the Northern and Western artists, who had been employed meanwhile in elaborating the rectangular basilicas, chanced to see it there, or whether the thing was only working itself out through the necessities of construction, the eleventh century saw the opening of that style where the idea of the Southern tent and of the long vista of the Northern forest met in the aisles and pinnacles with which the Gothic came to its splendid blossom in the thirteenth century. Thought was alive at last. The human mind, that had so long been benumbed beneath the pressure of superstition acting on the animal nature, began to stir; it had thrown off the shackles of the Middle-Age scholasticism—contending shadows of words. The people had outgrown the Crusades that had, however, enriched their experience and made them cosmopolitan; all that the Arabs of Spain could so long have taught but for the suspicion of the theologians, became familiar to certain of them; they began to look about and see what there was in the world that Aristotle did not know, and they took hold of nature as a child does to whom all is new. Roger Bacon was born; the laws of optics were discovered; the property of lenses; the elastic force of steam and gas; gunpowder; the compass; voyages were taken, and geography loomed into sight like the shores of another world; the feudal law gave way before the famous Roman law that governs us to-day; printing was invented; the Renaissance had dawned, and was sweeping forward to its noon—the Renaissance which may be dated from the year 1300, not long before Dante's birth.

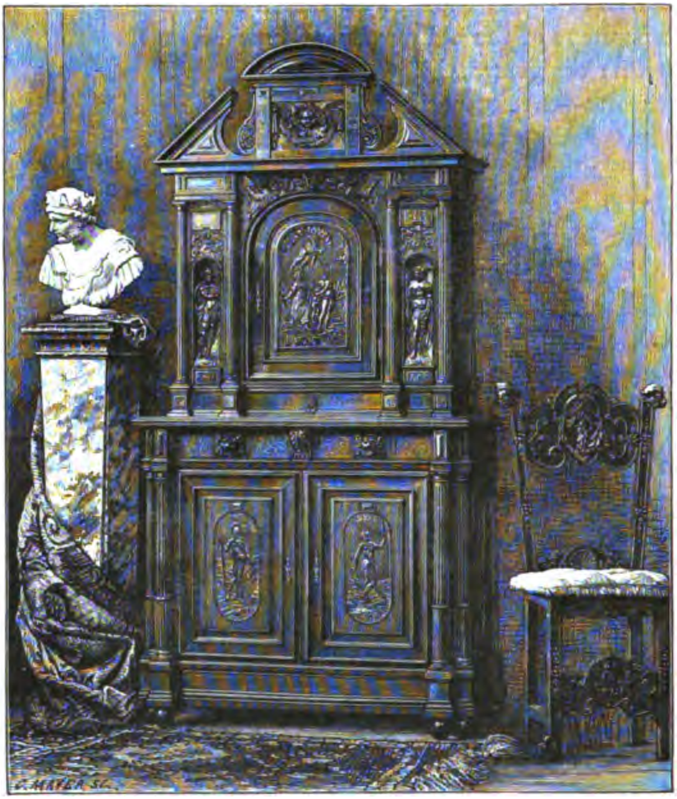
In France this brilliant dawning went under a cloud in its first century.



Italian Oak Chair, Henri II.; Walnut Credence, Louis XII.; French and Flemish Pottery.

Burgundy had been a stronghold of monks and of the false scholasticism that concerned itself with phantasms instead of things—scholasticism that died hard, that got the upper hand, indeed, and wasted three precious centuries there with theological puzzles, reducing chemistry to alchemy again, astronomy to astrology, and mathematics to magic. But in Italy, Dante and Petrarch and Boccaccio, lighted on their path by what the Renaissance had already done in France with the Provençal poets and troubadours, and leaning on the music of the tongue they used, founded the Italian language, restored classic studies, sought and found ancient manuscripts, which Petrarch copied, and begged his friends to copy and multiply, a century before the printer. And with that the taste for classic study grew and spread; the antique was in eager demand; explorers ransacked the corners of the old empire, and resurrected from their long burial the broken sculptures, the vases, the mosaics, that Constantine's edict had overthrown—a resurrection of wonders—and a new art fed upon the old. Then Cimabue and Giotto painted; Brunelleschi measured Rome and rebuilt Florence. All the world began to feel the impulse: Chaucer sung; Columbus discovered America; Copernicus discovered the laws of the universe; the Cid was written; Raphael and Leonardo lived; Michael Angelo and Titian, Ariosto and Tasso, Dürer, Camoens, Paracelsus. France took up the march; Greek savants came over from Constantinople, and Greek studies prevailed as Latin ones had done in Italy. In the next reign Francis I. returned from the long Italian wars, and brought Italian remembrances with him; Rabelais and Ronsard rose, Scaliger and Montaigne. The eye wearied of old lines, and craved new forms of beauty; the sight of the unburied antiquities, the rumor of their loveliness, caused a revulsion from Gothic grimness and distortion; the classicists had their way in France as they did in Florence; the Louvre was made over, Fontainebleau was built; and the Renaissance, whatever its results, reached its extreme at length with Tycho Brahe in science, fol-


Flemish Chair, 1680; Oak Credence, Francis I.; Screen in Flemish Tapestry.



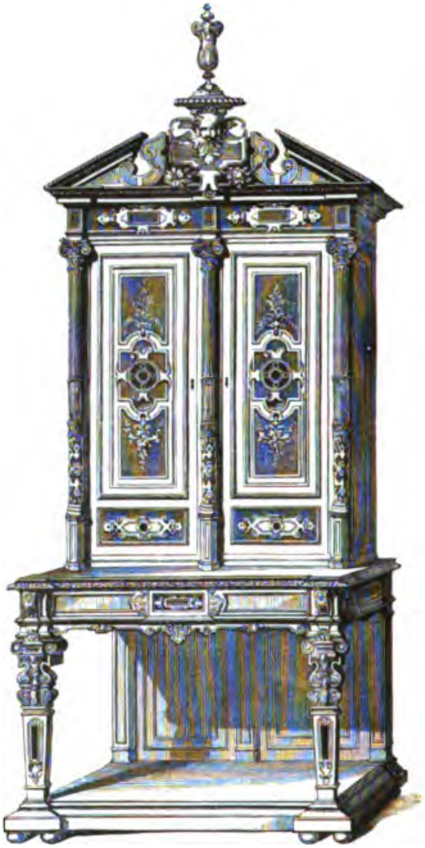
Armoire inlaid with Marble and Colored Wood, Francis I.; Italian Walnut Chair, Seventeenth Century; Bust in White Faience, Rouen.

lowed quickly as he was by Kepler and Galileo, with Luther in religion, with Palladio in art.

Of course such a great tide, as this uprising of the intellect was, could not thus sweep through the world without reaching all the by-places and sending currents into the narrowest channels; and thus it was that it reached every man's hearth. And when it had revived literature, breathed new breath into art, remodelled churches and palaces, it set about remodelling furniture. Printing had superseded the Gothic cathedral. Those who had studied the history of the world and of their country, the representation of the virtues and vices, the lessons of handicraft and the beauties of religion, in the thousands and thousands of figures carved on the cathedral, could study these things to infinitely more advantage between the covers of a book. The Gothic cathedral was practically ended, and with it Gothic carving and Gothic shapes. Meanwhile the universal application of the Roman law, giving right and equity and the protection of government to every citizen, hindered the necessity of any man's making his house a fortress, and the castle became the château, palace, manor-house, hall, grange. The manor-house and palace then, with their great glass windows, their light and airy rooms, their balconies and gardens, and their intimate home life, from which the communism of the clan had utterly disappeared, required no more hard and formal shapes in the furnishing and adorning, but shapes fit for ease and enjoyment; and thus the Roman law brought Roman luxury again, and with the unearthing of the Pandects at Amalfi, long before Pompeii shook off her ashes her splendors were revived. The Italian cities, alive and answering to the age, as commercial cities always are, were already rich in luxury. Venice, through her intercourse with the Levant, teemed with Oriental beauty; Florence modified this by the clarified and cultured taste of her court; Pisa and Genoa were not far behind. When the French princes married Italian princesses, the latter brought their luxury and love of beauty with them; and the artists who had wrought the Flamboyant Gothic to its last degree of attenuation seized this Venetian and Florentine brilliancy and covered it with French originality. What Francis I. began, Catherine de' Medici, the wife of Henri Deux, continued, and Mary de' Medici, the mother of Louis Treize, strove to uphold. With the latter monarch the Renaissance, in furniture at any rate, may be said to end, as the next reign—in which the tide of thought, checked three hundred years before, flowed back over France—brought in something with an immense difference; although all styles since the period of Louis Treize belong derivatively to the Renaissance, yet they have acquired a more distinctive character, and, as one might say, a personal identity.

All this thorough change of style in furniture was made the more possible by the fact that the wars, from the time of the Crusades downward, had so told upon the resources of many of the nobles that they had been obliged to sell portions of their patrimony, the land had been divided and subdivided, wealth had been created, and there were a multitude of buyers, the money of the rich bourgeois being as much worth to the artisan as any other money. Every article made was made, of course, to fit the new life, and not the old idea. They all became lighter, easier to handle, their construction unwisely less apparent, their ornament the main consideration; the heavy hinges were dropped, the elaborate hammered iron-work, the locks; delicate mouldings appeared, panels glazed with exquisite faience, carvings where classic fancy yet wrestled with Gothic monsters; in the later era, marquetry of rare woods, and incrustation of tortoise-shell and brass, mother-of-pearl, ivory, and niello-work. And thus composed of various elements, a mixture of all the world had ever seen, but essaying to clarify itself along the way, the Renaissance swept forward to its full development and perfection in the revival of the ancient Roman arabesques, the imitation of fruit and flower, and leaf and bird, the banishment of shield and strap, the exclusion of symbolism, the recognition of nothing but absolute beauty, the delight of the æsthetic sense, the worship of the curve, the high comedy of "Much Ado About Nothing" and of "As You Like It" in the Italian Cinquecento. For the Gothic had meant aspiration to the unknown, the opening of life on the side of the soul, while the Renaissance in art meant nothing but the passing moment and the enjoyment of the senses.

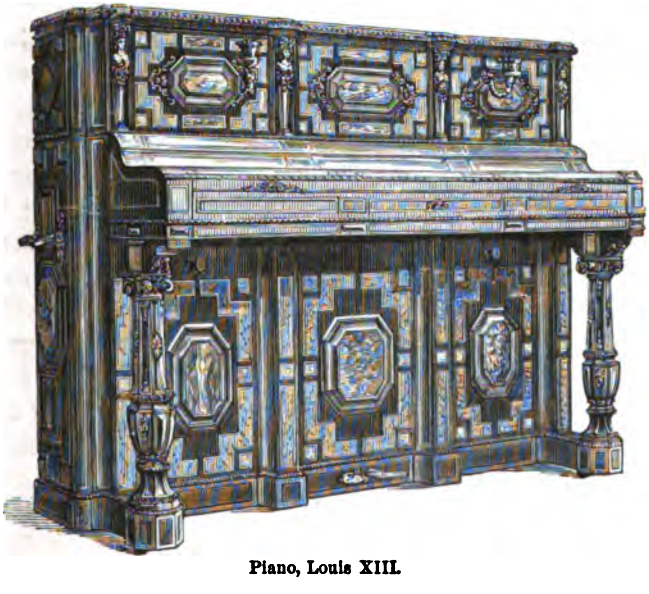
After the lightness and less solemn character of the pieces of furniture in the Renaissance, the chief characteristic is their ornament; their shape, meanwhile, ceasing almost entirely to present anything original. This ornament is so peculiar, that no one who has once become acquainted with it can fail to recognize it. It everywhere follows and strives for the classic, dallying on the way with the Byzantine that enchains and masters it, and haunted, meanwhile, by the old Gothic ghost that will not down. It is full of delicate interlacings in the beginning, intricate linear tracery, fine scroll-work, and conventional foliage—that is, the foliage treated upon a geometrical plan. This is the form known as the Trecento, and which owes a great debt to the Saracen. After the year 1400 it leaves the old traditional subjects, and seeks new ones to its mind—natural rendering of fruit and flower and insect and other objects; and at that time, the period of the Quattrocento, the cartouch, or scrolled and pierced shield-work, appears, borrowed from heraldry. It is the era, then, of Luca della Robbia, of niello-work, of enamelled pottery. And finally, after the year 1500, the cartouch and strap disappear, the arabesque perfects itself with exquisite lightness and grace, classical details abound, especially the old


Cabinet, Henri II.

Greek anthemion, the fret, and the acanthus, sculptures of scarcely surpassed loveliness, and grotesqueries so full of spirit that the whole seems to be a style of light high comedy, suitable only to pleasure, to the delights of a sensuous love of beauty. And yet it has been used on funeral monuments.

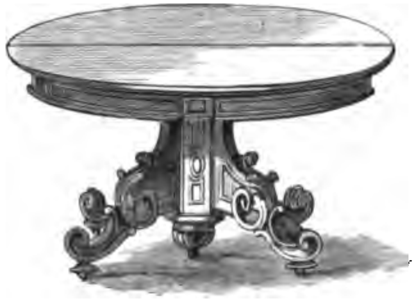
But this last development of the style, the Cinque-cento, was one that required too wide and deep a knowledge for the usual decorator; besides being an artist, he must be antiquarian, scholar, scientist, and poet; and it was only for about fifty years that it was pursued.

Thus it will be seen that no style presents such a medley as the whole career of the Renaissance—classical and Saracenic ornaments on the same piece of work; panels faceted and cut like jewels; the square parting the circle; human and ideal figures, and those of birds and beasts and reptiles, natural, conventional, and grotesque; the crescent, the vase, the cartouch; all flat decoration: a harnessing of straps, buckles, ribbons. It is the style of caprice; set free from the rules that had so long bound it, the art revelled in unconfined fantasy.

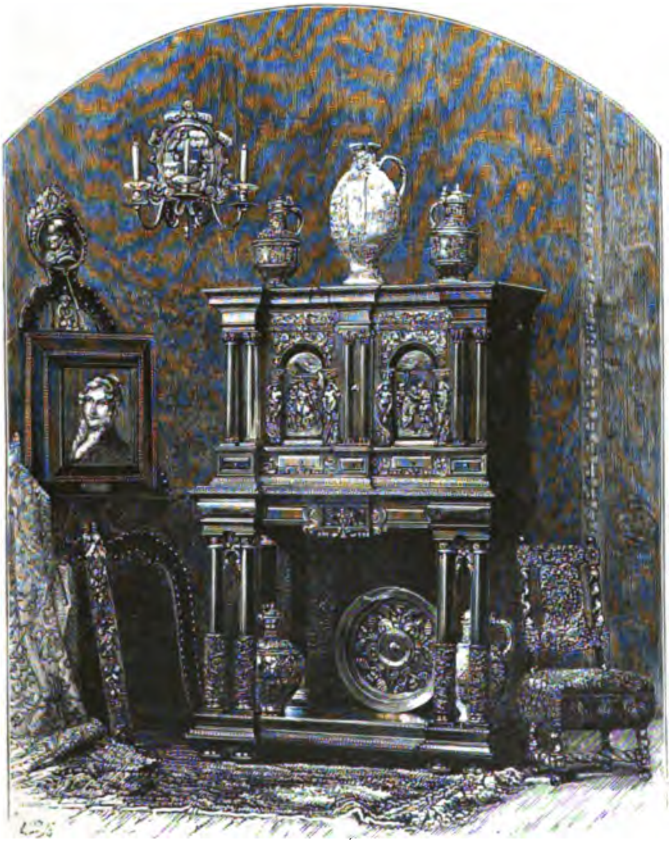


Piano, Louis XIII.

It was the second stage of this style that Francis I. brought into France, and that was so universally adopted there under his successor, in furniture and in all other ornamentation, that it acquired the name of Henri Deux. Its shapes were tall and rather narrow; frequently the legs of the larger pieces were vase-like, with the smaller vase of the flat panel upon the flat front; there were tiny pyramidal panels cut in jewel forms, scattered here and there; sometimes four small circles around a fifth made the central ornament of large panels, recalling the Byzantine, while there were squares parting ellipses, and triangles broken again by circular forms, which latter, when surmounting any article, seem to be a reminiscence of the Gothic dais, possibly of the Gothic freemason; there were scrolled and conventional and natural floriage and fruit; cartouches, and intimations of straps and buckles were everywhere; and slender columns with Ionic volutes, and echinus, and guilloche, announced the influence of the Classic. This style, with more or less degeneration, prevailed during several of the brief reigns which followed that of Henri Deux. It was furniture of this description that surrounded Mary Stuart when her home was at the French court. But with the bloody religious wars in that day of St. Bartholomew, there was a general decadence of all decorative ideas and the application of them. The people were occupied with weightier matters; and the furniture of the reigns of Henri Quatre and Louis Treize is heavy and sad in comparison, the gayeties and fripperies usually wanting, but with the material adornment of rich inlay of ebony, lapis lazuli, pearl, and other costly variegated substances. Occasionally there were articles of satisfying beauty in the Louis Treize, of whose initial ideas the artists of to-day have known how to take advantage; but, as a rule, a room in that style is so dismally dreary and formal as to be almost funereal; the exuberant carving, when not ponderous and offensively out of taste, has become a meagre artifice, the greater part of the ornament of the wood is simply turned and twisted, taking and giving pleasant lights, but betraying a paucity of fancies. The fringes are the principal adornment of the seats, and the chief beauty is in the material.

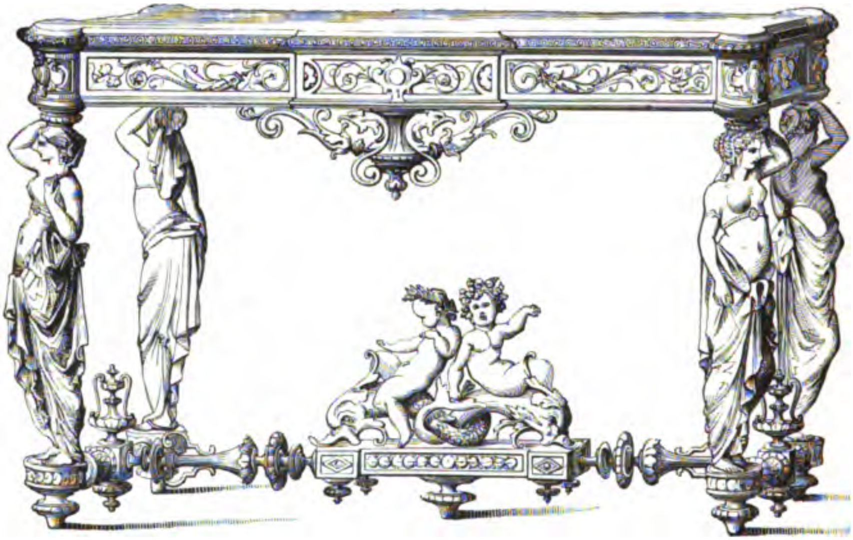

Dining-table, Louis XIII.

Wonderfully different from that of this grave style is the furniture of the Cinque-cento, a style which aspired to nothing but to display itself in curves of complete loveliness, with no reference to any other emotion than pleasure; a style crowded with a fantasy of grace and luxuriance and laughter—the laughter of the gods; a style where every object in nature or art was seized upon and turned into beauty and made merry with, and where the refined banter of the grotesque saw harlequins rollicking in the Grecian honeysuckles, wrought the acanthus scrolls into dolphins, and set fools' caps on the chimeras. Its shapes are stately, its figures perfect, its humor triumphant, its arabesques so rich in detail that hardly an inch escapes decoration with a grace and exuberance of line that, in maintaining its curve, runs into all sorts of vagaries—imps frolicking in the flowers, dragon-flies that have half the mind to be winged griffins, leaves that fashion crowned, and bearded faces, the gayety of the whole in its free fancy never forgetting beauty. One can scarcely realize the grace and resplendence of such a piece of furniture adorned with the inlay of variegated stones, picked out with gold, and presenting the full wealth of life-like colors that distinguish the Cinque-cento.

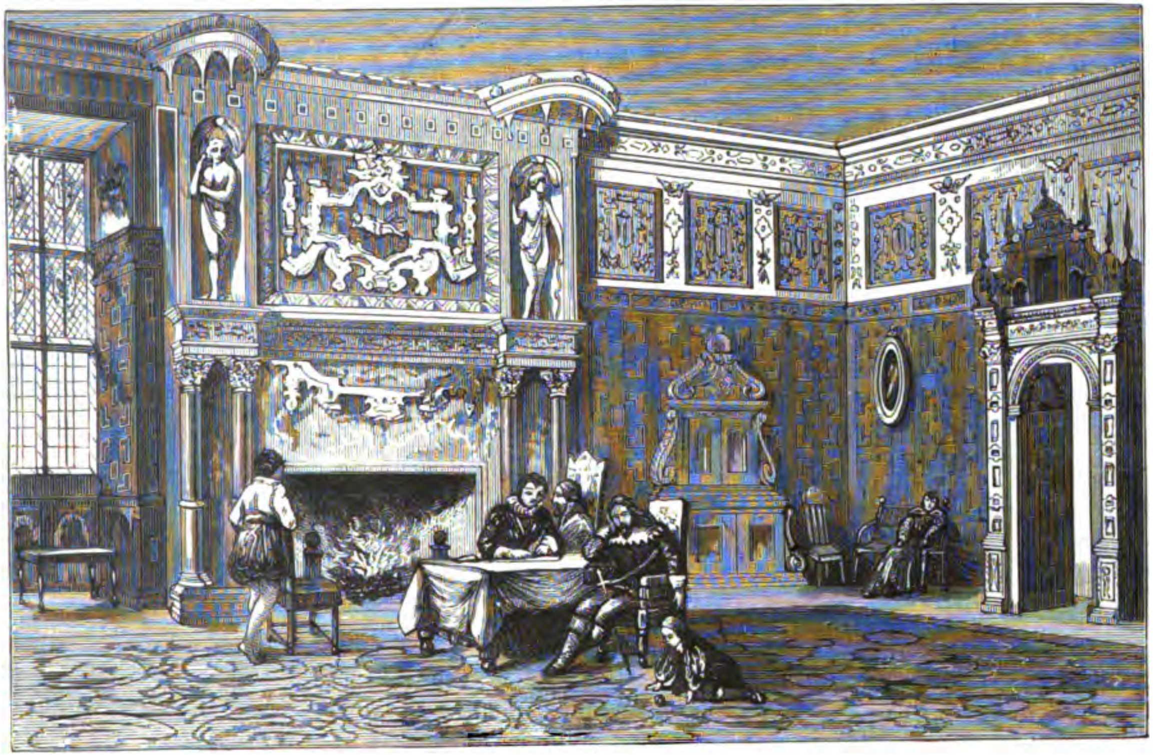


Ebony Cabinet, Child's Walnut Chair, Oak Easel, Louis XIII.; Italian Sconce, with Copper and Gold Chasing, Sixteenth Century.

Nothing more luxurious, perhaps nothing more enervating, can be conceived than lovely lofty rooms ornamented and finished in this style, to which only the soft and silvery sheens of satin belong as drapery. It is the furniture of summer palaces; its construction requires artists; its purchase the revenue of kingdoms. It tells in itself the whole march of life, from the military encampment in the gloomy halls of the dark castle, to the dancing, laughing, flower-clad life in the lighted, sumptuous apartments whose low windows open on verandas round which the gardens bloom and the fountains leap.



Renaissance Table.



Great Chamber of Moutacute.

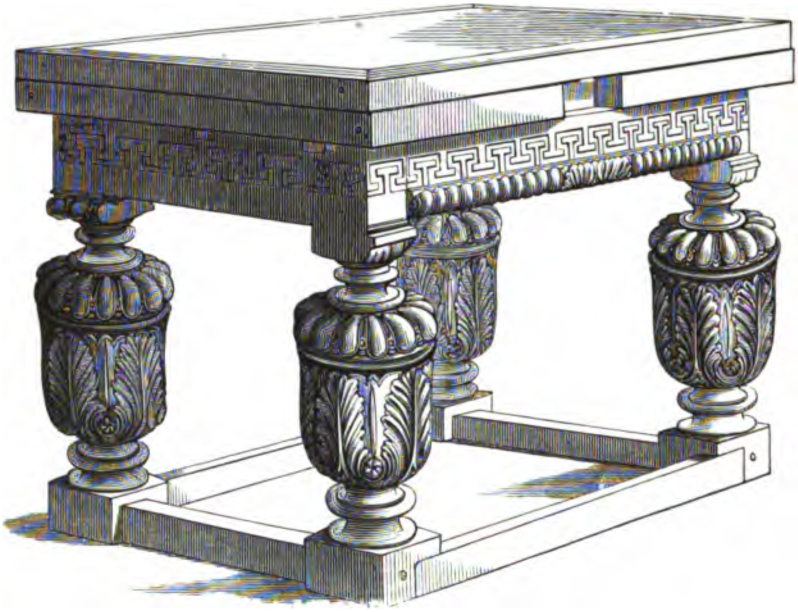
XV.

THE ELIZABETHAN.

WHILE the Renaissance was working its way to the beauty of the antique in Italy, it was having no such success in Holland; for although their Flemish neighbor caught its spirit, the products of the Dutch themselves remained dull and heavy evidences of the use of a manner whose *raison d'être* was not understood. In their struggle for civic life and religious liberty, they had little thought to waste on gewgaws; but their habits of thrift remained, and if people wished their furnitures thus and thus shaped and thus carved, the Dutch made them to suit the market. Nevertheless, age adds a sanctity to everything; and many of those old Dutch cabinets, gloomy, top-heavy, and overloaded as they are, sometimes covered with carving to the last splinter, and sometimes a solid patchwork of pottery of the most exquisite colors, are still so much sought after that it pays the counterfeiter well to fashion them in darkened wood with worn profiles to-day.

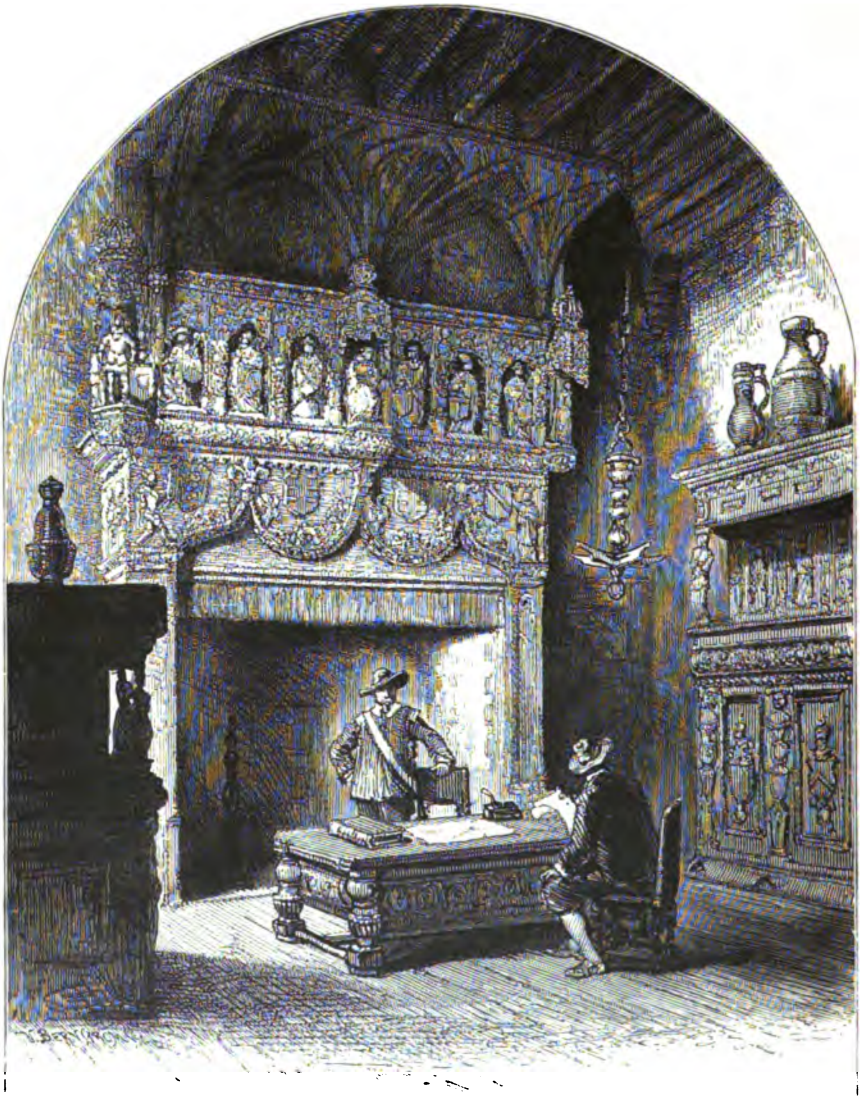
It was by way of Holland that the Renaissance reached England, partly by reason of the extensive commerce with the Low Countries; partly, perhaps, through the English sympathy with the people in their struggle there. It is only to Dutch example that we can attribute the heavy character of the Elizabethan style in furniture—the immense diameters of the supports, for instance, as sturdy as the legs of any plethoric burgomaster.

The Gothic had already begun to forget itself in England, and in the reign of Henry VII. had bent its high flight into the hunched and low-browed Tudor arch. It was ready now for further change, but not quite ready to surrender its existence; and thus all the Renaissance that came into England through the Elizabethan gate had still to pay tribute to the Gothic on its way. Neither pure Classic, nor pure Gothic, nor pure Renaissance, it yet had a certain royal warrant of its own, a stately charm, of which the English are still proud, speaking of it as the "noble Elizabethan manner," although this applies to the decoration of walls and ceilings, perhaps, more closely than to articles of furniture. There are many ancient drawing-rooms in England, in whose decoration there may be observed a delicate fancy of interlacing line on nearly as satisfying a plane as the Saracenic. The strap-work, indeed, which was the first distinguishing feature of the Elizabethan, was, after all, nothing but a play of line, and allowed the greatest liberty to the individual artist. It required genius, though, to develop it properly, and it was too frequently nothing but a medley of uninteresting sequences; and when the shield-work was added, and pierced shield-work at that, it sometimes became confusion worse confounded. This strap and shield work, it may be remembered, was very noticeable in the Henri Deux style in France, with which, indeed, the Elizabethan was contemporary, that style ranging over the reigns of several successive monarchs.



Elizabethan Table from Leeds Castle, Kent.

Shield-work—the cartouch—is simply what it purports to be, the representation of the armorial shield and its supports, the latter pierced in every conceivable manner, with circles, lozenges, crescents, and all sorts of openings, at first sight without rhyme or reason, although the interstices will be found, on examination, to assist in the general outline and effect. This use of the cartouch seems to be derived from the escutcheon and its heraldic ensigns, and the influence of those armorial bearings in the stormy periods of their assumption. Strap-work, also, is a term used as fitly as words can be used in description. What it describes is an elaborate tracery, in imitation of straps and buckles, varied sufficiently to atone for the meagreness of the type; and where it pleases at all, pleasing by its repeti-



Council-chamber of Courtray.

tion, its symmetry, and the exact way in which each line seems to fit its place. It would be interesting to follow to its origin this strap-work, used so largely in Saracenic ornament as to suggest the Arab love and admiration of the horse of the desert; and to discover if both strap and cartouch were not reminiscent of the time of chivalry and the Crusades, with all their harnessing, their shields, and banners.

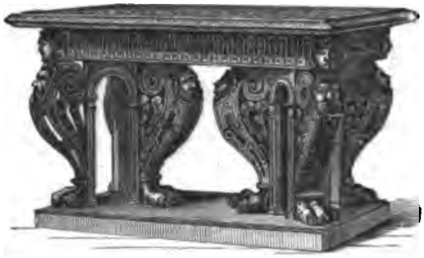
The Elizabethan pure and simple, that belonging to the exact era of the queen, has this strap-work sometimes finished off with slight scrolls—foliages, the Italians called them—and associated with some classical ideas not yet very exclusively or carefully managed; straps appearing well riveted to the middle of classic ornaments, and antique shapes rising, like the afrite out of the jar, from the curious Renaissance pilaster, neither a vase nor a pilaster, in truth, broken as it is half-way by the rising shape, like those of the Termæ, with which the ancients made their boundaries sacred, smaller at the base than anywhere else, and bearing straps, arabesques, and rosettes on its face. The spirit which allowed this mingling of the Gothic and the Classic in the Elizabethan is nowhere more perfectly illustrated than where Shakspeare, in his "Midsummer Night's Dream," sends his Gothic fairies to frolic in the Athenian forest.

You will sometimes find an Elizabethan chimney-piece, the fluted and channelled columns and the entablature of which leave little to be desired except the absence of the strap, which is apt to be bound somewhere about their length. Yet oftener the chimney-pieces are examples of cumbrous classicality, in which the drawing of the figure is not sufficiently correct to warrant the artist in giving the whole of it. Over the chimney-piece there was frequently an elaborate dais, and another over the door, thus giving prominence to the hospitality of the age, dignifying the door-way of the guest's entrance and the chimney-side to which he was made welcome. Above these places pithy mottoes, expressive of the duties of the entertainer, were carved.

Nothing can be finer in a lofty room than an old Elizabethan ceiling with all its intersecting curves and angles. Some of these ceilings were of a rich plaster-work, with deep square caissons, and bosses at all the intersections, or else a light crossing and recrossing of the interlaced arcs and chords of a small circle, with a mask, a rose, a leaf, or a star, at every crossing of the lines; but others were of the oaken beams, carved and gilt and often picked out in gay colors.

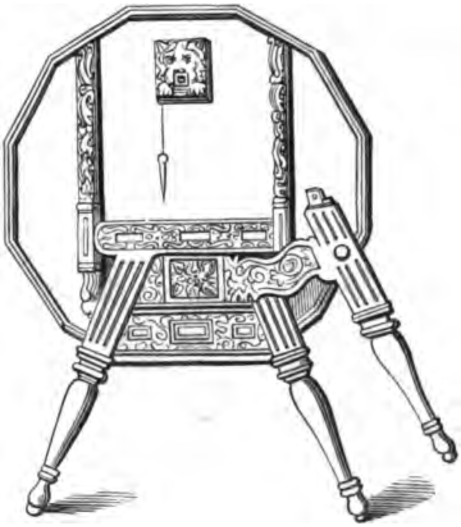
The panelling of the Elizabethan mansions was not the linen or parchment panel, popular in the preceding reign, although that was frequently adopted, but a simpler rectangular form of ornamentation that breaks up the surface of the wainscot nearly to the top of the room.

The Elizabethan chair is generally a very narrow and high-backed, low-seated chair, and except in its ornament, where the scroll plays a graceful but still rather unmeaning part, does not vary greatly from the chairs that preceded it; and we have seen chairs with an indubitable genealogy attached to them as Henri Deux and as Louis Treize, square, uncouth, half-backed, with twisted wood and fringed coverings, that could not be told from other of the chairs used in Elizabeth's day; there were also broad straight-backed seats, indicative of a time when lounging was not thought of, and hardly comfort, unless the human back was a stouter mechanism than it is to-day. But the tables, beds, and cabinets of the period are much more novel, and are to be rivalled, in the queer taste they display, only by the Dutch. These are characterized, wherever the column is used in their construction—and that is almost everywhere—by a slight inversion of regular Greek architecture, in a base of foliage to the column, something after the style of the Assyrian base, although in that the leaves grow down instead of up. Out of this globular mass of foliage the bulky column rises to complete itself, sometimes going straight to the top, sometimes pausing on the way to bulge out in another great globular mass, as if the not yet century old discovery that the world was round was a fact that the artists were still playing with. There are yet existing massive tables of the period that stand on four legs bound together by strong cross-bars at right angles, as if they were not stout enough to go alone, although able to uphold a moderate roof; at some distance above the cross-bars the legs effloresce into the big spheres, the foliage on the lower half of the sphere growing up, and on the upper half growing down, divided in the middle by a ring or strap, or else efflorescing into a hemisphere of acanthus leaves. Other elephantine structures are extension-tables made to pull apart till the top falls into place, when it has doubled its apparent size. There are cabinets, too, of equally heavy design, with the vase-like pilasters and their Termæ between the doors, and with all sorts of relief in the favorite style of work, sometimes with sculptured figures and groups, the mighty cornice meanwhile upheld by pillars that again put forth the globular excrescence at some point, usually at about the centre of their length; there are others whose great curling sideposts are one enormous scroll, beside which the inspiring but bulky Dutch ones, with their finely bevelled panels, have an air of noble dignity. The great



Elizabethan Table from Longford Castle.

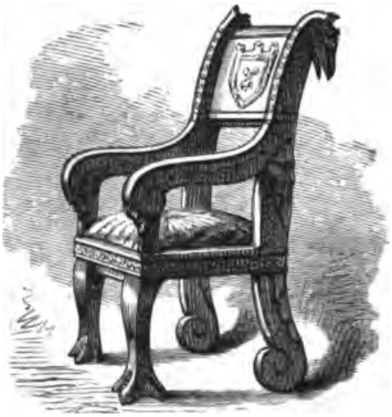
size of the rooms for which these articles were designed should always be taken into account both in judging them and imitating them; for massive and mighty pieces, within narrow bounds, simply assume their fit and unnoticeable size when space expands around them. Although the style exercises a certain fascination from the fact, perhaps, that it is so essentially and individually a style, and from its suggestion of a people making use of it, full of strength and of ideas, its interest attaches to the past, and it is not exactly suited, we think, to modern reproduction. Yet there was something about this furniture curiously in accord with the mighty farthingales and high heels and starched ruffs of the ladies who moved among it, waited on by their ruffed and rapiered, stiff and stately, gallants. Hardly any other would seem so much in keeping with stout old Queen Bess herself; and it acquires another interest when we remember that it was articles of this description that surrounded Shakspeare and Raleigh and Bacon and Spenser, and all the rest of that noble cluster that loom through the mist of history in the stature of demi-gods.


Elizabethan Table from Flaxton Hall, Suffolk.

XVI.

THE JACOBEAN.

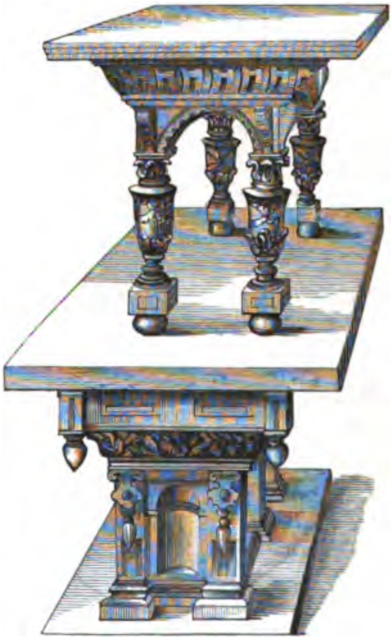
WITH the ascension of James I. to the English throne, we can assume that such a greater degree of splendor was added to everything as usually appears at the crowning of another monarch, with the new hopes and promises of the beginning of a reign, and the different fashions caused by the new individuality. And as nothing at home, easily reached and commonly seen, is ever quite so much valued as that which comes from abroad, it is likely that many articles of splendor were then brought from across the water; for, at any rate, at this time a fresh influx of foreign influence is seen to have made fresh havoc with such Gothic as remained.


Flemish Chair of Crispin De Passe.

The shield, which, through the preference for the strap, had been but sparsely used in the preceding reign, and which had already much more vogue on the Continent, came now to be the centre of all decoration, and was lavished everywhere in a wild whirl of flourishing curves, together with the previously common straps and buckles and general tackle of war. Its universal use gave a somewhat less interesting air to the decoration than it had when the purer interlacing of the strap, with but here and there the convolutions of the shield, supplied its place.

But the Jacobean by no means contented itself with this simpler form of Renaissance. In other characteristics it tended more and more to the Classic, although never arriving at purity: in construction, that is, the horizontal of the antique mingling with the vertical of the mediæval, and a volute upholding a pointed arch; in ornament, the Tudor leaf upon a Grecian frieze, with other equally maladroit and inappropriate arrangements, the furniture being, besides, of such an architectural description in its main outlines that columns and capitals and arches and architraves were as proper to cabinet and table as to church and palace. But it was not, in truth, for more than a hundred years thereafter that pure classicism came to be well understood in England.

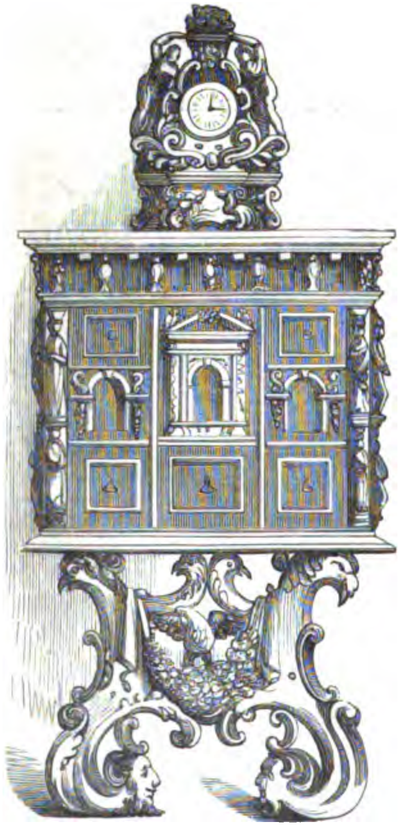
Much of the Flemish furniture corresponds with that which we find in England during the Jacobean era. Indeed, at an earlier date the Flemings were furnishing English mansions with something like monopoly, for we are told that "the chests and cupboards used in England in the fifteenth century were imported from Flanders: this, in the reign of Richard III., was considered to act so prejudicially to the interests of English workmen that a law was made 'agaynst straunger artificiers,' prohibiting, among other articles of furniture, the importation of cupboards." Whether the law was evaded or not we do not know, but certainly there was many a Flemish cupboard in those old Elizabethan and Jacobean dwellings. The Flemish, and also the German, cabinet and credence, when adorned as usual with carvings, may be recognized by their more dramatic if less graceful character, inclining to heaviness albeit—the Germans choosing, by-the-way, a rather didactic form of illustrating in a literal faithfulness certain classic and Scriptural legends. But although the Flemish carver was in the condition of the artist who complains that "his reach exceeds his grasp"—the more Northern mind never quite thoroughly assimilating the light caprices of the South, and apt to make a rude mimicry of its charming fooleries—his ideas wrought themselves, notwithstanding, into the picturesque.



Flemish Tables.

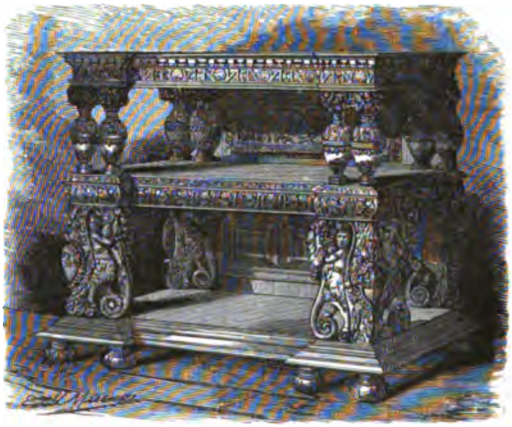
Thus, while the French furnitures still retained the stately and sombre character into which their art had fallen under Henri Quatre and Louis Treize, the influence of the Italian form of the Renaissance, through the filter of the Flemish, made itself very distinctly felt in the Jacobean of the English; not, that is, so much in the effort of the Italian toward æsthetic perfection as in the play of fancy, stimulated by rumor and sometimes by sight of the new forms, but unacquainted with the laws that should control it. And even those Italian workmen who found employment in *ébénisterie* in England must have fettered themselves by the requirements of the taste around them, in great measure.

We are told that not long before this period a certain large scallop shell had been brought home from distant seas, and that it took the eye of the decorators amazingly. A scallop shell could not, however, have been any new thing, for it had long ago been the distinctive badge of the pilgrim who had visited Palestine and picked it up on the shores there, and the escalop was a permitted bearing on the heraldic shield of one whose ancestors had made the same pilgrimage; and Bernard Palissy had used the tertiary shells in the decoration of his pottery. However this may be, it was now seized by the designers and used at every turn, never, of course, with the absurd profuseness of a later day, but quite upon the verge of that profuseness. If upon taking a chair you were not startled by the head of a monster leering over your shoulder, or his claws protruding beside your feet, you were likely to find yourself backed by a huge scallop, or half enclosed in the opening valves of another. Sometimes the effect, in a sumptuous drawing-room of fairy colors, may have been pleasing; but, as a rule, the whole chair, made in the form of a single shell, and the long couch, moulded with the whorls and channels of such a shell as belongs to Venus Anadyomene, can hardly be considered either so worthy or so beautiful as merely curious. But these shell forms and the shell in decoration disputed with the cartouch and cuirs—as they called the straps abroad—with rosette and scroll, with the fabulous griffins, and with the mermaids of the grotesque, whose tails, turning into scrolls, are seen dividing both to the right and left in the ornamentation of the Jacobean furnitures and chimney-pieces. Still, whatever the shapes, the carvings of the various articles were sufficiently rich, however questionable their taste, and the period has been called the Cinque-cento period of Eng-



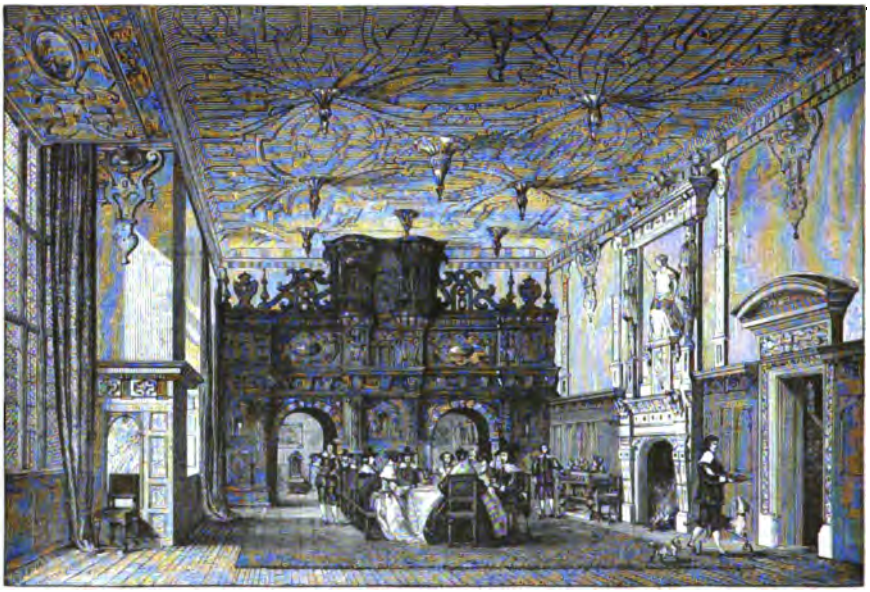
Jacobean Cabinet.

lish art. Yet, if such a thing were possible, it was the grotesquerie of the Cinque-cento disassociated from its loftier beauty, that is to say, what we understand by the word grotesque when used colloquially—the monstrous and ludicrous rather than the lovely—the word grotesque coming into use from the fact of the old arabesques that inspired the Cinque-cento, and with which the Italian so delighted itself, having originally been found in the grottos, while the application of the word in our language shows sufficiently the appreciation which such things found at that time in the general English mind; and both the application of the word and the use made of the designs show, moreover, that an exotic art can seldom have a healthy natural growth in a foreign land, that the mind which conceives is oftenest the only one that can go on originating in the special line, while the outside mind can only copy, and the errors of the mere copyist are wont to be equalled only by his vulgarities. If in the earlier Elizabethan there were massive traits to accord with the magnificent monarch of the era, in the Jacobean, with its torture of outline into conceits and quirks and quips, with the profuseness of its gilding, with its affectation of acquaintance with foreign fashion, even with the stiffness of that about it which chanced to be simple, and with the pedantic ignorance, if we may say so, of its misuse of classic details, we are reminded only of the vanity, arrogance, and petty travesty of majesty of James himself.



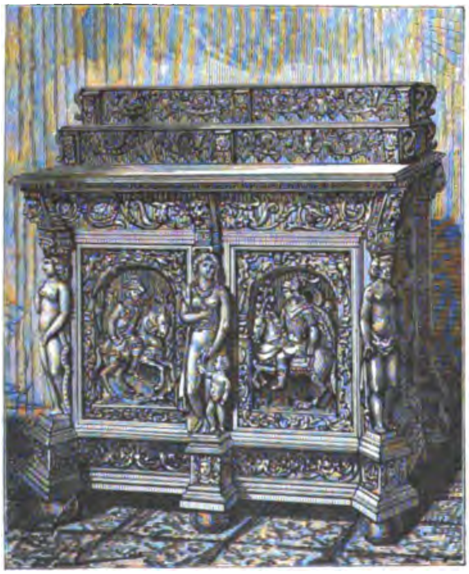
Jacobean Court Cupboard.

Nevertheless, the custom of more than two hundred years has taken off much of the objectionable in this style, for those things no longer likely to be repeated cease to be subjects of criticism, and are regarded as interesting and picturesque memorials. In the mean while, the style is valuable as showing the movements of the English mind in one of the many processes of art. The scale of its use in the decoration of such stately homes as Crewe Hall, Audley End, and Holland House—although the former, built on the boundary-line of the two reigns, is as often credited to the Elizabethan—its broad masses of light and shade, and its quaint and curious elaboration, render it stately and attractive; but it needs all the space and grandeur surrounding it that can be given in order not to



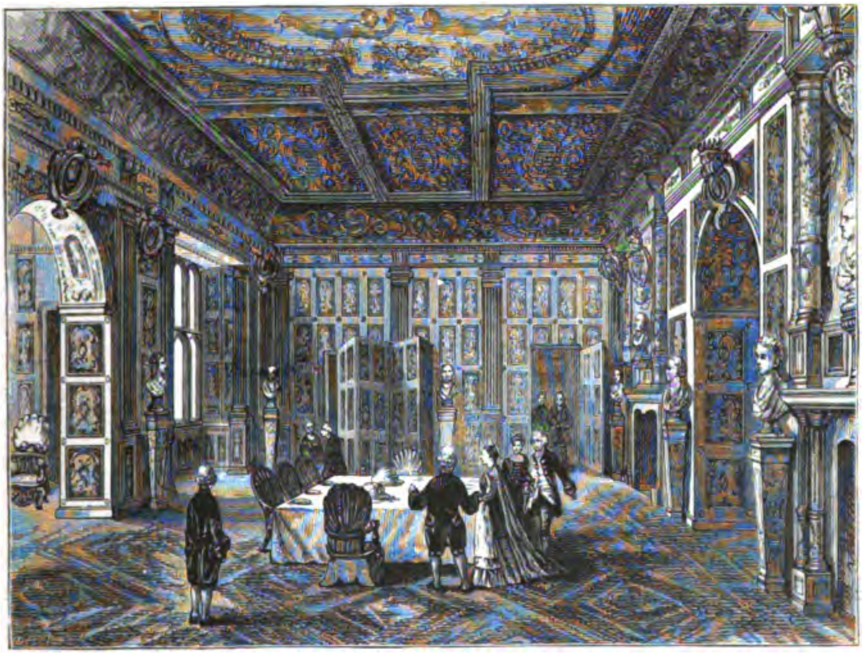
Dining-room of Crewe Hall.

be vulgarized. Having so little in itself that is original, being on one side a new development of the style of the previous half century, and on the other an ill-adapted use of a Southern style (the Italian), the Jacobean is not often considered as a thing by itself, but, as we have already said, it is usually regarded as a freak, and possibly a debasement, of the less pretentious but more pleasing Elizabethan.



Another Jacobean Court Cupboard.

Of late years a revival of this style has taken place under modifications that entitle it to the name of Neo-Jacobean, modern ideas being applied to the fashions of two hundred and fifty years ago, and modern art doing its best in the design and the daring yet exquisite arrangement of colors of the paper-hangings, which were unknown for nearly half a century after the original Jacobean came into vogue. The principal modification which the style has undergone is in the reduced size of its articles and of their members, so that the huge acorn becomes something much more like a long slim vase, and chimney-pieces ornament a room without crushing it with their importance, in the dismissal of the shield, and the rendering of the tiny Classic balustrade wherever it can be inserted, while the old Gothic cove at the daised top of sideboard and mantel is not forgotten. There are many mantel-piece arrangements, with shelves and nooks and crannies for the security and display of knick-knacks, in this new form of the style—a form whose endeavor seems to be to produce solidity without altogether losing grace, although it must be confessed that, in lacking the nobler size of its prototype, it does not entirely escape stiffness, in spite of its generally pleasing effect.



Dining-room at Holland House.

XVII.

THE LOUIS QUATORZE.

THE grace and beauty of the Renaissance, while it was still pursuing its serene course in Italy, and endeavoring to make headway against the Gothic in England, had been falling into neglect in France, so that the lovely furnitures of the reigns of Francis I. and his successor would hardly have recognized much relationship with those that followed.

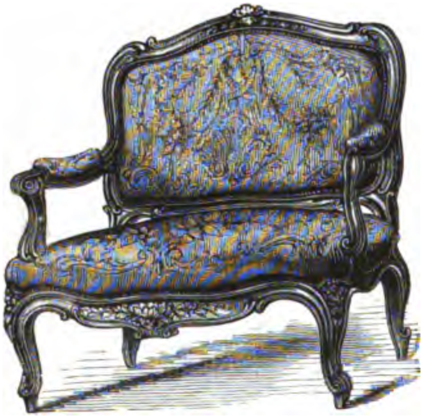
It is true that the later furniture was still well and solidly built, and there yet remain frequent specimens of great beauty and much interesting quaintness. But, in the main, design had been diverted from it, owing to foreign wars and religious disturbances, with a decimated and impoverished population either for manufacturing or buying; the arts in general had languished, and nearly all the sweet play of fancy that illustrated the early Renaissance was absent from the furnitures of less than a century after.

It was only when the splendors of the court of the Grande Monarque blazed up, that furniture, following the lead of architecture and general decoration, took a fresh departure, and clothed itself in what has been called a new style, probably because it is almost utterly unlike any of the old ones, constituting so veritable a rebirth that the French themselves are apt to consider it a second Renaissance. If it was not entirely novel in its repetitions, it was in its *motif;* it retained, for instance, the cartouch of previous styles, always made a prominent centre, magnified and distorted; but the scrolls, the ribbons, the straps, that accompanied and inwreathed these cartouches, were used not only as ornament, but also as structure, and fairly turned into the legs, and arms, and brackets, and other members of the various articles of furniture themselves, although, to be sure, it had some excuse for such treatment in the excrescences and vagaries of other styles. This is what will be perceptible to any one studying the outlines of a table or chair or couch in this style, even if much more important and striking differentiations presently develop to the eye both in separate pieces and in the broad effect of many in furnishing a room.

One of the characteristic elements of the style of the Louis Quatorze, applied to furniture, is the system of curves and flourishes into which it breaks up every profile and surface — a multitude of loose profligate lines, wanting in all the modesty of nature or majesty of art. An inverted S, the upper and lower limbs used as separate features, adorned and joined —the shape of certain lines of the violin infinitely less refined—expresses the tendency of the greater part of its outlines—loose curvatures that filled the ideal of grace in their day under the impression that they obeyed the line of beauty; but the line of beauty, it has been decided, follows a chaster curve—one that does not launch out in all its force at once, but that cherishes some repression and restraint. The style avails itself, also, of the usual forms of the Renaissance, but always with this recurrent setting; and it cares little for beauty of detail, so that it can attain sharp light and shade. The origin of the style would seem to have been primarily in decorative purposes in building, and its use was adopted into furniture from that. It came from Italy, and it was largely used by the Jesuits in their structures. While exhibiting at first a semblance of purity and humility in the absence of much decorative painting and color, it used the most brilliant and dazzling of all possible combinations in white-and-gold stucco-work.

In the preceding century, beautiful and superior as the furniture was, it was still so costly in table, chair, and cabinet that only the very wealthy could indulge in any great amount of it. Thus, for instance, benches, tressels, and coffers had still been in use for seats. If a plain citizen had a single chair, he did well. And in general the rich chairs and fauteuils belonged to those who could afford to overlay them with cloth of gold, if they wished to do so; and they were made with the greatest care, Paris having already established a reputation for fine work in this department. The arm-chair was still so unused to common possession that it had not outworn its honors, and even in the reign of the *Dieu-donné* himself, as Louis Quatorze was sometimes called, contests were maintained for the "right of using the arm-chair" in the royal presence.

But with the introduction of the new style and its resulting manner of work, all the world could afford chairs and tables. Gilding covered a multitude of sins then, as it does now; rude work escaped observation under the slurred light that gilding casts, and gilt deal and plaster were immeasurably cheaper and easier to attain than that solid seasoned wood and fine carving to which the workman needed to give years. Thus Paris took hold of the new style, and in taking hold of it made it her own, gave it eventually another identity, and at once a wonderful brilliancy. The means taken to reach this identity and brilliancy were a multiplicity of points of relief, in the first place, and an indifference to symmetry, in the second place — a disregard and sometimes an intentional avoidance of it, as by that means greater variety of light and shade was attained; and that was always the end in view, the convex and the concave alternating, gilt projection upon hollow background. Although the general scheme was classical, countless details making no pretence to the classical were adopted: shells, flowers, fruit, birds; scrolls either in smooth outline or in that of the acanthus; heads and faces of ladies of fashion; ribbons, shields, straps—all mingled, but all with a view to their disposal merely in the possibilities of light and shade.


Louis Quatorze Chair.

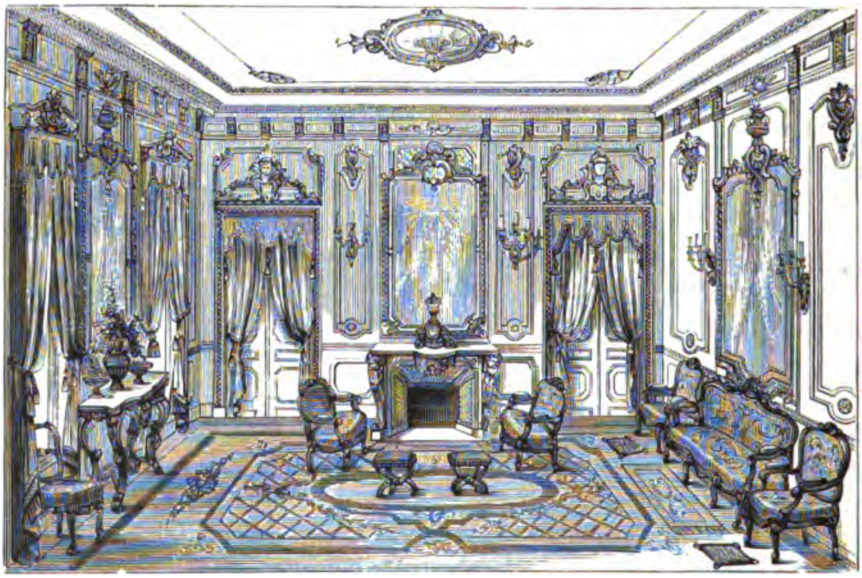
All the peculiarities of the style, of course, exaggerated themselves as they went along; so much so that in the next reign they had become so elaborated as to deserve separate notice, the Louis Quinze having many characteristics whose germ is to be found in its predecessor, but whose development is its own; although, as the title Elizabethan comprises, unless when speaking precisely, much that really came after it, so it is not unusual to speak of both of these French styles under the generic name of the Quatorze.

Whether meretricious or not, nothing could be more brilliant than the effects thus produced. They bent themselves especially to interior decoration, and they constituted a style to be chosen where great display and splendor are desired—the style of state occasion and parade. An excellent thing in the style was that it took into its plan not merely the sofas and cushions, but the whole room—doors, chimneys, ceiling, walls. The cabinets fitted the design as much as the panels, the mirrors fitted the panels; such a panel needed the support of such a table, with its sprawling legs beneath it; such a *coup d'œil* would have been unfinished in the design without such a couch and cabinet and drapery to complete it. The pictorial quality was always considered, and, such as it was, a saloon in the Louis Quatorze had no appearance of a bric-à-brac shop of curious incongruities; but when it was surrendered by the designer to the owner, it was one harmonious whole. Of course the result was exceedingly gay and bright, and better adapted to be the outward expression of life in that magnificent and scandalous era than anything simpler or chaster. "All that the taste of the time could combine of flowers, ciphers, and allegories was scattered over a golden background" in one of the rooms of the apartment of the Queen Regent at that period; "a solitary window, of which the frame was silver, served to light it."

It was a wonderful reign, that of the monarch under whose sceptre this order of decoration advanced. It compassed the entire period of six rulers of the English people and a portion of the reign of two others, and a style invented or applied under such fostering circumstances had time to understand itself and to progress undisturbed to the achievement of all that it intended. The one peculiarity of the times was that of theatrical ostentation or hollow show. The long curling peruke and gorgeous robes of the king never failed to assist his stature, and strengthen the divine right of a potentate who patronized genius while himself ignorant of scholarship, and had the reputation of a hero without possessing knowledge of soldiery, who by his exactions and prodigality sowed the seed that not a hundred years later destroyed the divine right of all potentates, and who, with the finances of his kingdom bankrupt, yet maintained his place as the first sovereign of Europe only to have his hearse hounded by curses. Meanwhile lighter elements played about the immense pretensions of his magnificence; and if it was the age of Condé, Colbert, Bossuet, and Massillon, it was also the age of Molière, of Watteau, and of the musician Lulli. It would hardly have been in nature that such an era should produce any higher order of decoration than that of these flourishing lines in gilt stucco. Spectacle was to be regarded first of all; solid reality was a matter of no consequence.

It was with the constant view to brilliant effect, of which we have spoken, that, as a rule, the flat superficies in the Louis Quatorze was little used, except under the control of marquetry and boule. Every surface was channelled and interlined; it protruded, it receded, it was never stationary. Wherever the Grecian anthemion was used, it represented the round and ribbed shell; and all these perpetually repeated lines, channellings, flutings, and mouldings took the light forcibly, with sharp and shining profile, and made resplendent effect of brilliant lights and subtle shadows. This is more absolutely true, however, of the decoration of the room itself, in wall and ceiling and chimney, than of the furniture. There, on the so much lesser scale, the flat surface was not so infrequent in the ornament; but in such case it was never used without the aid of color, in marquetry, in enamels, and in the delicate painting of Watteau and others. Watteau, in the ornamentation of small rooms, framed his fêtes and garden scenes with this scroll-work of the lines exacted by the style, mingled with fantasias of birds and flowers and flies, with free use of color.

Of course, under such a system of decoration, where all that was aimed at was present effect, and not permanence, furniture took an unstable character. There was a certain lovely grace in the undulatory curves of the long legs of tables and chairs and many of the elevated cabinets, as one's first glimpse had them — a grace of which one wearied as of too much sweets, a grace all of which was revealed at once, leaving no *bonne-bouche* for by-and-by. But there was no coherence, or appearance of it; construction was defied, and the pieces might nearly as well have been built of reeds. With the exception of bookcases, which, owing to the scarcity of books even then, did not enjoy much increase of amplitude, every article of furniture received some variation from its past standard, and many altogether novel ones were produced from modifications of the old. Yet the ornament of furniture never was more dazzling; rare woods entered into the structure, while jasper, bone, coral, mother-of-pearl, lapis, enamels, and bronzes were still freely used.



Louis Quatorze Drawing-room.

Draperies were generously employed in the Louis Quatorze, and had become wonderfully fine both as hangings and as coverings to seats. The production of these tapestries had, many years before, been transferred to France by the Gobelins, Dutch makers of hangings, and established in Paris on the borders of a little brook in the Faubourg St. Marceau, whose waters were supposed to have some peculiar property valuable in the scarlet dyes of which Gobelin had discovered the secret. After the manufacture came under the royal protection, Colbert, the great financier, placed it in the charge of Le Brun, the artist; and nothing can rival the delicacy and beauty of the finish given to these tapestries, reproducing masterpieces of ancient painting and portraiture that counterfeited life. These magnificent fabrics adorned walls and windows, and covered furniture and heightened its effect, whenever they could be had; and, in the opposite contingent, they were replaced by embroideries only less precious, and by velvets looped back with ropes and tassels of gold. An engraving can give no idea of anything but the faults of the Louis Quatorze, which needs to be seen in all its space and splendor, its white and gold and colors; and general eye-taking glitter.

The most striking novelty of the style, after the essential novelty of the shape, was the boule-work with its shell marquetry on vermilion or on gilded ground; and the exquisitely chased brass-work that, originally used to spare the weaker and more exposed portions of the inlay, afterward became a part of the plan of the ornament, was richly chased, and frequently thrown into relief with the finest repoussé-work. This incrustation and inlay made no simple adornment conforming to time-honored rules; on the contrary, it carried fantasy itself before it, and usurped everything to its own dominion. One had the article for the sake of the boule. The boule was no accident of the table or cabinet; the table or cabinet was a mere background and means of being for the boule. The inlay of these brilliant metals, costly marbles, ivory, and nacre upon dark rich material of ebony, lapis lazuli, precious serpentine, tortoise-shell, and the like, followed not only the elements of the style, but with those elements framed and surrounded a pictured mosaic of landscape, or of portrait, or of battle-scene, where the hues were as rich as, and the contrasts were more striking than, those of any allowable painting. Thus it would be difficult to conjure up anything more radiant and imposing, and in a certain sense beautiful, than one of the lustrous, lofty rooms of the Louis Quatorze, where, light and shade being the controlling thought, the soft rich hues of carpet and curtain and the burnished gold and wondrous color of the many-tinted inlay of the furniture are carried up and lost in the white and gilt splendor of wall, cornice, and ceiling, till the place and scene are regal, and fit only for the gallantries of the plumed and jewelled personages of courts.

XVIII.

THE LOUIS QUINZE.

THE progress of the style which took possession of all decoration in the reign of his great-grandfather, gave to the furniture of the reign of Louis Quinze a character of its own even more like an outcrop of the life of those that used it than had been that which preceded it. On the introduction of the style, it underwent an immediate adaptation to the peculiar genius of the era, as shown in the ostentation and glitter of the court, and the almost universal love of ease and pleasure. But what were merely accessory features at the first, in the process of development through many years became the essential qualities of the variation that at length obtained under the name and style of Louis Quinze; for the Grand Monarque had lived to see death twice take away his heir before he placed the sceptre in his great-grandson's little hand, and thus the style of his reign, as already mentioned, had had opportunity of developing all that it contained, so that if still further change were desired, there was nothing to do but seize the most fantastic elements, and exaggerate them till what grandeur there was in the original style was destroyed by accumulation of senseless details. There was some grandeur in the old Louis Quatorze; neither the Gothic nor the Renaissance rivalled it for purposes of parade, fitted for the shining reception of a perpetual pageant. It was not its grandeur, though, that its successor either carried on or rivalled, but merely its *mesquinage.*

The Quatorze had already made use of the occasional absence of symmetry in grasping its great effect of varied and abrupt light and shade; the Quinze formulated it, so to say, into a principle. Symmetry became with it not only a thing of no consequence, but an untoward circumstance not to be encouraged. Still making some classical pretension, using the anthemion, for example, although only as a shell, together with other classic members, it nevertheless seemed fairly wearied of the right lines, the severe flexures and simplicity of the antique, and indulged itself in a system of random fancies loosely thrown together without an artistic idea, and entirely at variance with classic use. To look over the drawings of the designs of this period, it is impossible to imagine that they were intended for furniture: rank weeds growing in summer heat around parcels of rocks and shells tossed together would present as reasonable an appearance of purpose. And it is from these rocks and shells, *rocailles* and *coquilles*, that the style receives its opprobrious epithet of the Rococo, a mere corruption of the two words—the *Rocaille* it is generally called in the land of its birth, while its involved, crimped, shabby lines are known as *coquillages*. Other details figure in the ornamentation, such as grottos —rock forms still, to be sure—roses, cornucopias, upset vases, scrolls; but over all the shell, which, so far as research has been able to trace it, appears first in ornamental art upon the Arch of Titus, is here triumphant—the shell which, although freely used in the Jacobean, never before so nearly made all decoration look like a work in Palissy-ware or an illustration of conchology.

Perhaps we are wrong in saying these rocks and shells and roses were thrown together without an artistic idea, for a purpose was really evident through all the vagaries of the Louis Quinze—the predominating idea of the Louis Quatorze, elaborated to its last limit, of affording splendid contrasts of light and shade; and in order to dash the light with still broader effect, an infinity of meaningless detail was unwisely carried out with a much more than Chinese disobedience to the laws of symmetry; for the Chinese abuse symmetry by the means of symmetry itself, even in their avoidance of it in particulars succeeding in balancing the whole.

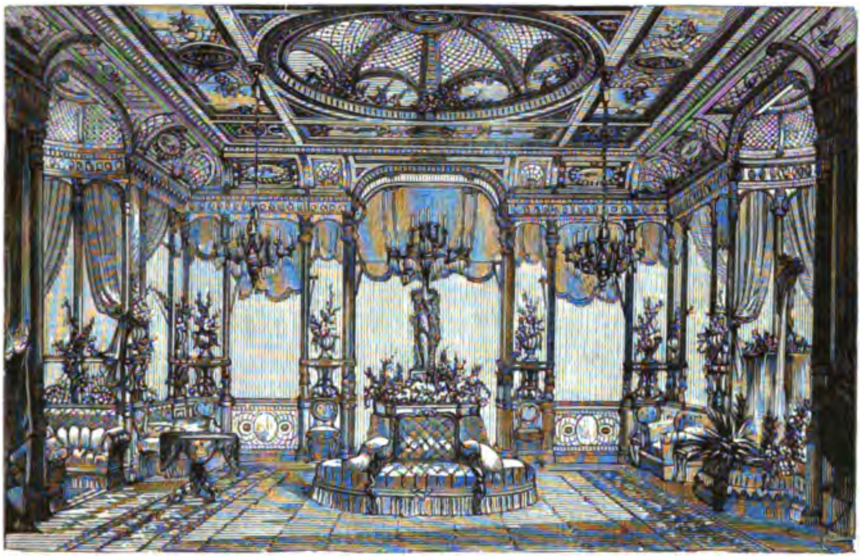
There is nothing in the entire range of art acting as an example or incitement to this Rococo. Before it existed there was nothing like it, and there has been nothing like it since, unless it may be the imitations of it where even its poor prevailing intention has been forgotten, and only its exaggerated peculiarities remain. In its elevations every shape and line throughout the medley is seen to be turned and twisted and involved with the most curious misunderstanding of beauty. The Louis Quatorze ornamentation, indeed, was born of the Cinque-cento infinitely debased, but the Louis Quinze seized the striking differentiations of the former style from its base, and thrust them not only into remote caricature, but utter dissimilarity and removal. It lengthened the acanthus scroll into endless reedy wandering foliations, and it took the *blasé* fancy of the day with the multitudinous detail and the brilliancy of ridged and broken outlines in constant succession; and not the least amusing part of the whole was the travesty of nature it made when obliged to render natural objects. It looked upon nature as a rude and barbarous affair that needed some dressing of French taste before it could be considered fairly *en grande toilette*, and it arrayed her according to its own fancy before offering her to your acquaintance.

Perhaps it was precisely the style that should have been expected of that age, which, already inheriting corruption, in little more than half a century prepared chaos. It was the court, and those that aped the court, on whose requirements furniture was modelled. It was they who bought and used furniture and commanded decoration; they commanded it of a sort befitting the giddy, volatile spirit that danced on the crumbling crust of a volcano; and they wanted it, perhaps, to match the robes on which silken, gold, and silver embroidery had been replaced by embroidery in gems—rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and brilliants supplying the desired color with the lustre of light itself. While the shameless king led his vile life of a sensuality more abominable than that of an Eastern voluptuary; while the court was abandoned to levity and insatiable pleasure, glittering with splendid vice and wanton waste; while the arts were patronized by a Pompadour, furniture, which is the clothing of the daily life, with its twenty-four hours, its needs and deeds, could do nothing but represent that vicious life. In other matters at that time intellect was not slumbering. The apathy of its rulers, plunged in their own pleasures and pursuits, had given the nation time to think, and that great impulse was starting which caused French ideas to rule the world. But philosophy and science did not yet trouble themselves with furniture: it was who should attain the academic fauteuil, not how that fauteuil should be made and ornamented.

Of course where profligacy and luxury demanded so much, and where the gold extorted from the people flowed in a thousand prodigal streams, manufactures flourished as seldom before. The king himself took a great interest in the Gobelin tapestries which had become of such marvellous value, made at the expense of the Government, and not to be purchased, being preserved for royal use and royal gifts, and in the exquisite Sèvres porcelain, which now adorned everything on which it could be used.

But the manufacture of furniture itself was of no such worth: its very shape hindered its solidity. The spindling, unconnected, untrussed legs of the chairs, and of the tables that were utterly unfit to uphold the heavy slabs of marble that crowned them, must needs presently strew the floor as once the rushes had done. Solidity was not in the least looked after or desired, and veneering had come into such general use as to complete the ruin of all noble work, in itself entirely in discord with a noble style. Veneering, indeed, was in its glory in the reign of the Rococo, and the universal face of furniture was falsehood. Rosewood had come in, and mahogany, and superadded to these the lacquers, a curious taste in lacquer-work having arisen, so that Paris was filled with rival workmen imitating the lacquers of the Orient. Furnitures made in France were sent out to

Coromandel to be lacquered, and we see the result in many an article of Oriental furniture to-day, where the shape is still imitated, especially in the long and slender crooked legs. These pieces of furniture were called Coromandels, and were usually passed off as entirely of foreign production. Large articles of furniture were not altered in their shape from that which they had held for many a year, although the ornament applied to them was of the new character. The armory still maintained its dignity, and the bookcase borrowed from the armory. They were in little use, the life of intrigue then adopting small rooms and closets, and furnishing them with pieces to correspond. Light fantastic delicacy was the order of the day; and the greater part of the pieces can be told from those of the Louis Quatorze, not only by the *coquillage* and the *bravura* conspicuous in the outline, but by the longer and slenderer supports that have forsaken the full curve and taken a departure at a lesser angle, and by curves in the face of the furniture, sometimes the whole front rounded out, both in the height and in the length, with alternate hollows—that outline first appearing in this style—and sometimes the doors and drawers in flat profile, and the corners and sides rounded out and ornamented.



Glass Room, with Flowers and Fountains.

Thus with the Louis Quinze there was developed a great taste for what are termed *babioles*—little tables, toy cabinets, tripods, guéridons, étagères, chiffonniers, pedestals—made after countless varieties, but all with undulatory feet, all falsely constructed, all glowing with gilding, and all decked out with the roses and wreaths and festoons, and that ever-changing but always the same shell which resembles the tiny spread feather on the head of a half-fledged ground-sparrow.

Nevertheless, with all the defect of the Louis Quinze, *bizarre* to the last degree, it yet was not altogether without elegance. It made a complete effect, according to its own purposes—the effect of dazzle and of luxury. A Louis Quinze drawing-room, carried out to the letter, looks, to be sure, the least in the world like the stage set for a conjurer, but a conjurer that can make the sun shine on a gray day, that can turn fatigue into pleasure, and fill discontent with cheer; that is because, with whatever faults it has, it is the only style of all that has ever paid complete attention to physical comfort. The straight back, the upright lines, the honest and sturdy supports of the Gothic, the perfect grace and beauty of the Renaissance, are nothing to be compared, for comfort to the aching, the worn, and the weary, with the deep-seated deliciousness of the Louis Quinze. What comfort has crept into the Gothic and the Renaissance—the properly tilted back, the seat at a healthy angle with it, the elastic support of springs—is there only because the Louis Quinze taught that such a thing could be. The Venetian chair that is made of three planks, the first for the tall back going straight from the floor, the second mortised into that, and supported in front by the third, and the whole then carved out into an intricacy of noble beauty, may be a most inviting, most satisfying, and delightful object to the eye; but the tired frame that feels the grasshopper a burden will pass it by and sink into the soft pillowy arms of the Louis Quinze.

It would seem to be the one good act, albeit unconsciously so, of that detestable monarch's life that he lent his name to a form of seat that has been a blessing to "the lame and the lazy and those that won't work." The beds of the style are miracles of restful luxury too. They often had the ancient back like a sofa's, as well as head and foot, and the three sides then under their lofty tented hangings were stuffed and tufted and richly upholstered. In everything where comfort was to be had, that was considered even before splendor; and round forms, so supporting to the body that sitting for a length of time afforded no fatigue, yielding and cushioned springs, characterize the style quite as much as any of its rococo-work does. And as the Venetian chair tells that it was used by no inert and enervated race, but by one ready to maintain its mighty name, so these round, cushioned, downy seats, and this dazzle of gilded shells and rocks, tell all the story of the lassitude and luxury of the court of that vicious ruler to whose self-indulgence and sins they owe their birth.

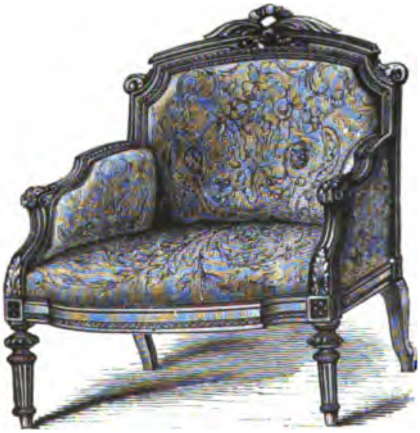
XIX.

LOUIS SEIZE.

THE furniture known under the name of the Louis Seize had at once an amazing difference from its immediate predecessors and a curious similarity to them. The similarity was in the festoons, the garlands, the gilding, the not entirely forgotten shell of the decoration; the difference was in the shape of the article, and the care and serious study expended on it. It was an eclectic affair; and although very far from an ideal style, it chose the best of several. Refinement was evident in its lines, and some comprehension that there was a world outside of Paris—the very opposite of anything to be gathered from the results of that habit of the Quatorze of neglecting detail in order to secure broad effect, through the unwise inheritance of which the Rococo had wound up not only with neglect, but with a complete ignorance and lawlessness of fancy that implied indifference to all beyond, if not contempt. And there was in the very aspect of the Louis Seize, in its right lines and its freedom from idle curvatures, some subtle and perhaps unconscious hint that here virtue was respected where lately vice had been enthroned. Nor is this entirely fanciful, since it is certainly impossible to look at the furnitures of the three reigns—the Quatorze, the Quinze, and the Louis Seize—and not observe where license became profligacy and was again restrained into decency—household and palatial decoration colored necessarily by the moral qualities of its designing and accepting minds.

Since changes have been made so vastly easier than they were in the old days of which M. Vicollet-le-Duc tells us, since people have grown so restless, and since wealth has in every way so multiplied itself, there has been almost as frequently a fashion in furniture as in millinery—some reason, if insufficient, some apparent philosophy, to be found in the change in both cases. And it seems to us that in its encroachments and selections—it possessed, we think, no inventions—the Louis Seize deserves, perhaps, more the name of a fashion than a style, having neither the freedom and novelty of the Quatorze nor the purity of the Grecian, nor, although using a mingling of both, marked by that pronounced individuality proper to the conception of an absolute style.

Whether fashion or style, we find in it, notwithstanding its attempt at nobler things, an evident clinging to the traditions of the century and a half behind it at court; just as in the king himself, who would never appoint a bishop or confer a benefice outside of the pale of noble birth, was apparent a leaning toward the privileged orders, although it had long been a recognized fact that the interest of the kings was with the people and against the nobles. We see, moreover, in its *coup d'œil* an uprising of popular thought and republican ideas, with the Classic turn that was given to all things much more distinctly than ever before, actuated probably by the example of the Grecian republics, the more wide-spread knowledge of whose history, joined with the awakening events of the American Revolution, was fast undermining the structure of the heaven-descended right of kings. It was also impossible that such a new world should have been opened, such a literal resurrection of the dead past in its beauty, as in the uncovering of Pompeii, that was all the time progressing, without producing a deep impression; and Pompeian ideas are so constantly reflected in the Louis Seize that it seems, in many respects, almost a repetition of the early Renaissance. In addition to all that, without doubt the very great favor that Classic aspirations had been meeting in England also, where, in a debased state, the Classic had prevailed many years, and during the last half century, especially since the publication of Adam's "Spalatro"—a description and restoration, with plates, of Diocletian's villa—with a more thorough acquaintance of the right spirit and details, had reacted on the French taste, weary of gaudy trifling, and just in the mood to accept it.

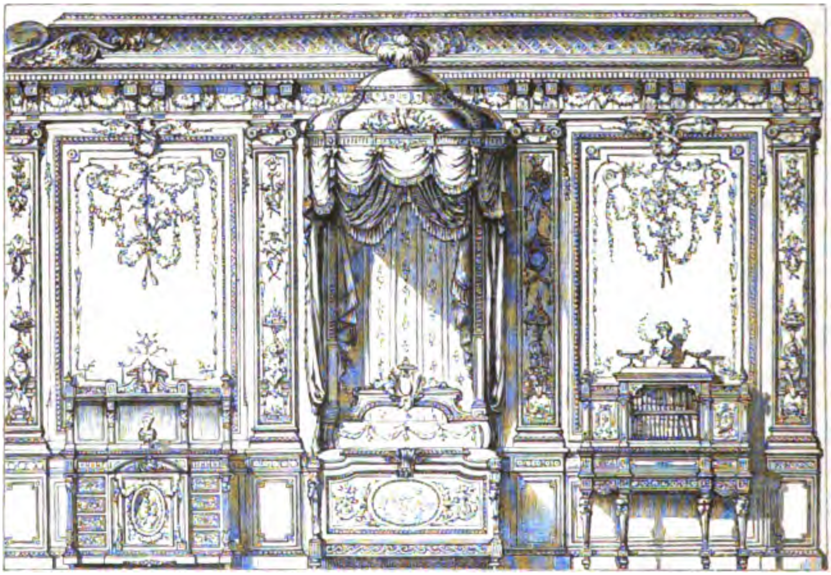


Louis Seize Chair.

Ideas that lead to radical change and renewal, the student observes, first come in literature, in dress, in architecture, last of all in furniture; and they reach furniture modified by many other influences than those of direct art—convenience, the fashion of garments, the habits of life, making themselves felt quite as much as the inspiring power of Greek lintel or Gothic arch; and the careful reconstructer can, as has been said, build again the whole fabric of a forgotten society from the features of its furniture. If he attempt, at some future era, to reconstruct history from the Louis Seize, he will find a love of sumptuous splendor and revelry on the one side, just beginning to be held in check on the other by the new ideas born of disgust for courtly vice—and for such wanton and useless expenditure as that where the mere hangings of the bed presented by Madame De Montespan to the bride of the royal prince, her son and the king's, cost, with their marvellous embroidery in gold and pearls, more than a million livres of the present day—together with a recognition also of the rights of man that amused and expressed itself by means of the forms in use in the times of early austerity and desired freedom. He will see that this was furniture that could array, as it did, the salon where Madame Roland and her friends discussed the principles of liberty, and also furnish forth the revels of Marie Antoinette and her courtiers at the Petit Trianon.

The earlier chair with sprawling legs, called the *cancan*, from which the vile dance of the same name derived its appellation, belonging to the Louis Quatorze, was a chair not to be accepted in the fashion of Louis Seize, but to be departed from as widely as circumstances would admit. There is not a sprawling leg to be found in any article of the Louis Seize; they are nearly all upright, turned sometimes in various ways, imitating vases and cups, the flat tazza at the top, and in the main resembling little columns, or *colonnettes*, headed and supported by tiny astragals, usually fluted, and usually with the fluting accentuated and broken again by vertical lines of gilding. Gilding did its best, indeed, in the Louis Seize, not with the vulgar profusion that it superseded, although more ostentatiously still than pleases the correct taste, but with rather remarkable freedom, considering the fact of the return to Greek profiles, and with that the naturally accompanying exhibition of a severer fancy than had ruled before for centuries. Severe in outline only, it would seem, for, when we come to decoration, there were the multitudinous wreaths and festoons and knots and ribbons, with rosettes of roses set in a square, nests of the acanthus, and scrolls half in doubt whether they are not broken fragments of a shell, with countless other variations in the mouldings and mounts. But heavy articles were well lifted off the floor, grace was regarded from a chaster point of view than when the polite world sat and lay on the old agglomeration of curves, while comfort, although carried to no such point of Oriental luxury and lounging as once, was yet by no means overlooked. Meantime the various *babioles*, that we have spoken of as coming in during the last generations, were retained, and the new woods were freely used in their construction, but all redeemed from the curve, and Grecianized. The material difference between the Louis Seize chair and that of the Quinze was its more upright form, the classic contour of its lines, and of the ornament that was doing its best to be freed from the Rococo;

while carving, perhaps inspired by recent English work, when used in preference to the perfect marquetry or in conjunction with it, was never in any French work since the early Renaissance of so rich a description. The sofa had the same character as the chair, sufficiently comfortable, not unpicturesque, on the whole, in spite of its too splendid glitter; mirrors had become very large, and, used extravagantly still, made resplendent features in the fashion; the tables were on long, slender, straight or tapering legs, sometimes simply standing four-square, sometimes with oval-shaped connecting bars between the feet, most of them of a pleasing appearance; and the cabinets, built in various shapes, were exceedingly beautiful pieces. Some of these cabinets resemble the little Italian bureau, which, light in construction, without fragility, was certainly as pretty an article as a drawing-room can know, its slender supports strengthened by the ornamental bars between, frequently long double ovals meeting in a vase or any other ornament, and the top raised and filled with numerous little drawers surrounded by elaborate ornament, the handles made of carvings of precious marbles in flowers and fruits, and a central space enclosing, between gilt colonnettes with richly wrought tiny plinths and capitals, more intimate and secret drawers behind the space of its ornament. We have been shown a precious old bureau of this description in this country, the price of which was not extortionate at something over a thousand dollars.



Louis Seize Bedchamber.

While, as we have seen, the effect of Louis Seize furnishing was somewhat more severe, it was equally as splendid as that of its predecessors. The panelling of rooms had no more of the Rococo flourishes; they followed straight lines, and usually, of whatever material made, were painted white; the pilasters between were carved with minute richness and delicacy, and were gilt so finely and substantially that the gilding is in perfect preservation to-day. The quills of the fluted columns were beaded, and arabesque-work after the old Raphaelesque designs accompanied the decoration of many interiors, these portions carved and those painted and gilt, the gilding alloyed so as to produce various tints—the coppery red, the silvery green. The furnitures themselves, when of merit, were designed by Riesener, Roentgen, Cauvet, and many other artists of celebrity, who also often took in charge the whole accompanying scheme of decoration; and various articles were made of tulip, purple, laburnum, and rosewood, or of lighter woods colored in the various golden-brown shades by means of a hot iron. The chief ornament was marquetry of elaborate pattern and workmanship in floral garlands, surrounded by borders of fine diaper-work. The chairs and couches were upholstered in Gobelin, or in the costly French and Italian silks. All these articles were further enriched by the remarkable metal mounts of Gouthière, Barthelémy, and others, modelled with exquisite precision, chased and gilt again with a solid finish that defies time and tarnish; while Sèvres china, profusely used, added its charm to the whole.

The style which succeeded the Louis Seize was so exceedingly faulty that it would needs have been followed by a reaction, if not by a return to that which it had supplanted, even if the restoration of the legitimate sovereigns had not enforced a banishment of everything that had obtained favor under the usurping powers—the great waves of those mighty events felt in the drawing-room as well as mounting to the scaffold. But of course when the kings had their own again, they did their best, or rather the purveyors to the court did, to make their absence forgotten, and took things up as nearly as possible where they were when the fatal axe of '93 had fallen. In this way it has come about that the Louis Seize furniture is again the favorite of that fashion which, after intervals of departure from its standard, always local, never universal, has returned to it, with the greater elaboration of its Pompeian features, and palaces are gay with the things whose associations are full of the sad history and bitter renunciation of one of the most picturesque and unfortunate women of all time. Far more refined and only less splendid than previous French styles, it is as well suited to the frivolities of the life too frequently led nowadays by the extraordinarily wealthy as more stable and solid and dignified furniture could be. While full of its reminiscences, it supplies a glitter that does not exist in the Renaissance, and it is lighter and airier than the Gothic, which, besides, exacts more archæological knowledge than has been, until lately, in the possession of many individuals, and which, even if not an anachronism in connection with the manners and habits of those about it, would be at any rate most singularly at variance with the French costumes of the men and women of the period. It is the nearest approach to the old Quattrocento that modern styles have made; and if certain purists deride the Renaissance, we can remember that people of as much weight in the world's history—such as Raphael, Romano, and Cellini—assisted at its formation.

The Louis Seize is now made with a perfection that gives it a right of existence until the spirit of the age shall develop something superior—something in which gilding shall be subordinate, and veneering a lost art. At present the Louis Seize furniture is made in America with a nicety and purity quite equal to that which characterizes the best examples, and its wonderfully beautiful carving is unrivalled by any that comes from abroad.

XX.

THE POMPEIAN.

THE Pompeian was the original of most of the features of the Louis Seize, and in choosing the elder style there is attained a more pronounced character of Greek beauty, free from the trivial details added by French fancy, if not the best and purest classicality in itself.

The Pompeian is a style of great magnificence, and it can be carried out with strict propriety only by the use of a vast amount of money. Limited incomes can indulge in the Gothic, in the Neo-Jacobean, even in the Louis Seize to some extent; but it takes a princely fortune to venture on the Pompeian, and to do it in character. A style of extravagance as it is, ignorance and vulgarity cannot administer it; costly artistic intelligence must have it in hand; nor can anything cheap be tolerated in its production, for it is the last expression of luxurious wealth, and whatever is done in it must be done finely.

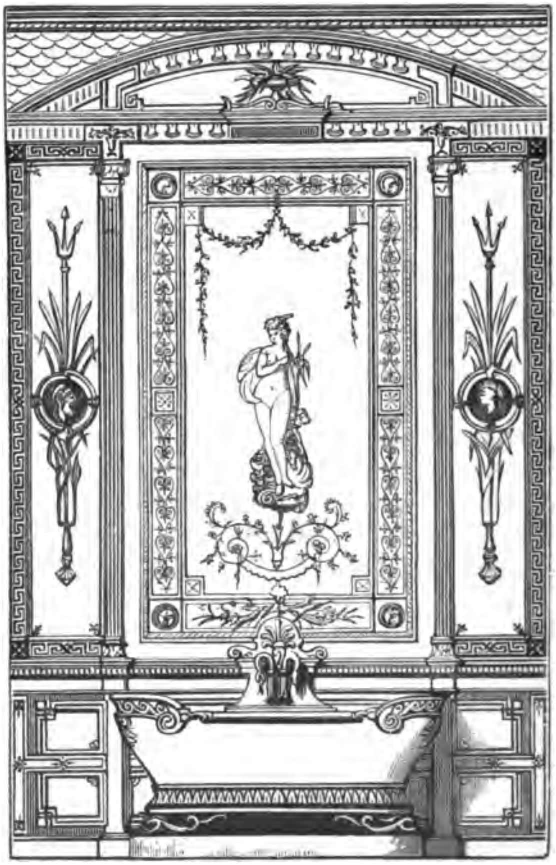
The art of the Pompeian was, as we all know, the Greek art after the Asiatic had debased it; not that of the ancient dweller by the Ægean Sea, but the Greek of Magna Græcia, who brought his arts and pleasures into Italy, and sapped the Roman power by means of them. Pliny complained of its period, saying that "a man now cares nothing for art, provided he has his walls well covered with purple or dragon's-blood from India." Yet, enfeebled by its rank blossoming as it may have been, it is doubtful if many of us can improve it; and if a millionnaire is going to live a sybaritic, self-indulgent life of pleasure, he could not express his determination better than by furnishing his villa in the Pompeian. But such as the art was in its day, "it made its way everywhere," says a brilliant writer; "it illuminated, it gladdened, it perfumed everything. It did not stand either outside of or above ordinary life; it was the soul and the delight of life; in a word, it penetrated it, and was penetrated by it—*it lived!*"

It was a wonderfully rich and attractive scheme of household decoration—the scheme of one who with his art indulged his senses, and not his soul—if he had one. Walls, ceiling, floor, and furniture, all had part in it. Panels were ornamented with varied frames, then with cornices, afterward with plinths, till at last the façade of a temple or palace was presented on the walls by means of them and their pilasters, the whole painted in strong colors, so that the luxurious citizen not only lived in a palace, but saw extensions of palaces on his every side. "These mural decorations were," says the writer quoted above, "a feast for the eyes, and are so still. They divided the walls into five or six panels, developing themselves between a socle" (a socle answers for a pedestal, but is without base or cornice) "and a frieze; the socle being deeper, the frieze clearer in tint, the interspace of a more vivid red and yellow, for instance, while the frieze was white and the socle black. In plain houses these single panels were divided by simple lines. Then, gradually, as the house selected became more opulent, these lines were replaced by ornamental frames, garlands, pilasters, and ere long fantastic pavilions, in which the fancy of the decorative artist disported at will. Moreover, the socles became covered with foliage, the friezes with arabesques, and the panels with paintings, the latter quite simple at first, such as a flower, a fruit, a landscape; pretty soon a figure; then a group; then at last great historical or religious subjects that sometimes covered a whole piece of wall, and to which the socle and the frieze served as a sort of showy and majestic frame-work. Thus the fancy of the decorator could rise even to the height of epic art."

The usual Pompeian panel, though, and the only one that, as a rule, we now attempt to reproduce, presented a dark field, dull red, deep blue, black, olivine; and on this field danced along the airy figures that are its chief adornment, full of original fancy, painted in bright and delicate beauty, and thrown up by means of this dark ground. "Everybody has seen those swarms of little genii," continues M. Monnier, "that, fluttering down upon the walls of their houses, wove crowns or garlands, angled with the rod and line, chased birds, sawed planks, planed tables, raced in chariots, or danced on the tight-rope, holding up thyrsi for balancing-poles; one bent over, another kneeling, a third making a jet of wine spurt forth from a horn into a vase, a fourth playing on the lyre, and a fifth on the double flute, without leaving the tight-rope that bends beneath their nimble feet. But more beautiful than these divine rope-dancers were the female dancers who floated about, perfect prodigies of self-possession and buoyancy, rising of themselves from the ground, and sustained without an effort in the voluptuous air that cradled them. You may see these all at the museum in Naples—the nymph who clashes the cymbals, and one who drums the tambourine; another who holds aloft a branch of cedar and a golden sceptre; one who is handing a plate of figs; and her, too, who has a basket on her head and a thyrsus in her hand. Another, in dancing, uncovers her neck and her shoulders; and a third, with her head thrown back and her eyes uplifted to heaven, inflates her veil as though to fly away. Here is one dropping bunches of flowers in a fold of her robe, and there another who holds a golden plate in this hand, while with that she covers her brows with an undulating pallium, like a bird putting its head under its wing. There are some almost nude, and some that drape themselves in tissues quite transparent and woven of the air. Some, again, wrap themselves in thick mantles which cover them completely, but which are about to fall; two of them, holding each other by the hand, are going to float upward together. As many dancing nymphs as there are, so many are the different dances, attitudes, movements, undulations, characteristics, and dissimilar ways of removing and putting on veils; infinite variations, in fine, upon two notes that vibrate with voluptuous luxuriance, and in a thousand ways."

The arabesques of the ornamental frames enclosing these figures were equally rich with them in imaginative form and in tint; in the choicest instances the curves were all that Greek curves should be. Of the mosaics of the pavements — where, at the door, if an actual dog was not seen, he was apt to be represented, although sometimes in his place was to be read only the familiar legend, *Cave canem*— Wornum says, that, "however inappropriate in their application to floors, they are examples of an exuberance of ornament to which few, if any, modern palaces can offer a parallel."

In ornament the Pompeian offers many features that remind one directly of the old Egyptian — evidence of the Asiatic influence on the Greek art which the Romans used throughout Magna Græcia, the art of the Persian,

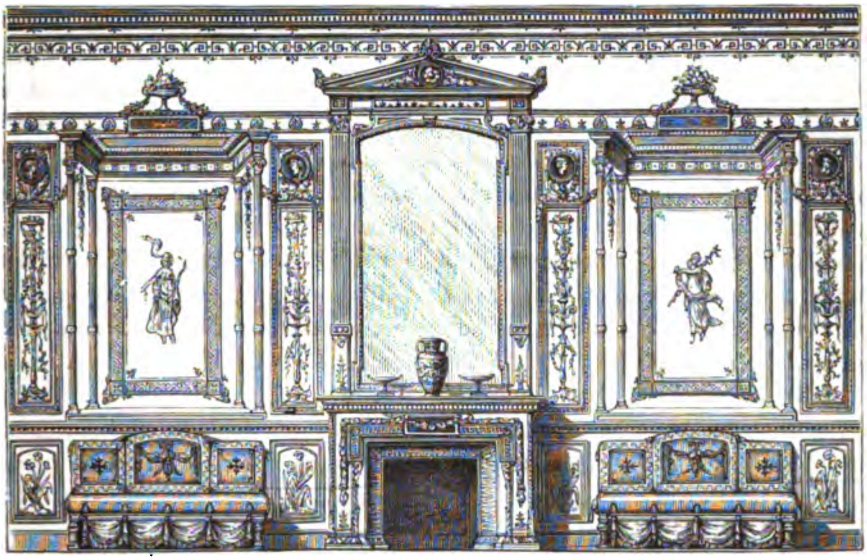


Pompeian Bath-room.

it is supposed, having been derived in great part from the Egyptian, its principal difference being that occasioned by the exigencies of religion and the direction of the Persian priests. One can imagine in it traits of the luxury of Antioch and of the refinement of Alexandria, and it is likely that some barbaric Carthaginian splendor may have helped in the Pompeian deterioration of the old standard. The anthemion was its constant attendant, always in a rather formal hieroglyphic-like arrangement, a spherical triangle, or a line of them, somewhat fan-shaped, somewhat shell-shaped; the fret also, the sphinxes; and besides these ancient and conventional forms were a multitude of natural imitations—flowers everywhere. There were an immense number of other paintings besides these merely beautiful ones; many that "appear destined for banqueting-halls; dead nature predominates in them; you see nothing but pullets, geese, ducks, partridges, fowls, and game of all kinds; fruit and eggs, amphoræ, loaves of bread, and cakes."

The doors of the rooms that were thus so universally decorated were made of narrow panels surrounded by gilt nails or bosses, and opening by means of a ring inserted as a handle; the windows were glazed, and the curtains were hung on rings. The material of the coverings of the couches, with their finely turned legs, was striped in bands; and here again, although the stripes are directly of Asiatic birth, yet taking into consideration the undoubted influence of Egypt upon the East and all Asiatic production, it is probable that we have another Egyptian effect on the style; for as Mr. Wornum, whom we have already quoted, says, "The Egyptian decorator, by a mere symmetrical arrangement, has converted even the incomprehensible hieroglyphics into pleasing and tasteful ornaments,....generally in the shape of a simple progression, whether in a horizontal line, or repeated on the principle of the diaper, that is, row upon row, horizontally or diagonally,....so that we have here one great class of ornament, and the earliest systematic efforts in design in the world's history,"—which would seem sufficiently to indicate the origin of these stripes and bands.

Something of the brilliancy of the wall decoration of the Pompeian may be gathered from its use of whole panels and of their surroundings, moulded of glass, richly stained in the most royal colors, and sometimes with all their ornament stamped into them. They were also frequently gilt, as well as all the wood-work about them; and sometimes a layer of another color above the main tint was cut away into the design, as a cameo is cut, although of course on a less delicate scale; and when the walls themselves were not ornamented with the architectural outlines, with the dark panels and the graceful figures, then great sheets of glass with their backs darkened, or else of the volcanic obsidian or of highly polished silver, took their place and reflected the forms of the dwellers and their guests.



Modern Pompeian Parlor.

Among the movable articles of furniture in these luxurious homes there were pretty tripods of bronze to sustain the braziers that sufficiently heated the rooms in such chilly weather as comes to the Vesuvian slope, to hold the flowers that the Pompeians used freely as the old Egyptians did, to uplift the lovely sculpture; there were tall candelabrum stands carrying wax-tapers, or else from their branches suspending the beautiful Pompeian lamps. A table taken from the buried city, and now at Naples, its height nearly twice its breadth, held three leopards' haunches upon a flat stand, and bound them together with an elaborate metal open-work, and, on these, three androsphinxes, their wings stretched high as a winged Victory's, held a circular tablet ornamented on all its broad rim with mouldings underneath festoons wreathing the famous ox-head. Such tables as these were sometimes made of cedar, on ivory feet, sometimes of silver, and even of gold; more frequently they were of wood whose grain had been changed during growth by artificial means, so as to present a mottled appearance—some called tigrinæ, some pantherinæ, and some, again, eyed like the peacock's tail; and there were tables made of citron-wood, worth more than fifty thousand dollars. It cannot but be felt, therefore, that the Pompeian in the original is a style whose name belonged to a period of utter luxury; not that luxury where art was lost in madness, as in the Rococo, but where, although it reminded you of

"Fruits of the fig-tree, rathe ripe, rotten rich,"

it was yet controlled by some purpose and some tradition, and if it did exert itself for the complete gratification of the senses, never forgot to gratify them by the means of beauty. Venus Physica, or the beauty in material nature, was the tutelary goddess of the city. "May he who injures this picture have the wrath of the Pompeian Venus upon him!" was the imprecation an artist there was found to have attached to his work.

The Pompeian is not exactly the style for parade, for public use, or for great state occasion; but for festal life, for luxury, for the enjoyment of wealth and ease and beauty, it may take the lead. The best of the early Renaissance is but a less daring effort after what the Pompeian had developed; the best of the Louis Seize is but a feeble echo of it. If its art was mingled with a thousand Persian and Egyptian impurities, it took no impurity that was not already a beauty, and with its courageous color and contrast it evolved a wonderful and magnificent charm from the conglomerate.

In its modern use, only the merest fraction of this magnificence could be countenanced. It is as entirely inconsistent with the arrangement and the spirit of our homes as if it were a work of enchantment, and of course no one can be literally advised to furnish in such a prodigal and voluptuous style; and it will, indeed, be a vast fortune that will not be quite willing to pause after so much expenditure as a single room will require, and content itself for the rest with the things of less extraordinary life. Yet the things of merely common life would hardly be companionable with such grace and luxury of loveliness; and if one begins with the Pompeian, the remainder of the house must, at any rate, be sufficiently rich and fine to present no violent contrast. A purer Classic may give it tone; it may slip for relief into the Louis Seize or the early Renaissance; it being usually understood, meanwhile, that a house furnished in more than one style is full of anachronisms, and greets one at the threshold with an exhibition of questionable taste.

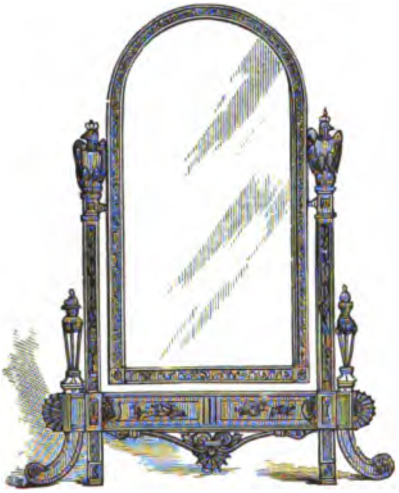
XXI.

THE FIRST EMPIRE.

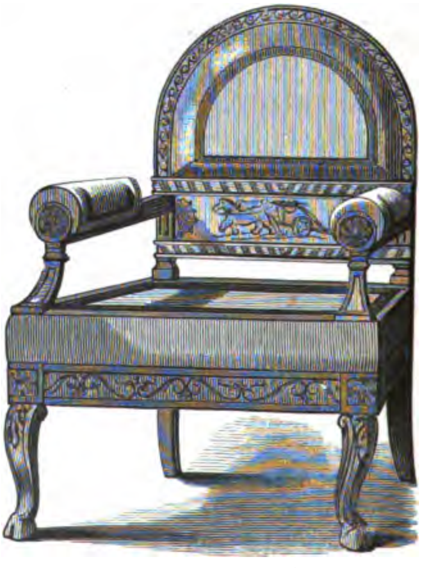
THE only thing to be expected of furniture after the great Napoleon came to his power was that it should develop itself into what is known as the style of the First Empire, which, although for purposes of convenience we speak of it as a style, is altogether so mistaken an affectation, so hybrid a birth, that it has scarcely so much right to the title as had the Louis Seize. Thus, when we hear an article of the furniture and interior decoration of the First Empire declared to be in pure or impure style, it seems as laughable a confusion of terms as if one should speak of the pure mongrel.

This fashion is sometimes known as the Néo-Grec; but if Grecian severity, and the tenderness toward the forms of the ancient republics and the popular rights they granted, had inspired any of the ideas of the recent past in art and fashion, the Napoleonic ideas were tainted by Roman grandeur and its imperial appanage; partly, perhaps, through the character of the Classic that had prevailed in France both in the early Renaissance and the Quatorze periods, which was borrowed in one case from the florid and in the other from the grandiose Roman schools, rather than at all from the serene and stately Doric, and from whose influence it was not easy entirely to escape. Indeed, some beautiful tables, ornamented with metal mounts after the designs of Cauvet, whose patron was the late king's brother, and made for the pleasure-house of the queen at the Petit Trianon, were sufficiently in style to adorn the Palace of St. Cloud in the Emperor's day. And, moreover, the new Cæsar—with whom, in spite of the real greatness wrapped out of sight by his cloak of theatrical display, the world was always *en scène*—could hardly forget the old one; and whether or not he desired to restore art to the place it held before Alexander, the other great general of the world, had debased it by the introduction of such Oriental luxury, after his conquest of Asia, that the name of a Greek became synonymous with extravagant sensualism and the total degradation of art, yet he succeeded only in making the style of the First Empire something tarnished by Roman reproduction in its inheritance, and administered to its ruin by a vicious French fancy.

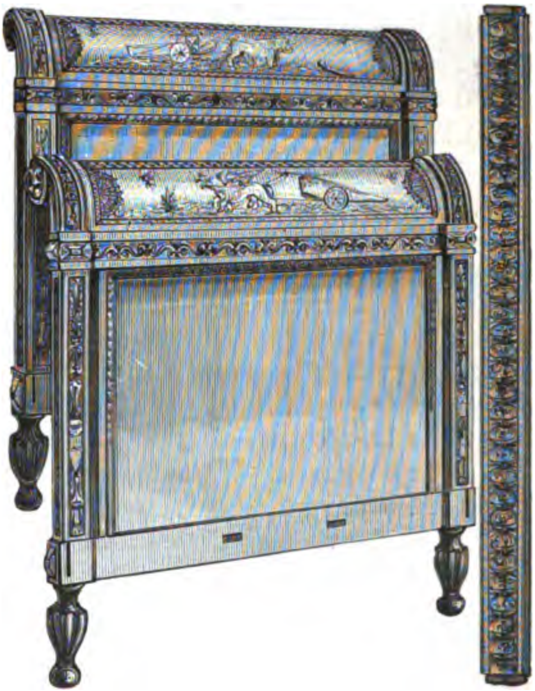
The Revolution had thrown out of France most of those who were able to be purchasers, and discriminating purchasers, of fine furniture, and there had been no serious attempt for some years at any artistic manufacture. All that had occurred in this line was the rifling of the palaces of the old order to dress out the palaces of the new. When the Empire became a fact, and its revenues were well in hand to assist its pageantry, attention was paid to this subject of household decoration, and the Greek became the countersign—the Greek known in ancient Rome. It was perhaps felt that the forms of art to accompany the last empire, with all its gigantic conquests and pride, must be those which had accompanied the vaster empire when its chains bound the known world.


First Empire Psyche-glass.

The First Empire never accomplished its aim of setting before us the antique at its height of graceful and perfect simplicity. The Grecian chair, which in one of its forms is, for charming outline and lightness, absolute perfection, seemed a tame affair to the later artificers; they either made it bald by their toning down, or else rendered it unrecognizable with ornament. In either event their want of taste was only equalled by their ignorance. If they did not put shoes upon the feet of their winged angels, as some modern painters do, they arranged Helen's hair as a French hairdresser would arrange it, gave a Parisian cut to peplum and chlamys, put implements of the present into the hands of the past, mixed the details of their ornament inextricably, scattered the Athenian bees broadcast, and seemed to think the sacrifice to the Grecian spirit was complete by oblations of nudity, unaware that the perfect beauty and grace of the ancient nude was in itself a garment.


First Empire Arm-chair.

The whole contour of furniture and its decoration, in the attempt to represent the antique, was as conspicuously inexact as the short-waisted gown and ruff of Josephine were in representing the lovely dress of Aspasia and Rhodope. Vague ideas without precise information moved the whole period, and designers did not think it necessary to go farther for their instruction than to the dry bones and the unreal art of the painter David. Chairs and tables thought their whole duty as chairs and tables was done when they presented an antique simulation, and were satisfied with themselves if they had concealed their own structure behind the bass-relief belonging to an ancient vase or the frieze of a temple—bass-relief neither well understood nor rightly repeated, slenderness of knowledge being assisted in the result by poverty of imagination. The style, with the exception of a few mechanical points, such, for instance, as the fine alabaster finish it gave to wood when desired—a practice as legitimate as that of ebonizing—possesses no claims upon favor. For although the largest freedom of choice is to be allowed, yet in certain matters taste is arbitrary: if, that is, a thing assumes to be classic, good taste requires that it shall be pure classic, and not the classic of a *petit maître.*



First Empire Bedstead.

As a tendency toward the style already existed in the days of the Directory, although in a severer shape, its growth cannot be considered as altogether a tribute to the emperor or an emanation from his pride. Doubtless many of its peculiarities were formed by rumor of those ancient treasures that were opened to general knowledge by the late campaigns and victories; and, for the rest, it was probably still aware of that influence which had been exerted upon the art of the previous period by the unearthing of Pompeii and Herculaneum in its gradual progress. Yet although the marvels of the buried cities, in all their extravagant beauty, were carried to the museums of Naples and Portici, and open to all the world, they were too florid to be of the same use that they had been in the Louis Seize, and seem never to have commanded any strict study from the designers of the Empire. They were not the noblest examples of art themselves, to be sure; Asiatic sensuality had corrupted art at its fountain-head, and we are still suffering from the poison it instilled; but they were of a wondrous loveliness, and possessed at least some character—a thing not belonging to the First Empire.

The fashion of the First Empire, on the whole, in spite of much inevitable beauty that could not altogether fall short in such a revival, was a sham scholarship and a hollow imitation of the nobility and of the pageantry of the past—glory calling unto glory. If the glory had chosen to develop a style for itself, something of infinitely better worth might have been reached; as it is, with its stiff ugliness and ancient pretensions, with its alabaster and imitative finish of common articles, with the fasces of the lictor bound at every angle, its unfailing pediments and metopes, coupled with details at which Pericles might have laughed, it reminds one of the hero who undertook to revive the past ages on his ancestral estate:

> "So all that the old dukes had been without knowing it,
> This duke would fain know he was without being it;
> 'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of his showing it,
> Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it."

Of course there was a great deal of splendor in connection with every article; inlay, and gilding, marquetry, and metal mounts, had already reached a point where, as mere work, they could go no farther, while carving of an exquisite nicety had renewed itself under the last régime. The whole brilliant array of the thing had an imperial guise of its own, but one in no way befitting the greatness of the period or the wonderful genius of the man who shaped that period to his own ends.

Poor as the style was, the Second Empire would not, perhaps, have felt that it was reviving its ancestral rights if it had not revived this bastard form of art with them. It mingled, however, so many Cupids and ribbons and unessential elements with it that it neither deserved nor received any wide countenance or continuation.

XXII.

THE MOORISH.

ALTHOUGH very few have had the audacity to attempt a whole house in a fantastic style, it has not been uncommon to see a conservatory and its anteroom in the Moorish, or a parlor in the Pompeian, or a cabinet—as certain small and more private rooms used to be called—in the Chinese; while the remaining rooms of the dwelling are merely in the prevailing fancy of the day, whatever that fancy happens to be.

It is a singular thing that two styles, originally the expression of two so very opposite religions and lives as the Saracenic or Moorish and the Gothic, should really have sprung from one and the same source, the Byzantine.

The art that arose in Byzance is called peculiarly the Christian art. Spurning all the elements of beauty in ancient art, it adopted only symbols that reminded the worshipper of his faith, just as the Egyptian had done. The Greek took the Egyptian symbols and used them, irrespective of their signification, for the sake of whatever loveliness was to be found in them; the Saracen took the Byzantine symbols and used them in precisely the same way. Some modification took place on the part of the Saracen, of course, as his religion expressly forbade the use of any imitation of a thing of life, and it required some art and artifice to evade the prescription. In the Byzantine all the beautiful old ornamental forms of Greek and Roman were rejected on account of their paganism; and the serpent, the cross, the fish, the vesica, with a few crude details, constituted the decoration of the primitive style—among these details the fleur-de-lis, or lily, emblem of purity, appearing long before it became the lily of France. The style was made all the easier for the Saracen by the fact that all its representations were conventional, the saint being known by his emblems and colors. The Saracen might have been safe in repeating them, for they certainly at first resembled nothing actually in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. In color, however, the Byzantine artist had free play, and here the Saracenic took advantage of its archeus, and used the richest tints with the most intricate variations.

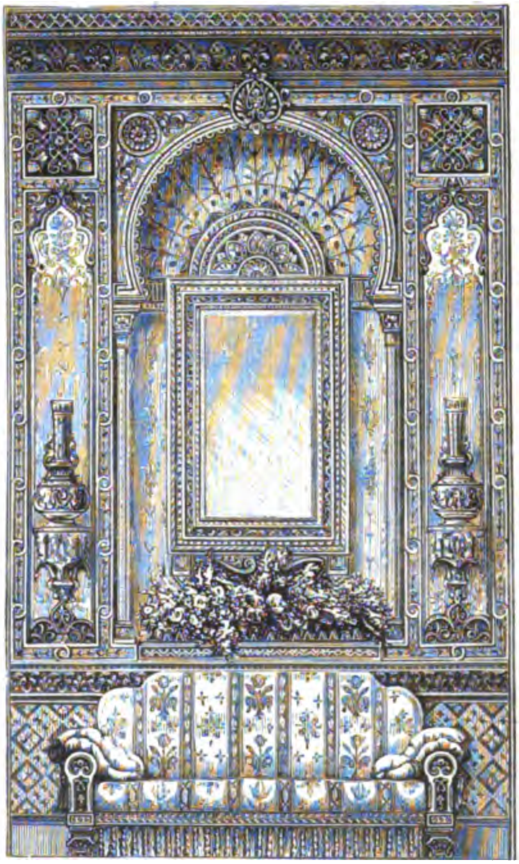
As Byzantine art progressed, its symbolism became less oppressive, and its artists, who worked in a faithful spirit, exceedingly skilful. Little by little old forms crept in: the scroll was countenanced, rude and sharp, and feathering off its foliations into the sacred lily or fleur-de-lis; and after about five centuries of the old life it gave up the effort to separate itself, and adopted the greater part of the ancient forms to its own use and interpretation, handling them, of course, with less grace and freedom and less knowledge of appropriateness and purity than in the original, but yet making a much wider, and in many respects nobler, variation of itself than when, as before, the only notable ornaments were the tracery of serpents, the circles, and the cross crushing the serpent again. It is interesting to observe the departure of features of the style into the North, on the one hand, as germs of another and grander, carried there by means of the priesthood, and by the Northern soldiers who served in the empire, a very noteworthy vestige of which, the author of the "Analysis of Ornament" tells us, is to be seen in the "cross surrounded by the so-called Runic knot, which is only a Scandinavian version of the original Byzantine image—the crushed snake curling round the stem of the avenging cross;" and the departure into the South, on the other hand, as germs of a richer, gayer style, the companion of splendor and luxury, in its use by Greek artists compelled to obey Mohammedan direction and evolve the Saracenic, which insisted upon beauty, but insisted also upon obedience in some form to the commandment of making no "graven image."

When in the seventh century the Arabs captured Damascus, they got a fair share of the Byzantine beauty with it. They were a wandering, tenting race, suddenly launched into power and glory and the possession of walled cities, loving color and brilliancy, and dazzled by the splendor of the architecture and ornament of which they had just become the masters. They, too, must go to building; and palaces and tombs and mosques must be had; and as they had no artists of their own, of course the captive workmen, or, at any rate, those belonging to the conquered cities, must build for them, and build and work according to their requirements. There was no way of positively disobeying the Mohammedan will that chose to have the most elaborate ornament, but refused to have any actual form or imagery repeated; painting and gilding, stone and stucco, marquetry and mosaic, must be employed, and with designs of interest and beauty, but not an animal or vegetable shape must appear in those designs. But the Greek artists were a cunning folk. They were already by this time sufficiently skilful and ingenious to evade the law without precise disobedience. In all the Moorish cities examples of the way they did it are to be seen. The necessity under which they labored stimulated the fancy, and out of their old material they actually created a new style, as beautiful in its way as anything since styles began. It was a style of pure ornament; one had only to enjoy it, and no longer, as in the Byzantine or as in the Egyptian, to pause in the æsthetic emotion for the sake of interpreting to and exhorting the religious one. It was a style, thus it may be seen, of beauty of line, not of object. A curve was saved from weakness by an accompanying angle; an angle was softened by a curve; the whole was interlaced and woven with bands in arches and ogees and with little petal-like shapes arranged with symmetry in every space and interstice. There were horns of plenty that paused just on the verge of being horns of plenty pouring out their fruits and flowers; there were anthemions that the Arab never knew for an anthemion; there were pastoral crooks turning into scrolls, questioning whether they were not stems of blossoms; there were flower and leaf shapes that caught themselves back just declaring their identity. They suggest, but they do not complete, the parallel; in all cases the precise resemblance is avoided the moment before it is too late. Besides all this, there was a world of strap-work—a sacrifice perhaps to the trim and tackle of the gay Arab horsemanship; and there were introduced everywhere Arabic inscriptions, each character and stroke of which was treated as though it were itself a flower. The crescent, by-the-way, does not at all appear in any early or pure Saracenic work. It had been in use in Byzance from time immemorial as a type of the civic gratitude to Providence, a new moon having once revealed a threatened night attack upon the city, and Byzance itself, with its crescent, did not belong to the Mohammedan power till the middle of the fifteenth century.

Of course all this swarming multitudinous ornament could not be grouped without some reference to schemes of arrangement already existing in the artist's mind and memory; and probably to this are due its perfect symmetry and certain standard effects in the design which always governed and controlled the whole.

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the Moorish style, after the horseshoe arch, to the casual glance, are the beauty and variety of its patterns of diaper; and as it covers the surface of its walls with this diaper, it has always had a great field for their development. The colors are chiefly blue and crimson thrown up with silver and gold in profuseness, the pattern of the tracery exceedingly intricate, although recurrent, and the suggested floral shapes of the gilding giving the whole wall, with its usual light colors and airy arches, a joyous and exquisite ensemble — a beauty constantly renewing itself with fresh complications of lines, and thus never palling upon the fancy, as sooner or later all other sorts of too luscious beauty will. These diaper patterns were originally in imitation of the rich stuffs that the Arabs treasured, and with which the East supplied them—stuffs that not only supplied designs to the Arabs, but were the source of almost all the European wall-decoration, as well as of much other ornament. "It is evident," says Mr. Hayes, in his charming article upon the precious stuffs of the Middle Ages, "that the arts of design and decoration came to Europe from the East with the stuffs of India, China, Persia, and Greece, which European artists imitated not only in the walls of religious and civil edifices, but in the smaller details of construction, in works of jewellery and enamels and illuminations. So closely were Oriental designs imitated, that the Arabian inscriptions, traced upon the tissues coming from Mussulman countries, became arabesques under the pencils of European artists and decorators." And Mr. Hayes further adds that "as the gold woven in the most ancient fabrics of the East still remains undimmed by rust or time, so do golden threads of Oriental taste survive not only in the ornamented tissues of the present day, but upon the hangings of our walls, the friezes of our apartments, the mouldings and scroll-work of our furniture, and the chasing and engraving of our plate and jewellery." Elsewhere we are told that the cloths of Genoa, the tapestries of Arras, all damasks, and even our modern wall-papers, were and are, when in good taste, obedient to the spirit of these Moorish diapers and their Oriental archetypes, which latter, indeed, are said first to have suggested painting to the Athenians.

This Moorish work is evidently something more in accord with the summer palaces of wealth than with the homes of people whose income is restricted, although we see no reason why every house, however small, where there are any means at all, should not cherish a little conservatory, and there some features of the style may always be indulged, such as arcades of the delicate columns upholding those lovely Moorish arches that are so light and buoyant and beautiful that, when the wall surface about them is decorated with gilding and colors, they seem just about to soar aloft like so many bubbles. Of course, wherever the Moresque may be adopted, nobody expects to see anything like the palaces of the Moorish nobles of Granada, their halls paved with the richest mosaics, their walls inlaid with cedar or decorated in azure and gold and vermilion, with fountains in all the courts, or like the Tower of the Princesses in the Alhambra, which Washington Irving describes as divided into "fairy apartments beautifully ornamented in the light Arabian style, surrounding a lofty hall the vaulted roof of which rose almost to the summit of the tower. The walls and the ceilings of the hall were adorned with arabesques and fretwork sparkling with gold and brilliant pencilling. In the centre of the marble pavement was an alabaster fountain set round with aromatic shrubs and flowers, and throwing up a jet of water that cooled the whole edifice, and had a lulling sound. Round the hall were suspended cages of gold and silver wire, containing singing-birds of the finest plumage or sweetest note." Nor shall we find anything exactly like the house to which one of the Three Girls carried the Porter, in the "Tales of the Thousand Nights and One Night:" "A fair court-yard, built by rule of geometry very excellently, the essence of composition and proportions; and there was a balcony and awnings to it, and minarets, and private rooms with curtains hung before them, and in the midst of the court-yard a large tank filled with water, and in it a fountain, and at the upper end of the court-yard a raised dais of cypress-wood set with gems, with a loose curtain hung about of red damask silk, the buttons of it pearls as large as nuts, and larger."


Moresque Sofa, Mirror, and Vase.

This, indeed, is all very picturesque and pretty in the past and on the poet's pages; but with our modern every-day life it is unnecessary to say that it is not at all in unison, and its use to any great extent is contrary to the common-sense of the day. None but the very wealthy and those that can afford eccentric surprises in their dwellings can be advised to adopt a summer parlor, or a smaller cabinet, in the Morisco. Of course, wherever it is used, it is in connection with the richest tints and gilding, with the most sumptuous gold-threaded material for coverings of the various articles of furniture, which all follow the standard Saracenic outlines, and as a general rule are entirely covered with drapery and cushions, revealing no wood-work, after the fashion of the divans of the East. Neither pictures nor statues can accompany it; but all sorts of summer-life suggestions are in keeping with it. There should be plate-glass windows, that give the sense of out-door enjoyment through their clear space, looking into a garden where a fountain plays, or else latticed with gilt and opening into conservatories; household pets are a part of it too, birds in gilt cages, parrots swinging in their hoops; and in a room furnished in the Moresque, after gilding, diaper paper, lattices, divans, the great vases familiar in the "Arabian Nights," and mats upon cool floors have done their best, the guitar and some great foreign-looking tropical plants must not be forgotten in producing the general effect.

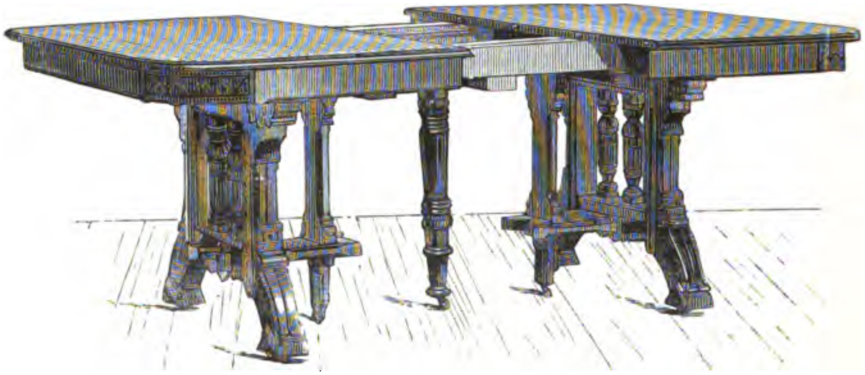
XXIII.

THE EASTLAKE.

SOMETHING more than half a dozen years ago, a number of essays, written by Mr. C. L. Eastlake, were printed in the various English publications, and afterward collected in a volume that has done a great work toward revolutionizing the manufacture of furniture. Criticism, in the beginning, was almost altogether barred from the ideas propounded in these essays by Mr. Eastlake's asserting that if the virtuoso should find them wanting in antiquarian research, the scientific man in technical information, and the sentimentalist in the poetry of art, it must be remembered that nothing more had been attempted than to show readers how to furnish their houses picturesquely, yet with reference to modern ideas of comfort.

The book met a great want. Not a young marrying couple who read English were to be found without "Hints on Household Taste" in their hands, and all its dicta were accepted as gospel truths. They hung their pictures and their curtains just as Mr. Eastlake said they should; laid their carpets, colored their walls, hinged their doors, arranged their china, bought their candlesticks, insisted on their andirons, procured solid wood, abjured veneering, and eschewed curves, all after Mr. Eastlake's own heart. If, now, it is seen that some things which Mr. Eastlake laid down as immutable and irrevocable laws of art are really matters of taste, to be left to individual decision, it nevertheless remains true that the book occasioned a great awakening, questioning, and study in the matter of household furnishing. Presently there arose a demand for furniture in the "Eastlake style."

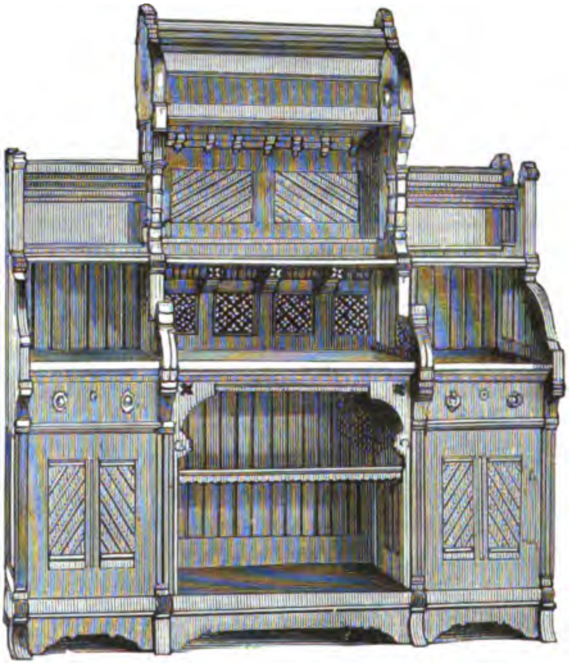
The upholsterers, with whom Mr. Eastlake had made quarrel in his pages, denied that there was any such style. Mr. Eastlake himself had said that he recommended the "readoption of no specific type of ancient furniture which is unsuited, whether in detail or in general design, to the habits of modern life." It was the spirit and principles of early manufacture which he desired to see revived, and not the absolute forms in which they found embodiment. The demand, however, was one which obliged the upholsterers to pocket their grudge, and if there were no Eastlake style, to invent one; for to-day Eastlake chairs, ugly past belief, but invincibly strong, Eastlake bedsteads, clean-shaped and charming, Eastlake wash-stands, dressing-cases, drawers, and cabinets, are to be seen everywhere disputing the palm with the so-called Queen Anne, and quite as quaint and picturesque as the lately revived Tudor styles. Mr. Eastlake called the Tudor styles, by-the-way, or perhaps rather the Elizabethan variety of them, "a miserable compromise by which classic details of the clumsiest description were grafted on buildings supported by the Tudor arch and crowned with the Tudor gable. It is," he continued, "perhaps the bizarre and picturesque character of this bastard style which still renders it popular with the uneducated. To this day Elizabethan mansions are admired by sentimental young ladies." But there are other judges who consider the Tudor styles, and the Elizabethan variety of them, as among the glories of old England. In the same way condemnation was pronounced upon many matters; among the rest upon all realistic wood-carving; yet the world will always recognize the marvellous beauty of the realistic carving of the Quattrocento, nor will the exquisite work of Grinling Gibbons be ignored, if not in the noblest school of art, nor the charm of the Palissy-ware with its realistic shells, its butterflies and flowers and reptiles. It is scarcely by wholesale condemnations or arbitrary pronunciamentos that real improvement can be made in the direction of art or anything else. The wise seeker is seldom so entirely sure of his attainment as to be absolutely without doubt that another may not be right.



Eastlake Dining-table.

Mr. Eastlake was not always perfectly precise in his archæological information. In commenting, for instance, upon the usual modern dining-table, and with much justice finding it unsatisfactory, he went on to praise an ancient table, and to say that "it was from no lack of skill that this old table was not made capable of being enlarged at pleasure. The social customs of the age in which it was produced did not require such a piece of mechanism. In those days the dining-table was of one uniform length, whether a few or many guests were assembled at it; and I am not sure whether, of the two fashions, the more ancient one does not indicate a more frequent and open hospitality. But be that as it may, if the Jacobean table had been required for occasional extension, we may be certain it would have been so constructed, and that, too, on a more workman-like principle than our foolish telescope slide." But, as a matter of fact, the reader will find in Sir Samuel Myrick's book of ancient specimens, still in preservation, an old table made to pull apart, with a slide and an extension, precisely the thing whose existence is thus denied. In another place, speaking of the design of a piece of Moorish pottery, Mr. Eastlake said: "In the centre or hollow portion is painted, on a white ground and in various colors, a very remarkable pattern. The idea seems to have been taken from a ship, for there are masts and sails, and pennants flying, and port-holes, and a patch of bluish-green below, which, I presume, must be accepted as typical of water.. But in such a hurry has the artist been to make his dish gay with color and a pleasant flow of lines, that no one can say which is the bow and which the stern of his vessel, whether we are looking at her athwart or alongships, where the sea ends and the ship's side begins, and finally, what relation the improbable hulk bears to the impossible rigging. The whole thing is, pictorially considered, absolute nonsense, and yet, as a bit of decorative painting, excellent." Now, it is much more likely that, whether the Moorish artist was in a hurry or not to "make his dish gay with color and a pleasant flow of lines," it is not because of that hurry that one cannot say which is the bow and which the stern of his vessel, or where the sea ends and the ship begins, but because of the fact that the Moorish artist was not allowed by the strict requirements of his religion to represent a single article of still or animated life; and desiring to paint the beauty of a ship, he subtly and skilfully represented all the lovely light lines and curves and colors, and suggested all the idea without touching the reality of the airy architecture of the sea.

But these are things apart. And we must confess that it would be hard, on any of the principles of taste that are generally thought sound, to find fault with the greater part of Mr. Eastlake's recommendations, founded as they are upon simplicity, honesty, and propriety. These are the fundamental principles of the Eastlake style, and those on whose basis the upholsterers had to work when the style was demanded; and if artistic taste and grace could be added to them, the style would be perfect. The articles given in Mr. Eastlake's own design were very few, although most of them were fine. There were some chairs, at once exceedingly handsome, stately, and graceful, not at all like the little Eastlake chair most commonly seen; a bedstead and tester, quaint and charming; a hall and extension table; a sideboard, bookcase, and wash-stand; but out of the material of these articles and the hints they afforded, the upholsterers had to provide the whole train of household furniture "after Eastlake." They have succeeded in producing an interesting variety, quaint, with an attractive air of antiquity, full of character and picturesqueness, but always a little stiff, and seldom very graceful. The upholsterers themselves have no fancy for its straight up-and-down angularity; they say they would as lief be shut up all night in a church as in a room with it; and they describe a house furnished in it as seeming too solemn for any of the trivialities of daily life; but if people want it, they must have it. Although they manufacture the article, they still seem to dislike calling it "the Eastlake;" and with some reason, as it so nearly fulfils the requirements of the mediæval as scarcely to need a separate name—not of the lovely pointed Gothic, indeed, with its perpetual poetry and beauty, but of the modernized Gothic, in which the principles of early manufacture are recognized, and whose less striking shapes are better suited to common domestic use. Mr. Eastlake himself made the



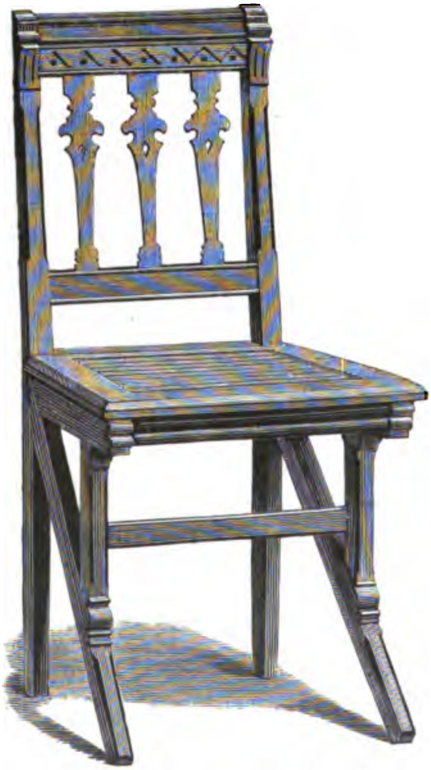
Eastlake Sideboard.

production of the articles called by his name easy to the furniture-makers. "Every article of furniture," he said, "which is capable of decorative treatment should indicate by its general design the purpose to which it will be applied, and should never be allowed to convey a false notion of that purpose. Experience has shown that particular shapes and special modes of decoration are best suited to certain materials. Therefore the character, situation, and extent of ornament should depend on the nature of the material employed, as well as on the use of the article itself. On the acceptance of these two leading principles—now universally recognized in the field of decorative art—must always depend the chief merit of good design. To the partial and often direct violation of those principles we may attribute the vulgarity and bad taste of most modern work." Farther on Mr. Eastlake added: "The best and most picturesque furniture of all ages has been simple in general form. It may have been enriched by complex details of carved work or inlay, but its main outline was always chaste and sober in design, never running into extravagant contour or unnecessary curves."

Among the decided principles that Mr. Eastlake pronounced for direction are such as that mouldings should be carved from the solid, not made of detached slips of wood glued on a surface; that doors should be hung on long, ornamented, noble hinges; that surfaces should be left in their native hue, never varnished, but if painted at all, painted in flatted color, with a "line introduced here and there to define the construction, with an angle ornament (which may be stencilled) at the corners;" that mitred joints shall be abolished; that joints, moreover, shall be tenoned and pinned together without the nails and glues in use at present; that an article meant to bear weight shall look capable of bearing it; that chests of drawers, and pieces of that sort, shall never bulge out in front, after the style that came in with the Rococo, but shall present a straight line; that curves shall be forsaken, and rounded corners abominated.

The tendency of the present age of upholstery, Mr. Eastlake asserted, is to run into curves—a vicious reminder of the old Louis Quatorze extravagance of contour. "Chairs are invariably curved in such a manner as to insure the greatest amount of ugliness with the least possible comfort. The backs of sideboards are curved in the most senseless and extravagant manner; the legs of cabinets are curved, and become in consequence constructively weak; drawing-room tables are curved in every direction—perpendicularly and horizontally—and are therefore inconvenient to sit at, and always rickety. In marble wash-stands the useful shelf, which should run the whole length of the rear, is frequently omitted in order to insure a curve. This detestable system of ornamentation is called shaping."

Under stress of such remark and instruction, the curve, as usually seen, is not to be found in the Eastlake sofa and chair—the curve rising and sinking on the outlines of the back, and sprawling in and out in those of the legs. The legs and backs of these articles are upright and downright, mortised and tenoned, and connected with under-bars, and consequently rather heavy, and certainly very stiff; and the frame-work of the construction is concealed no more than is inevitable by the springs, padding, and covering. It is not, however, the curve as a line that is objected to, but as a weakener of the fibre of the wood. As a line and an ornament, it is frequently to be found in the style—between the shelves of the cabinet, in the round-topped panels of other articles, in many various uses, and in the delicate turner's-work which adorns the backs and arms of chairs, the rolls now and then on the foot-board and head-board of bedsteads, and the posts of dressing-glasses.



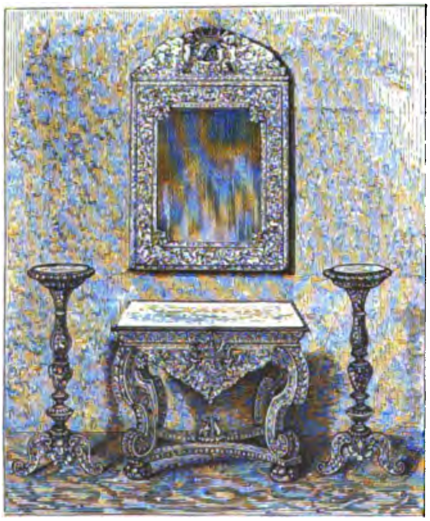
Eastlake Chair.

Thus it will be seen that the construction to be recognized in the Eastlake style is from the solid wood, unvarnished, usually without veneer, made in the simplest manner that conforms to the purpose of the article, with plain uprights and transverses slightly chamfered at the corners (that is, with a little groove or a narrow slanting slice pared off); and this purpose is always to be declared—there is to be no disposing of a bed by day in the wardrobe or the lounge-box: the bed is a bed, and the wardrobe a wardrobe unmistakably. Wherever there is a plain surface of wood, as on table-top, sideboard door, or foot-board, if it is not covered with the single deeply moulded panel, or with a multitude of little square panels, it is apt to be made of narrow pieces of wood, laid crosswise, meeting each other pyramidally at one end and retreating at the other, held in place by vertical and horizontal pieces, sometimes the narrow pieces running in one slant all the way, but boxed in after the same fashion, the effect of the different running of the grain being supposed ornamental in itself, much after the idea—on a vastly enlarged scale—of the Italian *tarsiatura*, where some of the shading of the inlay is obtained by the opposite laying of the grain. The other most frequent ornaments are the insertion of painted panels, of tiles and plaques, the substitution of well-wrought brass, nickel, and iron handles and hinges for those seen customarily; and in the choicest examples the free use of conventional carvings in sunk relief, the zigzag, the shell, the trefoil, the tracery of a bit of idealized foliage. With all this, the furniture of this description is a vast improvement in shape, in ideas, and in durability to anything that has been in use for many generations; and it is a comfort to see it in so many houses, if not for its intrinsic beauty, yet as an evidence of thought that has dared to question the supremacy of that Louis Quatorze arm-chair that has so long held the sceptre. If the Eastlake, so called, is not all in itself that might be wished, if it is here and there a little inconsistent with itself, it yet represents a movement seldom if ever before effected by a single person; and it has succeeded in inaugurating a new régime, which bears the same relation to the loose and wanton Quatorze and Quinze régimes that virtue bears to vice.

XXIV.

THE QUEEN ANNE.

SO far as the Queen Anne style belongs to the past at all, it belongs to the reigns before and after Queen Anne as much as to her own brief reign. Anne was peculiarly English, says her historian; "and thus full many works of genius and renown, though they may have been commenced under William or continued under George, are taken by the world to be centred in her reign." It was certainly, let it belong to whose reign it may, a great departure from the fashions of the court of James II., an example of which is given in the accompanying cut. As a matter of fact, at court and in the politer circles of the beginning of the eighteenth century, the heavy Classic had superseded nearly everything else. Correctness and elegance were supposed to be found only in the Greek and Roman styles which the Renaissance had brought in, which it was believed were then to be had in pristine virtue, and in which the greater part of the public buildings and palaces erected during the eighteenth and the latter half of the seventeenth century were elaborately designed. The mantel-pieces which we show today as indubitably of Queen Anne's time are as perfect specimens of classical device and workmanship as a Grecian could desire—of the pure Classic, that is, with columns and capitals of mathematical perfection, and wrought up with all of that ancient ornament which is severe without coldness, and although abundant, yet does not allow itself that wild exuberance of lawless grace which marks the Italian methods of the preceding eras. For these mantel-pieces in the original there is now an immense demand, and, as some one has said, pounds are paid for them where once pence were



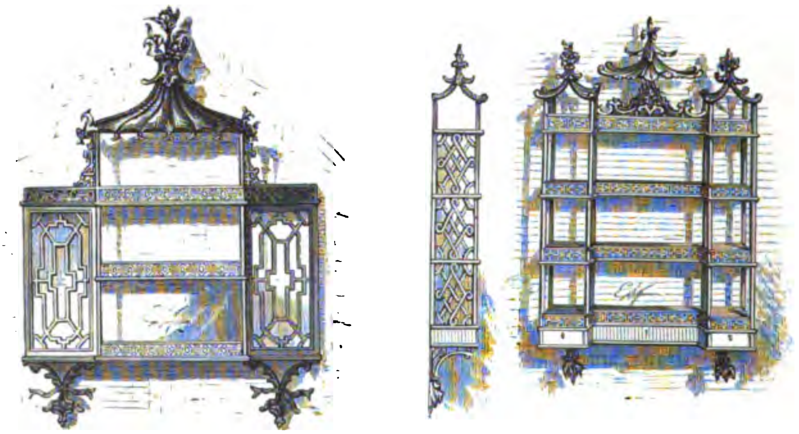
Silver Furniture of the Time of James II.

ample equivalent; and if they cannot be obtained, even by tearing down old houses—there is a regular class of labor for such purposes in England, whose members are called house-breakers—then copies of them are almost as eagerly accepted. It was doubtless to correspond with these mantelpieces in their first estate that the white and gilt finish and upholstery which filled the mansions of that era were used; yet it is not with any such finish and upholstery now that we associate the name in general of Queen Anne furniture.

But out of compliment to William of Orange after he came over from Holland to become king, numerous country-houses that happened to be building in the last part of his brief reign were built with Dutch features. It is this sort of country-house, with some important modifications and improvements, to be sure, that seems to have suggested the quaint new style of architecture which goes by the name of Queen Anne; and it is the delightful furniture of these mansions, also adapted to more modern ideas, built in defiance of the severe Classic, but soon superseded by it, that is the archetype of the present style in furniture.

From the moment of its reintroduction the Queen Anne style met with a great opposition, which it is but just conquering—now from dealers, who disliked the interference with their stock, and the necessary change it occasioned to their existing designs and habits; and now from others, purists who insisted upon the "unities," and those who hated to have their ideas jostled out of the ruts which they had long pursued, or objected to having it forced upon them that they had not already reached all the perfection that remains to be had. It was at first denied that there was really any such thing as a Queen Anne style, and asserted, as if one could ask anything better, that a parcel of poets and painters—William Morris, Dante Rossetti, and various others—had devised it between them. But when the genuine articles were shown that had descended from the time just preceding Queen Anne and following her, and that had been manufactured during her reign, and it was seen that they formed the working model of the new style, and sometimes were perhaps fortunate enough to exceed it, it had to be confessed that if the painters and poets were at all responsible in the affair, it was simply in having the fine taste first to appreciate that overlooked beauty.

The excitement which its reintroduction caused was rather remarkable, and all sorts of conflicting statements, and even ignorant ones, were made by critics, converts, and manufacturers; these maintaining that it was original and indigenous, those declaring it mongrel and an importation. The architects and designers of London, in their usual meetings, held animated discussions concerning the phenomenon, certain of them announcing their ignorance, and seeking information from its sponsors. Mr. Barry, a professor at the Royal Academy, speaking of the era from which it professed to be revived, doubtingly said: "I suppose few of us, at any rate until lately, would have been disposed to credit that epoch with any well-defined style. Queen Anne's reign recalls to our minds principally days of English daring and triumphs on the Continent, childish affectations and intrigues about the court..... As far as it developed a style at all, it would seem to have done so by breaking away from established traditions;..... a Renaissance, in fact, but less strict and refined than the style to which the term is usually applied." Mr. Stevenson, another authority on such matters, said of the style that, fundamentally, in its system of construction and in its forms of moulding, the Queen Anne forms were the same as the common vernacular style—that is to say, the free Classic, the vernacular, the customary and prevailing method everywhere—with a touch of interest and art added. But, on the other hand,

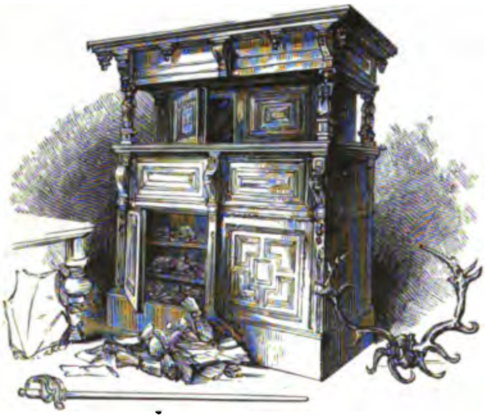


Hanging Cabinets of Chippendale's Design.

Mr. Spiers declared that principles were entirely wanting in this style, and there was nothing whatever to reason from. Meanwhile, although this voice maintained that it was "free Classic," and that one that it was gotten up by a clique of "Gothic devotees," and another that it had the merits of the Gothic and the faults of the Classic, and a fourth, while confessing that it was certainly a form of Classic, was sure that it violated all classic rules, and still others claimed that it combined the "truthfulness, variety, and picturesqueness of the Gothic with the common-sense of the Italian," despite this clamor the style progressed, the sale increased, and it became the fashion—a passing fashion, say the critics. No one, to look at the illustrations of this chapter, would imagine that their simple lines and forms could have occasioned such discussion and heat. "We are now offered," said the *Builder*, "the revival of the furniture of the Queen Anne and Georgian period, of which Chippendale and Sheraton were the leading makers. Of this there are one or two good specimens in the Museum (South Kensington)..... This type of furniture revels in curved lines and surfaces really unsuitable, as we have before said, to wood construction, and which, in fact, seem designed to create difficulties in order to overcome them." This, by-the-way, would seem to be a mistake into which the *Builder* was led by recollection of Chippendale's collection of one hundred and sixty plates, in which almost all of the earlier ones were designed in deference to the Rococo, then in vogue on the Continent, and which were full of "curved lines and surfaces unsuitable to wood construction, and which, in fact, seemed designed to create difficulties in order to overcome them," but the succeeding portion of which plates were formed upon a base of straight lines and ornaments of simple grace. "There is much to be said for this school of furniture design, however," the *Builder* continued. "Its execution is nearly always first-rate, and articles which appear slight are so well made and put together as to have a fair chance of outlasting more bulky-looking objects. There is much fancy and elegance in its forms.....and it deserves, also, the praise of being a purely original type of furniture design, not imitative of anything else, and not dependent on the reproduction of forms properly belonging to architecture;.....and if somewhat wanting in dignity, it has at least elegance and refinement to recommend it."

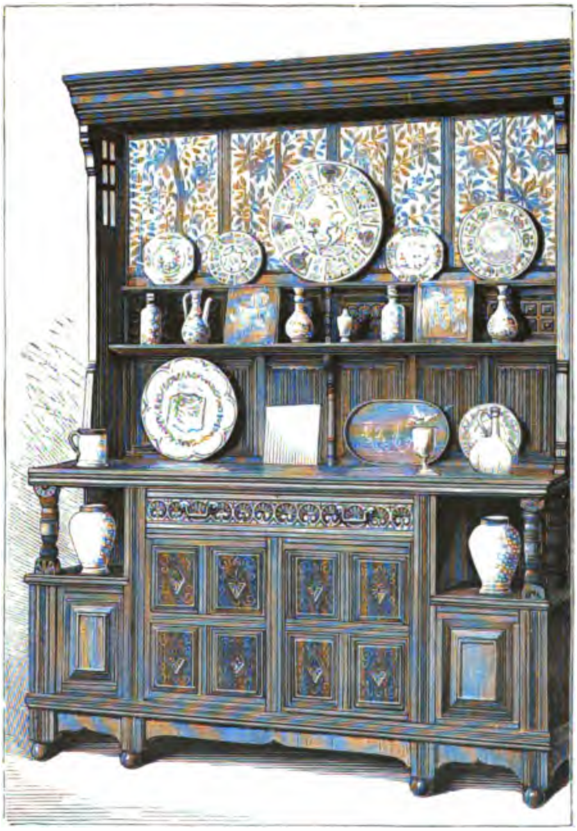
The *Builder* was certainly right in allowing the style elegance and refinement. To our eye it has dignity too—as much dignity, that is, as belongs to the parlor rather than the church. It makes none of the pretension of the Gothic, and has none of the wearisome iteration of the common Classic. It seems exactly the furniture to surround unostentatious people of gentle manners and culture.

Articles in this style may be characterized as severely square, with sharp corners, standing on feet usually straight, but sometimes slightly bending outward, built in an upright and downright fashion, with no pretence and no sham, the *motif* being solidity and compactness. The panelwork is small, square, and in multiplicity. When glass is used, it is always bevelled plate; a tiny Classic balustrade frequently crowns the articles; and they are decorated to the last point with carvings in the face, sometimes of birds, fruit, figures, but usually with conventional treatment, and largely of mere floral suggestions. The Queen Anne style, then, may be summed up as possessing the remarkable simplicity and quietness of old work, together with great picturesqueness and some quaintness. Although straight and square, with right lines and angles, it yet contrives to have a want of formality and a freedom from restraint, and always seems to be enriched with a "flavor of the past."


Queen Anne Cabinet.

A great deal of furniture that may fairly pass under the head of Queen Anne may be found with those families here that have descended from the old colonial houses of our own country. If it does not own all that artistic finish which the cultured fancy abroad has added to the same type, it yet remembers whence it came, the era in which it was born, and preserves a family resemblance. It became the fashion with us, half a dozen years ago, to gather it from here and there, to furbish it, to discard Gothic and Renaissance incompetencies in order to make room for it, and to furnish as far as possible with these old waxed and polished articles, as if one had ancestors and heirlooms. They certainly, with their dark surfaces, their perfect lines, their quaint carving, and their very few but choice brasses, make up a lovely interior. Many of these are not easily distinguished from the furniture of the Louis Treize. Some of the tables, for instance, are identical; and although they may not range, indeed, under the actual head of the modern Queen Anne, yet they consort with it perfectly, and certain of the chairs have but slight variation from the lines of pure Italian models.

Some among the manufacturers, in introducing novelties, are combining the Queen Anne with the Chinese and Japanese ornaments in cabinets, étagères, bedsteads, and other pieces, and are congratulating themselves on their inventiveness. It is an inventiveness, however, as old as Chippendale himself, as he has given numerous illustrations of articles where he had already done the same thing. China had been largely an unknown land to the rest of the world until shortly before that cabinetmaker's day. Tea, to be sure, had been introduced some half-century previous, but a shadowy knowledge of the customs of the country was but just entering the English ports with its porcelains, its bamboos, carved ivories, and lacquered trays. Its curiosities took the fancy. Chinese paper-hangings were everywhere. Whole rooms were furnished in what was called the Chinese fashion, Sir William Chambers publishing several plates to that effect, and hints from it thus came to be introduced into almost all the work of the day, sparingly and delicately, but quite pointedly enough to be recognized. The love of tea—the fashion of drinking it, at any rate—together with the influence of Queen Mary, the predecessor of Queen Anne, had brought in a great passion for china at that time too, and chiefly in the grotesque forms that had first struck the Dutch fancy and been imported into Holland. "In every corner of the mansion," says Macaulay, "appeared a profusion of gewgaws not yet familiar to English eyes. Mary had acquired at the Hague a taste for the porcelain of China, and amused herself by forming at Hampton a vast collection of hideous images, and of vases on which houses, trees, bridges, and mandarins were depicted in outrageous defiance of all the laws of perspective. The fashion—a frivolous and inelegant fashion, it must be owned—which was thus set by the queen spread far and wide. In a few years almost every great house in the kingdom contained a museum of these grotesque baubles. Even statesmen and generals were not ashamed to be renowned as judges of teapots and dragons; and satirists long continued to repeat that a fine lady valued her mottled green pottery quite as much as she valued her monkey, and much more than she valued her husband." Nevertheless, a piece of fine pottery is capable of containing infinitely finer and better art than many a coarser and larger object which the satirist would not dare to despise.



Another Queen Anne Cabinet.

The influence which this love of china had upon the forms of the Queen Anne furniture is very noticeable—in the mahogany tea-trays and the tiny tables for pouring out tea and for holding the cup and saucer, with a standing rim round them like that of the old abacus, the rim sometimes plain, sometimes cut in an open-work of the Chinese filigree; and in the great accommodation for its display also presented by every article—the open shelves and cupboards without glass that ran up the sides of buffets and mantel-pieces, the finely glazed receptacles in the same articles for more precious bits, and in the hanging wall-cabinets, where the beauty was displayed on a smaller scale. Old china is thus an essential accompaniment of the Queen Anne upon shelf and mantel, table and bracket, and adds to it a brightness and color that it perhaps needs, and which it takes better extraneously than in its own construction.

We are shown by dealers many minor articles and some miscellaneous bric-à-brac which they classify as Queen Anne, although not always with any better reason than that it harmonizes with that style. Among these are some wonderful mirrors made by the Adam brothers, who did not live, however, till a generation after Queen Anne.

The Queen Anne style, in its present modification, is, upon the whole, utterly destitute of any sort of affectation. Without the grandiosity of the Gothic or the intricate art of the pure Renaissance, it has attained a dignity and beauty proper to the age, and seems to be the very style to reward the search of the nineteenth century for something natural, beautiful, suitable, and convenient.

XXV.

ORIENTAL STYLES.

IN the present passion of the polite world for the art of the Orient—the revival of an old passion—and in the recognition of certain supernal virtues that this art possesses amidst much that is barbaric and grotesque, it may be interesting to take note of a few of the peculiarities of the furniture of that meridian, no article of which is without marked character of some sort, whether commendable or otherwise, while many articles are unrivalled for value and beauty.

Ever since the reign of Charles II., whose young Southern wife brought into England with her several interesting Indian cabinets, the workmanship of the East has been held in consideration, although there are few who would desire to furnish in either the Chinese or Japanese styles anything more than a smoking-room or a cabinet of curiosities. Furniture in the East Indian style is, however, both beautiful and comfortable enough to be used throughout a house if chosen either in the light bamboos, in the satin-wood inlaid with the Bombay-work in its mosaic of minutest cubes, in the black wood carved in a charming open filigree to the last fraction of an inch, the table-tops and flat plain surfaces upheld by storks with their long bent necks, the chair backs and other upright surfaces a mass of indicated floriage, or in the very differently carved teak-wood, with its blackness just tinged by the deepest half-dreamed crimson shadow, and in which the great pedestals have elephantine outlines with vast coils and involutions, half like the monstrous members of huge idols, half like the flowers of a nightmare.

In the Queen Anne and Georgian period, in spite of the acknowledged rights of the heavy Classics, the Chinese style became a fashion. Suites of rooms were furnished in it, plates being published for the instruction of furnishers, and picturesque results were obtained, although we flatter ourselves that we can now obtain finer; and without doubt our better acquaintance with the Eastern countries, the farther depth to which we have penetrated them, and the richer acquisitions that we have amassed from their artistic treasures, enable us to present a completer picture. Yet to eyes accustomed to the Gothic and the Grecian, the Chinese and

Japanese will, it may be, seem always more or less fantastic, in spite of the naturalness and spirit of their design, the richness of their color, and the usual fitness of their articles; and we can hardly imagine a thorough home feeling accompanying the rooms arranged in that style, except for the very young and gay, and for those cosmopolitan people who are able to feel at home anywhere.

One of the chief differences now between Chinese and Japanese articles is that the homogeneity of the Japanese has not yet been injured by European demands; and in buying a Japanese article we are tolerably sure of getting something according to the aboriginal idea, and not according to the idea of what the European taste of the purchaser may require. The Chinese have long since crystallized into deadness of repetition without a new form of fancy, while the Japanese constantly overflow with freshness and redundant life. Part of this is owing to the seclusion in which the Japanese have lived till now, and part to the fact that the Japanese artisan, as well as the artist, as a creator, takes a social precedence over the merchant, and possibly still more to the interest taken in it by those of the best culture and opportunities among them. "Not only did the Japanese nobles thus sustain art," as the author of "A Glimpse at the Art of Japan" tells us, "but they further made it fashionable by their personal knowledge and practice. The most exquisite bit of inlaid ivory lacquer-work we have ever seen, a cabinet with lovely compositions of birds and insects and scenery in the panels, is said to be the joint work of several princes, brothers, who lived two centuries ago, and was kept as an heirloom until it fell into profane hands during the recent civil war."

Every article of Chinese and Japanese furniture is ornamented, and a distinctive feature of the ornament is attained in a manner different from any that Western art would use to attain a similar end. To the untrained eye this ornament would seem as utterly without symmetry as the most uncouth contortions of the Rococo; but, to the eye accustomed to it, it will be seen that, however diverse the parts, however irregular the divisions and masses, however varied the outlines and representations, however decidedly avoided all repetitions and duplicates, still the parts are completely balanced as a whole, and one mass constantly offsets and complements another. This is visible in the designs drawn and colored or gilded on any screen, table, casket, or other object. Occasionally, indeed, it uses the sacred fret and the zigzag and the diaper, which both East and West probably derived from the same source, but not with much relish or spontaneity. Those forms represent a symmetry without life, and the Oriental artists prefer their own more vital equipoise. In their ornament they freely use scenes from their national, domestic, and spiritual life, together with vivid likenesses of natural objects, never stopping to be faithful in detail, but never failing to give the absolute intention and signification, half a dozen free strokes doing the work of half a hundred, using the richest colors boldly and marvellously, and always harmoniously, and never sparing gold, from the dullest flatness to the most burnished brilliancy, in lines and dots and smooth surfaces, in clouds, in blossoms, and in backgrounds, on their thick leathery wall-papers or on their wonderful lacquers. The old lacquers, we will say in passing, it is impossible to rival now; and it is an odd coincidence that the most thriving period of both Japanese and Chinese art was one exactly corresponding to the best of the European Renaissance—from the latter portion of the fourteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century—as if the whole human race at that time felt one universal throb and impulse forward.

A superiority to be found in the furniture designed and ornamented by these Oriental artists is its mechanical perfection. Every part fits, and fits exactly, and every detail of it shows the power of the living thought animating the workman's sensitive fingers, rather than the dead indifference and stolidity of the steam-driven machine. Yet convenience is not the designer's first aim in any article of the sort. He first endeavors to please the eye, to surround the owner with what he considers beauty; afterward to adapt the beauty to use. Nevertheless, the adaptation may be called perfect, for all mechanicians acknowledge the completeness of the objects he manufactures, whether bronze, leather, lacquer, paper, or porcelain, just as every artist acknowledges the harmonies of their color and the vivid action of their ideas. The Japanese designer, indeed, cannot touch the commonest object without leaving there some trace of beauty, as witness this description of an iron tea-kettle: "Compact, strong, handy for daily use, rough of general aspect and texture of metal, but bearing aloft a silver and gold inlaid handle, with dainty sprigs of early vegetation, while the solid sides show in lowest relief, as fine in outline and cutting as Greek gems, water plants and birds, with every minute organic detail exquisitely finished, the latter looking quite alive, and ready to step out of their atmosphere of metal into our breathable ether. The sense of animated life is, indeed, so strong in the birds and the plants that one banishes forever any idea of a base use of the tea-kettle, and consigns it to the companionship of the finest art, royally knighted at the sovereign hands of beauty."

The objects of this class of furniture are not many, for a great deal of furniture is not demanded by the habits of simple and natural peoples. "Clean mats for beds and seats," as Mr. Jarves tells us of the Japanese, "a few wooden pillows prodigiously uncomfortable, a portable stove, a score or more of lacquer and porcelain dishes, perhaps a pretty cabinet to hold writing and drawing materials and their few small objects of art, a musical instrument or two, and as many screen paintings; these quite suffice a young couple's wants, and, as for this matter, an old one's too. Instead of costly framed landscapes hung on their walls, the nobles make their rooms—scrupulously clean, airy, and spacious, with movable divisions or screens, which can be so arranged as to leave open, as if enclosed in frames—attractive vistas of out-door scenery. Often the screens themselves are made of the finest material, and either elaborately worked in gold and silk, or richly painted with landscapes and scenes from national myths and history, or curious and capricious devices so æsthetically ingenious as to afford an endless entertainment to the eye, and which are as readily shifted as the scenes of a theatre."

It is hardly possible in this climate to furnish any apartments warmed by stove or furnace after either the Chinese or Japanese method. The original articles of cost and beauty are made in and for a soft and equable temperature, without violent extremes either of frost or heat. Our furnace-heated houses are deadly to them; and many a beautiful cabinet with its imperishably lacquered panels, many a most curiously carved piece of work, has fallen irretrievably apart over here, warped and dried and shrunken by the alien air. The intricate carving of the work, by-the-way, is almost as much a marvel as if it were an illusion of legerdemain, scenes in perspective being cut there such as those where we have seen the blades of the rank jungle grass, and their very awns, minutely finished as the plunging horses and their riders and the leaping tigers were freely fashioned, with the runners and the dogs, the infuriated elephant, and the dense thickness of reeds and palms and trembling flowers.

But for light balconied summer rooms and well-built dry garden pavilions the Chinese and Japanese forms are quite suitable, the styles of either nation being sufficiently similar to mingle wherever one may help out the other. There, then, mats will partly cover the porcelain tiles of the floor; numerous tables hardly larger than would answer the purposes of a cup and saucer of the delicate egg-shell ware, or, at most, a tiny tea-service, that would hold a pair of pipes, or a fantastic flower-pot with its dwarfed tree, or a lute or its substitute, will stand about the place; there will be a moderate-sized cabinet, carved and lacquered, and perhaps lifted on long slender legs borrowed from some piece sent out to China for decoration in the days of Louis Quinze, and on the cabinet will be bits of rare ware, or their imitations, the old sea-green céladon, the imperial ruby, and the turquoise, a green dragon cup, a blue-and-white Nankin dish, and candelabra, possibly, chiselled from the pellucid jade, with the tints running through it from deep translucent olivine to palest cream; there will be hanging cabinets upon the walls, besides, of the sort from which Chippendale appears to have adapted many, with porcelains or with little polished steel mirrors ornamenting them; and there will be long and narrow silken scrolls stretched on rollers and hanging here and there between, painted or embroidered with their brilliant pictures, perhaps the battle of the storks in all the gray and black swirl of their feathers and fury, or else just a mere handful of blazing birds and boughs and blossoms all tossing in the wind together; or if the silken scroll is not to be had, then those of the paper, which is as stout as leather, will replace it—paper which the makers of many fine pieces of English furniture use to line and display the curved recesses of their cabinets and sideboards, although not ornamented then with the pictorial scene, but simply diapered with gold and flowers. Chairs, too, of many sorts are to be had for this room, the most of them bamboo and rattan—the long low extension-chair with its square outlines, the deep Sleepy Hollow wicker, and the arm-chair all of whose frame is composed of slanting groups of short rattans upheld by longer single ones of an opposing slant, black-lacquered and gilt in odd minglings of alphabetical characters and traceries; and chairs also of a heavier character, surmounted by the dragon's crest, that seem like demoniac old gods opening their arms to receive you. Sandal-wood desks will enrich the room; trinkets of cunningly carved ivory; half-open fans giving dashes of deep color; albums of paintings that open and stretch out their contents, not page by page, but in one long unfolding extension of gay tints and lively scenes; odd little bronzes, where every wrinkle of the creature's skin, every plumule of the bird's feathers, is imitated, or huge ones in vases that are idols, and in great storks overtopping your head; and everywhere that space offers specimens of porcelain and pottery, the little teapots of the Satsuma crackle, light as if made of paper; the platters of Kiyoto ware hanging from hooks on the wall, with their coral and creamy tints; the immense high-shouldered Jeddo jars carrying their relief of blooming branches and cloudy gold. Screens, too, can add their charm to such a room: one, a single sheet set in the black frame carved serpent-wise from teak, and on the crape enclosed, "like wrinkled skins of scalded milk," the peacock will be wrought in all his matchless colors, the scarlet flamingo, the pheasant, or the golden-crested cockatoo; or else a loftier one without frame or setting, opening in valves, leaf after leaf covered with lavish pictorial work, recessing the room, and making something like a new wall surface for the display of further beauty and lustre. And if, finally, there are to be had the light-textured silken and satin draperies of the Flowery

Kingdom, or chintzes resembling them, covered with quaint impossible blossoms and birds floating in their glowing dyes upon a soft background, it will be confessed that as bright and gay a surrounding as youth and happiness can desire on summer days will be found in these light and open rooms furnished in the Chinese or the Japanese style, all of whose glittering tints can be arranged so harmoniously as to blend into a charming whole.

XXVI.

MODERN FURNITURE.

THE nineteenth century is, without doubt, a great one in many ways: wonderful in adventure, in discovery, in invention; tremendous in mechanics; accomplished in the literature of poetry, fiction, history; doing more for science than has been done since Roger Bacon's day, achieving something in sculpture, as witness Story's work and that of others, and much in painting, as witness Turner. But all this is, in a manner, external. It is out-door work for the universal race, and hardly at all on the domestic and individual side; and it is not a little singular that in the more personal service of architecture and the kindred art of furniture design it should do nothing but revive that which has been done before.

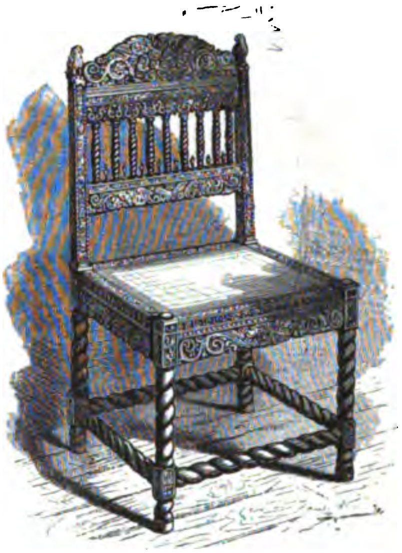
Modern furniture — to leave architecture out of the case — in one of its phases has revived the Gothic, although until very recently with insufficient knowledge, lacking also the spirit and honesty that actuated the ancient forms, imitating without the inspiration of the necessity that produced the original. In another phase modern furniture has used the Renaissance, but, except where furnishing for princes, robbed of half its splendor; and it has finally selected from all styles, with the old English always in mind in the Eastlake, and with a charming mongrel revivified in the Queen Anne. It has adopted also the Moorish and the Pompeian and the Oriental styles, upon occasion, but it has invented nothing new. It seems as if the modern designers felt that what had already been accomplished was equal to the emergency; that it was best, perhaps, to digest the past thoroughly, and when that was well done, something in this transition age might be evolved from it of a novel nature; and that, at any rate till a new architecture should arise, the new furniture which must follow it could wait.

There is certainly in modern furniture an immense variety to choose from — the picturesque mediæval articles with their pointed arches and vertical lines, the magnificent Renaissance ones covered with carvings that take light and shade like bosses of metal-work, the luxurious light and lustre of the articles of the Quatorze with their gilding and their inlay, and all the fantasticism of the styles of the Asiatic races. One might well be so satisfied with all this as to demand no more; and, indeed, the demand for more which is now and then made is principally from those who are ignorant of what we really possess already, and who are led to make the demand in view of the slight and superficial structure with which upholsterers are too apt to meet the popular desire for cheapness.

The dissemination of money among many, where formerly it was centred among few, has put it within the power of the million to make the home attractive, and fill it, for furniture, with objects that it gives pleasure to look at. But, notwithstanding, there is not money enough with each householder of the million to have that furniture of the best of whatever style he chooses among the existing ones. He wants beauty and he wants cheapness, and the upholsterer allows him a degree of both, but solidity and durability do not enter into the bargain. Perhaps the purchaser does not greatly care for either. He is not attempting to furnish for posterity; the things will last out his lifetime, he reckons, and posterity may furnish for itself. Nor, as a general thing, does he care for purity of style. Handsome woods and handsome material are ordinarily much more to him than any shape; his pronounced fancy is for novelty, and if that is obtained by Gothic arches topping Grecian columns, it makes small odds to him.

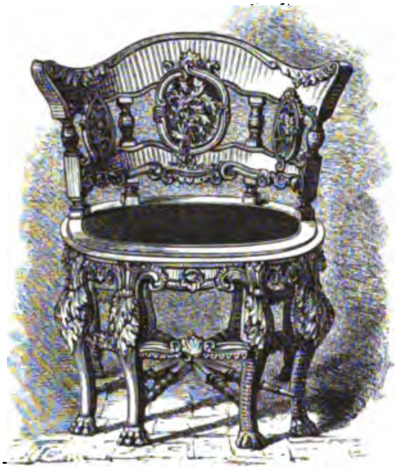
As a rule, it is the purchaser that makes the market. Whatever there is that may be wanted, there is some one that tries to produce it. If the purchaser wants French maple and satin damask, ebony and gilding, or their imitations, it is for somebody's interest that he shall have it, and no one will disregard the economy of things so far as to throw in any large amount of careful and unrequited discrimination as to outlines, curves, character, and expression of members, origin of parts, or preservation of style. The purchaser gets what he requires, the thing that pleases him, as much beauty as he is acquainted with or can afford, and as cheaply as it can be given and a margin of profit retained; and if great and real beauty is not the result of his bargain, and does not fill the houses of the million, it is not the upholsterers, but the public, who are to be censured and instructed. There are, indeed, upholsterers who refuse to sell to the million, and who will not make their articles such as the million can afford to buy. In obedience to our democratic instincts, we reproach them; but it is to such as they that the art of *ébénisterie* will owe its preservation.

Until recently, whenever any one spoke of modern furniture, two or three variations instantly offered themselves to the eye, neither of them of nobility or of true beauty: one, a faint and feeble representation of the splendor of the Quatorze, with sprawling spindling legs and arms, cushioned and tufted and sufficiently luxurious, with boule-work and ormolu, overlaid with gilding and underlaid with crimson mottling, losing the intention of the style, and reaching little but the vulgarity inevitable without that; another, yet more comfortable, but not to be spoken of in reference to beauty at all, other than as one would speak of any assemblage of cushions, the stuffed and puffed and tufted chairs and sofas where no wood-work whatever was visible, the outlines scarcely more than those of well-filled cushions shaped by the form and attitude of the sitter; still another presented series of padded panels of any odd shape apparently that happened to be handy to the maker, connected by bars either plain or turned, stiff and awkward to the last degree; and there were others with wood-work at the top, where the broken triangular forms appeared, styled Renaissance by virtue of those forms and of the *cachet* of some shield and scroll glued on at the corners. Variations and minglings of all these, interspersed with hints of others, we find as the staple of modern furniture, and they are what the public has asked for. By the public we would say the body of buyers with limited means, for of course there are always the princely purses — few in comparison, however frequently found in the great cities—to command finer objects; and there are always an exceptional few, besides, who furnish artistically and with intelligence in the style that has struck the answering chord of their fancy, these in the perpendicular Gothic, those in the Elizabethan, others in the superb radiance and richness of the Pompeian. But for such buyers the furniture is made to order. It would ruin any upholsterer to keep articles of the description they require in stock. Other buyers, unable to meet the expense of ordering articles manufactured, but, in disgust at the flimsy and characterless things offered them, have gone back to what is indefinitely known as the "old-fashioned," reaching accidentally very much the same thing that the English artists have reverted to upon selection; and every farm-house of any age along the country-side has been ransacked for its ancient furniture, a hundred years old in the manufacture frequently, two hundred years old in the design. Large quantities of this old-fashioned furniture have turned up in excellent repair, and



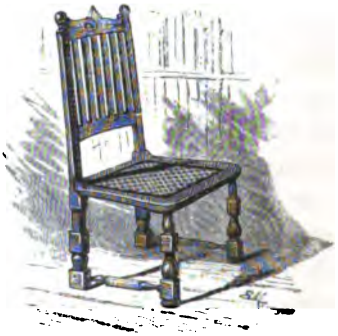
Chair of the Time of Charles II., owned later by Horace Walpole.

many of the articles carrying in their brass-work, their carved-work, and inscriptions patriotic insignia of the Revolution—inscriptions abounding on much of the old china. We will often find a whole house furnished, to the despair of the upholsterer, in this dark and quaint old stuff, illumined with its wrought brass, its delicate carving, and its satisfactory moulding; curious desks full of hidden places, charming chairs, claw-footed loo tables, and old "four-posters," sculptured with fine peculiar foliage after a modified Elizabethan.



Chair of the Time of William III.

The cabinet-makers and furnishers of to-day are as capable of producing noble objects as those of the sixteenth century were. They have better woods, better appliances, the best old models, and steam to help them in the rude blocking-out. But glue has been their undoing; and they have learned to rely on this fatal steam till it has nearly abolished the individuality of the workman and the life of the work. Fortunately attention has been directed to this tendency in season to prevent the loss of the superior traditions of the trade; and with plates existing of the best designs, in the satisfying excellence of the old Gothic, and of the early Renaissance whose merit is acknowledged by all but a few fanatics of the other, the art of furniture-making can go forward with the charm of the old design and the opportunities of the new workmanship. Artists have taken the matter in hand, not as a personal and private thing of their own hearths, but as a business. Under their oversight, the honesty of carpentry has superseded the sleight of hand of cabinet-making; house-decorators have formed themselves into firms, giving their attention to the preparation of interiors from the moment the plasterer is done with them; ancient houses are studied in all their appointments from roof to cellar; ideas are harvested and applied; and beauty, led by all the increased intelligence of the era, is becoming the trade-mark of modern furniture.



Chair in Pepys's Library.

XXVII.

CARPETS.

AFTER the appearance of the hall, the carpets give the first impression of the house to the person who enters, and they afford constant and countless sensations to the person who stays — unconscious sensations of comfort, if they are suitable; very conscious and continual ones of discomfort and annoyance, if they are inharmonious, glaring, and self-asserting.

The carpet is to the room exactly what the background is to the picture: it throws up the whole effect, the main features and their suggestions, and is content with that part. The moment it makes itself obtrusive or in the least degree noticeable, it becomes vulgar and disagreeable. It should, indeed, be such that one forgets to observe it, or if caused to do so by any accident, finds its perfection and quiet beauty with a little pleased surprise. What is usually called the quality of the carpet is of no sort of consequence in comparison to these qualities, although the want of harmony could hardly fail to be felt if a rich tapestry were laid upon the floor of an inferior little room with shabby walls and cheap chairs, or if a common ingrain were stretched upon the floor of a drawing-room with inlaid walls, boule cabinets, Venetian mirrors, and gilt sofas. It goes without saying, of course, that the unities in this regard are just as much to be preserved in the furnishing of a room as in the composition of a drama or any other work of art, and not unity of style so much as of character: the room makes its toilet; and we should think but poorly of the lady's taste who, with her trailing satins and her jewels, wore calf-skin brogans and cotton gloves.

The color of the carpet should always be chosen in relation to the general design of the room. To secure a thoroughly pictorial effect to the eye as a whole, and a comfortable one to the senses, the carpet, a little darker than other portions, should present the main body tint from which the rest of the room works up in lighter tints, unless strong contrasts rather than blending shades are desired.

The figure, or pattern, of the carpet should usually be small, and always should be treated conventionally, or with a near approach to the conventional, that is, without the attempt at natural imitations of fruit and flowers and Cupids and shells, but in the suggestions of things arranged upon geometrical base, better if the repeat is not to be traced at first glance. If the colors are well mingled, bit by bit will come out in its turn, and what produces but a negative effect altogether will be seen by itself to be bright and rich and fine.

The conventional treatment of the figure is the actuating principle of the Persian and Indian carpets; but there are other carpets quite as expensive, and by some considered as beautiful, such as the Aubusson tapestries, which are made upon precisely the opposite plan. Beautiful as the latter are as specimens of work, we cannot consider their scheme of ornament in as good taste, to be trodden underfoot or to form the foundation of the feeling of the room, if we may say so, as the conventional plan of the Oriental carpets.

Some deference in the design of the carpet should certainly be paid to the origin of the carpet. It came into use in Christendom from Spain, carried to England by a Spanish princess, if we except an occasional Persian rug used in the churches, introduced by some travelling ecclesiastic; and the Spaniards had it, of course, from the Moors, who had brought it with them as an appurtenance of their worship and their comfort from the East. Its natural design, then, would always be the pure arabesque: no vines crawling over trellises with cherubs' heads between, no huge leaves sprawling over vases, no gigantic and impossible roses, no antenatal ferns; but broken forms, hints that excite the powers of the imagination, but never swamp them with bald fact, suggestions of a beauty greater than any real beauty that we know, fresh combinations of old elements. The religion of the Saracen, forbidding the representation of living objects, vegetable or animal, compelled him to this sort of design as much on his carpets as in all else; and although the Persian did not always adhere to this in the ornament either of his textiles or his potteries, the greater body of the Mohammedans never failed to do so, and the most satisfactory ornament in those districts of the East Indies where art received any development was designed upon similar principles to that upon which Moorish art was developed. The colors of these carpets are usually the strong primitive colors—dark rich blues and crimsons; others have the deep greens, some yellow, and creamy white. We say the strong primitive colors, because those are what immediately strike our eye; but we are told that the Orientals claim to use, both in their carpets and their shawls, tints and half tints that the untrained Western eye does not perceive at all unless in the general result. However that may be, the Western eye does perceive the beauty of the result obtained and the full charm of the combination.

Although we would not limit buyers to the colors, or to our perception of the colors, used by the Orientals, but would leave them free to avail themselves of all the exquisite new tints that chemistry can give us, yet we think there is no doubt that the principle of the design is correct, and is the one to be followed by our manufacturers, and by those furnishers who would give to their work the most picturesque and pleasing combinations, together with that warm home feeling which is absolutely essential.

If we followed the spirit of the earlier carpets to the letter, as respects their origin and their manner of use by the Orientals, we should always remember that they are rugs, and are to be used as rugs; that, whatever the size, they do not quite fill the measure of the floor, but leave a border of the bare wood or tile around their edge. This bare wood may be costly, may be inlaid, or may be merely painted and varnished; but in some variety or other it is almost a necessary accompaniment of the real India, Turkey, and Persian carpets or mats. Whenever the carpet covers the entire floor, we should demand a deep border for it, thus preserving still to some degree remembrance of its rug-like character. Whatever be the carpet, the richest Axminster or the cheapest ingrain, a border always can be found to match it, and should be used where it is possible to compass the additional expense, since a carpet is as much enhanced by the border as a jewel is by the setting.

There are many varieties now in the manufacture of carpets: the Aubussons, the Wiltons or Moquettes, the Axminsters, Brussels and tapestry Brussels, Venetians, and ingrains or Kidderminsters, not to speak of the felts, the druggets or bocking, the hempen, the oil-cloth or canvas, and the cocoa-nut and grass mattings, and still others. Almost all the world is so familiar with these last and cheaper varieties that it is hardly necessary to speak of them at length: the striped hempen, used for upper halls and where little wear comes; the Manila mattings, used on school-rooms and offices; the drugget, a sort of coarsely woven flannel stamped in a brilliant pattern, serviceable as crumb-cloths; the felt, of a matted wool, either of soft natural grays or printed in colors; the canvas mattings, made by several coats of paint on a canvas foundation—sometimes on the foundation of old Brussels carpet from which the wool is thoroughly worn away, an imitation of which, by those who cannot afford even this, is very well made by papering the floor with newspaper, over that laying on, with thick flour paste, a wall-paper of decided pattern, sizing it then with common glue, and varnishing it with common varnish. Meanwhile all those who wish for the aboriginal rag-carpet, woven of narrow strips of old rags, endless balls of which the housewives send to the looms, probably know how to make it. The Venetian is nearly as old a carpet as any we have; its pattern is in simple stripes, the woollen warp woven over woof of coarse linen strands. The two-ply ingrain is within the means of almost everybody; it comes in exceedingly neat designs, mixed and mossy and mottled and geometrical, for those that desire them, as well as in exceedingly ugly ones for those that have not learned the beauty of the others, and in a good imitation of the best Brussels patterns; it usually turns well, having a reverse of the colors of the figure simply; and put down over a carpet-paper—a thin layer of cotton-wool pressed between sheets of brown paper—is pleasant and comfortable to the foot, and endures a good deal of wear. The three-ply, which is very much heavier, wears still longer, and is about as serviceable as Brussels. Brussels is made by weaving into a linen body loops of woollen threads, three to a loop customarily; as they are dyed in the wool, the color is almost ineffaceable. Upon the so-called tapestry Brussels, on the other hand, the pattern is stamped after weaving, and it does not require long use to wear it off. There are no prettier carpets than the Brussels, although others may be more luxurious to the foot; but with the proper padding they may be made equally luxurious, and more durable than any. They are a universal sort of carpet, not too rich for the poor, nor too poor for the rich; and the best talent, such as that of William Morris and Dr. Dresser, and, indeed, of the owners of many other distinguished names, is employed upon the designs, which are softly illuminated by quaintly blended colors as brilliant or as subdued as the buyer pleases. The ingrains, Brussels, and Axminsters are all made quite as good in America as in Europe. Many of the most marked improvements in their manufacture are American.

The Moquettes, the Axminsters, and the India and Turkey and Persian mats are all made in a manner much similar to that in which the Brussels is made; but the loops, which in the Brussels are left double, are in these cut and sheared, making a velvety pile in which the foot sinks. The Moquettes are finer and thinner than the others, and consequently less enduring; nor can they, after being soiled, be clipped and shorn off again, and come out freshly as good as new, as the Turkey can.

The pile of the Axminster is exceedingly thick and soft, and it is thought to exceed the Oriental carpets in richness. It comes either in breadths or in whole pieces filling a floor, and is very expensive. At present one of the best, in a piece that will fit a small oblong drawing-room of some twenty-four by eighteen feet, is sold for about five hundred dollars, although that price is, of course, variable. Both Wiltons and Axminsters are to be had in the India patterns; but they are ordinarily to be seen in those floral designs whose coarse roses and lilies seem as if seen through a huge magnifying-glass, and which assume life to be one long wedding procession with baskets of flowers tossed beneath the feet. The same class of design is most frequently to be seen in the Aubusson tapestries, perhaps the most expensive of all carpets, and, if work is a criterion of value, certainly the most valuable, and which, in spite of the reprehensible character of their design, are very beautiful. The Aubusson is not a velvety or pile carpet at all; it has no loop, but is merely a larger rep, but little more than the rep of the common furniture covering. We are told that the pattern is wrought upon it with needle-work, and pulls apart very easily. In those most commonly seen, the groundwork is of the extremely delicate shades: the tender blues and greens and grays, sprinkled at good intervals with starry blossoms perfect as if dropped upon it, and in their natural size, or but a trifle beyond. There is usually one central medallion, filled with other flowers upon a white ground; all around the whole runs a deep intricate border in wreaths and broken garlands of buds and blossoms, laurel leaves and oak, ribbons, shells, and some slight peculiarly Renaissance ornament, usually on a maroon ground, but little of which is seen. A wide maroon rep comes in rolls to make an exterior margin where the shape of the room demands it. In all this ornament every detail is so fine, the drawing so excellent, the tinting so perfect, that water-colors could not surpass its delicacy and charm; so that, judged by its own standard, it is impossible to find fault with it. Beside it the same character of pattern on Brussels, Axminster, and Wilton seems infinitely coarse and common. A carpet of this description is so frail, both as to soiling and wearing, that it can with propriety be used only in the scenes of very gay and festive life, where this sort of decoration is not so unsuitable as elsewhere. It is for those who literally tread on flowers, who "have fed on the roses and lain in the lilies of life." An Aubusson carpet of the same size as the Axminster just mentioned is not dear, it will be seen, at five hundred dollars, which is the usual price asked nowadays, although frequently less will be taken, as the demand for them is small; but it can accompany only the richest, rarest, most showy, and costly furniture, the marquetry and gilding of the Quatorze styles, lace and mirrors and Sèvres; in fact, it has a strange family likeness to Sèvres itself, and is as much like a superb dish of French china as anything else.

XXVIII.

CURTAINS.

MRS. POTIPHAR had curtains, we believe, woven of every color under the sun, and carpets that looked as if the curtains had dripped on them. It is not curtains of that description, though, that those of our readers who are arranging their houses picturesquely or cosily, and without recourse to the upholsterers, will be inclined to select. Nevertheless, we have seen exquisite broché stuffs at the upholsterers', which, while they were indeed filled with every color under the sun, had all those colors so closely blended and balanced as to present only a rich and quiet effect.

Whatever may be the predominating tint of the carpet, the curtains should lead it up in a something lighter shade, or else should decidedly contrast with it. At any rate, they are always to be considered as part of the furniture, and, when not of diaphanous stuff, are to correspond in color, if not in material, with the coverings of the chairs, sofas, and tabourets.

In some rooms, where the chairs and other articles are of wicker and bent wood, the curtains will be of Japanese and other extreme Oriental stuffs, as so much bamboo and rattan work comes from that quarter of the world, or else of muslins, white or tinted, or of the various flowering chintzes which correspond with the gay garden season in which such rooms and furniture are chiefly used. Lace curtains, too, are very suitable for the rooms of this summer occupation. Although the usual patterns of the coarse Nottinghams have an effect of the frosty fern and flower shapes upon the winter pane, lending some cool effect to a summer room, yet a geometrical design of bands and squares is preferable; but we think that something real and altogether less pretentious is in better taste. Prettier than they, to our mind, are the sheer white muslins with insertings and edges of coarse white guipure, and the unbleached muslins with unbleached guipure, or even the plain muslins without trimming; and the fittest way of hanging all these dispenses with heavy cornice or lambrequin. Thin curtains, it must be admitted, guard the transparent character of the window better than any other.

There is really a great latitude allowed in the choice of curtains, the desirability of drapery being so strongly recognized that almost any drapery is countenanced. Thus, it is not unusual even in elegant drawing-rooms to see curtains of a cretonne that harmonizes with the other furnishing, or of embroidered muslin alone. Still, it is desirable, of course, if the drawing-room is begun upon any scale of richness, to carry it out thoroughly; and curtains of satin, of silk damask, and silk rep, with under-curtains of lace or of delicately wrought muslin, are the window drapery best suited to a drawing-room whose furniture is covered in choice stuffs. Velvet is more suitable for the library, when that also is richly furnished; it is really too heavy for the light character that is usually considered appropriate to the drawing-room fittings.

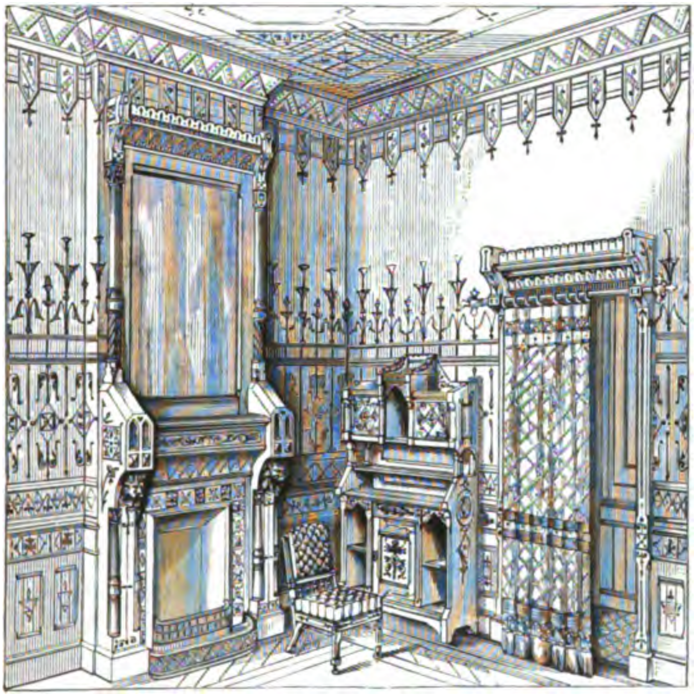
In the hanging of curtains their family relationship must not be overlooked. It is into them that the old once-tapestry-lined walls have shrivelled. Except for occasional instances of archæological furnishing, where middle spaces between frieze and dado are still stretched with tapestry or its representatives, the curtains are all there is to stand for that ancient and superb decoration with those for whom the Flemish and the Gobelin tapestries are impossible. Throughout all the revolutions and convulsions of France the great manufacturers of tapestry, and those of china as well —the Gobelin and the Sèvres—have never intermitted their work; but their product goes to princes and bankers and those with corresponding incomes, and the "meaner sort" of wealthy people content themselves with curtains and portières in a very different article. It would need, indeed, princely halls to carry off those great tapestries well; and in a republican country, where the richest men have nothing like a retinue of dependents to fill their halls, both the rooms and their decorations are undreamed of.

But if we are furnishing with precision, in spite of the latitude allowed those who are only intent on producing pleasing effect, and are paying little or no regard to the curiosity of epoch or style, we must choose and hang our curtains with hardly any latitude, but with as close attention to historic accuracy as when we design the carving of our chairs and wainscots. For instance, to one furnishing otherwise in the Gothic, the designs proper to the stuffs of the Gothic period are to be chosen, and not of the succeeding period. We would hardly choose, though, the stuffs of the first epoch, which were chiefly cloths of gold and silver, mingled, indeed, with colored silken threads, however pictorially splendid the result might be, but would take rather those designs where, either in a charming confusion, or with wheels set in bands dividing plain spaces, are mingled basilisks, unicorns, peacocks—the latter sometimes mounted by riders—pheasants, and swallows; sometimes tigers and elephants; sometimes oranges, roses, palms, religious histories and portraits; or the Byzantine emblems, it may be, or the long stripes of the Saracenic with its strange inscriptions—both Gothic and Saracenic being offshoots of the Byzantine. Or if we are furnishing in the Renaissance style, then the designs of elongated overflowing vases with dolphins, flowers, harlequins, chimæras, classical outlines, straps, buckles, and shields, these all of silk, and those of the suggested flower of velvet upon silk, from the Palermo, Venice, and Lucca looms, and the just-invented Utrecht velvets of the time. If the pictured character of all this is objected to, we must remember that antiquarians tell us that from the wrought-work of ancient Eastern tapestries brought to Athens the imitative art of painting took rise, and that thus it has certain rights to dues of honor. Nevertheless, all of these designs are frequently so subtly introduced in modern stuffs that one has to look more than twice before discovering anything but a pleasant blending of lines and tints; and for those that prefer it there remains the plain repped surface of silk or wool, according to the means of the purchaser, banded off by slight bars not too full of this ornament, or entirely without it.

Altogether the neatest and pleasantest way of hanging curtains is when the stuff is suspended by rings running on rods, either open or beneath a lambrequin that may be boxed in without folds or may itself run on the rod, the ends of the rod being either spear-headed, a derivative shape, or simple pommels. The boxed-in lambrequin was that in use in the vast castles where all the drapery had its origin, and it was put up after the other curtain, or portière, was hung over the door-way, and it was found that some draught still made itself felt over the top. With most of these stuffs, fringes are undesirable; at the best, the fringe represents only the ragged edge of the unshorn, untrimmed material. With Renaissance furnishing, other methods of hanging are suitable—those with loops, festoons, fringes, cords and tassels, under false cornices. In the Gothic the curtain is permissible at the window's height; but in the Renaissance and the Quatorze it may fall from the cornice of the room under its own top pieces, giving greater height and space to the whole room. Whatever be the curtains, it is necessary to have straight hollands shades within the whole arrangement; and something peculiarly elegant for cities, where the screen is valued, and where there is not that picture to be enjoyed from the windows which the country sometimes affords, is the fluted silk set close to the pane as Venetian blinds.

For the dining-room and library, heavier curtains are to be chosen than for the drawing-room, the solid character of the dining-room and the grave one of the library demanding it; but in the chambers, the boudoir, and sitting-rooms, lighter, airier, more easily cleaned, and much less expensive ones are the wiser. Bedroom curtains may be made of seeded muslin very full under a standing ruffle that serves for cornice, with a strip of colored cambric passed through the hem, and the whole bowed back with ribbons matching that strip. An unbleached sheeting bound with a bright border of print of some quaint pattern has a nice effect; and, indeed, there is hardly an end to the combinations that an ingenious fancy can devise.

Whenever the top-piece, called the cornice, can be dispensed with in putting up curtains, it is best to do so; very few have yet been designed that are not really injurious to their effect. Where long curtains cannot be afforded, simple lambrequins, a little longer on the sides than in the middle, go far toward filling their place, and there are an infinite variety of lambrequin shapes according to which they may be cut; silken lambrequins over lace curtains, without the intervening long silken or woollen outer curtain, being sometimes better adapted to the desired effect in certain airy drawing-rooms than more cumbersome drapery. But so much do windows need clothing—unless when of exceptionally lovely frames—that as a general rule almost any curtains are better than none, since dra-


Portière in Modern Gothic Drawing-room.

pery of some sort it is usually felt necessary to have about that outlet into sky and air, if only that of a growing ivy vine. Indeed, we have seen windows curtained with ivies in a way that would have shamed all the tapestries of the East; and the immeasurable influence even of lambrequins in destroying the naked look of a room may be learned merely by pinning up some boughs of autumn leaves above the window casings, and observing the air of covering and use and habitation which these simple outlines are capable of imparting.

XXIX.

WALL-PAPER.

IF the carpet acts as the background to the furniture of a room, the wall-paper may be said to be its atmosphere, for it is indeed as much so as if it were the medium through which all its objects are seen, and it performs for the room the same function that the air does for the earth when it becomes the boundary-line of sight where the sky slips over its side.

It is very far from being an affair of small consequence, as many seem to think it is, what the paper may be in a room, since with our cabinets and pictures, and brackets and sconces, and vases and busts, and old china, we can nearly cover it: very far, because, whatever be the furnitures, a large share of the whole temperament of the room will be given by the wall-paper; and it is only now and then that we come across a person with any transmuting power capable of taking an ugly paper that may not be removed, and by means of different ones representing dado and frieze and edgings, securing an harmonious and quite satisfactory whole.

The color of the wall-paper is a thing to be decided, of course, only by the furnisher, and will be chosen in relation to the general tone of color of the room. Like the curtains and furniture coverings, it must either be in contrast or in unison with the carpet, although in more delicate tints, subdued meanwhile, and quiet both in hue and pattern. It will always be well for the furnisher, unless possessed of a nice instinct for color, to look into the analogies of colors a little in the beginning, to remember that the primary colors—blue, yellow, and red—have their complements in orange, purple, and green, and that the tertiary colors—the russets, citrines, and olives—have again their own complements; and with these, of late, very fine effects have been produced. M. Chevreul, of the Gobelins factory, has made some valuable observations upon the harmonies of the various colors, and he classifies the harmonies resulting from immediate juxtaposition of certain tones, where the pure tint is either dulled or heightened by admixture of black or white, those resulting from pure tint mixed with the least other color, and those where well-contrasted colors seem all to be under the bloom of one of the colors a little stronger than the rest; and he carries the subject out to very close limits, the chief fact eliminated being that colors seen together differentiate themselves to the last degree, these mutually dulling each other, those heightening and intensifying each other. A little attention to the subject, although not necessarily on a very minute scale, will prevent violent dissonances hurting the eye, and secure agreeable sensations. But those who do not dare to trust to their artistic sense or knowledge in giving the strong colors near neighborhood will usually be safe in using the varying shades of one main body tint, whatever that may be, having in mind, however, the danger to health of the arsenical tints. Yet if one is agitated upon the question of health, a painted wall will always be found to be cleaner and surer than any paper, owing to its washable nature. Still, a painted surface, be it ever so well done and delicately stencilled, is always wanting in that powdery bloom which gives a charm to the paper-hanging. There is not, moreover, any such talent among the frescoers and stencillers of the day as there is among the designers of wall-papers, some of the very best pencils of England and of all Europe being engaged upon these designs.

The choice of design in the paper is an affair of merely secondary difficulty, since the effect of color is omnipresent, but that of design is not always so apparent. A close and small design for the main portion of the wall may be pronounced the best, except in extraordinarily large rooms; but even where large figures are used, the outlines should be so interlaced and mingled, and the colors so subtly blended, that it will not be easy to tell at once where this figure ends and that begins. As a general thing, such papers as these well-blended large patterns are their own decoration, and need no pictures upon them, although they will receive statuary. The diapered and damasked and calendered papers can hardly be rendered out of taste; but if natural imitations are given, they must be more or less conventionalized, and, moreover, given flatly, that is, without shadows of objects or anything that can afford relief to the representations; the spotty effect which is made by the repetition of detached bunches of flowers on any ground is something to be avoided; and the opposite treatment, by-the-way—the attempt to lift the height of a room by stripes—is a poor artifice that meets its own reward. But even the diapered surface is one full of recurrence, and with all the warnings against the use in sleeping-rooms of those patterns where the repeats may be counted, we think it would be almost impossible to have even so much figure there as the mere watery lines of a calendered paper which the fevered eye, weary of vacancy, would not seize upon; the most closely woven curves and angles and the colors of the best conventionalized papers that eye is capable of distorting into monstrous shapes. Papers in plain colors come, such as those already mentioned—oiled papers, as they are called—of the "patent washable tints," with which one can avoid this difficulty; but if one is obliged to use them, one is debarred from the opportunity of a great deal of delightful effect.

Paper-hanging is quite a modern invention, after all; that is, in its Western use. In the East wall-papers had been known from time immemorial; but it was only toward the end of the seventeenth century that they were brought from China, imported into England and Holland along with a multitude of other indiennes and chinoiseries. France took hold of the idea and perfected it, and has hitherto produced the best, while Germany and Belgium have given the cheapest papers; but England has lately come to rival France. There is now a vast variety to choose from everywhere: mounting from the rough kitchen fourpenny paper that, put on wrong side out, when its pattern is but slightly stamped, presents a uniform gray surface like something a great deal more expensive, and, where the pattern is heavily stamped, presents a damascened gray surface, to those elaborate in art and material, whose use in a single room requires an expenditure of a small fortune. There are the common satin-faced ones, the more desirable rough-surfaced sort, the gilded, silvered, and bronzed grounds, embossed gilt and mica, imitation of silks and tapestries, cretonnes and chintzes, raised and stamped velvets; there are some like delicate muslins embroidered in chain-stitch and lined with color, at six dollars a roll and upward; others like the dark old embossed Spanish leathers buttoned to the wall, from nine to twelve dollars a roll, according to present prices; there are the thick Japanese papers, where the black ground riots in fantastic assemblage of all rich colors, where a gold ground carries birds and butterflies and fans in charming confusion, and those of lighter, less marked, and less agreeable characteristics at about the same price as the leather papers; others yet more expensive, thick and heavy, a finely glazed porcelain-like representation of tiles of all sorts, for those that will have them in imitation; and, in addition, there are the frescoed papers, and those for ceilings, for dadoes, and for friezes. It would be hard if out of such a variety one could not get up rooms that would be satisfying to the most demanding sense of the beautiful.

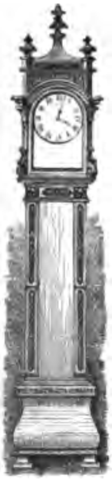
There are many papers now issued where the old tints are so exquisitely graded and combined that they produce the effect of new ones. Indeed, the new school seems to have caught the secret of the old colorists, especially of the workers in tapestry, although it does not by any means refuse help from the latest chemical invention. The greater number of all these papers are conventionalized in their designs; that is, even where the natural leaf and flower are used, they are so interwoven, melted, and mingled, so changed in inessentials, so refined and so intensified, yet all the time in arrangement corresponding to geometric rule and principle, that they seem like the flowers of some enchanted land rather than those of our own, reminding one of all sorts of weird conditions and fancies. We recall, in particular, one Morris paper of idealized jasmine flowers and leaves, the design forming its own background, and where the tints were more suggestively and conventionally treated than the shapes, with their pale olivine, fulvous, creamy shades, which in themselves so transformed the flowers that they seemed to be fresh combinations of old lines, and had the virtue of new creations, yet, although so full of color, bridally pure and delicate. Indeed, it is this new creation, this leading-up of beauty into higher reaches by the new combination of the old elements, that makes a part of the merit of conventionalized treatment. "Transformed by grace," said an old nun in explaining it, "nothing on earth perfect till grace illumines it." We presume this condition of conventionalizing would hardly obtain with most artists, who believe rather in the necessities of art than in the mysticisms of religion, and who hold that conventionalism is required in order to prevent an individuality of detail that may turn the mind from broad general effect. Yet it is scarcely more than a searching way of repeating unconsciously Mr. Wornum's assertion that "where the mind views something more than the surface, or where the eyes are auxiliary only to the mind, every natural object may be suggestive of some new essential form, or combination of forms. The lotus, the lily, and the tulip must be something more than flowers to the designer, or his use of them is limited indeed." Merely natural representation also, it may be said, is imitative and weak, but conventional treatment is interpretative and loftier: one is a photograph, the other is a design; one is mere handicraft, the other is art. No ornament, the authority just quoted tells us, "is beautiful because it represents any natural object, but because it has been chosen to illustrate certain symmetries or contrasts by the very nature of vision delightful to the mind, just as harmonies and melodies delight it through another of its senses;" and we are further told that the effect of the whole design should never be hindered by attention to details, as it is in the natural imitations; that where nature groups, it is not the individual, but the group, that is the ornament; and thus where we make the individual ornamental, as we do in natural imitation again, we conform to nature in a little thing, but outrage her in a great. And the broad fact remains that the natural representation is a picture, and in being a picture it loses, of course, all power of being an ornamental detail of a scheme; but the natural representation, taken and transformed to an "harmonic succession of curves"—that is, conventionalized—has gone through an organic process; it has gone through this organic process in the human brain, and in becoming idealized is as much finer, loftier, and nobler as the living soul is better than dead matter. And all this holds true as much in every other sort of ornamental design as in that of wall-paper. Correggio, indeed, may paint his disputed wall surface of rosy children peeping through trellises, covered with blossoming vines; but only Correggio. The rest of us are wiser to avoid that sort of realism on our walls, for the simple reason, if for no nobler one, that it is absolutely impossible in decency to set the furniture against the picture it makes, or to hang one picture on another. That furnisher, on the whole, will have chosen the best paper who has made it subsidiary to the ornamental scheme of the room—for we presume that if there is any uncommon care in the matter at all, there is an ornamental scheme to be considered—and will have called no more attention to its details and particulars than is called to the details of the soft gray bloom with which some misty mornings suffuse the air.

XXX.

THE HALL.

ALTHOUGH in its best estate in the modern dwelling the hall has in reality shrivelled into a mere entry-way, it should never be forgotten, even when in miniature, from what it is that in the first place it derives; and as far as possible, either to its space or to the circumstances of the house of which it is part, its ancestral traits should be maintained and always vindicated.

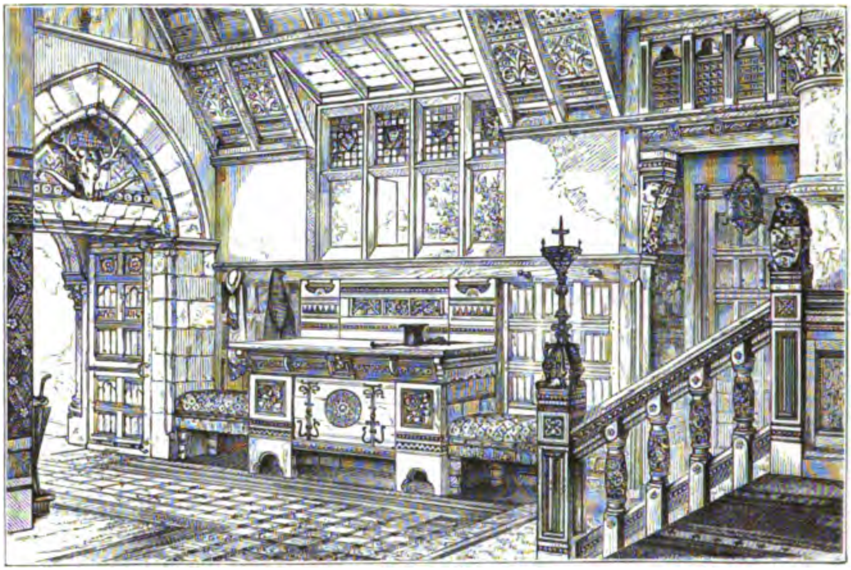
The slightest glance within the door should perceive a character of cordiality and hospitality in the hall; and that character can just as plainly be told in its furnishing and decoration as if the hosts stood there in person with outstretched hands to greet the guest.


Queen Anne Clock.

The idea that the hall is to present to the mind upon entrance is that of shelter—shelter and shadow and rest. It must be apparent that it is the entrance of a home—one of those homes where we draw the long breath of relief as we return to it and shut out the world behind us. The guest comes from all out-doors, from heat and sun, from cold and snow, or from gloom and rain, and always from some degree of fatigue of movement. He is to be made aware, the instant that the door closes after him, that he has found this complete shelter, and put a barrier, for the time being, between him and the outside annoyance. Thus the door itself presents one of the main features of this hospitable shelter, for in its right mind it opens widely, swings easily, shuts heavily, and displays its great hinges and solid bolts like friends and warders. The next feature apparent will be that presented by the tinting of the hall, which gives it a large portion of its effect; and we think there can hardly be a question that this tinting should generally be in the darker shades. In houses meant merely for summer resort, at the sea-side or in the country, this is not so much to be insisted on, as the whole place in such houses has more or less of the nature of the garden pavilion, and doors are open and sunshine pouring in, and the hall is a thoroughfare but little different from a covered balcony. Yet even there it seems to us that it would be better if felt emphatically as a place of shadow. But in the house that is the family house the year round, where the family root is planted and its name and honor upheld, the character and dignity of home are to be considered and supported: that house is no garden pavilion set merely for pleasure and enjoyment; it is the place where the serious business of life goes on; there the bride comes home to take up her duties and merge her existence in that of others, there the heir is born, there age is protected, and there the dead are brought back for the funeral procession to pass out of the wide old doors. Under such circumstances the frivolous frippery of light colors and gilding in the entrance hall may be pronounced to be as badly out of place as a young girl's gewgaws upon the matron's toilet, where character and majesty are demanded. Solidity and permanence are desirable characteristics to present, and in some covert but easily recognized way they are presented better by dark rich surfaces than by gay and airy ones. There are other places in the house where the gay and airy tints can be used to fitness and advantage.

We would recommend, then, in the wood-work of the hall the use of the dark or stained woods in doors, staircases, and wainscots. For the walls a deep dado of the wood, either plain or panelled, there being nothing finer or choicer than carvings of the various old linen panels there; above this the smooth wall surface either stained or papered in subdued tones—if the latter, with not too large a figure—upon which the family portraits are to be hung, and under the cornice a broad richly decorated frieze. If the dado is beyond the means allowed for outlay in this direction, there are very nice papers which are made expressly to be used in the same way, and the effect obtained, if not so rich and solid, is nearly as pleasant to the eye. The ceiling, if frescoed, should be frescoed with some formality, and not with any loose decorative fancy; if plain, should be tinted harmoniously, and well off the white; and if the dark rafters can be shown in any form, but particularly in set caissons, the result will be very noble. Great art has been exhibited in the old ceilings in wood and plaster, and there are many models from which ideas of work on a lesser surface can be borrowed.

The floor of the hall is another place where expense can be well bestowed on an inlaid or parquet flooring of varying shades of woods in some geometrical design as destitute of dazzle as possible. Rugs, preferably the dark full-colored India ones, or those in imitation of them, are to be laid on this floor. To most eyes these are pleasanter than a carpet covering the entire floor. They are certainly cleaner and healthier, and but slightly more troublesome to the housekeeper, and they preserve the ancient tradition of the hall floor better, although tiles, marbles, and stones might do that better still, were they not unsuited to our climate and customs in the main. Yet those whose house is on a smaller scale of expenditure will find that the carpet which covers the floors of the other rooms on the ground plan has a very pleasant appearance when continued over the floor of the hall also, adding to the effect of space, and preventing, if the space be small, the incongruous appearance of too many varying combinations of color and figure meeting the eye almost at once.

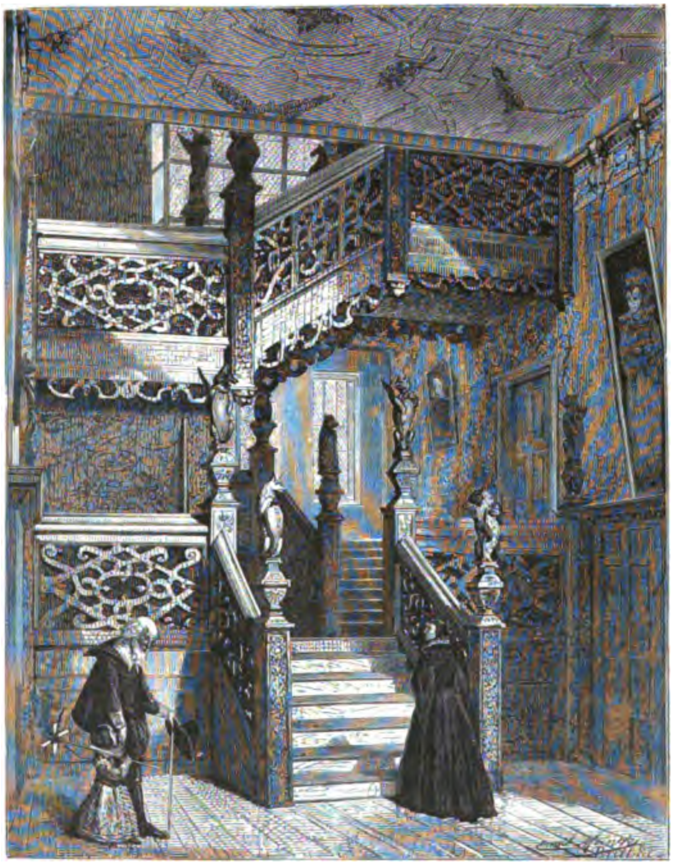


Modern Gothic Hall.

The staircase should be well set in the hall, not too near the door, very broad, with a solid balustrade and hand-rail, the upper hall with its own balustrade suspended in such a way as to obtain for it a light gallery-like look. Low wide steps should make the flight, all the better if broken into landings. If the floor is parqueted, a strip of rich thick-piled carpet is laid down with rods over the centre of the flight, ending in a rug at the foot; if the floor is carpeted, then the same carpet wholly covers the stairs, secured with a button at either end of the step, and made yet softer and more enduring by a pad beneath, binding the stair's edge.

If one is the possessor of an ancestral chest, the hall is the place for it. If it should chance to be of darkened oak, carved with any hint of the quaint old designs, with very visible metal hinges and ponderous locks, it is invaluable; but if of the lighter, commoner woods, it is still a great possession, all the more should any genuine date have been carved upon it. It stands high, is long and broad, and usually has a till and a few small drawers within it, with a larger open place under the lid for hats and shawls. Few things give a more finished and stable look to the place than this chest.

Other furniture of the hall depends a great deal upon its size. A cabinet for curiosities, or for canes, umbrellas, fishing-rods, and guns, is appropriately placed there when there is room. A comfortable sofa or lounge, a pair of antlers on which to hang the hats, over a little stand for the stick that is wanted immediately, and two or three high-backed old-fashioned chairs, may accompany it.



Old Jacobean Hall.

When the house is not heated by a furnace, nothing is more delightful than a blazing grate in the hall, equally so when in summer it is filled with fresh green boughs, or has a console of blossoming flowers before it.

The evening light of the hall depends a good deal upon individual fancy; and we will only say that, unless there is some peculiarity in the construction that makes one wish to increase an effect of painted glass, the globes or shades are in better taste when in white than when in colored glass.

Every hall is improved by the presence of pictures and other works of art. We are not speaking, of course, of princely halls, with their rows of statues, their bass-reliefs and bronzes and big vases. Most of our readers will hold themselves fortunate if they can spare from other places a single big vase and a statuette for the hall. Still, there are apt to be in all houses pictures better suited to the hall than to the portions of the house which are of a more strikingly domestic character; and the pictures most decidedly proper to the hall, as we have already intimated, are the family portraits. These are not exactly wanted anywhere else; they are perfectly placed there; the faces look down out of the frames as if your race welcomed your coming, and stood around you to receive your guests. Seen every day in their mute procession, they would seem to oblige one to maintain a standard of thought and behavior equal to the family legends; and as the household go in and out daily, and many times a day, along the thoroughfare where they hang, those whom they represent, although long since dust, seem still to have their part among the living.

It may seem fanciful, but to the person entering the hall a gush of bird-song from some unseen and remote quarter is a very pleasant greeting, full of the suggestions of home. It calls up some thought of inner rooms and sunny and flowery recesses not immediately open to the stranger, and makes one remember all the guarded privacy and sacred secrecy of Eastern homes, with their roses and birds behind their gilded lattices. Too much thought and attention, indeed, cannot be given to this first step within the portals of the house. It is literally the first step that counts. The empty and careless hall, with its hap-hazard carpet, its chance table and chair, or its common rack and stand and its bare wall, cannot but chill the owner, every time he enters, with its unhomelike aspect; cannot but tell the stranger that guests are few and not expected—perhaps not too welcome; while the comfortable one where thought and time have been spent, if not a mint of money, stamps the house with the seal of some trained taste, refinement, and intelligence, and with a sense of warmth, of comfort, and of cordial hospitality, which latter, if some think to be a matter of choice, others, in the love of their fellow-man, like the Arab, hold to be a duty.

XXXI.

THE DINING-ROOM.

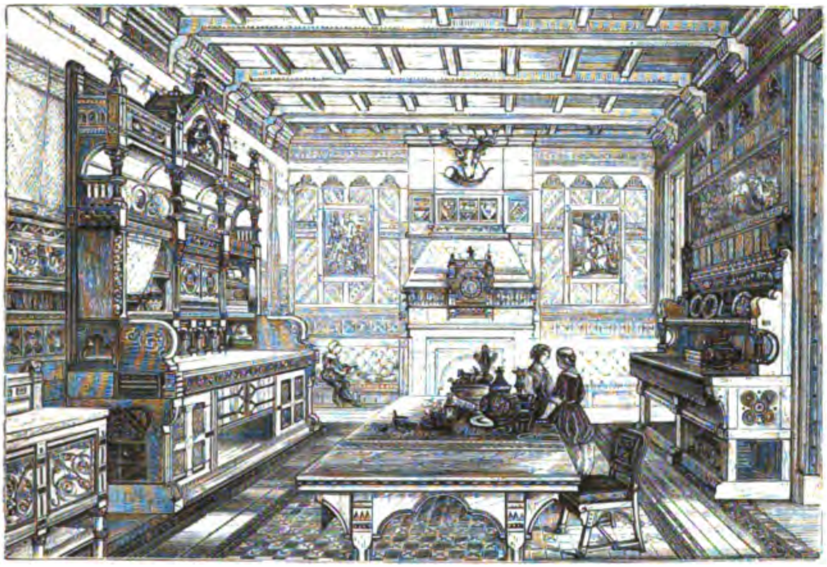
IF it were not for the sanctity of the family sitting-room, one would not be far out of the way in calling the dining-room, after all, the heart of the house. For it is in the dining-room, in all ordinary households, that the family assemble three times a day—sometimes the only place in which they are sure to be together for any length of time; and if things are wrong in the dining-room, they are tolerably sure to be wrong everywhere else in the house.

The first impression, then, which the dining-room should make on the beholder, the constant one it should make upon its occupants, is that of solid comfort. There is to be no airy trifling either with colors or fabrics there, and fussy fancy-work must not presume to show its face in such precincts. The colors must be those substantial colors which hold their own —the rich crimsons, the dark blues, the dull Pompeian reds and olivines, and kindred tints, according to one's choice, but those which, being of full body, present no appearance of having faded from the original hue— colors which suggest permanence, as the *fade* colors suggest poverty unless relieved by gayeties out of place in the dining-room.

The suggestion of poverty, by-the-way, is something to be avoided more in this than in any other room of the house. If it is possible to have but one sumptuous room, we would advise that the others should be comfortable, but that the dining-room should be that one sumptuous one. It is all very well to pronounce eating and drinking animal, but so is life animal; and as one must eat and drink to live, one should be allowed to eat and drink in peace without more reminder of care and pinching than is absolutely necessary; and this a pleasant dining-room secures. When we say that the dining-room should be sumptuous, however, we do not mean gaudily or ostentatiously so, but a sumptuousness that is felt at once, and observed upon examination, but does not carry its price upon its face, and does not obtrude its splendor.

But while the subdued richness of the dining-room is felt, there should be an amount of ease there which shall make it dear to the family, and allow the guest to feel at home—that is, shall cause the guest to feel that he is not upsetting the house by his presence, that the customary routine is maintained, and that the permanent arrangement of the room is so comfortable that evidently the "best things" are not emerging from their dark places for him alone. In fact, "best things" are the great enemy of the dining-room; it should always be so good that it can hardly be better. We venture to believe that the wife who makes the dining-room her first consideration, having it always in such a state in all its appointments, and her table so equipped and served, that her husband, if he has done his part of the duty and allowed suitable provision, will always feel free to bring home his friend to dinner without creating an earthquake in which soiled cloth and cracked dishes are swept away for clean damask and the nice china, will have twice as much of her husband's society as she would otherwise obtain. For if he cannot bring his friend home, he will take him somewhere else; and if he once has the habit of home established, he will find it too pleasant and comfortable to break. Let her feel that her husband is, after all, her most honored guest, and things are not good enough for him unless they are good enough for the best that may come with him. She will perhaps find it a measure of wise administration, too; for the husband that has all as he wishes in the dining-room will be tolerably sure that, so far as it is in his power, the wife shall have all she wants in the drawing-room.

As one of the component parts of the comfortable dining-room, an ample chimney-place should be demanded; and it may be either with tiled jambs and hearth and great shining fire-dogs to hold the logs, or with the old Franklin fire-frame and its polished brasses, or with the coal-grate flanked by bright steel implements, but either of them capable of holding a goodly core of heat. Perhaps no arrangement above the fire will ever be found more picturesque than the narrow high shelf and the tiny Jacobean cupboards and racks above it for the display of china too precious or too long-descended for daily use; in the centre the mantel mirror with bevelled edges, and smaller bits of mirror behind the open racks, again with the bevelled edges, whose jewel-like cut adds greatly to the brilliancy. On these open racks may stand many oddities hardly appropriate to other rooms: the mugs of '76, porcelain pepper-boxes, little old-fashioned gilded decanters—all those enviable trifles that some inherit and others "pick up." Such things as the strange shell may have place there too; the bit of coral which some roving member of the house may have brought from the seas at the other side of the globe; a fantastic little idol; a Greek jar—now turned out very satisfactorily in our own potteries—for the suggestions of the room need not be altogether those of eating and drinking, since it is a place for an after-dinner chat as well, or a nap as one stretches one's legs before the fire; and a pleasant dining-room invites many a pleasant loitering moment after breakfast or just before bedtime that no other room seems to suit quite so well. Over the fireplace here is a place for the carving of mottoes and crests also, rather than elsewhere.



Modern Gothic Dining-room.

The next item of importance is the floor; and if one is a convert to the square carpet with its border of bare floor or parquetry nowhere else, yet love of cleanliness will be very apt to influence one to such choice in the dining-room. A handsome floor well laid is decidedly the best thing for the dining-room; if in a choice geometric design of colored woods, so much the better; but laid in alternate strips of cherry and Southern pine, it is but little more expensive than a common floor; and if even that is unwise expenditure, a hard pine floor, whose boards one selects one's self, and so secures rich graining, can be made, either oiled or varnished, exceedingly attractive. There is, also, at about the same cost as the parquet flooring itself, a parquet carpeting of wood, which is both beautiful and enduring. Over any of these floors in winter the drugget is to be laid, dispensed with or not in summer according to taste; sometimes an article heavy enough to lie flatly by its own weight; sometimes held in place by very long nails, that have holes bored in the floor and lined with metal, like a caster socket, to receive them; sometimes merely a square of bocking stamped to imitate the India rugs — in all cases easily taken up for shaking. If, however, the furnisher prefers an entire carpet, she should remember, in selecting it, the old house-keeper's saying that green eats grease, drab eats dirt, but red eats a hole in the pocket. A crimson carpet certainly, in connection with old mahogany and its winy stains, gives a sense of warmth and luxury that is very desirable; but it is to be had—unless one can renew the carpet frequently—only at the expense of one's good name as house-keeper, for there is not the mark of a careless drop, a fallen morsel, a spot, a speck, that will not be visible in all lights, at all times, to all people. Crimson, although so handsome, is a bad color for convenience to the house-keeper anywhere, but in the dining-room it will end by breaking her heart.

Much variety can be given the room through the carpet. Many people, doubtful of their taste, in order to be sure of getting something not to be found fault with, furnish all in one suit of color; if the walls are brown, the carpet will be brown too, and the upholstery brown as well. But that secures only a stiff monotony, perpetual recurrence of one note; and it is better to have harmony than uniformity. If upon one's walls the paper be of a bluish slaty gray, relieved, as it may be, with outlines of dull Indian red, the red giving the gray a yet bluer tinge, the bluish gray giving the red an orange tinge, a carpet of royal purple, the combination of the two colors, will meet every wish, and will make warmth and variety; and the same carpet may be used with citrine-colored walls. Again, with a paper of pale azure and delicate lemon-color, the rich peacock-green may predominate in the carpet; and with any of the reds the usual Turkish or India mats, of deep blues and dull crimsons and innumerable dingy broken tints, will accord. In truth, a little experiment will evolve undreamed-of harmonies, and the more they elude the eyesight and affect the sensation, the better the result. The distinction between a room where these harmonies in difference have been sought out and one where the uniform color covers everything is that between true homeliness and cheer and flat dulness. Whatever the carpet is, the curtains, unless they are of lace, should carry up its idea; in the dining-room they need to fall in heavy folds and afford a rather subdued light. The man that built his house in order to frame his windows probably felt that he had furnished his rooms when he had draped those windows; and carpets and curtains certainly go a long way in the furnishing. But if the dining-room be also the breakfast-room, the curtains should be so hung that they may then be pulled aside to let in all the morning sun, which at breakfast seems to give a benediction to the day. The possession of that morning sun is the chief element in the location of the dining-room. If there are beautiful views, they may be spared to other rooms; one does not need further beautiful views at a table covered with sparkling silver and gay china, loaded with tempting dishes, and surrounded with loved faces.

As for the walls of the dining-room, the rich warm colors are the best, and there should be great care in selecting the papers, that, while rich, they may be also elegant; the leather dadoes are handsome here, and friezes of decorative paper just under the ceiling, which, by-the-way, should be toned down from very dazzling white into the first shade of the chosen atmosphere of the room. If one may have gilding in the paper anywhere, one may have it in the dining-room, for that is the sole place where it can be used to much purpose, and it adds to the desired idea of richness there. Everywhere else gilding is only to be used to enhance the effect of beauty, to throw up lights, to point out contrasts. But in fine patterns of gilded mosses, close reticulation of leaves and lines, or a diaper of gold-work, it gives valuable aid to the dining-room, especially if the room be on the dark side of the house, supplying a light of its own from the walls, as it were, independent of the window light—a sort of self-radiation simulating sunshine where there is none. And a gilded background is frequently not amiss in setting off such pictures as one may have upon the walls.

It has been the custom to have pictures of still-life in the dining-room —of game, fish, fruit. But, for our own part, the perpetual reminder of dead flesh and murderous propensities is not agreeable at table; and the habit of having on the wall those paintings of fish hanging from their nail, with all their beautiful dying colors, seems no better than the barbarous Eastern custom of carrying the live fish swimming in his tank around the table for every guest to see, and serving him twenty minutes afterward in his sauces. There are many who think the dining-room the best place for portraits. We have already expressed our preference for them in the hall; but if one is blessed with some generations of family portraits, the last generation may well hang on the dining-room wall, looking down on the daily meeting of the children and grandchildren of those that they represent. The dining-room is an excellent place for pictures of a curious nature, and those involving memorabilia; for, besides their pictorial office, they serve to stimulate the conversation which is so necessary to a cheerful meal, and make a groundwork for general observation among guests newly met, or with but little in common.

As the dining-room represents all the banqueting of its ancient original, the great hall, its furniture needs to be solid and heavy. The dining-table should be thoroughly substantial; and lately so much attention has been directed to this need, that stout articles, resting on a good central pier, or on their own four legs, are now superseding the flimsy affairs on which no dish has ever been felt quite secure from disaster. This table needs to be of generous size, that it may not be suspected of any niggardliness; but its shape is a matter of taste—a square, or a circle when closed, opening into an oval on extension. If the table is of handsome wood and manufacture, finely carved and turned, it needs no cloth when not in use; but a plain table under a cloth corresponding to the prevailing colors, with some silver or china dish set upon it, adds as much to the appearance of the room as the noble carved work could. The house-keeper should always have some very long and narrow napkins, fringed, and banded or embroidered at both ends, to lay across this cloth and fall on either side, on which to set a platter of fruit or a basket of cakes or a cup of tea, for some special purpose, and so spare the larger cloth.

The next requisite is the sideboard; and here one must choose, of course, according to the style of the rest of the furniture, the more massive and capacious the fitter for its purpose. The "old-fashioned" nondescript kind, now in so much request, is supplied with deep drawers for bottles, and long drawers for knives, and square drawers for damask, countless cupboards for dainties, and shelves for display. The Gothic shapes seem more appropriate to the dining-room than any other, from their heavy and solid character; indeed, it is almost impossible to furnish a drawing-room in the Gothic that it shall not seem wiser, when all is done, to use as a dining-room. Another appurtenance of the room is the carving-table at one side or in a corner, to which the heavier joints are sometimes removed to be carved by a servant. The carving can, however, be done on the top of a dinner-wagon—a rectangular piece of furniture consisting of two or three open shelves on which cold dishes are left. A butler's tray and trestle, in which the plates and knives that have been used are the more quickly collected and carried away, is also very useful for temporary purposes in a dining-room.

The chairs should be strong and comfortable ones, with broad seats and high backs, those of the host and hostess a very little higher and more throne-like than the others, for the convenience of commanding the situation. They are best upholstered in morocco; for those that cannot afford morocco or leather, the enamelled cloth will answer, although the wear that there is in morocco makes it the cheaper in the end. It is to be remembered that chairs are not merely conveniences for sitting at table, but for being at ease in that posture. There must be such a number of them that the rest of the room will not look stripped when the table is full.

The chief ornament of the dining-room, however, will always be the buffet, whether it stands in a corner or on the dead wall, whether it is a square Queen Anne, or a pointed Gothic, or a piece of Rococo. Behind its glass doors are to be set an array of gay colors in glittering china, whole sets and odd pieces, the ancient painted punch-bowl—if one is so lucky as to have it—green hock glasses, ruby finger-glasses, specimens of majolica, all the silver not in daily wear, and any gold-washed articles; the brilliancy of all which will be duplicated if little mirrors line the back of the shelves. The buffet is not always glazed, although properly so for the sake of simplifying household duties; but some of the finest are entirely open with all their choice burden. There should be, besides, a china closet, for the articles all the time in use, adjoining the dining-room, together with the butler's pantry; for the buffet, once handsomely filled, presents too fine an array to be lightly disturbed; in the old days it was for the delectation of the eyes almost altogether, and, as we have seen, was sometimes presented intact with all its burden to the individual in whose honor it was erected.

In conclusion, the mistress of the house will do well to save expense, as we have hinted, in her parlors, her boudoir, her "best chamber," in order to have her table-linen white and sufficient, her silver plenty, her glass lustrous and engraved, her china attractive to the eye, since cheerfulness and beauty here have great power over cheerfulness and beauty elsewhere, the dining-room being in some measure the laboratory of the house.

XXXII.

THE BOUDOIR AND SITTING-ROOM.

IT seems expedient that most of the other rooms of the house should be furnished after the conventional system of society, that is, on a scheme of general custom, with only the difference of individual taste and means. But the boudoir is the one place from which the conventional can be entirely banished, where eccentricity can be indulged, and where the dweller may intrench herself in the full enjoyment of her pet idiosyncrasies. If she wishes the room severe as an oratory, she has the right to order it; and if she prefers to represent in it the interior of a wigwam, there should be nobody to gainsay her, for that sole corner of the house is hers, and not the world's, and she is at liberty to make it the expression of all her hidden preferences. Its very name expresses its private character, derived as it is from the French verb *bouder*, to pout, and signifying a place for retirement when the world has put on an unfriendly aspect in relation to our especial sugar-plum, and our temper has become too much for our control. Yet it is in the boudoir that a lady sometimes receives her very intimate friends of either sex when she wishes their visit to be undisturbed, and it is not likely then that temper interferes with the scene; and therefore the room is arranged with other views as well as that of the comfort of pouting at one's ease.

It is only people of exceptional character who will be very likely to make the boudoir anything exceptional, for it is frequently felt that its name is an affectation in this country, and it will, as a general thing, be given the appearance which cannot meet with much criticism as a lady's sitting-room.

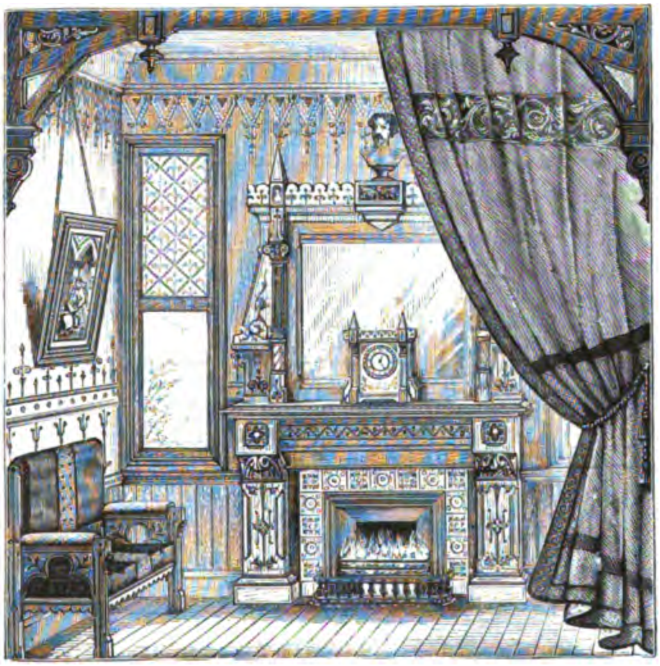
The boudoir is usually an up-stairs room, adjoining the bedchamber and dressing-room, and not too far from the nursery. Boudoirs play a great part in romances, but in the real life of America, at least, they are sufficiently rare. A bedchamber and dressing-room answer the needs of most of our ladies, and if there is a room to spare, it naturally becomes a sort of family sitting-room rather than the private luxury of one individual in the family. And even if, when the bride came, it was her boudoir, when the babies came, she lost her exclusive control. As a boudoir, although there are no restrictions on its furnishing and no laws to be obeyed, yet there are certain habits which usually creep in because comfort demands them, and the most eccentric spine has moments of needing a cushioned resting-place. Thus we will find in the boudoir the lounge, the comfortable chair for one's self and another for one's friend, the *prie-dieu*, if one is devout, and a collection of rosaries or of other religious emblems, according to one's creed; all one's precious knickknacks not quite nice enough for the drawing-room, or else too personal in character for that more open place—one's favorite books and their shelves, one's peculiar and particular escritoire, one's sewing-table and work-basket, one's own easel and piano; and we will see that it is a place of soft colors, soft carpets and curtains, and with the pictures that mean more to one's self than to any one else in the world.

We recall a boudoir which was a small room whose floor was laid in a carpet of an indistinct figure, where the colors and outlines blended with one another like stuff that has "run" in the washing, although of a somewhat chintz-like pattern. The wall, then, from cornice to moulding, was hung with a chintz in paler tints, very nearly matching the idea of the carpet, arranged in fluted folds on a cord stretched along the sides of the room at top and bottom; from the top the chintz was stretched over the ceiling, still preserving its flutings, all of which met in the centre round the frosted silver knob from which hung silver chains holding a low lamp under a china shade that matched the prevailing tints and pattern. The two long windows, which opened on a balcony under outside awnings, had no drapery of any other sort than that furnished by the woven sprays of a wax plant and an ivy vine. Of course the chintz allowed no pictures; but, in defiance of the prohibition, it was puckered away opposite the windows just enough to frame a child's or a cherub's face that peeped through, and whose rosy cheeks and blue eyes were only in too much accord with the salmon pinks and Nile blues of the chintz. The davenport and table were of ebonized wood; the rest of the furniture was rattan; there was a guitar in one corner, a light cast on a pedestal in another, a straw work-basket piled with bright wools; and the whole place was like a little nest cradled in sunshine and flowers and leaves, and charming as a place could be without an atom of repose about it. Nevertheless, nothing could be more dangerous than such a room for all the chances of fire; and for this reason its owner never pretended to light the pretty lamp there, and if she used it after nightfall, used it for reveries in the dusk. It was heated through a register in the floor.

Of course no such furnishing would be suitable for the room when used as the family sitting-room. In that room lamps, or candles, or gas must be burned, and there is a great deal of wear to which everything is subjected; so that fancy gives way there to utility. Here, then, colors and fabrics that will endure are to be chosen, and articles of furniture that will not fall to pieces before the assaults of little tumbling and climbing legs. But it is not to be taken for granted that because the room has now become the family sitting-room, not open to all the world, therefore its appearance is a matter of secondary consequence, and anything will do here that will not do elsewhere. It is the home room, the inner shrine, and it must be as agreeable to the soul and senses as skill can make it, for here natures will be formed and here memories will return. And it is even desirable, whenever the purse allows, that the outfit should be just fine enough to make the children now and then aware that they are ladies and gentlemen, even if occasional lapses into native animalism do make refurnishing necessary once in a while.

There are English decorative papers, to be had of any dealer in the larger cities at very easy prices, for the walls of this sitting-room; none of the satin-faced glaring papers covered with stripes or bunched about in bouquets, but those where geometric arabesques, or else the interwoven figures of idealized boughs and branches on idealized backgrounds, make the very walls objects of beauty. Here, certainly, the carpet should not cover the entire floor — in order that it may be the more frequently and easily removed and shaken, and put altogether out of the way for certain games of the children. There should be a low broad lounge, not too good for little boots to kick; large low tables with books and work; good *secrétaires*, with lights and inkstands and sketching-boards; comfortable seats and hassocks; an especially easy chair for the head of the house when he honors the place with his slippered presence; cheerful pictures; and if used at all as a school-room, as when the children are taught at home, globes, piano, a canterbury for loose music, and stands to hold a pair of huge slates folding like a portfolio: with all this some vivid dashes of color, a Japanese scroll or two to take the young fancy travelling, a hospitable hearth, some growing plants, plenty of sunshine, and always neatness, if not always order. Further refinements, but none ever too fine for free and daily use, will be added here according to the power or the wisdom of the furnisher. For it will require but little experience to recognize that this room should always be a pleasant and inviting one, both as to outlook and interior, since here a good portion of the family life passes, and the children are more apt to remember it as the nucleus of home than rich dining-room or splendid parlors, or even the mother's room itself. It is a place where, in large measure, early surroundings help to create life-long prejudices and tastes, and the love of beauty should be fed and nurtured and satisfied here as much as in the most superb saloons, for the ability to do that is not at all a question of cost, but of knowledge and time and skill.

Not seldom, however, it is the dining-room which is used as the family sitting-room. But although that is a pleasant place to loiter in, it is but a poor plan, when it can be avoided, to use it for any but its own purposes. The maid coming in to lay the cloth for dinner or tea creates an undesirable confusion; books and work are in danger of being soiled by unfit neighborhood; and on occasions when the children are not wanted in the dining-room, there is no convenient place for their retirement. Besides, the care which the very great majority of American mothers take of their children makes the sitting-room almost a nursery, or else obliges it to adjoin the night nursery, and that is out of the question in a dining-room of even the least pretension.



Settee in Modern Gothic.

It is, therefore, when the space can be afforded in the house, and on winter days the extra fire can be had to warm it, better to have a sitting-room for general family use separate from dining-room and parlors; and where there is not ground-room enough, it will be found nearly as convenient, and much more private, when up a flight of stairs, than when on the same floor with the hall-door. Privacy is, after all, a requisite of this room, where circumstances often oblige one to be in a very demi-toilet, and where, let the house-maid do her duty ever so thoroughly, there is likely to be more or less litter of the hour. It should be a room nice enough for the girl's embroidery to be about in it, and not so nice that the boy's carving would be unbearable rubbish there; a room to be kept so that the boys shall always remember that there stands the mother's throne, and that the girls can always make a little brighter to welcome the father; a room that should be made sacred to smiles, a happy room for shelter, no matter what gayety, or trouble, or confusion goes on in the house elsewhere; a room that is the very antipodes, in short, of the boudoir in its original uses: since the latter, in spite of its beauty and its comforts, meets but a selfish need, but the other opens its doors in self-abandonment till sybaritic enjoyment of solitude and a novel is lost in the life of the household.

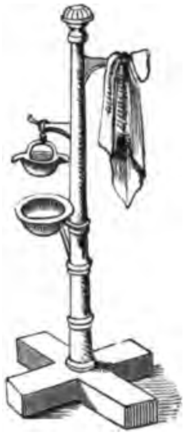
XXXIII.

THE BEDROOM.

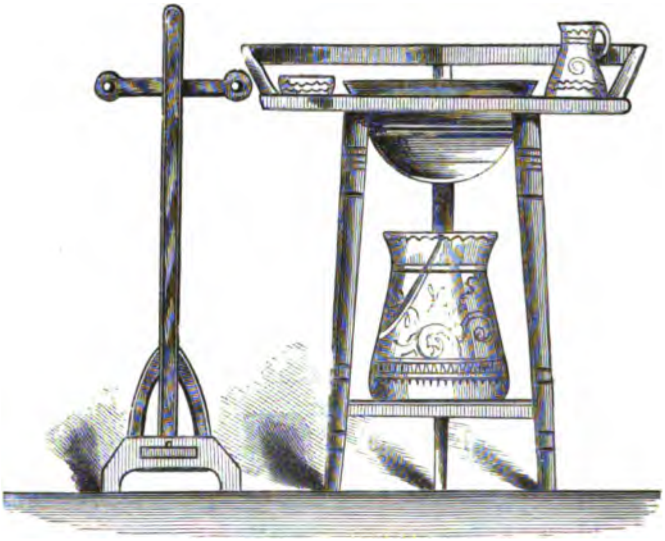
THE first thing to be attended to in a bedroom is the possession of good air, for we are singularly liable to lie oblivious and submit to the slow murder that poisons the blood in most sleeping-rooms. If we are building our own house, we shall secure this by having the rooms of the sleeping floors loftier than those below, and by hanging our windows there so that they will let down from the top. The next consideration is to obtain sunshine, for it is best to have the sun in every sleeping-room during some portion of the day; and care in orienting the house to this end, rather than heedlessly facing it just as its neighbors face, can always secure this sun. Old wisdom has already found out the advantage:

> "Dove non entra il sole,
> Entra il dottore."

After these two essentials of the comfort of the bedchamber have been dismissed, proper attention to the floor is as important on the score of health; and we should see that it is either of hard wood polished, or of common spruce ornamentally painted round the edges, so that the carpets need to be little more than rugs, and yet shall keep the place comfortable to the feet. The best parts of the Brussels that has had its day downstairs, with a plain border of felt or baize, make very good and useful chamber carpets to those who wish to avoid expense.


A Mediæval Washing-stand.

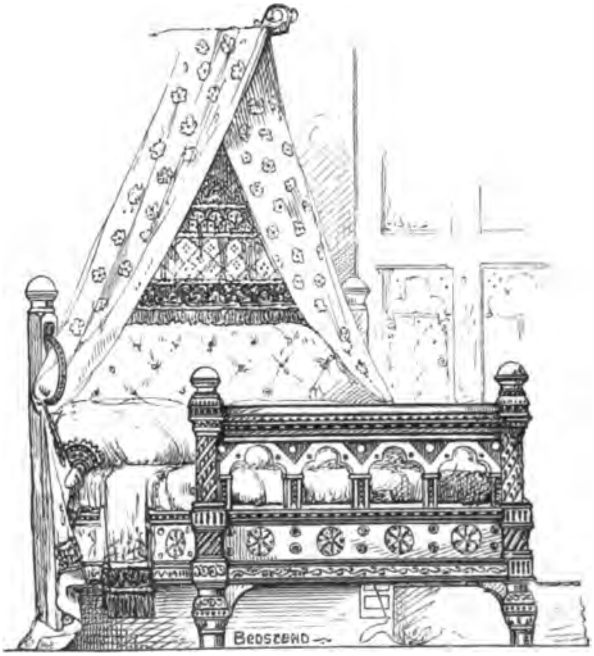
The next thing to be remembered in the bedroom is the wall. There has been a great deal said about the necessity of having a pattern of paper or stencil there which shall not be likely to torment the eye of a fevered patient, as every sleeping-room is liable to be also at some time a sick-room. But we feel assured that there is no pattern to be devised by the ingenuity of man which the eye of a sick person cannot torture into any fantastic shape that suits his heated brain; and so we think we had better secure beauty for our healthy moments, and leave it to work its own especial charm upon our sick ones. "Variety of form and brilliancy of color in the objects presented to patients," says Florence Nightingale, "are actual means of recovery."



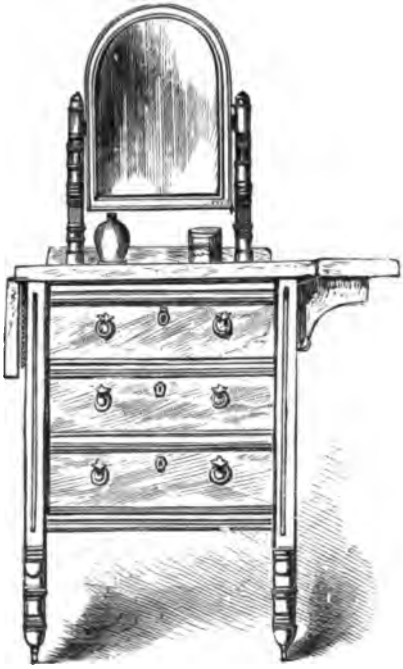
Oxford Washing-stand.

The aspect of the bedroom in regard to the points of the compass may perhaps determine us a little in our choice of colors there, other things being equal. If it is a south room, in which the sunshine falls freely, we do not wish to add to that illumination, but prefer, while deriving all the benefit of its presence, somewhat to tone down its dazzle. The violets and deep blues and reds all absorb heat, while white does not. Thus we will not put a deep violet or a red shade on our southern chamber, but will reserve them to warm the chill sides of the north rooms, and use on our southern walls those tints that are white just off color, with the cool gray-greens and sea-blues, never using anywhere the bright apple-greens, into which the poison of copper and arsenic enters so freely as to be able to disperse itself into the system of the sleeper. The virulence of this poison was shown us experimentally the other day, when a friend of ours had found a rat dead at the foot of a bordering of rich green velvet paper which he had been nibbling. Other papers of the undecided tints, the figure, so far as it may be called a figure, being composed of varying shades of the same color, giving an atmospheric softness under the one general bloom-color, are excellent for bedrooms, and in general any light paper there is better than any dark one. If the rooms are low, and are already provided with a wooden moulding or cornice under the ceiling, a paper border may be dispensed with; but if there is no cornice, some sort of a border is necessary to complete the wall; but it is to be used only at top and bottom, and not down the sides at the corners of the room. If the room is high-studded enough to permit it, the lower portion of the paper may be a close diaper or arabesque set between narrow and precise edges, and above that a border, some foot and a half in depth, of freer design—branches of leaves, wheat-ears, and corn-flowers blowing in the wind, and other natural representations; sometimes even of natural life, as the flashing of hawks' wings and herons', and the half-guessed leaping of hounds through the brakes, the effect being novel and not unpleasant, and, in case of sickness, amusing rather than fatiguing the patient's eye, with some likelihood of finally inducing sleep as the eye wanders along the track of the pattern. Under this treatment the pictures of the room will be hung upon the diapered portion suspended from nails in its narrow upper edging, and there will be the brackets for such busts and statuettes as adorn the place.

The wood-work of the room is best painted in two or three tints of the same color as the paper, possibly a little more decided, unless it is a harmonizing hard wood, which, however, is unlikely to be the case.


Modern Gothic Bedstead.

For furniture, the article of first importance in a bedroom is naturally the bed. It has been the habit, since the days when the bedroom was almost a room curtained off from the great hall, to have the bed a large and prominent object. We have seen what a splendid erection it became in the days of the Renaissance, and we do not know why it should now be stripped of all its stateliness. There is always a little fluctuating fashion about all articles in the cabinet-makers' shops. Yesterday they sold you the bedstead with the high head-board as the style, to-day they sell it with the low one, and to-morrow the pendulum of change will swing back again. But here again fashion has no more right to intrude than it has to intrude upon the foundations of the house. Out of regard to its ancestry, to the safety of the pillows, and to the security of the sleeper from draughts, the head-board of the bed should always be high; and the bed being the chief thing for which the bedroom exists, it should be made evident that it is the chief thing. It is throwing away words to say that a bed is just as comfortable whatever its shape. A bed is not as comfortable if the pillows are forever slipping off backward, or are obliged to lean against the wall, liable to receive stains from the paper, and to become the highway of spiders and other wall vermin, or if there is nothing to cut off the air that passes from window to door or chimney, in spite of the best of carpenters. Nor, again, is it so comfortable as it might be if the foot-board rises so high as to shut off any view of any portion of the room; and nothing is so maddening to patients as the smuggling of secrets among the nurses behind the shelter of the high foot-board. Long use has determined the best balance of parts for the bedstead, and fashion should have no more to do with it than to mould those existing parts into the shape of the separate styles. A broad, long, low bed, with plenty of light coverings and soft and hard pillows, is the best to be had—undue height giving a sense of insecurity. There should be, in complete equipment, a pretty down *duvet* tossed on the white quilt, and a little case for the night-dress, of ornamental work matching the color of the other fittings, if color is used. If one desires a slight hanging of curtains suspended from an arrow in the cornice and falling behind the head-board and at either side of the head, still more surely to exclude draughts, it is both admissible and ornamental. On the floor beside the bed a large white lamb's-wool mat is a very pleasant thing both to the feet and vision. The wood-work of the bed is at the buyer's choice, but simplicity is best in its ornamentation, using rather

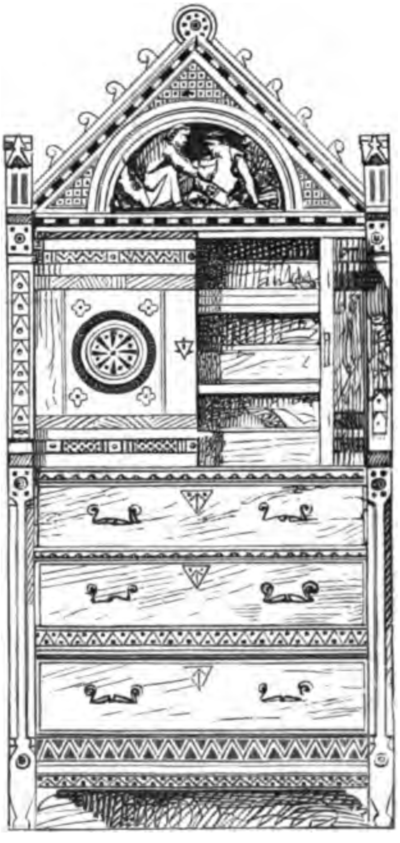


Modern Gothic Dressing-table.

a few noble outlines than any great amount of rich detail—the rich detail, moreover, lending itself with such wonderful ease to nightmares and delirium that it sometimes seems as if the spirit of evil were in the designer. Nothing, for instance, could be closer to the most fearful delirium than the writhings and contortions of the gods and dragons and demons in the miraculous carving of some of the Japanese bedsteads. Brass bedsteads are now in much use, made of brass rods in a simple open filigree, and they are strong and clean and handsome; the shape, of course, in all varieties. It is these varieties of shape for which one is called to pay more than for the material of the construction.

The curtains of the windows of the bedroom must be of some washable material—of chintz, of the more delicate muslins—and if of the white or dotted muslin, with a ribbon inserted in the broad hem; under these, white linen shades.

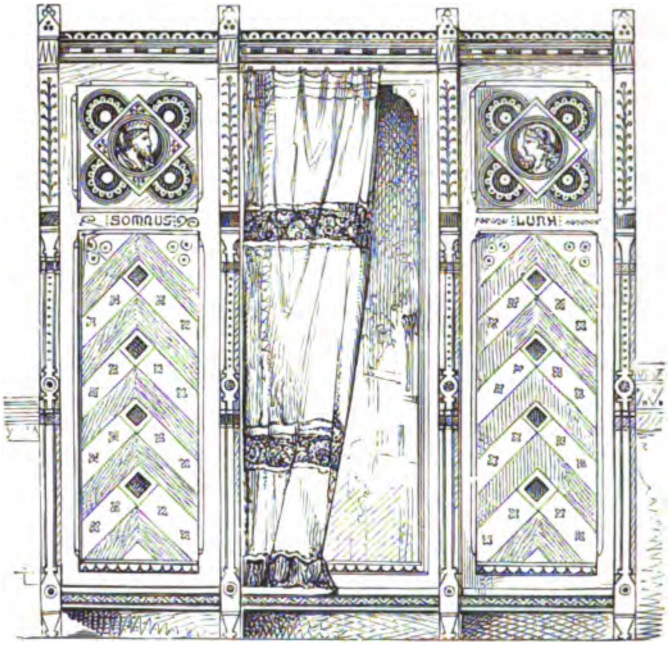
The next requisite of the bedroom is a long glass, preferably a swinging cheval-glass, for the bedroom is usually the dressing-room, and even when it is not, a mirror is a necessity. Sometimes the mirror in the dressing-case is quite sufficient. It should always hang between the windows, that light may be thrown on the object to be reflected. In England, particularly in London lodging-houses, it is a frequent custom to stand the small chest of drawers with the glass on it—it is never called a bureau there, by-the-way—directly against a window, probably with an idea of securing the light around its sides and over the top, although the result is not fortunate, and the outside appearance is very unfortunate.



Modern Gothic Deal Chest of Drawers.

A lounge is a necessary appurtenance of the bedchamber, in order to spare the bed in the daytime; and there must be easy-chairs and footstools, toilet-table and wash-stand and service, unless there is a dressing-room for these; and a loftier chest of drawers with its innumerable compartments and its bronzed handles—brass, if the bedstead be of brass

—is of great value. The brasses of an open fireplace will always increase the lightness and brightness of the room; and an open fireplace there should be in every bedroom where it is practicable, for purposes of ventilation, for taking the chill off the air in excessively cold weather, and for use in sickness—a rug, of course, lying before it. Muslin curtains, suspended from a pretty ornament close beneath the ceiling, falling and parting over the toilet-table, are a pleasant finish to that article, and have been in use for hundreds of years; they save the glass from dust and specks, and are drawn before it, according to ancient usage, on occasion of a death in the family. The wash-stand, if it has a marble top, should be fitted with soft covers to prevent breakage and noise; the wooden top is better in some respects, but it soon looks very bad from the soap-and-water stains. There should be a washable square of carpet of some thick white material, bound with the same color as the carpet or the general tint or contrast of the room, under the foot or tin bath; and the china of the wash-stand and the toilet-table should be of one pattern. A protection to the wall from splashing is generally made with ornamental muslins and ribbons; but others prefer to paper about the wash-stand with the thick tile papers which can be spattered without injury, and are almost indestructible. If there is no dressing-room, a screen is a very de-



Modern Gothic Wardrobe.

sirable part of the bedroom furniture, of sufficient height and number of valves to completely enclose the person behind it. This screen may be made up at home, with the help of a carpenter, in a simple frame like that of a common clothes-horse, although with exceedingly slender sticks and long and narrow leaves, and with stout cotton or silk stretched over it; on this base all sorts of pictures and bits of color are to be carefully arranged with gum-arabic, the interstices painted in with bright flowers and butterflies and birds' wings, the whole afterward sized over and varnished in a suitable tone.

In addition to all this, if there should be no closet, there must be a wardrobe, but it is best in a recess; and if there is any room left, a little rack for books, with a simple writing-desk beneath it, will be found a great convenience. As for the pictures in the bedroom, they will usually be those that have some especial value to us independently of their beauty.

XXXIV.

THE LIBRARY.

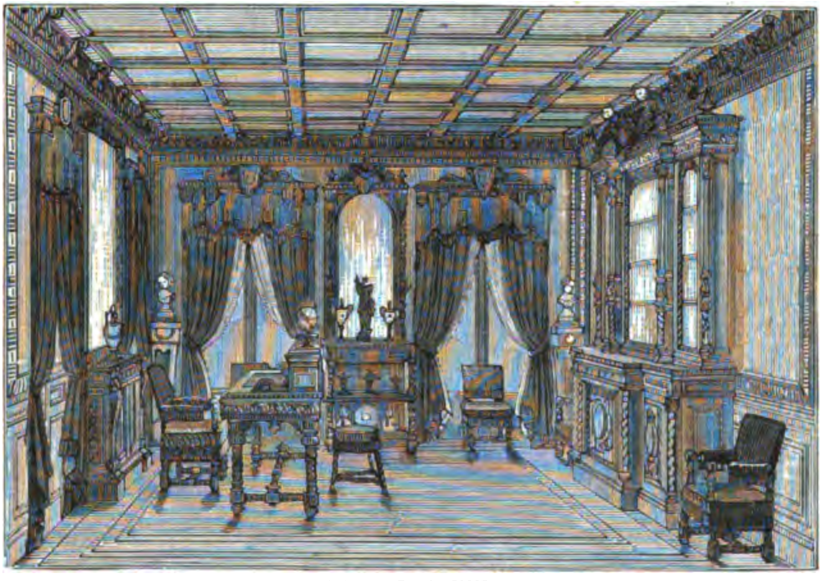
AS soon as we have collected books enough to be in the way elsewhere, and have any closet to hold them, we line that little place with shelves and call it the "library," and are then rather ashamed of ourselves, as if we were making a pretension and the whole thing were an affectation, and feel inclined to call it the study instead—the school-room, the office. Yet a library is as essential to every house where there is culture or refinement or reading as a parlor is; and if there is neither room nor means sufficient for a large one, there is no reason for going without because a small one is all there is to be had.

In many instances where the family is very fond of books and their belongings, the drawing-room is given up altogether, and the saloon devoted to the library, or the two are combined, with large concessions on the part of the drawing-room. But the little library as a mere writing-closet, apart from the drawing-room, a place to retreat to for a moment's quiet—a place in which to answer notes, to audit accounts—if it is smaller than Mr. Dick's room in Hungerford Market, is invaluable. And it gives a sort of dignity to the smallest style of house-keeping to have this altar, in whatever secluded corner or humble manner, set up within its walls.

Yet where it is possible it is best to treat the library with reverence. Here the masters of thought make rendezvous; here the fiery spirits of Milton and Byron entreat you; here Shakspeare makes you free of this world, and Dante of the other; here History brings you the past, and Science pours out her secrets, and here the great travellers of the earth sit down with you; here the gossipers of courts come and whisper to you behind their hands; and here the lesser monarchs, the crowned kings and emperors of nations, step down from their thrones now and then and become your familiars. One remembers the dignity of one's guests here, and one makes it a fit place for their reception. It is in this view, as well as in the proprieties of the surroundings of abstracted thought and studious occupation, that the library should be "in sober livery clad."

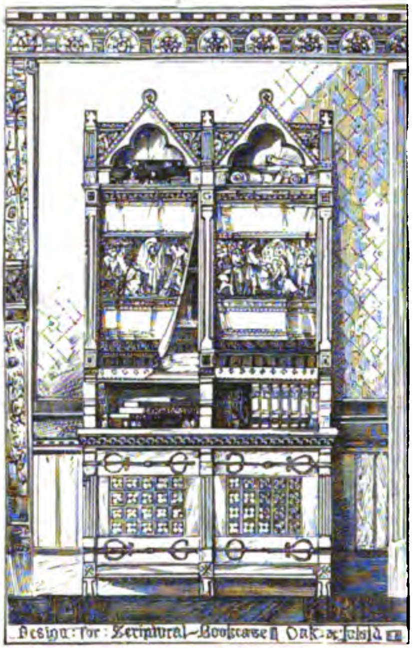
The color for a library, according to this idea, which seems to be the prevailing one, is, then, rather a sombre than a bright one—the soft wood colors, the deep purples or violets, or, better yet, the strong emerald greens and their darker shadows. As the part of the house chosen for it, whenever its location can be commanded, is on the northern or the north-western side, there is but little lightening of the main color with the daily action of sunshine; but the windows need to be large and long, giving that steady light where the student is not teased by sunshine on his books and papers, yet draped with shades and heavily hanging curtains in order that the light may be tempered on occasion to the eyes that frequent use obliges to be careful. The walls should harmonize, of course, with the dominant color wherever they are seen; and nothing has a pleasanter effect on them than a high dado of the thick and almost indestructible leather-paper which seems like the stuffed leather wainscots of generations since.

For the fitting of the book shelves and cases it will be found, wherever practicable, rather the best plan to have them built into the walls, especially if one owns the house; this saves trouble with the carpet, which then extends to the foot of the cases as to the wall of the room, where a carpet is used, and not the bare polished margin of floor with rugs; and there is then no giving-out of the shelves, or tilting of this or that support, or collecting of dust beneath them, as often happens with movable bookcases, and they can be made quite as handsome as the others. These cases may be either with or without doors; those with doors being, of course, the



Library, Louis XIII.

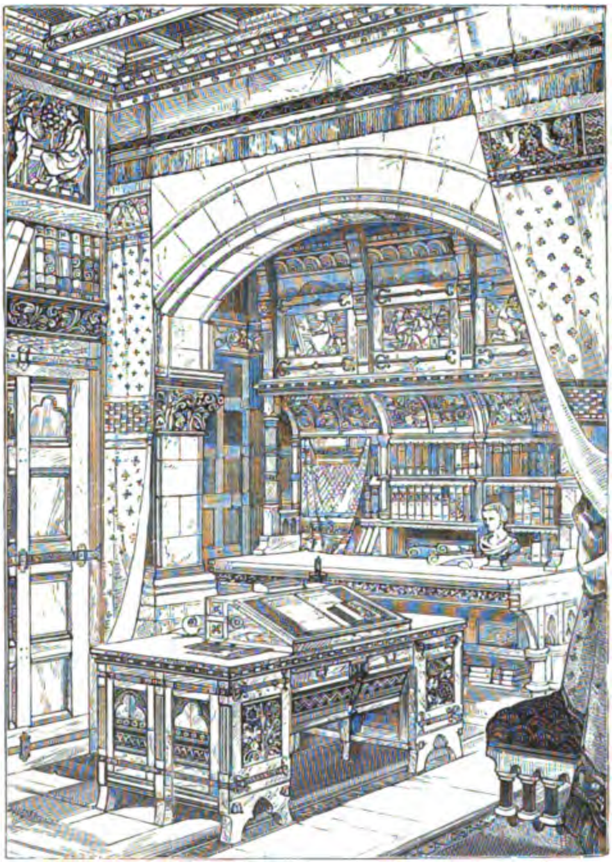
more expensive, and giving better protection to the books from dust and light and flies and heedless fingers. But the books seem more cold and remote thus shut away behind glass, and lose much of the friendly warmth and companionship which they wear when standing on their shelves invitingly open and handy. The glass doors of a bookcase, too, have a way of slurring off the light that is sometimes trying, and that hides a good deal of the charm presented by regular rows of books with the lettering and gilding of their backs—a charm not easily explained, but which may bear some relation to that love of banded ornament—that is, ornament running in parallel lines—which seems inherent among those races that have the most natural decorative ability. A little curtain of leather tacked on the face of the edge of the shelf above, and falling just over the top of the line of books beneath, affords nearly as much security as glass doors, and will be found a tolerably sufficient protection from dust. The leather can be easily procured in strips, and can be cut into scallops and pinked round the edges at any saddler's, and a bookbinder will stamp it with a line of gilding if desired. Some people have this little curtain in red leather, some in green and other colors; but we think the former too brightening for the character of the room, and it seems more suitable to have it either the plain color of calf-skin as usually dressed, or else stained the color of the shelves, with the tiny thread of gilding along the margin. Yet we have read of book-shelves valanced with green velvet fringed with gold.


Design : for : Scriptural—Bookcase in Oak

Modern Gothic Bookcase.

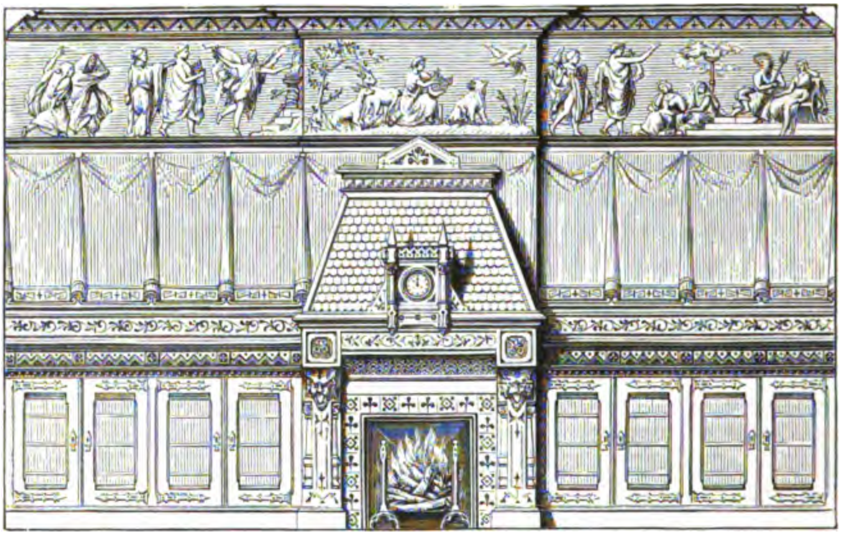
Fashion varies somewhat as to the shape of the bookcases: now it will have them from floor to ceiling; now they shall leave space enough between the top and the ceiling for at least a bust; now they shall be but shoulder-high, giving the remainder of the wall space to prints, paintings, and other ornaments. But this is a matter upon which fashion has no right to intrude. The library is the place for books, and books and their requirements make their own fashions. Ornaments, too, should be reserved for the rest of the house; the library needs little other than that presented by the backs of the books and by the necessities of the apparatus for writing and reading. There are great and stately libraries where the curiosities collected by the various generations of the family, and still preserved, are stored—the old chests, bits of armor, weapons of any noted use, certain heirlooms, and interesting objects of one sort and another; but in some of these instances the room is large enough for a gallery, and in others the license of ownership takes advantage of the place.

In general, the use of pictures in the library is to be very sparing, and restricted in subject, so that whatever is represented there shall be in harmony with the purposes of the room. The space over the mantel is always ready for a picture, for a mirror hung there would be something foreign to the library and to all its uses; and the mantel-shelf itself affords a place for any bronzes or vases one may like, and for a clock, which is a



Modern Gothic Library.

very essential thing in a library of practical use. Busts, however, in niches, on brackets, and on pedestals, are welcome additions, for they seem to people the room with the illustrious shapes proper to it, as if poets and gods visibly haunted the place of thought; and here and there bronzes may remind you of a time when some artist first dreamed of a god's figure dark between him and the sky.



Library, with low Shelves.

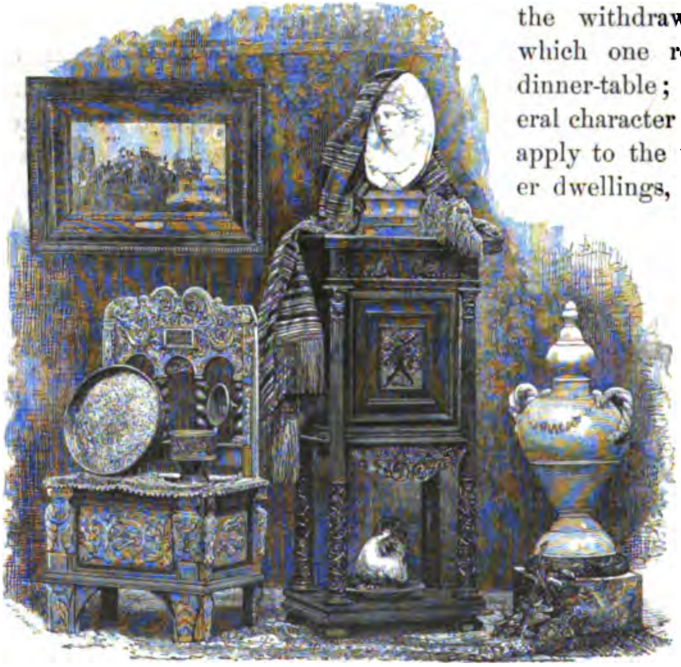
Bass-reliefs, too, are more appropriate in their light and shade than the diversity of color in much painting; a map is often indispensable in some odd corner, and we suppose a foot or so of space must be conceded to a pipe-rack. For the rest, the pieces of furniture in themselves are rather ornamental than otherwise: the desk and its lamps; the steps; the little temporary three-sided bookcase moving about on casters; the lectern that holds the books in use beneath its reading and writing shelf; the heavy table with its requisite paraphernalia of pen-trays, paper-knives, mucilage-receiver, and barrel of string; the portfolio-stands; the great globes; possibly a cabinet for minerals and things of that nature; the comfortable chairs and foot-rests. With a good fire and a bright hearth, whose steels are never rusty, this library, in all its grave and quiet dress, may be found the pleasantest room in the house.

XXXV.

DRAWING-ROOM.

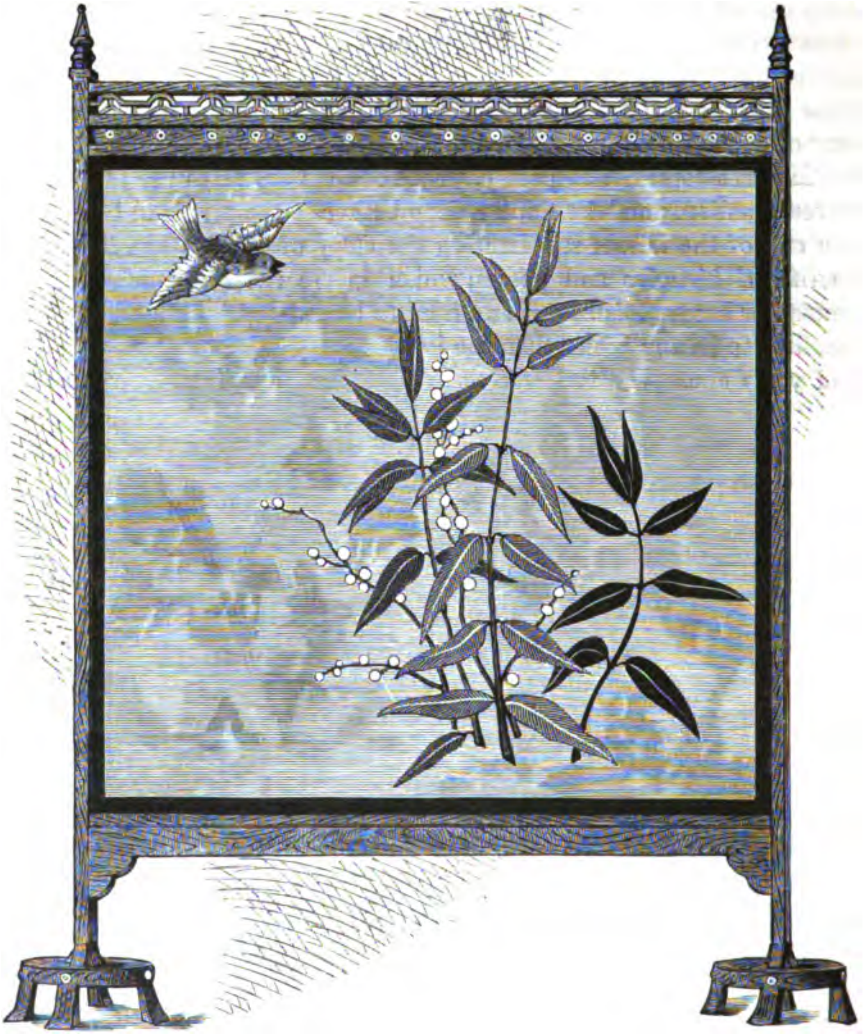
THERE is no reason for simplifying or abating the splendor of the drawing-room but the insufficiency of one's purse. Whatever of light, airy elegance and beauty is within the power of the furnishers of the house should be lavished on it. Solid wealth and comfort belong to the dining-room, but as soft and gay a beauty is demanded for the other as can be imagined and procured. Even were it not for the desired warmth and substantiality of the deep tints in the dining-room, yet the use and nature of that room suggest rather its dress in what the poets call the strong male colors, leaving the delicate tints for the more feminine character of the drawing-room. As we have before had occasion to remark, facts concerning the origin of every room should have weight in its general furnishing; and while the library may be considered to be born of the lord's "solar," the drawing-room is the result of the first separation of the lady's chamber from the great hall, even if it does not in some measure represent the gynæcium of the ancients, and is therefore essentially one of the feminine apartments; and if it were not so in its history, it is so, at any rate, in its daily employment and occupancy. Hence the preference for delicate tints. Not that they are an absolute requirement though, for there are delightful drawing-rooms on record furnished in quite the opposite; and probably we have all envied a certain lovely drawing-room in a recent novel, where the groundwork of the carpet was nothing less than black. Yet even there, if we remember rightly, the *couleur de rose* of the rest was illuminated by numberless mirrors and much gilding, by quantities of pink china, quaint lamps, and all the pretty glittering *bijouterie* in the world. Every one, of course, in choosing the colors of the drawing-room will suit some special fancy or some necessity of complexion—a family of pale and sallow people not being able to have a great amount of green about them, for example, and a very rosy lady being quite unwise to surround herself with the ruddier colors. Yet if complexion does not enter into the question, the peach blooms, the tender blues, the ethereal greens of winter sunsets, are charming in fine drawing-rooms; and gold-colored satin, being in itself a thing of most extreme lustre, supplies a happy sunshine when clouds are gray. Yet upon the walls these colors can hardly be given in their crude primaries, but must rather be suggested by combination of tertiary tints, which in the hands of artists project, as it were, the desired color; and in selecting our papers we will frequently find that one which has not a line of the color in it that we wish, at a little distance produces precisely the effect of that color upon eye and mind.

Of course, in speaking of the drawing-room, we refer more particularly to the large and handsome saloon for the reception of guests that belongs to large and handsome houses, the withdrawing-room into which one retires from the dinner-table; but in their general character our remarks will apply to the parlors of smaller dwellings, if the furnisher bears in mind that the object in either room is to obtain the elegant and light effect—an effect which excludes the idea of anything but enjoyment in the place—the very word "parlor" signifying a place for conversation.


Walnut Cabinet, Henri II.; Alabaster Medallion, Head of Amazon (Italian), Sixteenth Century; Carved Oak Chair, Henri Quatre; Faience Vase, Moustier.

In the use of delicate tints for the drawing-room, the dark hard wood finishing there is frequently unsuitable, although with gold-color, or rose, or the robin's-egg blue, black lacquer is effective; but the choice lies with a lighter finish—the satin-woods, the creamy polished maples, the pearl-gray stained maples, and others of the sort—for wainscot and cornice, doors and window-frames, and for the mantel, according to ancient and elegant usage, since there are few more delightful things in any room than some of these woods nobly fashioned and finely carved in the mantel. It frequently happens, however, that the wainscot and cornice and dado are not in wood at all except for the skirting-board round the floor, but are represented by paper-hangings of varying but harmonizing colors and patterns, the portion between dado and frieze being broader than the others, and of softer tint. There are many papers issued now of the soft new combinations of color, which have just that slight peculiarity in tone and pattern that Morris's verse has in poetry, whose designs are all either idealized or conventionalized; and we think a deep border of the sort is in better taste than any of the friezes representing the story of Middle-age legends or the life of histories and poems, which injure the effect of paintings, bronzes, or bass-reliefs below, and need to be most artistically designed or stencilled to be any better than the insufferable landscape paper of a hundred years ago. Without any doubt, it is in incomparably better taste than the classic friezes with which some of the modern Gothic reproducers ornament their walls, and portions of which, in medallion, may frequently be seen making anachronisms of their various articles of furniture, although with reasons satisfactory to themselves. On the middle portion of the papering, which corresponds to the old panelled wainscot, the pictures are to be hung; and care must be taken that they are not simply spotted round the room at convenient intervals, but that they are arranged with a purpose; not only with an eye to the best light for the picture itself, but also to its work in the *tout ensemble* of the room, which must not be suffered to have a patchy or scrappy look. Sameness can be avoided only by breaking up the room into parts, never losing sight in the mean time of their ultimate union, and after each separate part has been well treated, reuniting them in a whole. The patchy look is prevented by arranging the furniture with a view to masses, and then combining the masses themselves with a view to harmony; that is, where the heavier objects, such as cabinets or pianos, tables or davenports, and the darker paintings, make a place of deep shadow, that place must be balanced by another having relation to it, and must be relieved by lights —by the bare wall surface, by gilded articles, by marbles, by the delicate window drapery; and masses and shadows can always be created by the tall and slender dark articles flanked, immediately or by the foreshortening of the view, by smaller ones.

The carpet of the drawing-room is perhaps as great a puzzle as the house presents. By common consent it has usually been some elaborate floral piece in Brussels or Wilton or Axminster, which on every true principle is an abomination to the eye; all the more so when, as it frequently happens, pedestals, urns, cherubs, ribbons, busts, and baskets, and bits of sky between, are thrown with a liberal hand among these roses the size of cabbages. This carpet is an atrocity, and its design should be replaced



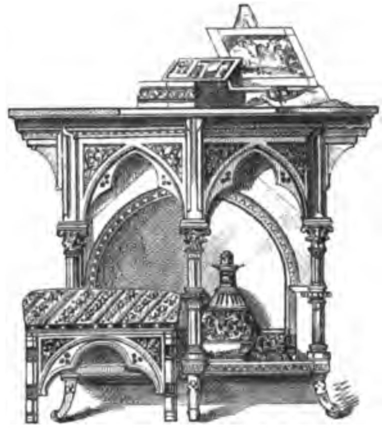
Screen designed by Princess Helena.

by the small arabesques; by the mossy mottlings, although they are not altogether noble enough for a room of any size; by interwoven shapes that are not exactly floral or leafy, but look as if they might have dropped out of the material when the leaves and flowers were cut; or by the India patterns, which, although they usually come in the very pronounced deep colors, can be had in the lighter shades. A light carpet, however, is not absolutely indispensable to a light effect otherwise, it will be understood. The only carpet of floral design that can be allowed at all, and that but questionably, is the Aubusson tapestry, which is a work of art itself, and which, with its imitations perfect and delicate as water-color painting, when brilliantly lighted, under circumstances of great gayety, plays a part in the scene, and represents sufficiently well the flowers strewn at the feet of the bride. But people are not going to buy princely carpets to use at one wedding and roll up and put away for another; and if the Aubusson is a work of art, it may be said that its place is not under the feet. An Axminster carpet, woven in one piece, except for a border, of soft shades and conventional and rather unnoticeable pattern, is the one to be most generally chosen; and those made in this country under that name are quite as good as those made abroad, and, sooth to say, quite as dear. But a Brussels, were it not for the lines of the several seams, would be of as much use, and is preferred by some feet to the tufted stuffiness of the other.

For the windows, shades of fluted silk of a creamy white, under lace curtains, soften the light like ground glass, and are pleasant where the outside view is not desired. If other curtains are added, they are best of a silk corresponding with the carpet as much as may be, and combining the agreeing or contrasting shades of the coverings of the furniture, running under a lambrequin on a gilded rod rather than hung in those festoons whose folds accumulate dust and streaks of discoloration from unequal light. But it is possible that the drawing-room is the place to remember the transparent nature of windows, and that lace drapery is all-sufficient to those windows.

The seats of the drawing-room must be deep and luxurious ones, whatever be the style of their wood-work; and there must be varying chairs of the light fanciful kind, easily moved about, with one or two of the black lacquer and straw chairs, and those whose gilded rods give brightness; while sofas, lounges, chairs, ottomans, and all their sort, with the circular divan and its round tufted back where there is room for it, and various footstools and hassocks, inviting the lingerer, are to be provided in profusion.

Unless one has a separate music-room, there is to be a piano in the drawing-room; and although we are all so much attached to our own pianos, in our pleasure over the soft gleaming of the black and white keys, and our feeling that they are like sentient beings and personal friends, that we seldom think of them as objects of beauty or otherwise, yet in reality there is hardly anything uglier and more elephantine than the modern piano, whether grand or square. The upright piano has its possibilities, but it is objectionable on the score of requiring the singer, when playing the accompaniment, to face the wall in singing; but the old-fashioned clavichord, with its shallow, curving, prettily panelled and inlaid sides and its slender legs, was something to please the eye, while the very construction of the modern square and grand piano requires substantial supports to its weight, and makes it bad. Illustrations have already been given of a Louis Treize upright piano, magnificent with inlaid work of lapis lazuli, pearl, and jasper, and of a Gothic one bristling with Flemish carving; and as the *exigeante* prima donna to whom the situation of the instrument is of vital consequence is too seldom a guest of the general drawing-room to be considered, one may prefer to attend in this matter to the beauty that feeds the daily eye, rather than to the possibility of a voice that may never be lifted within the doors.


Modern Gothic Drawing-room Table and Stool.

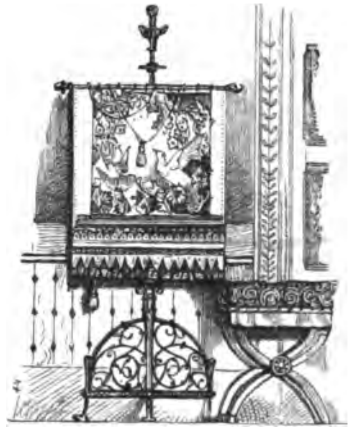
The shape of the centre-table, whether round, oval, or oblong, is at the option of the furnisher, although it might be thought that the oblong table was best suited to the oblong room. While the round table has been common in all, most of the very beautiful tables of the grand styles have been in the oblong shape. Yet there seems to be something more friendly about the round table, with its greater convenience, than about the other, provided it is generously large and comfortably low. Still, it will probably be found that the contiguous pieces of furniture have something to do in determining the shape; and in small rooms a centre-table is best dispensed with altogether, side-tables answering all purposes not met by a little guéridon or tripod for a lamp. The side-tables may be pier-tables with mirrors, half-moons, or mere consoles, and they are very necessary in filling too naked space between windows or on the blank wall, or in smaller size standing here and there to support some trifle or answer some need.

The mirrors are another important feature of this room, for, banished from the library, and of disputed right in the dining-room, they fall back on the drawing-room and on the boudoir as upon strongholds, and all the lightness and brightness that has been built up in the place it is their province to reduplicate, while they enlarge space and seem to add society, and give, whether sensibly recognized or not, some of their own magical atmosphere to the scene they reflect. It is not only the long and large mirrors that are of service in the drawing-room, but the tiny bevelled mirrors of curious shapes set in curious frames either of carved wood or old brass and silver, and with cup-shaped candlesticks or sconces underneath. These little mirrors and girandoles are immensely illuminating, and if wisely distributed, so as not to bring a blot of lustre in the wrong place, increase the brilliancy of the room.

Producing almost as instant result as the little bevelled mirrors is the gayly colored china platter, pierced and hung upon its hook, and often doing more than any picture in positive decoration and supply of a piece of needed color. One need not speak of such things as pedestals with their marbles and casts, the antique vases or their imitations, the brackets, the jardinières, the vases and stands of flowers, and all the thousand and one momentous trifles. They are things of course, and according to one's purse and education; but we may say that the lamps should be as varied and choice as the artist has designed, that if gas is used, the chandeliers must be mere coronas as light as jewellery, and that wax-candles are pleasanter than either.

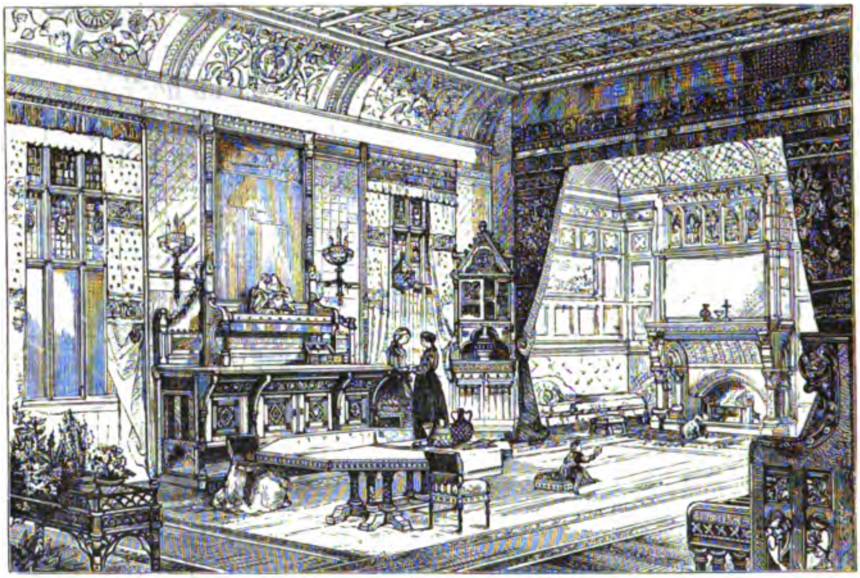
The mantel-piece of the drawing-room is always to be its most elaborate and beautiful point, giving the key-note, as it were, of the rest of the room, and care must be expended on its scenic capabilities—its ornaments few but majestic and splendid, its dignity completely maintained. It is not necessary that the fireplace should be large—it is only to toast a lady's feet; but the fire furniture, although kept shining, must not be too richly wrought, except the little gilt fan screen, which is almost a fire in itself. The coal-hod need not remain in the room, if coal is used; and if wood burns on the hearth, shovel and tongs and andirons should not be too fine to use. In summer, flowers will replace the whole.

The customary folding-screen is valuable for its effect, both through its beauty and its use in breaking a space, and it affords opportunity for the exercise of fancy, with gilded glass, with peacock plumes and velvet, with frames of finely woven brass wire, or with panels of embroidery. Almost as valuable is the easel, and its beauty and convenience were recognized hundreds of years ago, as finely carved specimens of the early Renaissance still exist to tell us. The last pictorial acquisition leaning on the easel, open to study, gives a pleasant addition, and calls up thoughts of something more than a mere idle drawing-room, after all.



Modern Gothic Drawing-room Screen and Stool.

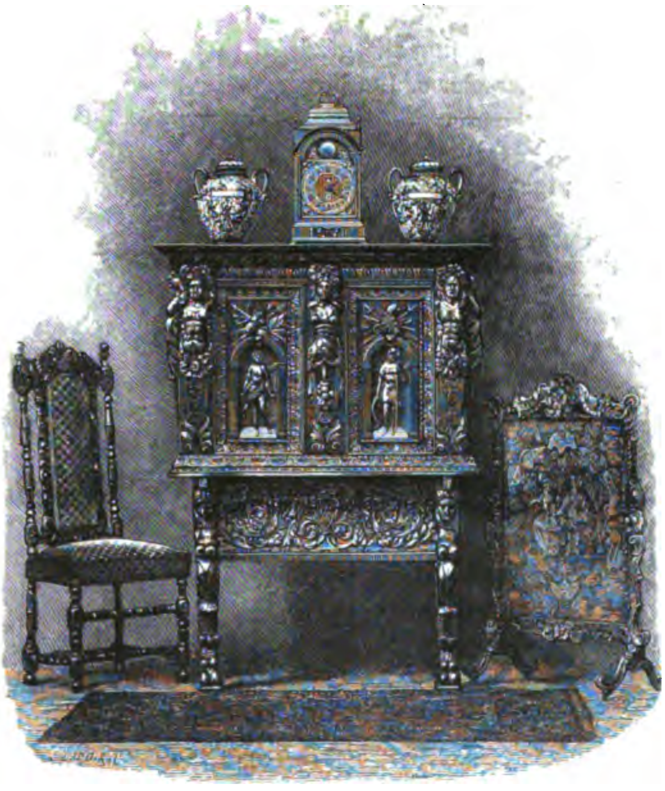
The davenport, the étagère, the corner shelves, all help to fill the room and give it the air of occupancy and use and agreeable life. Provided there is space to move about, without knocking over the furniture, there is hardly likely to be too much in the room.



Modern Gothic Drawing-room.

As important a piece as any, though, is the cabinet, partly drawers, partly doors, partly open shelves. Always to be of fine workmanship, but not too much variegated itself, with faience plaques and fringed curtains and gay leathers, and in character with the wood-work of the chief furniture, it receives and keeps secure all the little treasures that belong nowhere else — choice minerals perhaps, atoms of priceless china, the too precious album, historical relics, trophies of travel, little dainty curios and fragile things that may have fallen into one's possession, now and then to be displayed. From its height and breadth the cabinet is the main piece of furniture in the room, and is capable of vastly adding to or diminishing the desired character. It is almost impossible to have it of any lightness in the Gothic; in the Renaissance the artist naturally takes to lightness and grace and the superficial charm that becomes the drawing-room; but if it must be in the Gothic, some light gilt cresting and lattice-work, and guards to hold insecure articles in position, lend it a more suitable appearance. The little hanging cabinet, with its open shelves at top and bottom, and its enclosed ones behind tiny doors of plate-glass or of gay porcelain, must not be forgotten, in its place, for although so small, it is one of the most charming objects of furniture we have.

These things are the appurtenances of wealthy drawing-rooms. Yet we have seen drawing-rooms with the carpet threadbare; with the hopelessly marred furniture hidden beneath delicate chintz; vines draping the windows and the tarnish of the old mirror; with home-painted china and water-colors; cheap tables covered with cloths embroidered by nimble fingers; screens where the scissors and paste-pot rivalled the Japanese; the one luxury of a fine piano, and a harp, most picturesque and poetical of shapes; and everywhere an abundance of books—drawing-rooms whose simplicity eclipsed the achievement of silk and velvet and gilding, and obtained the light effect proper to the place without the sacrifice of anything more costly than time and patience.



Walnut Armoire, on Italian Pedestal, Sixteenth Century; Screen in Tapestry, Louis XIV., Subject "The King and Mademoiselle de la Vallière."

XXXVI.

BRIC-À BRAC.

IT is the bric-à-brac, the curious trifles, the movable ornaments and gewgaws used for filling up the picture, for giving an enhanced brilliancy, and creating interest — the things that "notable housewives" call trash and trumpery—that have about as much to do with the impression a room conveys as the heavier articles and their arrangement do. Indeed, a few moments' observation in the drawing-room of any family will usually give much information concerning the grade of that family's culture by nothing more than the character of the bric-à-brac to be seen there.

To be sure, people of moderate means must take their ornaments as they can get them — this an heirloom to be preserved with pride, if not with admiration; that a gift, and to be treated with honor, whether desired or not, although too frequently purchased with reference only to the giver's eye, and without thought of its future surroundings—so that they are by no means responsible for the whole burden of their bric-à-brac. Yet almost every one can now and then find some small but characteristic treasure within reach, and that single characteristic thing, given due prominence, may be the one righteous individual of a perfect Sodom of worthless baubles. The absence of all trifles, though, is as betraying as the presence of inferior articles is, for if there is any evidence of much free expenditure elsewhere in the room, it is apt to show that articles sought for by the vulgar are in more esteem than those where sometimes one looks for beauty twice before finding it; and yet just as tale-telling is the presence of a multitude of the smaller affairs that have no especial value, for they declare a too eager love of acquisition and a less fastidious taste than full purse. The mere shape of a lamp shows whether people buy what their neighbors buy, or have any individual taste of their own to exercise, or give a thought to the matter of educating what we may call the æsthetic senses.

It is not for what they tell of us to outsiders, though, that we want our pretty trifles; they answer a requirement of our own, and give us a gratification that renews itself every time we look at them—not that of possession merely, but food for the appetite, given by the lovely outlines, the pure colors, and the precious histories drawn out of the past by the little thread they hold. Who can take up an ornament of old green-crusted bronze, dug from the earth that has covered it for two thousand years, without wondering to what purpose lived and died a people so perfect in the arts, and losing one's self in the problems of creation and the economies of the universe? Who can see a broken drinking-cup of glass, whose long decay and disintegration have coated it with richer dyes than the opal's, without wondering what bearded lips of mighty heroes last it kissed? Who can see a worn and blackened ring of Egyptian gold without thinking of the romance of two lovers that it bound in its magic circle, whose very dust no longer blows about the earth? And in the more modern articles, where no such story clings, who can take up the bronze bird poised lightly on his bending wheat-ear, or the china cup with its wreaths of blossoms, without bringing sunshine and all out-doors within the four walls of the house?

It is true that bric-à-brac costs money, and vastly more, in proportion, than the larger, more solid, and what the majority of the world considers the more indispensable, furniture, although there are some people so fond of the pride of the eye that they quite agree with the worthy economist who was willing to forego the necessaries of life if he could only have the luxuries, and will revel over the bit of wonderful bronze or curious china while they sit in a deal chair to enjoy it. But it may be that these people, in their turn, have a defect of taste in not demanding fit surroundings for their bit of china, and in enjoying beauty as a mere detail without requiring it as a whole.

It is these details, however, that go very far toward securing beauty as a whole; they supply a lack here, and give the dash of opposite or of continuing color just where it is needed, draw attention to a point there by adding the bit of lustre that brings a surface out of the gloom, and they engraft a life and vivacity upon what would frequently be but a dead dulness without them. In order to do this they do not need to be of the most costly description. If the little wooden bracket is cut upon artistic principles, it answers the purpose of general effect nearly as well as if Grinling Gibbons had carved it, although, of course, infinitely more desirable if informed with genius; and if it upholds a statuette whose subject is fine and treated with spirit, it is no matter whether that statuette be a copy or an original. Nor, indeed, does the material of the statuette or bust signify so much as we are accustomed to consider that it should; for if the work is good and the copy faithful, almost as much can be gained in the appearance of the room and in the personal pleasure of outline and proportion from a choice plaster cast that the master has superintended as from the real bronze; and in the unconscious action of the mind the owner gathers satisfaction from the knowledge of what is intended if not reached, and the beholder from perception of an atmosphere of thought and fancy where such a selection of subject is made. We do not, however, mean that any plaster cast can ever equal the perfection of the original, the sharp precision of the bronze, the transfigured splendor of the marble, but only to assert that the one will answer where the other cannot be had; and where the more precious materials are quite beyond one's power, that by careful search and by keeping on the lookout for them, very nice things in the plaster or the inferior metal composition will be found, and will give great contentment; for it is surprising how things of the sort turn up the moment we really begin to look for them. But one or two small bits of real bronze are hardly out of the reach of anybody who has a drawing-room to furnish at all; exquisite things in it are to be had in the San Francisco markets at small prices—inkstands of quaint and ingenious device, paper-weights, knives, Oriental gods; and many curious oddities are brought home, and can be had of those engaged in the East India and China trade.

Nor need we despise a little of our grandmother's old china because it is not Sèvres, or Capo-di-Monte, or Raffaelle ware. It is usually better than anything we are likely to be able to buy, if our incomes are at all circumscribed; and one of her best platters on the top of the cabinet will add a note to the chord we are trying to strike; one of her bowls, with its roses and butterflies, on a wall bracket beneath, will take up and carry down the flowers of the water-color that hangs above, and correct the spotty look such little pictures sometimes give. It is not uncommon now to find these odd pieces of china for sale with the dealers in old furniture in our large country towns; and if one takes pains to secure information from books or actual examples, one can sometimes bring that information to bear, and secure a piece of something really valuable. For our ancestresses, even in this country, did not so value the contents of their china closets for nothing; many of them, indeed, in tolerably comfortable circumstances at home, before they came here with their ambitious or restless husbands, and with relatives there to send them what they wished, brought out with them, or received afterward, as their proper equipage of house-keeping, china which then was valuable and now is invaluable. We have ourselves seen many precious pieces for sale for a mere song in the hands of these old dealers, who, with a general idea of what they can "make a trade on," travel round the country and inspect the contents of one farmer's house after another, and collect such available material as will be parted with by the wives, who, although they hold this or that thing as their last link with an ancient gentility, now need the money enough to be tempted by it. Perhaps it is not faience de Rouen, or Rennes, or Strasburg, or any of the priceless Italian majolicas; but it is not unlikely that it should be a bit of genuine Delft, and not absolutely impossible that it should be the early Bow, with the bee beneath the handle, or the Chelsea, its last owners utterly ignorant of its value; for in those later colonial days it was Oriental china that met the fashionable mania under royal patronage, and china of English and Dutch manufacture was used in whole sets upon the breakfast-table, a single piece of which we are now proud to have in our cabinet.

It is not to be denied that every woman loves china, and every man knows it, and perhaps in the depths of his inner consciousness loves it himself. It certainly supplies a more feminine grace to the drawing-room if there is some treasure of it there. Addison said, more than a hundred and fifty years ago, that there was no inclination of women that more surprised him than this passion for china. "When a woman is visited with it," said he, "it generally takes possession of her for life. China vessels are playthings for women of all ages. An old lady of fourscore shall be as busy in cleaning an Indian mandarin as her great-granddaughter is in dressing her baby." The great writer forgot that there might be some real excellence in an article.a passion for which takes possession of one for life. But women are not alone in the matter, for men have been the most famous collectors and writers on the theme, and of Horace Walpole it was said:

> "China's the passion of his soul;
> A cup, a plate, a dish, a bowl,
> Can kindle wishes in his breast,
> Inflame with joy, or break his rest."

There must be reason for such a passion, and it would not be amiss for every lady to inform herself thoroughly concerning its object—a part of it, to be sure, being due to the influence of a fashion, but a greater part to the sealing of fine shape and color under this almost indestructible glaze, so that a flower painted and fired on china is beauty made imperishable, as a diamond is a drop of dew eternalized. We say imperishable, meaning, of course, under proper treatment; for a thing which can almost defy the elements is at the mercy of a child's fingers, and that sort of fragility acquires value through the very action of the care we take of it. Those who laugh at the love of china have the laugh against them, for they only expose their ignorance. It is impossible that men should spend their lives, and kings their treasure, in securing a certain glaze to a certain kind of porcelain unless it is worth doing, unless it is a victory wrung from raw material and crude nature; and not only has this been the case, but as fine genius and accomplished art have been expended on the production of china as on gems and marbles, gold and silver. A Palissy mug, with its embedded shells, its raised reptiles, insects, flowers, and leaves, is a work of high art, although utterly out of our reach; a Henri Deux pitcher, with the amber glaze over its inlaid ornaments, and its rosy reliefs of masks and garlands; pieces of Sèvres, with their tints of bleu du roi, jonquille, vert pré, and rose du Barri, with their paintings by Watteau, and their incrusted gems; Dresden candelabra, whose life-like figures are in fact statuettes, and where the detail, in its rich and delicate colors, is so perfect that the lace, for instance, imitated there (an intricate piece of point de Venise or a delicate gossamer of Brussels) is said to be secured by pressing the real lace into the clay—a story, perhaps, no truer than the corresponding one that the excellence of certain Chinese porcelain is secured by dropping a young child into the furnace; a Wedgwood copy of the Portland Vase, with its classic white cameos upon the blue ground; a plate of Luca della Robbia's majolica, with its Cupids and wreaths and fruit and ivory enamel; or of Fontana's, with its designs from Raffaelle, for which Louis XIV. offered the counterparts in gold: these are each and all just as pure and fine works of art in their way as the sculptures of Ghiberti, the old enamels of Limousin, the golden vases and coins and jewel-work of Cellini, although the latter are all more keenly and generally appreciated, in the one case, perhaps, for size, and in the other for native value of material. It is better to strive to reach such things by an imitation than not to care for them at all; and as we cannot comfortably use the big sculptures in the drawing-room, and the chinas or their imitations remain at command, we may be thankful that the latter are much the more decorative. The majolica, indeed, is a peculiarly interesting product of art, for its ornamentation requires singular facility and talent: the vessel of common terra-cotta, fashioned on the wheel and burned, then dipped into a paste whose moisture its porous substance absorbs, leaving a soft and exceedingly tender coating on the surface, is painted in enamel colors by artists who know that every line must tell and be complete at one stroke, that no erasure can be made, and that even to delay with a lingering brush one instant is to cause a ruinous suffusion of color; the vessel is then enclosed in another of the same clay, and again cast into the flames, out of which at last it arises glorified.

It is idle to suppose that this genius, this care, this labor, this money, are wasted. For those who can see it, they bring the beauty of the world into the house fortunate enough to have the result. But it is a beauty that is unattainable by most of us, for not even money can purchase it, princes and collectors and museums having monopolized the genuine existing specimens; and the many must content themselves with imitations, with counterfeits, with modern reproductions of the old, and with inferior productions of the present. Yet neither Dresden nor Sèvres, in small articles, is impossible to the average person who really desires it, and is willing to forego some other luxury in order to have it; bits of real majolica are not very expensive; and plates of the lovely Doulton-ware, painted after designs by some of the best living designers, and which, made in all its beauty, as it is, of the common drain-pipe stuff at one firing, reminds us of nothing so much as of Swedenborg's Beauty from Ashes, ought to content those who can afford that which costs far more. Whatever it is that we can have in that line, whether precious and priceless, or mere brightening bits of color that some untaught sailor has brought home from the East, an atom of coral-ware, of blue-and-white Nankin, a little teapot of crackly Satsuma, there is nothing more decorative to a room, among the lesser objects, and the flat articles may be framed and hung, or be held by hooks in the wall, or may stand protected by a groove on the top of the cabinet, or on any shelf. Then, too, a modern Venetian goblet, with its twisted strings of colored glass, is not beyond reach of those that know its charm, now that the manufacture is again encouraged; and we have seen in old country-houses, that will one day be rifled of them, tall cylindrical glasses of greenish tinge, with bosses and gilt and colored ornament, that will very well take the place of an almost priceless German original. Close upon china and glass, too, come wonderful things in the Chinese jade—vases, candlesticks, cups, trinkets—sometimes of the deep green of shallow water running in limestone regions, sometimes of a pure creamy tint almost transparent. This is exceedingly precious and costly; but we have seen it imitated for tiles, paper-weights, and such articles, in the noble serpentine, so that it defied detection, and, for ornaments of personal wear, an oak-leaf-shaped brooch, a pin of the four-ribbed cornel leaves, ear-rings imitating those made of the rattlesnake's rattle, thin, translucent, and utterly lovely.

With the rest, if we have no myrrhine cups or unicorns' horns, there are the countless things that our travelling friends bring us; there are our card-receivers, our tortoise-shell work-boxes, our brass appliqués and candlesticks, our carved coral card-cases, our fans, our hand-screens, our albums between plaques of ivory, our vases of famous shape, even if of commonest blown glass, our lacquered trays and cases, our sandal-wood boxes, our bits of the strange Bombay work, our thousand and one fancy things, grotesque or severe, the tiny Navajo basket that holds water, the bit of gold-work of Montezuma's day, the drinking-cup of a chamois' horn, the little Spanish dagger, whose damascene-work makes one remember the wonderful Moorish weapons with rubies set in their back like drops of blood, the brier-wood pipe that had a new intaglio cut upon it after every battle of the war, and that never will be smoked again—all these *babioles* can be made to illuminate a room and help its picturesque idea, even if they amount to nothing at all in the eyes of a dealer in bric-à-brac.

XXXVII.

THE ART OF FURNISHING.

WHEN all is said, the art of decorating and furnishing comprises something very far beyond the mere technical knowledge of styles, and the ability to date on sight a piece of furniture by its construction. One may be as well acquainted with the outlines of the pointed Gothic, where the soaring spirit of art is kept within just such bounds as those within which the ritual confines the soaring spirit of faith, as with the opening pages of Milton's "Paradise Lost," parsed at school—may have as keen a relish for the bossy beauty of Renaissance carving, with its masks and shields and tracery and luxurious loveliness, as for Shakspeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream" or Spenser's "Faerie Queene"—one may admire the splendid contrasts of light and shadow and the eccentricities of the Rococo as one admires their literary counterpart in Victor Hugo—one may be able to tell the place of manufacture of a broken bit of china a couple of hundred years old without looking at the *cachet*—one, in short, may be a connoisseur in all sorts of curios, and yet be totally destitute of any faculty of putting them together so as to make the most of their congregated beauty, of the first idea of grouping various articles for the sake of their picturesque charm when united.

Much may be said about the subject of furnishing as an art, but when every instruction has been given that love of beauty or knowledge of origin and correspondences can impart, it will still be felt that furnishing is an affair of genius and tact, that is, of thorough taste; and that unless these qualities are brought to bear upon it, the most magnificent garniture a room can have might as well be four pine chairs and a table, for all the real harmony of effect and delight of home produced by it. Nor are these all; for as the house is not furnished whose kitchen has not received the same attention as a kitchen that its parlor receives as a parlor, and whose mistress goes without broiler or dredger in the one place for the sake of any ornament in the other, so is the house yet unfurnished where a regard for others is not shown in matters that hardly come under the domain of taste at all—in provision of the stout chair that the stout person can use without fear of breaking; of the high-seated chair from which the stiff-limbed old person can rise without effort; of the low seat for the chance child, if the house is so unblessed as to have no other, to be happy in: unfurnished without such and other constant evidence of an unselfish care, as well as of love of beauty and knowledge of what has been done in beauty. But if one has absolutely neither taste nor aptitude in this direction, yet desires fit furnishing, and has the wealth which that demands, the best course is to put the whole house into the hands of accomplished upholsterers. They will enter at the moment the masons leave, and they will not only attend to every detail, but will render those details into a homogeneous whole. The frescoes of the ceilings, the colors of the carpet and curtains and furniture covers, the wood-work of the furniture and of the walls, will be designed exactly to correspond with each other; doors and fireplaces, windows and mirrors, will be a part of the picture; and if the result does not express any individuality of the owner, it is yet necessarily full of harmony and grace and beauty, for it is the work of skill and art, and that skill and art which command a price, as one may believe who knows that the great furniture houses pay from thirty to fifty thousand dollars a year for the drawing of their designs alone.

Yet there are many who possess this genius for furnishing and decoration who have but the narrowest means with which to work; and we are often forced to wonder, upon entering a place thus made attractive by some gentle spirit with so slight material, what the same spirit could do if possessed of the special knowledge of what has been achieved in furniture in past and present, together with the pecuniary resources necessary to make use of it.

Furnishing, although largely woman's work in the direction, is really no trivial matter, to be left contemptuously to the women and girls of the family. Its study is as important, in some respects, as the study of politics; for the private home is at the foundation of the public state, subtle and unimagined influences moulding the men who mould the state; and the history of furniture itself, indeed, involves the history of nations. The art of furnishing comprehends much more than the knack of putting pictures and tables and chairs into suitable co-relation; it comprehends a large part of the art of making home attractive, and of shaping the family with the gentle manners that make life easier to one and pleasanter to all; and it would seem as if the people who came out of pleasant homes would have their sympathies and humanities so cultivated by the influence of their surroundings that they would be more earnest to make pleasant homes possible for all. Not that we would lay any undue stress on the substance or the shapes of furniture and its accessories. One of the finest rooms we ever knew was furnished in a coarse, cheap cretonne and straw, with one or two rubbishy pieces of old mahogany of the last generation. Its whole outfit would hardly have brought fifty dollars "at vendoo;" but the colors of that cheap cretonne, of the mahogany, and of the straw so well contrasted and agreed, and the objects of the room so well answered each other, as to prove its mistress a perfect adept in the art of furnishing.

Everybody may have some genius in this matter to be developed and fostered; but it is not merely the individual who rents a house that needs instruction. It is the builders of houses as well, those men who locate a mantel-piece out of sight on entrance; who swing staircases in the air without visible means of support, pinch them out of all nobility, and make us walk up a corkscrew in ascending them; who place the windows so that picturesque arrangement of the interior is impossible, and so that there is no spot where a bedstead shall stand and escape the draught; who make a passage-way of the dining room, forget all about closets, lay the floors so that decency obliges one to have them covered, and take the liberty of putting on paper and paint before the tenant, who may want the very opposite paper and paint, takes the house at all. Perhaps when the tenant is a little more exacting, and insists upon certain things as rights, the builder may learn that those things are in the body of the law.

Thus, for example, how many rooms we see without any mantel at all, or with only a slab of marble supported on a couple of gilded iron scrolls or brackets! Yet a room without any mantel has not the dignity of a tent; it is simply an enclosure, of the same character as a pound, with no central point, with nothing for which the eye seeks at first, and with which it is satisfied at once, and upon whose base it finds the rest of the room arranged as from a point of departure. The mantel is a part of the reverence due the chimney, a tribute to the fire upon the hearth, which is the deity of home; it is the modern and the mediæval household altar, and the last representative, too, of the ancient altar and the Lares and Penates: too much honor and remembrance cannot be given to it. In all rooms the mantel-piece should be where it will be the first thing to catch the eye on entering, and with as much reason as the ordained position of host and hostess where the guest can at once find them and receive welcome; and it will be difficult to make that room attractive at first glance where this is not the case. If the arrangement is to be such as leads up with light and splendid effects in white and gold and delicate tints, it will be found that the mantel and chimney-piece are the crowning work of the room; and if the arrangement is to be in soft glooms and shadows, the mantel will accentuate it all, as if by gathering those glooms and shadows into itself in still darker shadows—the root and centre of them all. And thus, whether the builder has done his duty or not in placing the mantel, it is the furnisher's duty to give it the fit prominence, and make the room in some measure what it should be, after one is once within it, by striking the key-note there.

In fact, it is somewhat by this regard and attention paid to the mantel that one learns the use and disposition of masses in the room. One learns, for instance, if one wishes to project the chimney-piece with added brilliancy, to place dark pieces of furniture, books, or paintings on the wall on either side of it; one learns that this brilliancy needs an answering shadow; one learns to counteract the influence of too heavy an article by another at a distance; one learns how to darken a place where there is too strong a glare, not merely by curtains, but with an ottoman, perhaps, standing near a table, the table, it may be, cornering on a piano not far away, the piano carrying up the darkness to the dark picture above it—picture, piano, table, and ottoman not to be moved. Attention to the massing of objects prevents the speckled, piebald appearance which we see in many rooms, where everything seems spotty and disconnected, and gives a homogeneous character to the articles, as if they belonged together, had grown in their places, and were a virtual part of the room, as the room is of the house. It is this very thing which gives the sensation that we call "a home feeling." One does not feel at home in a room unless the furniture seems to be already at home there, and that it will never do unless it fits so exactly into its niche that one would as soon think of moving anything meant to be stationary as of moving the side of the house—unless it looks so fixed that it never crosses your mind to think house and furniture and people will not grow old together precisely as they are. But those people who are always moving their furniture about can never, except by some kaleidoscopic chance, get that furniture into its fit place, for the very circumstance of their indecision shows their want of the necessary knack of house-furnishing; and one can never be impressed with much of this home feeling where one cannot go twice expecting to find the rooms wearing the same aspect.

The furniture in any permanently and well-arranged room seems to be living a life of its own; the various pieces consort in friendly relations; and you never descend, on any errand, into such a room at night without being aware of a certain conscious existence on the part of the room, much like that of a tree, and without being suspicious, if you are at all imaginative, of a still more active life behind your back. We have, most of us, felt an answering belief in the quaint fancies of Browning's Venetian lover:

"Stay longer yet, for others' sake
Than mine! What should your chamber do?
With all its rarities that ache
In silence while day lasts, but wake
At night-time and their life renew—
* * * * Your harp, believe,
With all its sensitive tight strings,
That dare not speak, now to itself
Breathes slumbrously, as if some elf
Went in and out the chords, his wings
Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze—

* * * * * * *

And how your statues' hearts must swell,
And how your pictures must descend,
To see each other, friend with friend!
Oh, could you take them by surprise,
You'd find Schidone's eager duke
Doing the quaintest courtesies
To that prim saint by Haste-thee-Luke.
* * * * Each enjoys
Its night so well, you cannot break
The sport up, so, indeed, must make
More stay with me, for others' sake!"

An important aid in the art of furnishing is a theory of colors. One is apt to feel that if a certain color effect is desired in the room, it is only to be obtained by using a whole body of that color—carpet, curtains, and upholstery in general; but just as one vivid line of light will sometimes carry more meaning to the brain than a blinding sheet of it, so frequently a great amount of color will dull the senses to its reception, and act like a wet blanket to fancy, while one brilliant bit of the desired tint, placed in exactly the right spot, will do all that is required. We have known a person to leave a room, where the prevailing tone was neutral, with an idea that the whole room was brilliant with carmine, because the eye had been caught by one very distinct and beautiful piece of carmine blazing out of all the ashes tints like a coal of fire; and another who described a room, where carpet and curtains were fawn, as very gay and bright in peacock-blues, because a black table-cloth had a border wrought in peacock-blue, a footstool of the same lay on the carpet beside it, and a Chinese jar of the lustrous peacock-blue was in a niche above it.

One should seek to reach a breadth of effect in the disposition of one's articles, keeping always in mind their union as a whole, even when attending to the details of odd corners. The broad effect is not injured by a quantity of furniture, provided it keeps on this side of the limit of crowding: sofas and lounges along the vacant wall, or seeming to be along it, even if at various angles with it; seats in all of the odd recesses; chairs in the open spaces; tables; easels. There are those who think that to fill a room is to rob it of half its size; but they are mistaken. A great painter secures far-reaching water surfaces by line after line continually breaking monotonous space, each catching the eye with new interest and carrying it to the next, till it has travelled far enough to gain the full idea of the long distance it has passed over; and so the eye, following on from divan to table, from table to chair, from chair to portfolio stand, none breaking rudely on the unisons of one characteristic shape, and all under one soft light, obtains the idea of depth and distance in the room. Another mistake, which is not an uncommon one, is the notion that everybody's house must be like that of everybody else. Certainly our rooms, in common with other rooms, must have walls and windows, carpet, whether that be entire or in rugs, and curtains of some sort of drapery, wherever they can be afforded, as a room of any size seems incomplete without them, and always has a naked air and suggests a lack of warmth and even of habitation; but beyond these requisites there may be infinite variety, and every house is the better for expressing the individuality of the owner, and for having personal traits and preferences apparent, since what is slightly peculiar and quaint, without being fantastic, gives vivacity, and is of more worth than uniform and mechanical dulness.

Yet we think that every room should be in one dominating key, and all the rooms of the floor, or the greater part of them, should be a set of correspondences in ideas and color. That is to say, one should not furnish one's house in a medley of all styles, this room in the Pompeian, that in the Tudor, and another in the Rococo, nor with too violent a change in tint from room to room; but one mean style should prevail, except, it may be, where some one little nook is desired—a smoking-room, a boudoir, a growlery—as a complete contrast, a relaxation, or a brilliant surprise. In small houses it is pleasant even to see one carpet spreading over the hall floor and the floors of rooms on either side; but in large houses nothing of the sort should be attempted, nor is it usually possible with a light and lovely drawing-room, unless that is beyond an anteroom. Nor should one mingle styles in one room, although there are pieces of furniture just bordering on the last of the Gothic and the first of the Renaissance that are not out of place with the varieties of either style; and the Elizabethan itself, that ranged under the later banner, casts an eye back upon its Gothic beginnings, while the modern Queen Anne lends itself with equal ease to a certain amount of classic or mediæval accessories. But if one has a parlor furnished in the "old-fashioned" articles that were cherished by our grandfathers a hundred years ago and more, and are beginning to be cherished by us—the straight-backed narrow carved chairs, the long spindle-legged tables and fire-screens whose claw feet are grasping a ball, and all their sort — one should endeavor to get for the piano a spindle-legged case like that which it wore a half century or so since, or should, at any rate, compromise on a cabinet piano, for the huge members and vast surfaces of the modern piano make a strange discord with the slender grace of the era of the minuet and the long sword. Yet a room where absolute purity of style is insisted upon in every trivial point—window-glass, andirons, wall sconces—is like a strait-jacket, and its rigidity destroys all the comfort of home, and seems mere affectation. It is only true taste that can tell exactly where to drop the ban and introduce the article whose color and shape and structure may be delightful to the eye and harmonious with other things, although built after a pattern of two hundred years earlier or later, and on the plan of a fancy bred half the circumference of the earth away. Taste, after all, as we have said, the offspring of genius and tact, is the great secret of the art of furnishing; and although that is a thing to be cultivated just as much as any seedling that the gardener transforms from its barbarous wildness to full beauty, yet no rules can ever supply its original deficiency.

THE END.

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