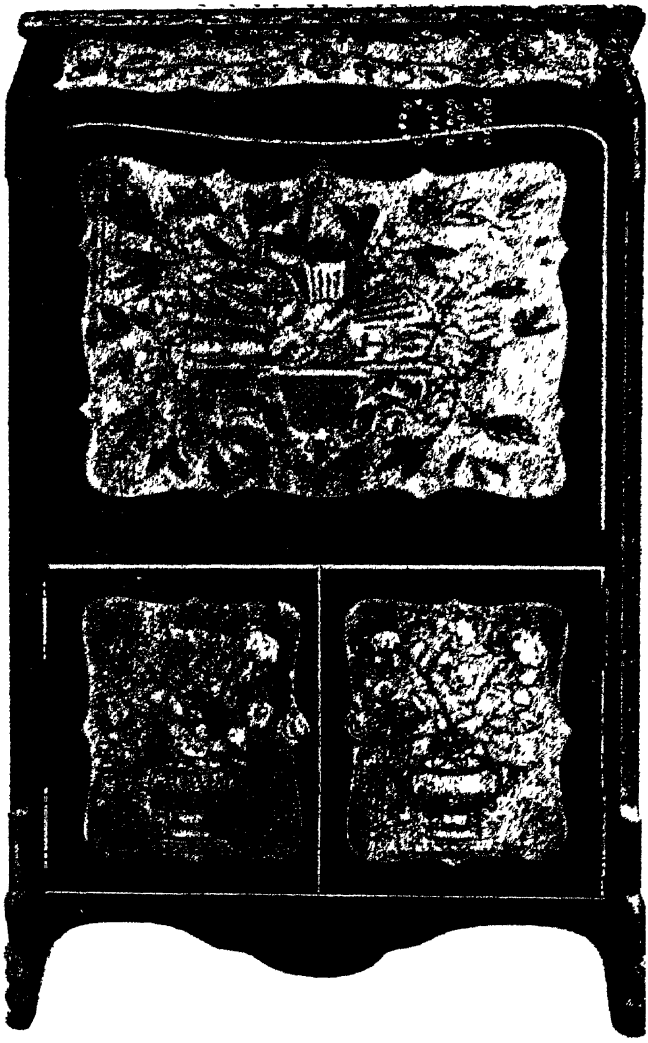
OLD FRENCH FURNITURE

III. FRENCH FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XV



SECRETARY WITH ADJUSTABLE INLAID FRONT

LITTLE ILLUSTRATED BOOKS ON OLD FRENCH FURNITURE III

FRENCH FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XV

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NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY

INTRODUCTION

MANY people are inclined to see in the Louis XV Style only a very sumptuous and profusely ornamented elegance more in keeping with the pleasures of *roués* than with the simple family life of sober business folks like the majority of us. True, it is the perfect expression of a frivolous and voluptuous period marked by a passion for pleasure—all pleasure, from the most delicate intellectual and social delights to unalloyed debauchery—a period in which moderation was by no means a ruling virtue. No seat could be more suggestive of love and idleness than a sofa of 1750, nor could any furniture display more florid magnificence than some of the commodes Charles Cressent loaded with ormolu decoration, or some of Philippe Caffieri's elaborate bureaux. In fact, we may sum the matter up by admitting that such works, in spite of the incomparable beauty of the chasing, evoke a financier rolling in wealth rather than a gentleman of noble race.

If we consider form alone, we may think the inexhaustible caprices of Rococo wearisome, and its horror of straight lines and symmetry exaggerated. We may legitimately dislike its perpetual convexities and undulations, which sometimes degenerate into very disagreeable excrescences. We may allow that some of the commodes of this period are more than

portly; they have the paunches of old farmers-general.

Finally, when we take into account construction, we must admit that their insistence on the curved line too often led the joiners and cabinet-makers of the first half of the eighteenth century to forget that wood is not a plastic, homogeneous material, but a substance composed of fibres which are, as a rule, straight and parallel, a substance the texture of which must be respected if we demand solidity in the result. We see legs on heavy console-tables, legs known as *pieds de biche* or *pieds en console*, which, with their S-shaped curves and their exaggerated attenuation towards the foot, bid defiance alike to common sense and statical laws.

It is, however, hardly necessary to point out that these examples no more represent the sum of Louis XV furniture than the King, his favourites, and his boon companions represent the sum of French society, or Van Loo, Boucher, and Nattier the sum of French painting. We must not forget that Soubise and Richelieu were contemporary with d'Alembert, Jussieu, Lavoisier, and many other distinguished *savants*, also with Montesquieu and the Encyclopædists, devotees of social progress and the weal of humanity. This great period was at once the most frivolous and the most serious of centuries. The polished and corrupt society which masks all the rest for us, because it always occupied the front of the stage, was but a very small minority in the mass of the

nation—the populace in town and country, the tradespeople, the lawyers, the provincial nobility—who were busily amassing wealth, gaining knowledge, awakening to a sense of their own importance, and aspiring to share in the increasing prosperity of the times.

It is true that the lower middle classes had formed a numerous and well-to-do section of the community even in the seventeenth century; cabinet-makers of the period did a good deal of work for them. But in the eighteenth century they increased tenfold perhaps in all the towns of the kingdom, for their ranks were swelled by a class which had scarcely existed before, especially in the northern provinces: that of the prosperous rustic, farmer or small-holder. From Champagne to Gascony, and from Normandy to Provence, substantial prosperity succeeded to the hideous poverty of Louis XIV's reign.

It was then that the farms and homesteads, *mas* and *bastides*, began to acquire those huge cupboards in which were ranged orderly piles of stout hempen sheets fragrant with wholesome washing and the scent of dried herbs, the pride of the good housewife, and an evident token of her prosperity; kneading-troughs covered with carvings; dressers with fine pierced metal fittings, on which gaily coloured china and well-polished pewter were proudly displayed; comfortable arm-chairs in turned cherry-wood, cosily fitted with square cushions of coloured linen, stuffed with the fine down of Christmas geese. The

excellent provincial cabinet-makers who did such sound work with plane and gouge in the solid oak and walnut were busy enough throughout the eighteenth century. Those were the good old times in which, when a daughter was born to you, you went and chose the healthiest walnut or the finest cherry-tree on your domain, cut it down, and stored the wood. Then, fifteen or twenty years later, the seasoned timber was taken to the master-joiner of the market-town, who, sparing neither time nor material, made the nuptial bed and the great wardrobe for the bride's trousseau.

Is our modern passion for these pieces of furniture, originally made for the lower middle classes and even the peasantry, and now used to adorn the most refined interiors, a totally irrational one, due to a mania for everything old, irrespective of its merits? By no means. Not only do they deserve their honours for the most part, by reason of their beauty of line and material, the soundness of their construction, and the fresh originality of their decoration, but it is certain that even at the period when they were made, no social prejudice banished them from the most elegant houses.

Take, for instance, those modest seats made by turners in oak, cherry-wood, and sometimes walnut, and fitted with coloured straw, the so-called chairs *à la capucine*; they still exist in France in great numbers, and authentic specimens are easily obtained by collectors. Such

chairs would not be out of place in any house, whether in winter we fitted seats and backs with flat cushions of down or horsehair covered with linen, and even silk, or in summer allowed the gay colours of the straw to appear. We need only go through the gallery of eighteenth-century pictures or the La Caze Collection at the Louvre, to see that they figured in all houses, rich or poor.

They appear, of course, in the genre pictures of popular interiors painted by Chardin, Jeaurat, and Greuze. But let us go up a step higher in the social hierarchy of the period. We all know the engraving by the younger Moreau called *The Last Words of J.-J. Rousseau*; the dying philosopher makes Thérèse Levasseur open the window of his room (in the Marquis de Girardin's house at Ermenonville), that his last look may rest on that nature he had so often extolled. Well, Jean-Jacques is seated in a large straw armchair, and in the corner of the print, near the spinet, is another straw chair, on which the author of the *Devin du Village* had sat to play the instrument for the last time.

It may be urged that the Citizen of Geneva always insisted that the borrowed abodes in which he successively housed his restless and uneasy spirit should be philosophically simple. This is true; but let us turn to some scenes by Chardin, the actors in which are well-to-do members of the comfortable Parisian *bourgeoisie*:

Négligé, or *La Toilette du Matin*, *La Sérinette*, the celebrated *Bénédicité*, and many others; in all we find these chairs *à la capucine*. The little girl of the *Bénédicité* is seated on a straw chair, so is the mother in *La bonne Education*; the industrious mother's chair is of straw, as is also that of the boy in the *Tour de Cartes*, who is very elegantly dressed, and that of the little girl in the *Jeu de l'oie*; the lady richly dressed in brocaded silk, who is training her canary in *La Sérinette*, is comfortably installed in an arm-chair *à la capucine* with a wadded cover.[1]

We may now look at a truly aristocratic interior, that of Madame du Deffand, whose room we know from an engraving by Cochin, as exact as a photograph. The huge arm-chair with down cushions in which the old Marquise spent the greater part of her days by the fireside was a simple straw seat, the woodwork of which was even a little rough.

We may note finally in connexion with these simple straw chairs, that all the inventories of the eighteenth century mention them, even those of the royal household; there were some, indeed—supreme distinction!—in Madame de Pompadour's bedroom at Marly; there were some at Versailles, and Lazare Duvaux sold them to his noblest customers.[2]

[1] It may be interesting to note in passing that the straw seats Chardin painted, which were manufactured in Paris, were much more coarsely made than those reproduced in Figs. 83–86, which came from the south-west of France.

[2] As we shall have occasion to mention Lazare Duvaux very

And it is hardly a paradox to say that these simple pieces of eighteenth-century furniture, made for citizen or farmer, have often as much, or even more beauty than the most sumptuous examples of the same period. These, as we have said, sometimes sin by their excessive richness and splendour, their complicated decoration, the exaggerated restlessness of their convex surfaces

often, we may say a few words here about this famous tradesman. He kept a shop in the Rue Saint-Honoré, in the parish of Saint-Eustache, as a "merchant-mercer," and he also bore the title of "goldsmith-jeweller" to the King. The trade of a "merchant-mercer" seems to have been very comprehensive. Lazare Duvaux' stock ranged from commodes and bureaux to flat-irons and kitchen cord; he sold chandeliers of gilded bronze and portfolios; plates and dishes and Chinese figures; jewels and "oil of Venus"; watering-pots, snuff-boxes, and a great many other things. He repaired furniture, clocks, and dog-collars, and among his constant customers were Mimi, a brown King Charles, and Inès, a red and white spaniel, Madame de Pompadour's pampered pets. In addition to the famous favourite, whose town-houses, country-seats, and "hermitages" he furnished and loaded with curiosities, his customers included the King and Queen, the royal princesses, and all the princes of the blood; the greatest members of the aristocracy; the Ducs d'Antin, de Beauvilliers, de Bouillon, etc.; the great collectors, Blondel d'Azincourt, Caylus, Julienne, La Live de Jully; the financial magnates: Grimod de la Reynière and La Popelinière, farmers-general; Randon de Boisset, Receiver-General of finances; theatrical celebrities, such as Jélyotte and Mlle Lanoix, the dancer; la Duchapt, milliner and procuress; the good Madame Geoffrin, and many others. A most happy chance has brought to light Lazare Duvaux' day-book, in which he made daily entries of his sales between the years 1748 and 1758. This day-book was published in 1873 by Louis Courajod, and is an inexhaustible mine of information as to furniture and artistic objects in the time of Louis XV.

and sinuous lines; these faults were the errors of artists free to spare no expense either in material or workmanship, or of very skilful craftsmen eager to show the extent of their technical mastery. They did violence sometimes to their material, and overstepped the narrow boundary-line that divides good and bad taste. But the joiner or cabinet-maker who had to make a commode at a moderate price was obliged to give it quiet lines and a sober decoration, simply because he was limited as to outlay, a limitation which by no means excluded breadth and grace of design. A very ordinary seat of this period, without any carving, is often a perfect feast for the eye, merely by the beauty of its lines and mouldings, and its harmony of silhouette, while at the same time it satisfies the mind by its fitness for the work it has to do.

The Louis XV Style is perhaps the only style marked by this characteristic, for here carved ornament, when it exists, is, generally speaking, simply the expansion or, as it were, the blossoming of the mouldings, which are themselves merely the affirmation of the structural lines. Contour, mouldings, and carvings have a sort of organic unity which suggests that of a plant. The same cannot be said of a Louis XVI piece of furniture, in which the decoration is added to the line as if to mask the faults to which this later style was so prone: poverty and dryness. If we suppress the decoration there is no beauty left. But however much we may simplify a Louis XV

example in thought, it will remain admirable, like a branch stripped by winter of its flowers and leaves, if the artificer who fashioned it had a sense of harmony and proportion, and, above all, that subtle feeling, so rare in other periods, which this fortunate generation seems to have possessed instinctively, like the men of the fifteenth century: the sense of beautiful curves, at once firm and suave.

So, in spite of the enormous rise in prices of all antiquities, more especially those of the eighteenth century, it is not essential to pour out money like water at the great sales in order to possess Louis XV furniture of genuine beauty. A person of taste may still make lucky purchases, even upon the pavements, where small dealers occasionally expose poor old arm-chairs *en cabriolet* to the ravages of the weather, the street Arab, and the wandering dog; these, though their horsehair entrails may be protruding from a hundred wounds, sometimes arrest the passer-by and compel his admiration by the exquisite inflexion of a leg, or the nervous delicacy of a moulding.

Such is the furniture, the charm of which, and the taste for which, we hope to suggest and to inspire in this little book. Our photographs will give some idea of it, in spite of the inevitable falsifications of the camera.[1]

[1] We take occasion here to thank all those who have kindly allowed us to reproduce the furniture in their possession or under their care. Among these are Mesdames Egan and de Flandreysy,

Many writers have described the famous cylinder bureau in the Louvre made for Louis XV by Oeben and Riesener, the medal-cabinet made for him by Gaudreaux, now the pride of the Cabinet des Médailles, and the magnificent commodes by Caffieri and Cressent in the Wallace Collection at Hertford House. These are certainly masterpieces, but masterpieces of overpowering splendour, of less immediate interest to the majority of readers than those unpretending examples which have this advantage: they may be bought and even used.

We propose to describe the various pieces of a set of Louis XV furniture, cupboards and sideboards, secretaries, commodes, tables, seats, and various other articles, after giving a summary sketch of the history of the style, pointing out its principal characteristics, and indicating the various techniques in favour at the period. We shall then make some suggestions for the furnishing and decoration of a town flat and a country house in the Louis XV Syle.

Mlle Moutet, Messieurs Brunschvieg, Cérésole and Briquet, Duchêne, Labouret and Ladan Bockairy, Oriel and E. Bouzain, of Paris; Mesdames Lefèvre of Neuilly, and Ichon of Sèvres; Madame Meyniac, Messieurs Abel Jay and Broquisse, of Bordeaux; Mesdames Dumoulin, Larégnère, Messieurs Dagassan, Guillet-Dauban, Edouard Jay, Loreilhe, Pascaud, of Sainte-Foy-la-Grande (Gironde); M. Ducros, of Simondie (Dordogne); Madame Roudier, of La Rivière de Prat (Gironde), as well as the Directors of the Carnavalet Museum and of the Museum of the Union centrale des Arts décoratifs, of the Muséon Arlaten of Arles, and of the Champenois Musée Ethnographique of Reims.

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CHAPTER I: HISTORICAL SKETCH

It is scarcely necessary to say that the style with which we are concerned neither began nor ended with the reign of Louis XV. The traditional appellation of styles rarely corresponds with their incidence, and it would indeed be strange if the death of a king and the accession of his heir should modify the manner in which furniture is made. Further, it would be absurd to say such a style ended in such a year, and such another began. Styles have no strongly defined colours; wide zones of half-tints with imperceptible gradations unite them one to the other. The transition from the Louis XV to the Louis XVI Style is fairly rapid, and the latter is a conscious reaction against the former; but between the Louis XIV and the Regency Styles—if, indeed, we allow that there was a Regency Style—and, again, between the Regency and the Louis XV Styles there is no clearly defined line of demarcation; each is but the culmination of its predecessor's slow and unconscious evolution.

Louis XIV died in 1715; but though the disappearance of so strong a personality could not fail to be an important event in every domain, it is nevertheless true that in the arts, as in the world of manners and ideas and the field

their legs, their arms, the consoles which support these, the bands round their seats, and the summits of their backs began to curve long before the Regency. The elements that resisted the tendency longest—indeed, until about 1720—were the quadrangular plan of the seat, and the rigid lines of the uprights of the back, but the evolution was complete, and before the actual reign of Louis the Well-Beloved began, the arm-chair had no longer a single straight line.

To take another example: the passion for Chinese and Japanese objects, more especially porcelain, lacquer, and figured papers, would seem peculiar to this Regency and Louis XV period, when caprice and a taste for all that surprises and amuses the eye reigned supreme. But such was not the case; innumerable *chinoiseries* were to be found at Versailles and Marly under Louis XIV, side by side with the majestic articles designed by Le Brun and the Marots; all the inventories of the Crown furniture attest their presence. Everywhere there were screens and seats covered with "China satin printed with flowers, birds, and *pagodas*," i.e. figures, or *magots* as they were called later. These "pagodas" were the rage; they were to be found in every house, and in every kind of material—china, lacquer, painted and gilded wood; many had movable heads and arms, and ladies amused themselves by dressing them in Chinese stuffs. It seems almost incredible, but the inventory of 1673 includes 548 among the royal furniture. Besides, the King's dessert

was served in bowls of Chinese and Japanese porcelain, painted with figures. Private persons, of course, followed this exalted example, and curious objects from the Far East abounded in the houses of Molière and Le Nôtre, as in all the refined homes of this period the contents of which have been recorded.

Examples of this kind might be multiplied. In the matter of styles nothing is more misleading than the exact delimitations formulated by theorizers after the event. They are false when applied to objects made in Paris, where fashions changed rapidly, and were followed by all who had any pretensions to elegance; but they are still falser when the art and habits of the provinces are concerned.

It is therefore impossible to date the beginning of the Louis XV Style, the more so because, if ever a sovereign lived whose influence on the art of his period was negligible, it was Louis the Well-Beloved, who showed little appreciation for any art save the culinary art! What shall we say then of the Regency Style? It is obvious that no distinctive style could be created, could develop, and disappear to make way for another in the space of eight years. The Regency Style (like the Directory Style) is an arbitrary invention of furniture dealers, auctioneers, and writers on the decorative arts. It is a convenient term of classification for all that partakes alike of the Louis XIV and Louis XV Styles, of objects characterized by the solidity, dignity, richness, and symmetry proper to the earlier period, and yet showing

indications of the supple and facile grace of that immediately following it. We deal with the works of transition belonging to this category in another volume. But the Regency epoch is also that in which a perfectly new element made its appearance somewhat abruptly in French furniture: the *Rocaille* Style. It is inseparable from the Louis XV Style, or rather the two are but one. Pure Louis XV is *Rocaille* chastened and simplified; we must therefore define it here, and say a few words of the two great designers who, if they did not create it, at least gave it all its development. These were Oppenord and Meissonier.

The contemporaries of the Regent Philippe of Orleans knew nothing of this term *Rocaille*, or rather they never applied it to that sinuous style they had seen developing before their eyes. What they meant by "a *rocaille*" was a fantastic structure, a rustic bathroom on the ground floor of a country mansion, or an artificial grotto in a park, decorated with natural stones of irregular shape and curious colours, stalactites, madrepores, petrifactions, masks, and other ornaments made of shells stuck together. The most famous of these "*rocailles*," which had been in vogue some two hundred years at the time, were constructed by Bernard Palissy; he made his of "carved and enamelled terra-cotta in the form of a rugged, irregular rock of various strange colours." The term *rocaille* was also applied to a rock, represented in "its natural state" in bronze, plate, or china, and serving as a base for a clock or a centre-

piece for the table. The use of the word to denote the manner of Meissonier, Oppenord, and Slodtz dates only from the beginning of the nineteenth century, and is not particularly happy.

The essential characteristics of *Rocaille* are the inexhaustible and sometimes delirious fantasy of sinuous lines, the horror of all symmetry and of all vertical lines, and, finally, the excessive use of certain motives which the Louis XV Style retained, and which we shall describe in our next chapter: the bean, the shell, the cartouche twisted upon its axis, etc. It was the violent reaction of hasty artists against the severity of the Louis XIV Style: in decorative art it was a phase of folly comparable to that which was convulsing all French society at the same period, the agitation produced by Law's famous scheme. It may be called, perhaps, the juvenile Louis XV Style, sowing its wild oats at the age of youthful indiscretion. The Louis XV Style was an all too brief return of French art, freed from imitation of the antique and the Italians, to the true traditions of the race; but its exaggeration, *Rocaille*, too often lacks qualities essentially French: restraint, balance, clarity, and reason.

Further, though the precursor of this new style, Robert de Cotte, was a real French artist, the brother-in-law and successor of Mansart in the office of First Architect,[1] the two designers whose

[1] Robert de Cotte was the admirable decorator of the Hôtel de la Vrillière, now the Bank of France; the Hôtel de Soubise (National Archives) was the work of Germain Boffrand.

names have become, so to speak, synonyms for *Rocaille*, Gilles-Marie Oppenord and Juste-Aurèle Meissonier, were not pure Frenchmen. Gilles-Marie was the son of one of the King's cabinet-makers, born in Holland, and Juste-Aurèle was a Piedmontese. Both are celebrated for the numerous collections of engraved models they produced for architects, joiners, goldsmiths, founders, and chasers in bronze; but in addition, Oppenord was Architect in Chief to the Regent, Director of the Manufactures of France, and Superintendent-General of the Royal Gardens; Meissonier was a goldsmith and chaser, with the title of Architect-Designer to the Chamber and Cabinet of the King. There is a more architectural strain in the former, a residuum of grandeur even in the freest divagations of his fancy, which retains something of the Great Century (he was born in 1672); whereas the Turinese Meissonier, younger by twenty years, is inclined in his designs to treat all materials with the freedom proper to the goldsmith, accustomed to impose his caprices on finely tempered metals. He has an imagination prodigious in its fertility, a truly Italian flexibility and facility, a great deal of intelligence in the creation of novel forms; but also an exasperating fondness for complicated curves and counter-curves. After turning over the pages of one of his collections for a few minutes, one actually begins to like the Empire Style itself!

The greatest artist in the domain of furniture during the Regency, at least among the *Rocail-*

leurs, was Charles Cressent. Primarily a sculptor and worker in bronze, a pupil of Jean Charles Boulle, but completely emancipated from the tradition of the old master, he often drew inspiration from Robert de Cotte for his ornament, and from Gillot and Watteau for his figures, more especially for those graceful busts of women with wide collars—they were called *espagnolettes*—with which he was fond of ornamenting the tops of the legs of his bureaux-tables. Cabinet-making, strictly so-called, plays but a subordinate part in Cressent's furniture; the ornaments of gilded bronze are all-pervading. They are, indeed, marvels of flexibility, and also of virile firmness and breadth; the chasing is priceless, the gilding admirable. Here, terrific dragons revolve their scaly folds; elsewhere, in a rocky framework, a rope-dancing monkey frolics on his cord between two monkey-musicians; here again, a monkey balances himself on a swing pushed by two children. Here is Cressent's own description, for a sale catalogue, of one of his most sumptuous works, the famous commode with the dragons of the Wallace Collection: "A commode of agreeable outline in violet-wood, furnished with four drawers, and decorated with ornaments of gilded bronze ormolu. As regard the bronzes, this commode is a work of extraordinary richness; among other pieces there is the bust of a woman representing a hasp or fastening, placed on the neutral portion* of the wood between the four drawers; two dragons, whose upturned tails in high relief

serve for handles *; the stalks of two large leaves, very beautiful in form, are also raised in high relief and serve for handles to the two lower drawers; it may truly be said that this commode is a very curious piece."

The artless pomposity of these lines perfectly suggests one of those pieces of furniture the beauty of which almost disappears under their excessive richness.

While the *Rocailleurs* were thus boldly pursuing their fancy outside the regular line of evolution, the majority of Parisian artisans arrived unerringly at the Louis XV Style properly so-called, taking all that is best from *Rocaille* and leaving its exaggerations. The most notable quality they assimilated was its *asymmetry*, which was to reign triumphantly until the return of regular forms imitated more or less from the antique.

During the first half of this interminable reign —it lasted sixty years—cabinet-makers accomplished an immense task. They created for their voluptuous generation so many new kinds of furniture, and adapted them so perfectly to all possible uses, that they left nothing important to be invented by their successors; they reached the utmost limits as regards perfection of manual technique and refinement of comfort. "I think," wrote Mercier in his *Tableau de Paris*,[1] "that our

[1] A great many *Tableaux de Paris*, or *Descriptions de Paris*, appeared at this time. It was a very fashionable *genre*. The authors of these works—Germain Brice, Dargenville, Piganiol de la Force, etc —never fail to describe in detail the beautiful

furniture inventories would greatly astonish an ancient, should he revisit our world. The language of auctioneers and valuers, who know the names of all this immense collection of superfluities, is a very delicate tongue, very rich, and quite unknown to the poor."

The production of furniture was amazingly abundant. The *clientèle* of the cabinet-makers extended day by day, the mania for fine furniture took possession of society, financiers and magistrates, artists and great nobles alike, and all the provinces set up in rivalry with Paris. "Furniture," to quote Mercier again, "has become an object of the greatest luxury and expense; every six years people change all their furniture, to possess all the most beautiful things that the elegance of the day has been able to imagine." And in a certain *Dictionnaire critique, pittoresque, etc.*, which appeared towards the end of the reign, we read: "All things pertaining to the use and adornment of a house are now objects of the greatest luxury and expense. . . . Passing the Hôtel de Myrtal, I saw that it was being entirely stripped of its furniture, and noting the tapestries and pictures that were being carried out, I asked if Myrtal were dead, or if he were moving to another quarter. I was told that although he owns furniture of very great value, he does not consider it good enough, and that he is getting rid of everything now in his house, as rubbish fit

furniture in the houses of which they write; such furniture had become one of the curiosities of the capital.

only to dishonour it, in order to procure all that elegance has invented in the way of beautiful possessions."

The industry of furniture was completely transformed to meet demands of this nature, or rather the art of furniture-making was "industrialized." Hitherto it had been customary to order the furniture required a long time in advance from a master cabinet-maker; the customer gave him indications; he then furnished designs which were discussed with him. Henceforth the fashionable and the newly rich were in too great a hurry for such deliberations; joiners and upholsterers set to work and produced series of ready-made objects with which they filled their shops, or which were bought from them by middlemen, "merchant-mercers" such as Lazare Duvaux.

The old community of *huchiers-menuisiers* (literally "hutcher-joiners") was transformed in 1743. It had become too numerous, and was subdivided into two specialities, that of the *menuisiers d'assemblage*, or makers of solid wooden furniture, and that of the *menuisiers de placage et de marqueterie* (veneerers and inlayers), who a few years later took the name of *ébénistes*, just at the moment when ebony, long unfashionable, fell completely into disfavour.

Henry Havard, in his monumental *Dictionnaire de l'Ameublement*, gives a list of the Parisian *menuisiers-ébénistes* admitted to mastership from the death of Louis XIV to that of his successor. There are no less than forty-five names, and the catalogue,

it must be remembered, is far from complete. But what are the greatest names of cabinet-making under Louis XV ?

We have, first, two members of the illustrious lineage of Caffieri : Jacques, fifth son of Philippe the first, sculptor to Louis XIV, and Philippe the second, son of Jacques. They, like Cressent, and perhaps even more than he, were primarily workers in bronze, and their use of the metal was extravagant ; they bore successively the title : "Sculptor, Founder, and Chaser to the King." Their works are very much alike, they collaborated more than once, and it is often difficult to assign to each his own productions. The influence of Meissonier is very apparent in both ; they have more grace and fancy perhaps, but also less dignity than Cressent. Their pieces are widely dispersed, and hardly any specimens remain in France.

Gaudreaux is known almost exclusively by the famous medal-cabinet with rams' heads in the Bibliothèque Nationale, a piece superb in execution, but overloaded with bronzes, confused and illogical in composition, and on the whole unworthy of his reputation.

The king of Louis XV *ébénistes* was Jean François Oeben, the "King's Cabinet-maker." He was primarily an inlayer, and the bronzes for his furniture were executed by other artists, notably Philippe Caffieri the second. The finest pieces sold by Lazare Duvaux came from his workshop. He died in 1765 probably, and his widow married Riesener, his "first journeyman," or, as

we should say, foreman, who completed the important work left unfinished by his master, the cylindrical Louis XV bureau, that unrivalled masterpiece of modern furniture. Oeben was the unquestioned master of the charming art of marquetry; he commanded its supreme resources, but with perfect tact he never asked too much of it; and those who presumed to compete with him, or even aspired to surpass him in this domain, only fell into the ridiculous extravagances of stained-wood marquetry.

The principal customer of Lazare Duvaux, and consequently of Oeben, was not the King, but the Marquise de Pompadour, who, from the time of her "accession" in 1745 to her death in 1764, had innumerable houses to furnish: little hermitages like *Brimborion*; mansions built or rearranged for her, like Crécy, Champs, and Bellevue; a town-house at Versailles, a town-house at Fontainebleau, and, above all, the magnificent Hôtel d'Evreux in Paris, besides suites of apartments at Versailles and at Marly. She therefore bought a great deal of furniture, and artistic objects of all kinds. But it was not merely by her perpetual commissions that she had a great influence on the decorative arts. They received a further stimulus by the nomination, which she suggested to the King, of her uncle by marriage, Lenormant de Tournehem, and later of her brother, created Marquis de Marigny, to the post of Director of the Royal Buildings, an office which was, in fact, a veritable superintendence of the fine arts. Much

must be forgiven to this woman, in view of the admirable manner in which she protected, supported, and advised the best artists of her day. Her contemporaries recognized this and were duly grateful to her, as is shown by the *Mémoires Secrets* of Bachaumont, who records her death on April 15, 1764, in the following terms: "This evening Madame de Pompadour died; the distinguished protection she afforded to men of letters, and her taste for the arts, make it impossible to pass over this sad event in silence."

Madame de Pompadour, in spite of her humble beginnings as Mademoiselle Poisson, had exquisite taste, and what seems more surprising to many persons, her taste was comparatively severe, and made her prefer simple works, pure in line and perfect in execution, but without any florid magnificence. It is absurd to give the name of Pompadour Style to the most sinuous and florid specimens of Louis XV, for, on the contrary, Louis XV art unquestionably owes to her, in part, the extreme refinement and the return to simplicity which marks its final phase. Amusing herself at times with the etching-needle, she was fond of reproducing antique intaglios; she often asked the advice of the archæologist and engraver Cochin, a great enemy of *Rocaille*, as we shall see; of the Comte de Caylus, an enthusiast for the return of art to Græco-Roman sources of inspiration; of the architect Gabriel, the classical Gabriel of the Petit Trianon, the Ecole Militaire, and the Garde-Meuble (now the Ministry of

Marine). When she sent her brother to travel in Italy, she gave him as mentor, Soufflot, the man who was to become the pedantic author of the Pantheon. It is an exaggeration to say, on the other hand, as is sometimes done, that the favourite was the promoter of the Louis XVI Style, but it is quite certain that she approved the return to the straight line and to antique ornament.

An under-current of protest against the curved line and asymmetry had never ceased to make itself felt from the birth of *Rocaille* onwards in certain circles, especially among the "philosophers" and the archæologists. The sons of Boulle imitated their father to the best of their ability, and their productions found many admirers. Blondel, one of the first architects of the period, who has left a very interesting work entitled *De la Distribution des Maisons de Plaisance* (1737), apologizes for giving a few examples of non-symmetrical ornament, because some concession must be made to the fashion of the moment, and he does not fail to ridicule "the absurd jumbles of shells, dragons, reeds, palms, and plants." Another architect and designer, Brizeux, gives only rigorously symmetrical examples. In 1743 the Duc de Luynes could still write in his *Mémoires*, when recording the important fact that the Queen's bedroom had been decorated with a new set of summer hangings: "In the centre of each piece of tapestry there is a large vase, which gives a very fine effect; but the ornaments ac-

companying it are all crooked, to suit the latest taste." Yet, in 1743, *Rocaille* had been in the ascendant for over twenty years; the good Duke was a little behindhand! In 1757 Montesquieu, in his *Essay on Taste*, pronounces a penetrating eulogy on symmetry, while admitting that it is not natural.

But the most lively attack came in 1754 from the engraver Cochin, who was, as Nattier and others learned to their cost, a clever writer with a command of biting irony. He had published in the *Mercure de France* the *Conseils d'un artiste pour faire observer certaines règles très-simples sur la Décoration.* "Goldsmiths, chasers, and wood-carvers for apartments and others are humbly entreated by persons of good taste henceforward kindly to submit to certain laws dictated by reason. . . . When they have a candlestick to make, we beg them to make it straight, and not twisted as if some rogue had taken pleasure in spoiling it. We will not venture to find fault with the taste that obtains in the internal decoration of our buildings. We will not even ask for a little reticence in the use of palm-trees, which are cultivated in such profusion in apartments, on chimney-pieces, round mirrors, against walls, and in short everywhere; to suppress these would be to deprive our decorators of their last resource; but we may at least hope that when a thing may be square without offence, they will refrain from torturing it; and that when a pediment may legitimately be semicircular, they will not corrupt

it by those S-shaped contours which they seem to have borrowed from a writing-master."

Gradually critics multiplied; the philosophers, austere folks, in theory at least, and professional admirers of the ancients, waxed indignant against the so-called "corruption of taste"; archæological works appeared on every hand. Herculaneum and Pompeii (1755) emerged from their winding-sheet of ashes; all the decorative art of the Romans came to light, and there was a universal enthusiasm for their seats, their beds, their tripods, and their candelabra. Revolutionary actors, such as Lekain and Mlle Clairon, dared to cease representing Greeks in powdered wigs and Roman matrons in panniers and high heels; in short, antiquity triumphed all along the line. Our admirable Louis XV Style was not able to hold out long against such an onslaught; architecture yielded first, long before painting and sculpture, and French art, after a brief span of emancipation, fell once more under the yoke of imitation.[1]

When did this great change in the style of furniture take place? There is no hint of it in the *Livre Journal* for ten years of Lazare Duvaux (1748–58), which has come down to us. On the other hand, the first documents in which furniture "in the Greek Style" (for so it was called) is

[1] It is curious to note that this reaction coincided with an ephemeral offensive return to *Rocaille* on the part of Boucher the younger, who produced some extraordinarily complicated designs for furniture, all crockets and bristling points, like the feathers of an angry cock. They are very ugly. (See, for example, certain consoles at Fontainebleau.)

mentioned are, according to Havard, the inventory of Madame de Pompadour's effects made in 1765, the year after her death, and an announcement of a sale of furniture at the Hôtel de Combourg in the same year. But a curious page of Grimm, the friend of Diderot, shows that the first appearance of the new style was of earlier date. It was in 1763 that he wrote: "Eccentricity in ornaments, decorations, the designs and forms of jewels, had reached its crowning-point in France. . . . For some years past antique forms and ornaments have been in request; taste has improved considerably in consequence, and the fashion has become so general that everything now is made in the Greek manner. The internal and external decoration of buildings, furniture, snuffs and jewels of every kind, all things in Paris, are Greek. The taste has passed from architecture into our milliners' shops. Our ladies dress their hair *à la Grecque*, our dandies would think it a disgrace to be seen with a snuff-box not in the Greek Style. . . . The jewels now made in Paris are in excellent taste, the forms beautiful, dignified, and agreeable, whereas ten or twelve years ago they were all arbitrary, eccentric, and absurd."

Grimm exaggerates, no doubt; but we gather from his text that the new taste manifested itself at first about the year 1753 in architecture and small objects, such as snuff-boxes and jewels, etc.; and later in furniture. We may therefore say that approximately the Louis XVI Style was born

about 1760, fourteen years before the accession of the king whose name it bears.

It need hardly be pointed out that the Louis XV Style did not disappear suddenly. The cabinet-makers of Paris continued for some time to make curvilinear furniture, as well as articles "in the Greek manner"; they also produced hybrid objects, as happens in all periods of transition: tables with festoons and "doe's feet," but with fluted ornament; arm-chairs with rectilinear legs, sheath or quiver shaped, but with curved arms, consoles curving inwards, and fiddle-shaped backs. They also carved classic ornaments on an arm-chair purely Louis XV in structure. A whole series of intermediate types may be found, just as between the Louis XIV and the Louis XV Styles. Stranger still, in vol. vii of the plates for the *Encyclopædia*, published in 1769, we find among pieces in either style indifferently a wardrobe in two parts, of which the upper panels are decorated with the "diamond point" characteristic of the seventeenth century, and those below with purely Louis XVI rosettes.

As to the provinces, they continued to produce Louis XV furniture throughout the century. I remember seeing a beautiful Provençal cupboard, pure Louis XV in style, which was dated 1818.

CHAPTER II: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STYLE

THE Louis XV Style was "a return to the sense of life and humanity." The phrase is Michelet's; it could not be bettered. If the architecture and furniture of the seventeenth century were *superhuman* in their dimensions, and in the heroic grandeur of their decorative motives, they were certainly *inhuman* in their lack of comfort and intimacy. Those of the Louis XV period are pre-eminently human. Conceived in every detail with an eye to the amenity both of individual and social life, and reduced from the mania for size of the preceding generation to a scale proportionate to human stature, they seek inspiration from living nature in their lines and their decorative elements. When we enter a well-restored Louis XV interior we get a delightful impression of perfect adaptability to human needs; and when we sink into a cosy *bergère*, the down cushions of which yield luxuriously to our weight, we exclaim involuntarily: "It is pleasant to live here!"

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the house underwent a radical transformation, due to a desire for comfort and for intimacy: the first reduced rooms to a more reasonable size, perfected methods of heating, and multiplied divisions; the second brought about the separa-

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tion of that part of the house destined for social intercourse from that reserved for domestic privacy. Under Louis XIV houses consisted of long suites of immense rooms, communicating one with another, in which everything was sacrificed to splendour. In these people slept, ate. received visitors, danced, and worked; they were entirely devoid of comfort, and the occupants shivered in them all through the winter. A few years later everything was changed; the architect put twice as many rooms into the same space, and each had its special character. An advertisement of a flat to let in the time of Louis XV ran as follows: "An apartment of ten rooms consisting of an ante-room, a dining-room, a reception-room, a second reception-room adapted for winter use, a small library, a little sitting-room, bedrooms, and clothes-closets."[1] Everything is complete; we have the modern flat, with a refinement we no longer possess: the reception-room for summer and the reception-room for winter. The bath-room is the one thing lacking; but we must not conclude that it was always absent. Blondel, in his plans for "maisons de plaisance," or small country-houses, does not forget it, nor does he omit other conveniences, which he multiplies. He also introduces the dressing-room, a great novelty, which did not become general till the following century. We may note that even the

[1] Such an apartment, together with a kitchen, pantry, bedrooms for servants, stable and coach-house, was rented at from 1200 to 1500 *livres* a year Happy days!

lift existed under the name of the "flying-chair" (*chaise volante*).

But the chief domestic characteristic of this agreeable period, which showed such a lively taste for social life unfettered by pomp and etiquette, was the multiplicity of the little rooms destined to conversation, play, and music. Beside the large drawing-room was a smaller reception-room, the *salon de compagnie*, a less imposing retreat; the occupants played the harpsichord; books of music, tambour-frames, and the fashionable novels of the day lay about, and intimates were received here. Then there were the *little room for retiring after meals*, or coffee-cabinet; the writing-cabinet, the boudoir, and others again. These rooms were sometimes very small, even in huge dwellings, as, for instance, Marie Antoinette's "little apartments" in the immensity of Versailles.

Decoration was naturally transformed with architecture. "Before this period," wrote the architect Pierre Patte in 1775, "everything was concentrated on the exterior and on magnificence, and the art of lodging people comfortably and privately was unknown. All those agreeable arrangements which are admired in our modern mansions, all those conveniences which make our dwellings delightful and charming abodes, were only invented in our own days. This change in our interiors also brought about the substitution of all sorts of woodwork decorations, tasteful and infinitely varied, for the solemn ornament with which they were formerly loaded."

This was, in fact, the supreme change. The pompous walls, panelled with marble or coloured stucco, cold alike to eye and touch, disappeared, making way for polished or painted woodwork with panels enframed in delicate mouldings relieved with gilding, or for the painted papers of England or the Indies, unless, again, the walls were hung with the material used for curtains and furniture-covers, arranged in panels. Floors of stone or marble, so disagreeable to the feet, even when covered with a carpet, were superseded by parquet in "point de Hongrie" (herring-bone pattern), or "mosaic." Monumental fire-places, with huge chimney-pieces, disappeared; they were made small and low, and the shelf supported a glass, a "parquet de glace," to use the expression in vogue at the period; opposite the fire-place, over a console-table, another mirror was generally fixed, to increase the perspective and reflect the lights. Blondel also introduced fire-places surmounted with sheets of non-mercurial glass, which allowed one to enjoy a view of the landscape, with one's feet on the fire-dogs. Tapestries were used very much less, and paintings were relegated to fixed places, generally over the doors.

Furniture also became smaller, better adapted to human proportions, and, above all, more comfortable. Those pieces which are most frequently in contact with the body, seats and tables, were transformed first and most thoroughly, as was natural.

Formerly, in a Louis XIV apartment, chairs

standing on high legs, with great square, straight backs, were ranged permanently along the walls. They seemed to be drawn up to do honour to the visitor rather than to invite him to rest; the tables were so huge and so heavy that they looked as if fixed for ever in their places. When a visitor appeared it was necessary to summon two lackeys to bring forward a seat for him. Now, the large arm-chairs, which had to remain big and heavy that they might duly envelop and support the body, were supplemented by light chairs and "cabriolet" seats, easily handled and displaced to suit the exigencies of conversation; the legs became shorter, and also the backs, which had no longer to enframe the monumental wigs of bygone days. For a group of two or three there were convenient sofas and ottomans; for old persons and convalescents, the most perfect of easy-chairs, with desks for reading or writing, pockets, and spring-backs; for tired or invalidish women, *chaises-longues*, *duchesses*, and *veilleuses*. In the matter of seats the last word of comfort was said; it was impossible to improve on them. Even those elastic springs which give such an ugly dome to the seats of modern arm-chairs were invented; Louis XV's daughters had them in their *bergères*. Madame Campan relates in her *Mémoires* how, when one of them, Madame Louise, became a nun, she had feared that Madame Victoire might follow her sister's example. "The first time I saw this excellent princess," she writes, "I threw myself at her feet, I kissed her hand,

and asked her, with the self-confidence of youth, if she would leave us all as Madame Louise had done. She raised me from the ground, kissed me, and said, pointing to the *bergère* on springs in which she was reposing: 'Be easy, my child. I should never have the courage of Louise, I am too fond of the comforts of life. Here is an arm-chair that will be my ruin.'" Madame Victoire was a true child of her age!

The ingenuity of the joiners rivalled that of the upholsterers; they invented an infinite variety of little tables, light and practical, for every conceivable purpose: work-tables, chiffonnière-tables with little drawers, *inn-tables*, with removable trays, for tea; writing-tables, screen-tables to protect the owner from the heat of the fire, or to ward off the rays of the sun; ten kinds of gaming-tables, toilet-tables, and a great many others. The chest, a most inconvenient receptacle, was replaced by the commode (chest of drawers), which so well deserves its name. The bookcase came into vogue, and the chiffonier set up its superposed drawers for trifles. If you had secrets, your roll-top bureau would hide them at the slightest alarm. Were you interested in rare shells, like the Marquis de Bonnac and the Présidente de Bandeville? There was a shell-cabinet for you, "in the form of a bureau" where you could put your finest specimens in full view but in safety, precious examples such as the *Scalata* and the *Pourpre*, called the "Radix with black foliage." Had you a passion for flowers? A table with a

pierced top was invented in which to plant Dutch bulbs.

The King, as is well known, was fond of little suppers, at which the presence of servants becomes irksome, and the Sieur Loriot invented a *flying-table* for him, which was exhibited at the Louvre; all the town came to see it. "M. Loriot," said the *Mercure de France*, "has made a kind of magic table. When the company passes into the dining-room, not the smallest vestige of a table is visible; all that is to be seen is a very smooth floor, in the centre of which is a rose. At a given signal the leaves disappear beneath the floor, and a table spread with a meal rises from the ground." At the end of each course the table disappeared into the basement, and came up again with fresh dishes. After this, invention could go no further; the period was certainly that of convenient furniture *par excellence*.

This style was also in closer touch than any other with nature and life, and more human, because more than any other it relied on the curved line. It emphasized this at all costs, sometimes to excess, as when it gave "doe's feet" to supports that had heavy weights above them. Such examples suggest caryatides bowed beneath their burden,[1] but they have all the same air of organic things, of half-contracted muscles, of strength, not inert but active, that characterize the ribs and flying buttresses of Gothic vaults. The legs of a Louis XV arm-chair seem to be as elastic

[1] See the legs of the cupboards, Figs. 6, 8, etc

as its seat; we almost imagine that they will bend beneath our weight when we sit down, and spring back again like the bough of a tree when we rise.

The curve is, indeed, "the line of life *par excellence*," to quote Michelet again. The straight line does not exist in nature (even the marine horizon is a curve); it is merely a cold abstraction of our minds. The Greeks, who gave a slight inward curve to all the lines of their temples, knew this well. A straight line is neither graceful nor ungraceful, it is nothing at all; straight lines intersecting one another are either ungraceful or uninteresting. The utmost one can say is that the eye finds a certain satisfaction in a rectangle (a window, for instance) when the sides have a happy proportion of length. But a curve may be in itself a marvel of grace, a pure delight to the eye. The men of the time of Madame de Parabère and Madame de Pompadour felt this, and expressed it when they said simply: "a commode *of an agreeable contour*." These voluptuaries certainly had the ideal of the feminine body always before their eyes, perhaps unconsciously. All their surfaces swell or curve inwards, every line is nervously arched, or inflected with a sort of languor, all the tangent curves seem to be exchanging caresses; everything, in short, *lives*. And when straight lines are inevitable, they are often interrupted,[1] or their dryness is modified by the softness of the mouldings.

[1] As, for instance, in the uprights of the arched bay, Fig. 1, which are made of ribs connected by acanthus-leaves, or in the

The elementary curves from which all others are derived are the C-curve (the arc of a circle or ellipse) and the spiral. They have been used in every style. There are Louis XIV tables and consoles the legs of which consist merely of C-curves, but of a short and sturdy kind, nearly always set in pairs, back to back, and clearly distinct one from another. A Louis XIV *pied de biche* is composed of a first salient curve terminating in a roll, and then of a re-entering curve, which begins in the same manner and terminates in the cleft hoof of the animal. The C's set back to back are also freely used in the Louis XV Style, but they are drawn out in long curves, which are more graceful, and, much more frequently than in the Louis XIV Style, it combines two successive and opposite C's in a continuous curve; this forms the S-curve. The most complicated festoons and contours are combinations of C's and S's.[1]

This continual use of undulating lines presents a certain danger to the artist; if he is not guided

vertical members of the wardrobe, Fig. 4 (reeds bound together by ribbons) Note how the uprights of the mirror-frame, Fig 101, are interrupted.

[1] Examples · C-curves: the cartouche with an irregular outline surmounting the arched bay of Fig 1, the mirrors, Figs 97 and 101, etc S-curves: the "doe's-foot" legs of tables, Figs 33, 36, etc.

C and S following one another. the legs of the secretary-commode, Fig 30, of table, Fig 37, of console, Fig. 40, etc.

Two S's following one another, end to end · the pediments of the cupboards, Figs 5, 6, etc

Two S's joined by an angle (accolade): table, Fig. 42; chiffoniers, Figs 48 and 49; arm-chair, Fig 57, etc.

by unerring taste, he easily becomes effeminate[1]; but the cabinet-makers of the Louis XV period avoided it on the whole with conspicuous mastery, either by the introduction of short, straight, transitional lines in their curves, which give them greater emphasis,[2] or by delimitation of their component parts by the little spirals known as *roquillards*.[3] Very often, too, a nervous moulding corrects an indecisive line, just as a very soft moulding modifies the dryness of a straight one.

If the Louis XV Style dislikes everything rectilinear, it especially abhors rectangles, produced either by lines or plans. Rectangles are tolerated at the bottom of a cupboard door, of a wainscot-panel, or of a frame—in a word, there where an impression of strength and solidity is desirable; at the top they are always replaced by united curves,[4] or concealed by an ornament.[5] As to

A C between two S's: base of the salt-box, Fig. 16; of the commode, Fig. 25, etc.

The same combined in a continuous curve: base of commode, Fig. 27, etc.

More complicated and, generally speaking, less successful curves: salt-box, Fig. 16; bread-bin, Fig. 17; flour-bin, Fig. 18; base of commode, Fig. 20; ornaments of console, Fig 39.

[1] Console, Fig 39, and chair, Fig. 65, have not escaped this fault

[2] Base of sideboard, Fig. 10; of commode, Fig. 28; sides of commodes, Figs. 25 and 26, etc.

[3] Bases of the cupboards, Figs. 6, 7, etc. These *roquillards* were naively exaggerated by the rustic joiners on the little Provençal cooking utensils, Figs. 16, 17, and 18; and on the Pyrenean commode, Fig 22.

[4] Woodwork panels, Figs 1 and 2; cupboard doors, Figs. 4, 5,6

[5] Upper angle of door-frame, Fig. 1; inner angles of mirror-frame, Fig 100.

arrises, they are rounded,[1] chamfered,[2] often made of lighter wood when the piece of furniture is veneered, or ornamented with a moulding of gilded bronze which softens their harshness while emphasizing and affirming the contour.[3]

Neither did interior angles find favour. The sensitive eye of the people of this period was disagreeably affected by the junction of the two walls of a room; it was concealed either by rounded woodwork,[4] or by a piece of furniture designed to fit into the corner: a cupboard surmounted by shelves, a console, or even a seat. It was also considered necessary to avoid the angles formed by the wall and the sides of a commode or a cupboard. These sides were accordingly made with convex surfaces, and the piece of furniture was designed wider at the back than in the front. If this happened to be a commode, the form was very illogical, for a drawer must necessarily be of the same width throughout. and thus there were useless spaces on either side.

To sum up, everything was rounded, not only all that the hand could encounter, but also, in virtue of a certain confusion between touch and sight, even things that only the eye could reach.

[1] Cupboards, Figs 5 and 7; sideboard, Fig 11; commodes, Figs. 25 and 26, etc.

[2] Secretary, Fig. 19; commode, Fig 24, etc.

[3] Commodes, Figs. 20, 21, and 23; bureau, Fig. 44, etc.

[4] The narrow arched panel of Fig. 2 was made for this purpose.

Louis XV furniture has further, in common with the living being, the unity and continuity of parts. In a Louis XIII or Louis XVI arm-chair the legs, where they meet the seat, seem to end abruptly in a circular moulding or a cube, ornamented with rosettes; the separation of the two elements is thus deliberately affirmed. On the other hand, in a Louis XV arm-chair the leg is a continuation of the seat, which is also continued in the console of the arm; the console and the arm seem to be all in one, and the arm carries on the back just as a branch continues the trunk of a tree, or as a limb continues the trunk of an animal.

This, indeed, is one of the dominant characteristics of the Louis XV Style; it may be called "the principle of continuity." The eye glides along the flowing forms without a break. It seizes the whole intention at the first glance, which is certainly a merit; but it must be confessed that this involves an infringement of the rights of the material, for, after all, wood is wood, and metal is a different thing; an arm-chair or a chest of drawers ought not to look as if cast in one piece. There is an exaggeration of unity in certain commodes, the entire fronts of which are treated as if they were a solid block; their bronze decorations, made, for instance, of long, supple bands of foliage, rising at intervals into bosses which serve as handles, are continuous, and take no apparent account of the division into drawers: looking at them from a distance of a few feet, we

might take them for pieces of stage furniture, not meant to be opened.

In veneered furniture,[1] it is the function of the applied sheets of mahogany or rosewood to hide the junctions; in other furniture, especially seats, the mouldings provide the connections between the various parts, sometimes by continuity and identity, sometimes by carrying their development from one part to the other.[2] Mouldings, indeed, as we have already pointed out, played a very important part in Louis XV furniture of solid wood. Many chairs have no other decorations,[3] and in spite, or perhaps because of their simplicity, they are not the least pleasing examples. It may be said that here the principles of the style are carried to their extreme conclusion, and that it is seen in all its purity. There is more than a relation, there is a profound identity between construction and decoration; it would be impossible to divorce them.

The treatment of mouldings is an admirable art, sober, difficult, and subtle. Thanks to the magic of light and shade playing among excrescences and hollows, lingering upon angles, gliding into gradations on heavy curves, it emphasizes or attenuates, reinforces one part and makes another slighter; it is both a modulation and a language. Delicate or vulgar, it may

[1] Commodes, Figs. 21, 23, 24; bureau, Fig. 44, etc.

[2] Arm-chairs, Figs. 52 to 58, etc.

[3] Arm-chair, Fig 64; chair, Fig. 65; *bergères*, Figs. 70, 75. *See also* the cupboards, Figs. 6, 7.

make two pieces of furniture, similar to the eye of the profane (and in this connection, many a cunning old dealer must be reckoned among the profane), so different, that one is a work of art and the other an object entirely without beauty. Happy the amateur truly worthy of the name who discerns and acquires the former at a moderate price!

And then these beautiful Louis XV mouldings, with their graceful inflections and richly swelling curves, have an essential merit: they cannot be imitated by vulgar mechanical processes; indeed, the carvings of this style require so much material that cheap reproductions of them are impossible.

The final principle of the Louis XV Style is the asymmetry of its decoration.[1] Of its decoration only, be it understood, for it never went so far as to produce an entire piece of furniture structurally asymmetric. . . . But I must not say *never*, for there are a few specimens of furniture entirely without symmetry, such as the famous Metternich bureau, doubtless by one of the Caffieri. It is surprising to find how easily artists threw off the ancient bondage of symmetry, which seemed so firmly established since the Renaissance. Was this the effect of the mania for the irregular objects

[1] Examples: Woodwork, Figs. 1 and 2, pediment of wardrobe, Fig 4; door of bread-bin, Fig 17; bronzes of commodes, Figs 20, 21, 23, and of the small bureau, Fig 47; mouldings of commode, Fig. 28; band round table, Fig 37; consoles, Figs. 38 and 39; front of arm-chair, Fig 57; ornaments of couch, Fig. 87; decoration of bed, Fig. 93; bronzes of clock, Fig. 96; mirrors, Figs. 98, 99, 101.

from China that obtained during the Regency, or merely an irresistible desire to do something that had not yet been done? However this may be, irregular decoration took but a few years to establish itself in all the applied arts. It satisfied the general taste of the day for the unexpected, the piquant, the free, and the fantastic. It was also more "natural," though animals, flowers, and leaves are symmetrical. One of the follies of the day was the collection of strange shells, minerals, corals, madrepores, and petrifactions, a mass of objects of baroque form; this undoubtedly had some influence on decoration.

Asymmetric decoration, we must insist, by no means connotes loose and facile decoration; far from it. There is nothing easier than to compose a symmetrical decoration, of a kind; to count the squares, or fold a piece of paper in two, will suffice; the completed motive will always have a certain effect from the mere fact that the two halves are alike. It is also very easy to compose a perfectly irregular decoration, regardless of the balance of the masses; the bronze-workers of the Regency and of the Louis XV period have proved this.[1]

But what is really a difficult matter—and these same bronze-workers often accomplished it with triumphant success—is the ornament which,

[1] Examples: The pediment of cupboard, Fig. 4, an example of extreme confusion; the traverse of consoles, Figs. 38 and 39; the *rinceau* * of commode, Fig. 20, which is quite formless and disfigures this fine piece of furniture.

though it has no symmetrical relation to an axis, balances equivalent masses. This exact equilibrium is a very delicate problem, but when it is solved, the ideal of ornament is achieved, for while the eye is amused by the variety and unexpectedness of the detail, the reason is satisfied in its desire for order by the balance of the parts.[1] This is a more subtle process than brutal and mechanical repetition; and further, the principle of asymmetry has the happy consequence of leaving the hand of the sculptor or chaser much freer in its attack on wood or metal than when it is constantly restrained by the necessity of reproducing exactly a part of the work already executed.

We must add that asymmetry is by no means an invariable rule in this style. Many bronzes even are perfectly symmetrical.[2]

The Louis XV Style abandoned many motives used in the Louis XIV Style; it modified others profoundly. Those it deliberately rejected were the elements borrowed from classical architecture. At no other period did decorative art so

[1] Good examples of this well-considered asymmetry: the pierced ornament of table, Fig 37; the leg of console, Fig. 40; the escutcheons of commodes, Figs 21 and 27; the carving of bed, Fig 93; the asymmetric portion of the pediment on mirror, Fig. 98; and more especially the fine bronzes of regulator, Fig. 96.

[2] Woodwork, Figs 2 and 3 (left panel), sideboard, Fig. 9; secretary-commode, Fig. 29, tables, Figs. 34 and 36, bronzes of bureau, Fig. 44; and of chiffonier, Fig. 48; seats in general; pediment of mirror, Fig. 98, as a whole.

far emancipate itself from the trammels of architecture; nay, more; architecture itself at this period borrowed certain motives from the joiner and the goldsmith.

But before enumerating the motives in use at this period, it must be recognized as a principle that they were never used in numbers, arranged in continuous rows of similar elements, an imitation of antique methods constantly adopted by the Louis XVI Style. In the Louis XV period a single motive was placed judiciously in the right place, or in the case of the bronzes of a piece of furniture, several motives were so applied, and on all the rest of the surface, it was the material itself, either solid wood or veneer or the mouldings which gave the required interest.[1]

The Louis XIV scallop-shell[2] was profoundly modified; it lost its regularity, and broke away from its axis; it became jagged at the edges like an oyster-shell, or was even pierced; generally speaking it was combined with the *bean* motive the origin of which is indicated by the name.[3] The floriated lozenge, which dates from the end

[1] Arm-chair, Fig 67, which is decorated with a continuous series of interlacements, is a piece of transition furniture, already showing several characteristics of the Louis XVI Style.

[2] Preserved intact on the left panel of Fig 3; the frieze of table, Fig. 34; and screen, Fig 94.

[3] Woodwork, Fig 1; cupboard Fig 5; wardrobe base, Fig. 9; sideboard, Fig 13; table, Fig. 36 (here the shell forms a kind of concave cartouche); table, Fig. 37; console, Fig. 38; clock, Fig. 95 (pierced scallop-shells combined with *rinceaux*).

of the seventeenth century, was retained fairly often.[1] The cartouche, originally a card only partly unrolled, or turned over at the corners, on which coats of arms, emblems, and ornaments were painted, became itself an ornament, and was often used as a keyhole escutcheon; it took on a peculiar form; the contour swelled, and the motive became rather like a pear standing upright.[2] The acanthus-leaf, always very much used in woodwork, plays a more modest part in furniture [3]; becoming small and insignificant, it ornaments the extremities of chair-legs and their backs at the junction with the arms.[4] More or less recognizable, it occasionally forms *rinceaux** and rosettes on woodwork.[5] The heavy twisted garland of the seventeenth century is unbound; capricious sprays and tendrils, escaping from the mass, wander lightly over the background; everywhere, in bouquets and baskets, singly or grouped in twos and threes, bloom roses, daisies, eglantine, narcissi, and again roses, those "roses d'Amathonte" which the courtly poets of the day loved to sing

[1] Tables, Figs. 34 and 37.

[2] Arm-chair, Fig 52 (cartouche in a shell); *bergère*, Fig 72; top of the clock, Fig. 96. At the springing of the legs of table, Fig. 37; and in the keyhole ornaments of commode, Fig 20; and secretary, Fig. 29, it has still the Louis XIV form.

[3] Yet it should be noted in the legs of cupboard, Fig. 5; of tables, Figs. 34, 36, and 37; of chair, Fig 60, etc.

[4] Arm-chairs, Figs. 53, 54, etc

[5] Woodwork, Fig. 1; cupboard, Fig. 5; commode, Fig. 26, etc. In the frieze at the top of the Breton sideboard, Fig. 11, the *rinceau* has preserved a very archaic form, directly derived from the Middle Ages.

in their minor verses. The most modest arm-chairs *en cabriolet* cannot dispense with their "upright flower" at the top of the back, the springing of the legs, or on the front of the seat.[1] Elsewhere, branches of laurel and olive, or of palm, are interlaced.[2] Whole palm-trees, often wreathed with flowers, are used more especially to enframe looking-glasses over fire-places.

Animal life is rarely put under contribution, with the exception of the tender tribe of doves which are found everywhere in couples, pecking at each other and fluttering with outspread wings. The *pieds de biche* properly so-called become rare, and degenerate[3]; but we meet with the irreverently named *pieds de Jésuite*, which are turkey-legs holding balls; they support round tables, and were called after the Jesuit Fathers who, in the preceding century, brought the first turkeys (*coqs d'Inde*) from America.

Then we have the vast family of attributes, and first of all, invading everything, those of the little archer-god, his bow and quiver, his blazing torch, and hearts in pairs, pierced, burning, or bound

[1] Woodwork, Figs. 1 and 2; cupboard, Fig. 8; sideboard, Fig. 10; kneading-trough, Fig. 12; secretary, Fig. 19; console, Fig. 38; arm-chairs, Figs. 53, 54, etc.; *bergères*, Figs. 69, 71, 73, 74; sofas, Figs 89, 90, 91; beds, Figs. 92 and 93; clock, Fig. 97; frames, Figs. 98, 100, and 101.

[2] Kneading-trough, Fig. 12; woodwork, Figs. 2 and 3; clock, Fig 97.

[3] Tables, Figs. 35, 37, and 50 The graceful return at the end of the legs of table, Fig. 43, is a last echo of the cloven hoof.

together.[1] Next, the pastoral attributes, the crook, the bagpipes, the shady straw hat of the shepherdess, her wicker-basket for gathering strawberries in the woods or flowers in the meadow, and the cage of the turtle-dove presented to her by Némorin one day. Music also holds a considerable place: flageolet, bassoon, violin, guitar, and tambourine, all the instruments required to accompany an arietta by Mondonville or Monsigny.[2] Attributes of hunting and fishing, and even of science,[3] find favour, but the stately and warlike trophies of Louis the Great are no longer in vogue; Louis the Well-Beloved cares nothing for them.

But this was not all; the decorator at a loss for subjects found an inexhaustible supply in a little world of comic fantasy where he was the undisputed master: the world of the East, which the travellers Tavernier and Chardin brought into fashion, and that of China, which had already been the delight of two generations: mamamonchis in pumpkin-shaped turbans, fat dervishes and pashas, odalisques and sultanas. Van Loo was the master of the style, and decorated a marvellous cabinet in this manner for Madame de Pompadour at Belleville. But the vogue of China was still unrivalled, the gaily grimacing China of a painted screen, where *poussahs*, mandarins, and other figures jostle each other under fantastic kiosques. If we may believe Voltaire,

[1] Kneading-trough, Fig. 12.
[2] Secretary, Fig. 19. [3] Woodwork, Fig. 2.

there was often an absurd amalgam of Turkey and China :

> J'ai vu ce salon magnifique
> Moitié turc et moitié chinois,
> Où le goût moderne et l'antique
> Sans se nuire, ont suivi leurs lois.

The man of the eighteenth century saw no very great distinction between a Chinese and a monkey; there is a very strong likeness between the Chinese cabinets of the day and the *singeries* (monkeyisms) or monkey-cabinets like those at Chantilly and the Hôtel de Rohan. These fancies were the appropriate decoration of miniature retreats, reception cabinets, coffee-cabinets, writing-cabinets, etc., without which no great house was complete at this period. "As all these little apartments," says the worthy Blondel, "are destined for the relaxation of the mind, everything possible should be done to make the decoration playful and gallant. This is a domain in which genius may soar as on wings and yield to the vivacity of its caprices."

It has been asserted more than once that the Louis XV Style owed the lack of symmetry of its ornamentation and the sinuous character of its borders to the influence of lacquers, porcelain, and printed papers imported from China. But it seems unnecessary to seek the sources of the most original of our styles so far afield. On the other hand, the theory that there was a determination to do the opposite of all that had been done in the preceding century is too simple an explanation.

For if we reflect a little we must admit that all the elements of the style were not, after all, such unheard of novelties in the history of French art. The love of the curved line, and notably the long S-shaped curves; the principle of continuity we have tried to define; the strange likeness of the thing made to a living thing; the consummate skill in the treatment of mouldings; the decoration which is so integral a part of the construction; the profusion of light flowers and of serrated foliage; and, finally, the complete disdain for the facile effects of symmetry are familiar to us. Were they not the essential characteristics of expiring Gothic, the flamboyant style of the fifteenth century? Think of the delicate shafts that spring so nervously from the ground, and, with no capitals to interrupt them, soar up to the intersecting arches of Gothic vaults; think of the marvellous traceries of the windows at Les Andelys, in Saint Wulfran at Abbeville, in the Cathedral of Troyes, all in undulating curves which separate, rejoin, and separate again to melt one into another finally. Remember that the Middle Ages cared nothing at all for exact symmetry; recall the capricious vegetation that flourished in those ages on the stones of our churches, and say if the affinity between the two arts is not striking? The Louis XV period (unconsciously indeed, for it cherished a fine contempt for Gothic art), when once it had shaken off the classic yoke, merely took up the old French tradition interrupted by the Italian

invasion of the sixteenth century; it fastened by instinct on the exact point where our ancestors had stopped.

Unhappily, a new crisis of antiquomania did not fail to come once more, and spoil everything for us. But are not the artists who are now attempting to give new life to the glorious art of French decoration, an art that has been languishing for a century, harking back in their turn to national resources? I speak of the elect among them, and not of the unintelligent plagiarists of Germanic art. Have they not, after the lapse of two centuries, the same sense of life, the same ardour for the harmonious curve, the same taste for delicate mouldings? Do they not also seek for continuity of form?

To sum up, may we not say that there is nothing Chinese in the Louis XV Style, but that it may be bracketed with Gothic as the most French of our styles?

CHAPTER III: TECHNIQUE

NEITHER the joiners nor the cabinet-makers of the time of Louis XV invented any new technical methods, strictly speaking; but they perfected several, and popularized others that had been little used before their time.

A great deal of furniture of solid wood was still made; in the provinces practically nothing else was produced, for veneerers and inlayers flourished only in the large towns.

The native woods most in use continued to be: oak, especially in Normandy and Brittany; walnut, which was very common in central and southern France; wild cherry, of which seats, little tables, and secretaries were made; beech, a wood that has no beauty, but is so solid that it is much prized for seats destined for hard service, such as dining-room chairs; this humble material often acquires a charming light patina as a result of wear and of continual polishing. Elm sometimes has exquisitely marked knots, which are used in panels.[1]

Next in order was the large family of fruit-trees: cherry, an excellent wood with a very

[1] These knots result from excrescences on the trunks of certain trees—walnut, elm, olive, and ash, and are known as the "figure" or "flower" of wood Their curving, undulating and interlaced veins are often very decorative. As such wood is scarce and difficult to work, it is now used only for veneering, but formerly it was often made into solid wardrobe panels. Bureau, Fig. 45, is of ash "figure."

fine grain, which was used for chairs, little tables, commodes, and even large cupboards—it carves well, and often takes on, in course of time, a superb tone of warm brown verging on red, while it polishes as well in use as the best walnut; almond, which when rubbed over with vitriol, was a good imitation of rosewood; palm, of a yellowish-brown, well veined, and with satiny reflections; apricot; pear, which is rarely met with otherwise than stained black, because of the poorness of its grain; and finally, in the south, chestnut.

Furniture made of the wood of fruit-trees was not always, as we might have supposed, of rustic or even of provincial origin. Lazare Duvaux provided plumwood secretaries and cherrywood tables for his refined customers, as well as furniture of mahogany and rosewood.

Foreign woods, with the exception of ebony, had only been imported into the kingdom in very small quantities up to the eighteenth century, and so they were only used for very costly furniture. From the time of the Regency, but especially from about 1725 onwards and during the prosperity of the East India Company, the enormous blocks of mahogany of which Haiti and Honduras sent whole shiploads, were seen more and more frequently stacked on the quays of Bordeaux, Havre, and the new port, Lorient. At Bordeaux particularly, this magnificent wood arrived in great quantities, and solid mahogany was freely used in the south-west of France for

important pieces of furniture, and even for large cupboards, before the use of it was very general in Paris. But by the middle of the century it was possible to buy furniture made from this wood, which was soon to become so fashionable, for very moderate prices. On one occasion Lazare Duvaux delivered to Madame de Pompadour six commodes and a dozen writing-tables in solid mahogany, with ormolu gilt bronzes, invoiced, the former at 128 *livres* each, and the latter at 52 *livres;* and to M. de Belhombre "a business-bureau with drawers in solid mahogany, with a paper-case fixed to the bureau, the feet casings and escutcheons gilded with ormolu, covered with morocco, and a writing-desk with silvered ink-pots," was sold for 150 *livres*.

The beauty and value of mahogany, as of all woods, varies very much in proportion to the beauty of the veining; the varieties most esteemed are the "thorny," the "flaming," the "watered," and the "speckled." Some of these varieties are the most sumptuous material a joiner or a cabinet-maker can work on, by reason of the rich designs of their veining, the depth of their tone, the silky brilliance of certain parts contrasting with the non-lustrous darkness of others; only the finest specimens of walnut "figure" can vie with them.

Let us add to the praise of mahogany, that it is almost proof against the attacks of worms, that it will take the most exquisite polish, and receives varnish perfectly; if it does not, like walnut,

box, or ebony, lend itself to a modelling soft and fused as that of bronze under the sculptor's tools, it is unrivalled for the sculpture of ornaments that are to be relieved in a precise and nervous fashion on a plain ground.[1]

As ebony had been almost completely abandoned —save for the manufacture of book-cases or the lower part of cupboards in the manner of Boulle, which certain amateurs of severe taste continued to prefer for their "curiosity cabinets," the only other "woods of the islands" or woods of the Indies, as they were also called, were satinwood, and amaranth, which were sometimes used to make small pieces of solid furniture, chiffoniers or screens. Amaranth is merely a variety of mahogany of a wine-red colour, or of a dark violet inclining to black. Cressent had brought this austere-looking wood into fashion, by associating it with palisander. Satinwood (there is a red variety and a yellow variety) is very much like rosewood, though it is less lustrous, less shaded, and less warm in tone.

As to turnery, which had enjoyed such general favour for a century and a half, it was no longer admissible for the refined furniture made in Paris or in the large provincial towns, with the exception of certain round tables or "tables in the English fashion"; but this easy and expeditious process of ornamentation continued to be used for simple seats everywhere, to some extent, and for all sorts of furniture in

[1] Commode, Fig. 26; table, Fig 36.

many of the provinces, Britanny, Champagne, Provence, etc.

As early as the middle of the nineteenth century the Dutch had been past masters in the art of veneering and inlaying wood; and even in France, André Charles Boulle had practised marquetry with coloured woods[1]—and he was not the only worker in this *genre*—at the same time when he was producing his sumptuous harmonies with copper, pewter, and coloured varnishes on grounds of ebony and tortoise-shell. But it was impossible to get all the effect proper to the process, and make it fashionable, as long as the artificer could only dispose of quietly tinted native woods. True, he had hornbeam, chestnut, and holly for white, cherry and yew for red, certain walnuts for grey and others for brown, olive-wood and acacia for yellow; but this made up a restricted palette, very subdued in comparison with that commanded by cabinet-makers at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when multi-coloured exotic woods began to arrive in large consignments. Amaranth, palisander, and violet-wood furnished a whole scale of purples; calembour, green ebony, and lignum-vitæ gave bright greens; clairembourg, lemon-wood, and yellow sandalwood provided yellows, bright, russet, or pale; mahogany, Brazil wood, coralwood, caliatour, locust-tree, granadilla, and many others yielded red tints

[1] A magnificent cupboard in the Louvre proves this.

of every variety; black ebony, anise-wood, jacaranda, and Rhodes wood introduced blacks, greys, and whites. Others, striped, speckled, watered, marbled, marked with circles or concentric ovals, mingled the most varied tints. But the material which was deservedly appreciated above all others was the incomparable rosewood, which seems to combine all the most beautiful colours of autumn in its warm russet tones shaded with gold and purplish-brown; rosewood, that precious material which mellows so finely with age, and harmonizes so exquisitely with dark palisander.

It is not within our province to describe the technical processes of veneer and marquetry. It will be enough to say that they were more difficult to execute perfectly in the Louis XV period than at any other time, because then the thin and brittle sheets of wood had to be applied to surfaces that undulated in every direction.

During this period, the word marquetry was hardly ever used in the modern sense. The *Encyclopædia* defines it thus: "The art of applying carefully and delicately wood, metals, glass, and precious stones of different colours in plaques, bands, and compartments to other materials of a commoner kind, in order to produce furniture, jewels, and articles for the embellishment of interiors." Thus, the simple veneering of wood without any design, was one variety of marquetry, and a mosaic of precious stones or glass was another. As to furniture ornamented with lozenges, imbricated scales, *rinceaux*, or flowers in

woods of various colours, they were described as "pieces of furniture veneered in compartments," or "veneered with a mosaic of different Indian woods," or "veneered with flowers," or simply "furniture of woods pieced together."

Sometimes only panels were veneered or inlaid, sometimes, and this more frequently, the whole surface of the piece of furniture was adorned in this brilliant fashion.[1] The most usual methods of treating the sheets of wood were the following: when the cabinet-maker had procured a piece of walnut-wood "figure" of considerable size, or a piece of finely grained mahogany, he cut it into thin sheets, with which he sometimes covered whole panels. But this practice, so frequent at the end of the century and the beginning of the next, was rarely adopted under Louis XV. Sometimes a panel was veneered with two or four sheets taken from the same piece of wood, which, if the veins were well-marked, enabled the artist to compose a very decorative symmetrical motive with two or three axes, whereas, if he had only narrow sheets with parallel veins (as, for instance, in rosewood), he arranged them in chevrons; this was known as *point de Hongrie* or "herring-bone" veneer, or sometimes as "fern-leaf"; a panel of this kind in rosewood, either rectilinear or curved, was often enframed in a band of palisander, a thin fillet of lemon-wood or holly being inserted between the two woods to emphasize the

[1] Secretary, Fig. 19; commodes, Figs. 21, 23, 24; bureaux, Figs. 44 and 47; dressing-table, Fig 41; clock, Fig. 96.

contrast.[1] Or a panel of lemon- or satin-wood was outlined with a black fillet (sometimes of whalebone, the flexibility of which made it easy to follow all the sinuosities of the contour), and enframed in mahogany, amaranth, or palisander. In general, the bands enframing the drawers of a commode or chiffonier were emphasized by a little quadrantal moulding of the same wood as the compartments of the panels; the lateral arrises of the piece of furniture were chamfered, and the chamfers were veneered with the same wood.[2] Sometimes, again, thin slips of wood were arranged in stars, the rays starting from the top, the bottom, or the angle of the panel; a kind of rosette was formed with small oval plates, with finely marked concentric veins, furnished by branches of wild cherry- or violet-wood sawed obliquely; a panel was covered with geometrical motives[3]: lozenges, checkers, cubes simulated by a combination of squares and parallelograms, either by setting the grain of similar pieces of wood in different directions, or by using two or three different kinds of wood.

But the triumph of the inlayers was achieved in a combination of rococo ornaments with bouquets of flowers in vases or baskets, trophies

[1] The little commode, Fig 24 (of palisander with panels of rosewood and fillets of lemon-wood), shows a combination of the two processes; *point de Hongrie* in the middle drawer, and in the lower drawer a symmetrical motive obtained by arrangement of four sheets taken from the same piece of wood

[2] Secretary, Fig. 19; commode, Fig. 23.

[3] Bureau, Fig. 47.

of scientific or musical instruments,[1] crooks and bagpipes, amorous attributes, and finally—the crowning consummation—groups of figures in the taste of Boucher. These were veritable pictures, for which artists finally could not rest contented with the eighty or a hundred different kinds of woods they possessed; they adopted such expedients as plunging the pieces of light-coloured woods for veneer vertically into very hot sand, and drawing them out slowly, to give them brownish gradations, darkening them with vitrol, or graving them with hot irons; finally, as was inevitable, they were seduced into the detestable practice of dyeing white woods blue, green, and pink. Of course, the colours soon faded, their relations were modified, and these dyed marquetries lost all their harmony.

Certain simple pieces of furniture were made of common woods dyed a uniform tint—that is to say, coloured by means of immersion in a dye that penetrated more or less deeply into the texture. Such were the pieces in "reddened and polished woods," screens, night-tables, writing-tables, and those in blackened pearwood, which are much less frequent, owing to their lack of cheerfulness.

Painted furniture, made to harmonize more perfectly with coloured woodwork, or the fresh colours of summer hangings, was much more popular. This, again, was by no means an innovation; nearly all mediæval and Renaissance furniture was painted and relieved with gold, as

[1] Secretary, Fig. 19.

was also a good deal of Louis XIV furniture. The things that were painted more especially were the pieces that were generally speaking fixtures, such as corner-panels or cupboards, and the bases of wardrobes and consoles; also little "fancy" pieces, as we have said above, toilet-tables, writing-tables, and screens; and notably, seats; commodes and wardrobes were rarely painted. A great many pieces of furniture were painted at a later date, towards the end of the eighteenth century, when there was a mania for light colours; others received a hideous black livery, with or without gold fillets, in the nineteenth century.[1]

With a little practice and attention, we may distinguish the seats which were intended to be painted from those the wood of which was meant to remain visible; in the former the mouldings and projecting carvings are narrower, more sharply defined, and the depressions and interstices are more strongly emphasized, for otherwise all the detail would have been blurred by coats of paint. At the present day antiquaries abuse the processes of scraping and "pickling"; they reduce many seats which were always painted from the beginning, to the most disastrous nudity, merely for the sake of using old shreds of tapestry which would not harmonize with light-coloured woodwork, and which were never intended for covering arm-chairs.

[1] There were, indeed, black tables with gold fillets in the time of Louis XV; such, for instance, is the very pretty table with a top of coloured stucco reproduced in Fig. 33.

The paint was sometimes "flatted," and sometimes varnished or, as we should say now, lacquered. Furniture lacquered smooth (which must not be confounded with that in which the lacquered reliefs were imitated from Chinese models) dates, if we may trust Barbier's *Journal*, from about 1750; the first specimens were made for the Prince de Soubise's "Folly" at Saint-Ouen; a visit paid by the King to this little pleasure-house, and his delight in the fresh and cheerful appearance of the furniture was the origin of its popularity. It was generally *réchampi*—that is, "picked out"—the groundwork being of a lighter or more neutral tint, and the mouldings or carvings strong in colour: white was picked out with green or blue, pale yellow with gold, etc.[1]

We must not be deceived by the repainting of the following period; under Louis XV decorators were not in the least afraid of the most vivid colours; Lazare Duvaux (*Livre Journal*) notes many red toilet-tables with black fillets, corner-shelves lacquered green and gold, jonquil and gold, "green, red, and polished gold." We must imagine this highly coloured furniture in rooms with damask hangings, generally of purple-red, golden yellow, or bright green, and banish once and for all the idea that the Louis XV Style was insipid and its colour-schemes those of the bonbon-box.

Other paintings were more complicated. Lazare Duvaux sold to the King "pierced corner-

[1] Arm-chair, Fig. 52; chair, Fig. 77, etc.

shelves with cupboards in the middle, in polished lacquer imitating veneer," and to the Dowager Princesse de Rohan "a corner-cupboard with doe's-foot legs in white lacquer, painted in the Indian taste—that is to say, with Chinese subjects." On the celadon green, grey, or cream ground of certain seats flowers were painted from nature in very brilliant colours; and this brings us to "Vernis-Martin."

At the close of the Louis XIV period amateurs were roused to enthusiasm by the beauty and decorative value of the lacquers imported by the Dutch from the Far East; it was then the practice began of enframing in pieces of furniture designed for this purpose lacquered panels which their Chinese and Japanese creators had destined for very different uses. But when the Regency and Louis XV Styles set in, when protuberant commodes, and corner-cupboards with curved fronts were multiplied, it was no longer possible to use the flat panels of the Chinese. It then became customary to send ready-made drawer-fronts and door-panels to China, where the artists of the Celestial Empire decorated them with their exquisite works, just as the dandies sent their silk waistcoats to Japan to be embroidered, after having them made up at home. We may imagine the expense and delay entailed by such a proceeding. The lacquers thus obtained were generally black with gold reliefs, or Coromandel lacquers (flat lacquers of many tints, admirably harmonized, in which the different hues are separated by a kind

of *cloisons* or ridges "left" in the wood; the process is closely akin to *champlevé* enamel); or, again, sometimes red lacquers.

It was natural that the French cabinet-makers should have cast about for some means of escaping from such difficulties. As early as 1660, native "painter-varnishers" attempted to imitate the foreign enamels. When Louis XIV died, a certain Dagly had a workshop in the Gobelins factory itself, where he made "lacquers in the Chinese manner." The Sieur Le Roy and the Langlois, father and son, competed with him, painting "all sorts of furniture in Chinese lacquer." But they were soon to be eclipsed by the four brothers Martin, who in 1748 founded a "Royal Manufactory" of lacquers in the Chinese manner. At first they made copies of Chinese lacquers with gold reliefs on a black ground, by a process which they kept jealously secret; later, extending their process, they painted from nature, under transparent varnishes, fruits, flowers, and ornaments on yellow, emerald green, lapis lazuli, blue, and brownish gold-flecked grounds; finally they even produced complicated pictures, mythological allegories and rustic scenes, enframed in garlands of flowers.

The success of the Martins was extraordinary; every sort of object was given them to lacquer, from snuff-boxes, shuttles, and fans to spinets, sedan-chairs, coaches, and even whole suites of rooms. The Dauphin's apartments, one of the marvels of Versailles, was panelled and floored

throughout with marquetry by Boulle; this unique work was unhesitatingly destroyed and replaced by white wood with carvings lacquered by the Martins.[1] These famous lacquers soon became the symbol of the most refined luxury; Voltaire quotes

> . . . ces cabinets où Martin
> A surpassè l'art de la Chine

as the supreme expression of magnificence.

The French lacquers were very inferior to the Chinese in the matter of solidity; the majority have perished, others have greatly deteriorated. As may be supposed, those which have survived and have not been too much repainted fetch enormous prices at sales. To see really fine specimens, the curious should go to the Musée Carnavalet, where there are two charming corner-fittings, in the exquisite little Chinese cabinet; to the Musée de Cluny, which has a very fine coach decorated in this manner; to Fontainebleau, where there are two commodes with two drawers on high legs, by the Martins themselves; and, above all, to Potsdam and Sans-Souci, where are some little rooms which still retain the decoration made for Frederick II.

I may say a word or two here as to furniture of gilded wood. Though less popular than in the time of Louis XIV, it was still fairly frequent in

[1] This decoration disappeared in its turn under a hideous coat of colour-wash which has recently been removed; the carvings are now left in the plain wood.

sumptuous houses. Console-tables were gilded to harmonize with the gilt ornaments of the mirrors above them (Figs. 39, 40); the wood of seats was also gilded (Figs. 61, 62, 67, 88). The process remained unchanged; it was either *oil-gilding*, done by laying leaf-gold on a ground of *colour-gold*, a greasy, viscous deposit which forms at the bottom of painters' cans; or *distemper-gilding*, in which the gold-leaf was applied to a plaster of whitening and glue. Sometimes, again, the wood was silvered, like that of Frederick II's famous chairs; and more rarely it was bronzed.

We may now pass rapidly in review what may be called the accessories of furniture, made in materials other than wood.

First of all, bronzes, which in certain costly pieces of furniture of this period are rather principals than accessories, and play at least an important decorative part in all panelled furniture and in all elaborate tables. Bronzes coming from good workshops were entirely worked over with the chaser and the burin after casting, and then gilded with *or moulu*—that is to say, gold with a mixture of mercury. If the piece of furniture was of the more modest kind, or even if its maker was a person of sober taste, all, or nearly all, of the bronzes had their practical uses. In a chest of drawers, for instance, the handles, either fixed or hanging, were of gilded bronze, as were also the escutcheons necessary to prevent the key from injuring the wood [1] and the casings (*chaussons* or

[1] The commode, Fig. 20, has only one ornamental escutcheon,

sabots), which ensure the solidity of the feet. All the arrises of a piece of furniture are sometimes encased in a fine fillet of metal; this was very useful to protect this weak portion of veneered furniture, which is so liable to be damaged. Only the ornament under the angles of the top and the *rinceau* at the base of the front, or apron, are purely ornamental.[1]

A bureau-table (Fig. 44) has in like manner metal casings on the feet, escutcheons, fillets on the arrises of the legs, and ornaments at the tops of them, a quadrantal moulding protecting the edge of the table from the rude shocks to which it is exposed; the rounded corners of this table are reinforced by *hooks*, pieces of metal which unite the drop to the quadrantal moulding, and give the corners of the piece a look of strength which is very effective. There was always more of logic than of fancy in the ornamentation of a fine old piece of furniture.

Materials other than wood were used very often for the tops of tables, generally for those of commodes, unless they were of the simplest kind, and always for those of consoles and bureaux. Writing-tables and bureaux were given a facing that could be replaced if disfigured by ink-stains; this was either of morocco leather or, in the case of dainty feminine writing-tables,

because the Chinese lacquerer had placed one of his figures in the middle of the drawer; the plain keyhole even had to be placed a little on one side.

[1] Commodes, Figs. 20, 21, 23

of blue velvet. Consoles, commodes, night-tables, and other varieties of tables liable to be wetted, had marble tops. The marbles used, which often added a superb note of colour to a piece of furniture, were almost as varied as the woods. Side by side with the humble grey and the modest white marble, we have turquoise-blue, Egyptian-green, Carrara marble, which is red, pink, and green; Italian *griotte*, red and brown; *antin*, which is streaked with red, grey, and violet; Aleppo breccia, formed of sharply defined grey, black, and yellow pebbles bound together by a brown cement; *brocate*, a marble with the surface of a flowery brocade; *portor*, the most precious of all, with white and grey veinings on a fine black ground, splashed all over with golden orange-yellow; and a hundred other varieties, to say nothing of onyx and alabaster for small and very dainty pieces of furniture.

Some costly tables, especially those which adorned the curiosity-cabinets of collectors, were still, as in the seventeenth century, covered with mosaics of selected stones or, as they used also to be called, specimen marbles. Cheap imitations of these were made in stucco, a mixture of powdered marble, plaster, glue, and alum. A certain specialist, the Sieur Grisel, advertised in the *Mercure de France* that he had discovered a composition which "imitates all marbles, even the rarest and most precious, so perfectly as to deceive connoisseurs, and possesses the veinings and streaks, the cold, the feeling, and the polish of real

marble." Indeed, these imitations are often surprisingly excellent, and tables "of the marble kind" had their passing vogue.[1]

Does this complete the tale? Not altogether, for the cabinet-makers of the Louis XV period further initiated the practice of pressing china—that new material about which the fashionable world was crazy at the time—into their service, and using it to enrich their small pieces of furniture. They made the tops of little round tables with it, and inlaid mahogany panels with medallions of fine procelain; the cabinet-maker Migeon, who distinguished himself in this kind of work, received a pension of 1000 *livres* a year from Madame de Pompadour.

They, too, were the first to set mirrors into their secretaries and bureaux for ladies (of the kind known as *bonheur-du-jour*), into the bases of their wardrobes, and their low book-shelves. But there is no evidence at all that they invented the horrible wardrobe with looking-glass door. The suggestion has been frequently supported by a passage in Barbier's *Journal*, in which he tells how the Maréchal de Richelieu was in the habit of visiting the charming Madame de la Popelinière by a secret passage opening into "an apparent wardrobe (*armoire*), which was of looking-glass." It is almost certain that the "wardrobe" in

[1] Table, Fig. 33, has a charming stucco top imitating coloured marbles; the subject of the decoration is a "monkey-piece," enframed in rococo ornaments and fantastic architecture, in the manner of Bérain.

question was a cupboard, the doors of which were made of looking-glass in compartments, to match a real door or window; cupboards were frequently called *armoires*; and we find no other mention of wardrobes with looking-glasses till the beginning of the nineteenth century.

To be complete, we should also describe the internal arrangement and ornamentation of furniture; it will be enough to say that the majority of small pieces with any pretensions to elegance were inlaid on the backs of their doors as well as on the fronts, and that their inner surfaces were hung with green watered silk divided into compartments or lozenges by silver galoon, with white satin, or with flowered tabby.

Thus the cabinet-makers of the eighteenth century had a remarkable variety of resources for the embellishment of their furniture; and it is no slight praise to say that they drew upon these resources to the utmost without ever abusing them.

CHAPTER IV: PANELLED FURNITURE

PANELLED furniture, all derived from the ancient chest or coffer, consists of receptacles for various objects. Its essential features are a framework of jambs and traverses supporting thin panels slipped into grooves. Such furniture is closed either by doors, by drawers, or by flaps. It forms an important family, the chief members of which are the wardrobe, the sideboard, the commode, and the secretary.

Honour to whom honour is due; the wardrobe holds the first place, as much by reason of its imposing size as by its importance in modest household goods, of which it is the undisputed queen. It was not a creation of the eighteenth century; not, indeed, to this century, but to its predecessor do we owe the large wardrobe all in one piece, though it became general at the later period. Under many different names—*garderobe* in Provence, *lingère* in the south-west, *corbeille de mariage* in Normandy, *cabinet* in Brittany—it was, together with the bed, the chief item in all house-furnishings, and very soon no home, however humble, was without it. The young bride of the peasant or small tradesman class brought it with her as part of her dowry to keep her trousseau in, and throughout her life the good housewife, in her white kerchief or starched cap, will polish it as if her one function in life were to give the fair

walnut, the rosy cherrywood, the sturdy oak that inimitable bloom which will enchant the lover of antiquities a century hence. How many of us can recall some such provincial wardrobe among our childish memories! It inspired a kind of respectful admiration with its mighty bulk, its broad shining surfaces, its elaborate metal fittings, and the mystery of all that slumbered in its deep recesses. It was a thrilling moment when it opened under the hand of a grandmother, with the familiar but always surprising creak of its big lock, the long moan of its hinges, and a breath of mingled scents, made up of dried rose-leaves, iris, and a hint of the sandal-wood box brought from India by some sailor ancestor.

The majority of these roomy, decorative, and time-defying wardrobes have one fault—a grave one in view of the kind of bee-hive cells in which we are condemned to pass our lives in Paris: their dimensions. They are sometimes from 2 metres 50 to 2 metres 75 in height by 1 metre 40 in breadth. Those of the Louis XV period are especially cumbersome, because of the high arched pediment which generally crowns them. But others of more moderate size are to be found; and the Norman, Breton, and Lorrain examples with a horizontal cornice are not rare.

The arched cornices are sometimes S-shaped—that is to say, formed of two long-drawn-out S-curves, merging one into the other, and continuing from one angle to the other (Figs. 5, 6, 7),

or divided by a central motive (Fig. 4); sometimes in "basket-handle" form, with an horizontal piece at either end (Fig. 8). The door-leaves are divided into two or three plain panels with curving contours, and are enframed in mouldings. When there are three panels, the central one is smaller than the others, and is placed a little lower than the centre of the door. The traverse of the base is cut out into festoons with a moulding at the edge which continues along the angles of the legs; these, curved in the "doe's-foot form," terminate in a volute which rests on a cube. The upper traverse, called the frieze, follows the form of the pediment, and the tops of the door-leaves are also cut out to harmonize with this form. The angles of the whole are rounded, and its sides are made of panels with mouldings, simpler in design than those of the front.

The Parisian wardrobes, which are often very masterly and intricate in construction, are very sober in decoration; generally speaking, their only ornament is the division into plain panels enframed in the fine mouldings described above. There is nothing surprising in their simplicity; in the capital they were "for use as linen-cupboards," says the *Encyclopædia*, and were not of much importance, whereas in the provinces they occupied the place of honour, even in rich homes.

As we cannot pass all the provinces in review, we must be content to describe only the typical cupboards of the south-west, Provence, and Normandy.

Those of the south-west (Figs. 5 and 6), or rather of Bordeaux and the lower valleys of the Garonne and the Dordogne, remain simple, and have two panels to each half of the door; the lower panel, not so high as the upper one, is rectangular at the base; its sides, like those of the second panel, are rectilinear; but at the top it is curved, and at the junction of the curves the moulding often expands into carved crockets and acanthus-leaves. Parts ornamented with more important carvings, the motives being generally beans, shells, palm-leaves, and running foliage patterns, are the broad oblique traverse which separates the two panels, and the top of the half-door. This is completely enframed by a strong moulding. More elaborate types have carvings on the lower traverse, with a central motive, very often a pierced shell; an acanthus-leaf is applied on the legs; the non-practicable neutral part, which is in one with the left half-door, is also carved sometimes; as to the frieze, it is always very simple, and either quite plain or with a slight moulding. The mouldings leave little room on these cupboards for the metal fittings; they are reduced to a small escutcheon of pierced steel on the right half-door, a symmetrical false escutcheon of the left half, and two long thin pins as high as the door-leaves, which terminate in turned acorns most refined and elegant in profile.

These three bands of carving, so happily distributed, separated as they are by large plain surfaces and connected by the long vertical mouldings of

the framework, make up a whole of a fine architectonic character; in our opinion no provincial wardrobe is so perfect as this sober Louis XV linen-press of Bordeaux and its neighbourhood. The wood is walnut, but sometimes it is cherry or even mahogany.

Provençal wardrobes (Fig. 7) are somewhat different in character, in spite of a general likeness in silhouette and proportions; the lines are less sedate, the ornament, both of wood and metal, is more florid; they have more southern exuberance. Each door has three panels, all the sides of which are curved in accordance with a very complicated design; these panels stand up from a plain ground, and the margin of each half-door is covered with iron fittings for its entire height; six similar escutcheons (one of them real, the other five false and serving merely for ornaments) form in threes two long continuous bands of metal—an illogical excess of decoration. The design of these flat bands of steel, worked entirely with the file in an open-work pattern, is, however, often exquisite. The very large pins—they are sometimes three centimetres in diameter—are either two or six in number. The frieze is always ornamented like the lower traverse. Nothing could be gayer or more charming than these presses, when the fine light walnut-wood of which they are made is resplendent and all their steel fittings are gleaming.

In connection with the Provençal cupboards it is interesting to note what a long popularity

the Louis XV Style enjoyed at a distance from Paris; but this applies also to other pieces of furniture and other provincial districts. When once they had adopted the S-shaped pediment, the console legs, the curved and non-axial form of the panels, cabinet-makers held their hands, and continued throughout the century, and afterwards, to make furniture on strictly Louis XV lines; the influence of the new style that reigned in Paris was revealed only in the carved ornament which covered the whole surface, except the panels, with flowering branches, garlands, quivers, torches, hearts, knotted ribbons, antique cups, vases, and baskets. The purely Provençal Louis XV piece is generally ornamented only with mouldings; but this is not an absolute rule, and it is sometimes very difficult to distinguish between periods.

Finally, we must devote a few words to the Norman cupboards, which are so famous that most Parisians generously attribute every old, or soi-disant old, wardrobe to Normandy; of these Norman cupboards—the most freely "faked" of all pieces of furniture—which the Faubourg Saint-Antoine places upon the market with truly astonishing fecundity. They are nearly always of oak, and with the exception of certain fine models of the most refined sobriety, such as the example we reproduce (Fig. 4), they are much more elaborately decorated than their Arlesian sisters. However, they have not so many metal fittings; in general they have only two escutcheons—

though these are immense—and their pins are less imposing. But the richness of the carvings is astounding. In addition to the fundamental motives of the style—the bean, the shell, the pear-shaped cartouche—we have older and more traditional elements of ornaments; rosettes, palms, scallops, a series of grooves cut in the semicircular gorge, and a host of others, invented by artists who cared nothing about following the fashions of Paris; for instance, bands of draped stuff, or rows of beads, forming festoons. The cabinet-maker carves everything that can be carved, and respects only the surface of the panels. Towards the top of the cupboard, in the centre of the frieze, he places large motives in high relief, which overhang, and break the lines of the cornice; sometimes carved in the material itself, they are merely in high relief; sometimes they are carved independently in the round, and pegged on to the bare surface of the frieze. These "dust-traps," often very graceful but rather too much in the nature of ornamental plaques applied to the piece of furniture and not incorporated with it, are also to be found on certain Arlesian cupboards, half Louis XV, half Louis XVI.

There were, of course, a good many simpler types, with single or double doors, such as the modest Saintongeais cupboard (Fig. 8) with the "basket-handle" pediment, the rustic carvings and mouldings of which are both ingenious and tasteful. We note in the wardrobes of this region a very curious liking for polychromy;

the cabinet-maker is fond of setting panels of massive walnut in a framework of cherry, or knot-elm in walnut; he emphasizes his carvings by touches of black paint.

A very attractive variety of cupboard, much in request because of its small size, was the *bonnetière* (cap-cupboard), Breton, Norman, or Provençal; it is a small piece of slender proportions, generally with a single door; this has sometimes an open-work panel at the top, ornamented with turned spindle-heads; in this case the *bonnetière* is closely akin to the larder-cupboard.

The book-case only began to be differentiated from the cupboard in the general evolution of the type about the year 1700; Boulle was perhaps its inventor. Book-cases were not in common use until the fashion of a small *format* for books was general; the large, heavy folios and quartos which were the basis of all collections of books in the preceding century would have required immensely large and solid cases; it would have been very inconvenient to take them down from high shelves; they were either piled upon the floor or arranged in the bottom of cupboards. Authentic Louis XV book-cases are rare. They are nearly always wide and low, five feet high by six feet wide, for instance; sometimes, indeed, they are no more than breast high. In this case they have marble tops like commodes. The doors, made of a trellis of gilded wire, were lined with green, yellow, or crimson silk.

Angles, as we have said, were shunned in the

Louis XV period; and this gave rise to the invention of the corner-cupboard. There are some very high ones, made for dining-rooms. Mouldings were their sole decoration, and they generally matched or, at least, harmonized with the woodwork, and were painted the same colour; they were made in two parts, one above the other. Low ones, breast high, with tops of fine marble, were made for drawing-rooms and cabinets; these were often surmounted by shelves in tiers of three or four, gradually diminishing towards the top. They were called "corner-shelves with a cupboard in the middle," or very often simply "corners." Nearly all these "corners" have quadricircular projecting façades, or curving façades formed of one convex curve between two concave ones. These little pieces are very much coveted, especially if a pair can be found, to give a Louis XV *cachet* to a room, and to hold antique or Chinese curios. About 1750 no room was considered complete without "corners"; Madame de Pompadour ordered thirty in mahogany one day from Lazare Duvaux for her country house, the Château de Crécy.

The "under-cupboard" (Figs 9 and 10), as its name shows, is nothing more than the base of the old wardrobe in two parts, which has become independent. It is a piece of furniture with two or three doors, the height of which ranges from 1 metre to 1 metre 50 cm. The lowest are, properly speaking, commodes in the form of under-cupboards. They were used in ante-

rooms and dining-rooms. Those which were made for dining-rooms took the place of the stately sideboards of the Louis XIV period, or, rather, they were simplified sideboards, serving the double purpose of a buffet and a place for plates and dishes removed from the table.

The sparsely furnished dining-rooms with which architects first provided the rich apartments or mansions of Paris contained only under-cupboards, tables, and consoles; but the Parisian *bourgeoisie* owned large closed sideboards in two parts, sometimes so lofty that the upper part, with its door of three panels, looked like a complete wardrobe perched on an "under-cupboard" a little wider. These sideboards in two parts were also very frequent in Normandy, Brittany (Fig. 11), Auvergne, and part of Provence.

But in the principal furniture-manufacturing centre of Provence, Arles, only a very special kind of sideboard, the *credence-sideboard*, was made (Fig. 13). This, too, was in two parts, but the very small upper cupboard looks as if it had been cut off sharply from its base. As the lower portion projects considerably beyond the small superposed structure it could accommodate a great many articles during a meal, and also serve for clearing the table. On certain examples decorative objects may even be left standing permanently, for the doors of the upper part run back on grooves instead of opening on hinges. These two doors, together with the fixed panel between them—sometimes replaced by a tiny hinged cup-

board, called a *tabernacle*—form a very animated façade, the undulations of which produce the most agreeable play of reflections and shadow. The lower portion has two doors, separated by a fixed plat-band; the façade is straight, but covered with delicate carvings. A curious characteristic is the size of the pins and escutcheons, which even on the tabernacle, when this exists, are often as voluminous as those of the largest wardrobe.[1] The lower part rarely has drawers; if it has these they are furnished with large, handsome drop-handles of pierced ironwork. This Arlesian credence-sideboard is a charming and original invention.

The dresser-sideboard (*buffet-vaisselier*) (Fig. 14) is common to all provinces, and known in Gascony as an *escudié*, in Champagne as a *ménage*, and in Auvergne as a *vaisselier*, it is more or less the same everywhere. It is an under-cupboard with two or three doors, surmounted by a tier of two or three shelves set back on the top. This *étagère* is generally movable; placed upon the lower portion it fits into it by tenons which are not fixed in their mortices; it has always a solid back, and often two lateral partitions with panels; when these latter are absent, turned uprights support the angles of the shelves; the upper and more important shelf has a cornice-moulding, and under it a scalloped and sometimes a carved band; the others are edged with a beading, to secure objects placed on the shelves, or with a little turned

[1] Not, however, in the example reproduced in Fig. 13.

balustrade. The *vaisselier* was the parent of our modern sideboard, with its glazed upper part and its cellaret, a piece of furniture that did not exist before last century; all sideboards of this kind which lay claim to styles such as "Henri II" or "Louis XV" are absurd anachronisms.

The secretary, or at least the cupboard-secretary, is another derivative of the wardrobe (Fig. 19). For there were also commode-secretaries and bureau-secretaries of which we shall speak presently. It was the cupboard-secretary—a very practical possession to people who knew not our modern American bureaux, and an object that lent itself admirably to decoration—which was most popular from the time of Louis XV to that of Louis-Philippe. It was invented in the middle of the century, and is described as follows in the *Inventaire général du Mobilier de la Couronne* of 1760: "a cupboard-secretary, the front of which closes with a lock and key and may be let down to form a writing-table covered with black morocco; it contains six drawers with handles and rosettes; the lower part has a double-door which locks and contains one large and two small shelves. . . ." To be complete the inventory should have added that this complex piece of furniture further possessed a drawer extending right across the upper part, and a marble shelf with a moulding to crown the whole. The lower cupboard sometimes enclosed drawers instead of shelves, or a safe, and was sometimes replaced by

three drawers; when this was the case it became a "chiffonier-secretary" instead of a "cupboard-secretary." The usual dimensions were about 1 metre 60 cm. high by 1 metre wide and 40 cm. deep. The great decorative merit of the secretary-cupboard was the large square surface of the adjustable front, which enabled the inlayer to compose an important central motive, such as a bouquet of flowers or a group of attributes. The beautiful secretary we reproduce, although its bronzes are in the Louis XVI Style, is essentially Louis XV in the contour of the inlaid compartments and the attenuated form of the top, described as *amortissement en chanfrein* (literally, deadening by chamfer). These secretaries are sometimes designed to fit into corners. Their interiors, more or less complicated, contain an amusing combination of little drawers, apparent or secret, shelves, pigeon-holes, and receptacles for papers.

We now come to what is, perhaps, the most characteristic piece of furniture of the Louis XV period, the commode, or chest of drawers; it was in the composition of this that joiners and cabinet-makers were able to give the freest course to their taste for undulating lines and convex surfaces and reveal the rich elegance of their gilded bronzes.

This, again, was a piece of furniture invented towards the end of Louis XIV's reign which did not come into common use until the time of the Regency. Boulle's pompous, "tomb-like"

commodes were merely show-pieces of an exceptional character; the ordinary chest of drawers was born with the eighteenth century. The *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* of 1708 gives the word *commode* as a new one. In 1718, again, the Duchess of Orleans (Madame, the Regent's mother), wrote in a letter: "The present the Duchesse de Berry has given my daughter is a charming one; she has sent her a commode. A commode is a large table with large drawers." This, however, is not very exact; the commode is much more closely akin to a chest mounted upon legs than to a table.

The Louis XV commode has from two to four drawers, superposed in two or three rows; two large, or one large and two small, or three large, or finally, two large and two small. When there are two small drawers at the top they are sometimes of equal size, and are separated by a non-practicable part which has generally a false escutcheon corresponding to those below (Fig. 26), and sometimes unequal when the larger of the two has this false escutcheon at the end (Fig. 21). In the latter case the division between the drawers is masked as much as possible either by ornaments of marquetry and lacquer, which are continued from one part to another, or in some very refined but not very logical examples, by bronzes which are combined in a central motive extending over the whole front of the piece of furniture. The more modest specimens always proclaim their structure much more frankly. Commodes with two tiers of

drawers are, of course, more slender than others; when their legs are not overslight, and their curves are well studied, they achieve supreme elegance. This variety was distinguished as the "commode on high legs."

There is an infinite variety of commodes. Some are massive and protuberant, crouching like *poussahs* upon short, thick legs; others are small and slender, and it is difficult to say whether they should be classed as commodes or as *chiffonnières*; these latter, very sober in style and almost rectilinear, everywhere proclaim their style only in the slight undulation of their vertical façade, their scalloped traverse below, and the motives of their metal-work (Figs. 22 and 27); the former, on the contrary, skilfully combine vertical and horizontal curves; their sides have the same contour as their fronts, and often swell out towards the base. Some are obvious villagers, and with their iron handles and their carvings cut with a knife have a kind of jocund rusticity, a most amusing savour of the soil (Fig. 22). The "nun-commode" (*commode religieuse*) (Fig 24) is high and narrow and quite small; it is a low chiffonier with three drawers. The console-commode (Figs. 25 and 26), which was made in Paris (Lazare Duvaux sold them) but is common throughout the south of France, recalls the console-table by its tendency to diminish towards the base; the upper drawers are concave; that in the middle is convex and is separated from these by a little vertical band, which takes away the impression of

effeminacy,[1] the lower one, curving outward, terminates the re-entering curve; the sides have the same contour as the façade; the very animated console-legs and the lower traverse are those of a southern wardrobe.

The *chiffonnier* (not to be confounded with the *chiffonnière*, which is a table) is nothing but a high chest of drawers. It is generally about 1 m. 50 or 1 m. 60 high, and has five drawers and a marble top, the angles being chamfered. It is an essentially feminine piece of furniture of costly workmanship, nearly always in rosewood or violet ebony, with drops, handles, escutcheons, and feet of gilded bronze. It made its first appearance about the middle of the century.

At about the same date the commode, allying itself to the bureau with a slanting flap, gave birth to the commode-secretary (Figs. 29 and 30). This is a commode in the console style, the upper desk part of which opens by means of a sloping flap which forms a writing-table; the upper part of the secretary has the usual accessories of such pieces of furniture, shelves, little drawers, etc.

Becoming more complicated, the secretary-commode took to itself a cupboard-top, and this produced a new variety, the monumental secretary, on which the shipowners of Bordeaux wrote their letters at the time of the Seven Years War; a fine piece of furniture in oak or mahogany which would be perfectly practical if, in order to open

[1] This feature is lacking in the commode-secretary, Fig. 30, which accounts for the lack of firmness in its lines.

the drawers of the under part one were not obliged to get up and push back one's chair, and if a person writing at it were able to stretch out his legs. On the whole, this secretary-commode-wardrobe is closely akin to the Dutch and Flemish *scribanne* and suggests some connection between the two. This is by no means improbable, for at this period Bordeaux often imported Netherlands furniture.

CHAPTER V: THE TABLE AND ITS DEVELOPMENTS

THE transformation of tables at the beginning of the eighteenth century was at once rapid, complete, and peculiarly happy. They became simpler and lighter; save in the case of certain large types, they dispensed with all the complicated apparatus of traverses and connecting motives between the legs, and relied for solidity on the robust and precise juncture of the legs with the frieze above. They gained appreciably in grace of outline from the new practice of making the upper surface overhang the legs more, and of attenuating the supports, sometimes, it must be admitted, to an exaggerated extent.

All the varieties of Louis XV tables—and their name is legion—have one uniform characteristic: the lines of their legs, which are invariably of the *pied-de-biche* type. Even the kitchen-tables of the peasantry make a rude attempt to get this undulating outline, reminding one of a country wench attempting to make a Court curtsey. When these legs, which describe an S-curve more or less pronounced, do not terminate in cases of gilded bronze they are finished off by a small volute resting on a cube (Figs. 33, 34, 36), or by a graceful projection which is a kind of adaptation of the doe's-foot (Fig. 42); this latter is sometimes retained, but very infrequently (Figs. 35, 37, 50).[1]

[1] In the last example it is quite degenerate. We shall find it again in the time of Louis XVI.

Large tables of the period are very rare in these days. It would be very difficult, for instance, to procure a genuine old Louis XV dining-table. They were used, of course; but they were so cumbersome that they have been nearly all destroyed. They were either round or oval; a set of furniture included several of different sizes. We learn from Mlle Guimard's inventory that the famous dancer had three tables to seat ten, fifteen and thirty persons respectively. These huge pieces of carpentry had no pretensions to beauty for a very good reason, the tablecloths that covered them fell to the ground, so they were never seen. Consequently common trestle-tables were often used as substitutes for them. Tables "of the English kind"—that is to say, with adjustable leaves—did not come into use until the close of the reign, about 1770, when the Louis XVI Style was in full vogue.

Before leaving the dining-room, we may mention the *dumb waiter:* it was a little round table with superposed shelves, in the upper part of which was a wine-cooler. Furnished with clean plates and covers it stood near the table (it was usual to have four), and enabled the guests at a little supper to serve themselves without the irksome presence of servants.

Medium-sized and small tables for every sort of purpose, suitable for drawing-room, boudoir, or bedroom, are to be found in a great variety of forms: round, rectangular, canted, with and without drawers; their friezes are carved or

moulded, sometimes straight (Fig. 32), but more often with curves of contrary flexure (Fig. 42) or festoons (Figs. 33 to 37, etc.). Some have a peculiarity which makes them at once more convenient and more graceful: the surface is sunk like a shallow basin with edges (Figs. 33, 34, 42), or they have applied edges. Among these little occasional-tables (known as *ambulantes*, and in the south as *correntilles*), the simplest without or almost without mouldings, are often exquisitely graceful by reason of the happy proportions of their various parts—top, frieze, and legs—and the perfect line of their supports.

The console, like so many other pieces of furniture, dates from the reign of Louis XIV. Under Louis XV it was called a console-table (*table en console*) or, somewhat oddly, a console-table leg, with its marble (*pied de table en console, avec son marbre*). It was a fixture, ornamental rather than useful, and had its appointed place in drawing-room or dining-room under the pier-glass. As it formed part of the decoration of a room it was nearly always gilded or painted, and was highly ornamental, with a costly marble top of Aleppo breccia, sarrancolin, or brocatelle. Being fixed to the wall, its legs (two in number) were free to take the most fantastic shapes and often showed the most audacious false bearings; sometimes they came together at the base, and the piece was then called a *pied de table à consoles rassemblées* or *en cul-de-lampe* (Fig. 40). Relieved from any preoccupation

as to solidity, designers gave free rein to their fancy in these models, and it is in certain consoles that we find the most extravagant excesses of the rococo style; the examples we reproduce, in spite of the somewhat exuberant tendency of their decoration, are comparatively simple (Figs. 38 and 39).

In the drawing-rooms of this society which had been passionately addicted to card-playing for a century, there was an infinite variety of card-tables. For lovers of tri, or ombre for three, there was the triangular trio-table (Fig. 43); for quadrille, there were square tables, often with round trays at the corners for candles; for five-handed brelau and reversi, there were pentagonal tables; for piquet, ingenious tables with folding tops mounted on pivots; this is the classic French card-table; it was invented during the period we are studying, and is still known as a "Louis XV pivot-table." All were mounted with cloth; but the conventional green cloth was often replaced by velvet edged with a gold or silver galoon.

In every study the essential piece of furniture, when it was not a secretary, was a bureau. The simplest kind of Louis XV bureau is a large table, covered with a dark-coloured morocco leather, enframed in a gold tooling similar to that on the bindings of books; an ornamental fillet, also of gold, covers the join in the leather, for a single skin is not large enough to cover such a table. A quadricircular moulding of gilded bronze runs round the top, the rounded corners of which

often project. Three drawers open in the frieze. That in the middle, the lowest of the three, is rectilinear, while the other two are curved; their frontal lines are parallel with the external contour of the piece of furniture. The bronze decoration, more or less rich, generally consists of escutcheons, sometimes accompanied by fixed handles, of two curving acanthus-leaf ornaments separating the two drawers, and of drops at the top of the legs often attached to the quadricircular moulding, and of casings connected with the drops on the arrises of the legs by enframing fillets. The panels of the three remaining sides of the frieze often have bronze motives in the centre, and the acanthus leaves of the façade are repeated at the back. The framework is of oak, nearly always veneered with mahogany. The bureau of Fig. 44 is a perfectly classic type; it belonged to a bishop, whose arms, surmounted by a tasselled hat, adorn the sides.

In this form the bureau with its three drawers, the central one of which the user could only open by changing his position, would have been a retrogression from the seventeenth-century bureau had it not been supplemented by a "bureau-end" or "bureau-stand," a little accessory object placed on one end of the table, or incorporated with it. It consisted of tiers of small shelves for the temporary reception of papers and of a drawer; it was provided with doors like a little cupboard, it was known as a "paper-holder" (*serre-papiers*).

But the crowning perfection was added towards the middle of the century, when the cylinder-bureau was invented, perhaps by Oeben himself. The revolving top was a great convenience; at a touch it closed all the upper drawers, and covered the writing-table when the owner wished to hide his papers hurriedly from indiscreet eyes.

Side by side with these large masculine bureaux the cabinet-makers of the period produced an endless variety of ladies' bureaux, dainty pieces of furniture in precious woods, with bronzes chased like jewels, in which the utmost refinement and delicacy were displayed; they were worthy shrines for the charming letters and sparkling memoirs penned upon them. The varieties may be grouped round two principal types: the bureau known to modern dealers as the *bureau à pente* or *à dos d'âne* (slanting or "donkey's-back" bureau), and called in the language of their day a table or bureau *à dessus brisé* (with a broken top) and a *bonheur du jour*.

The former (Figs. 45 to 47) had a flap either veneered with fine wood or inlaid on the outer surface, and covered inside with blue, green, or yellow velvet or with morocco leather; when opened, it rested on two wooden slides with knobs, unless it was upheld horizontally by two "compasses," metal supports that slid back into the sides of the bureau. When it was let down this *dessus brisé* revealed a more or less complicated arrangement of little drawers and shelves; two

larger drawers opened in the frieze. A further refinement provided a blind or movable screen at the back of the bureau, made of India paper or silk, which made it possible to write without discomfort in front of a sunny window or a large fire.

The *bonheur du jour* did not receive this coquettish name till quite at the end of the reign, when it was already made in the Louis XVI Style; but it had been in existence for some fifteen years. In 1754 Lazare Duvaux sold to M. de la Boissière a "writing-table with desk, cupboard, mirrors, and a strong-box," and to the Keeper of the Seals "a little table with a drawer, ink-horns, and desk, and a looking-glass above." These were undoubtedly *bonheurs du jour*. The first-named had even those mirror-doors which became regular adjuncts in the following period, adjuncts which feminine coquetry was bound to demand; what better ornament could a pretty woman desire for a piece of furniture than her own face? But the majority of Louis XV *bonheurs du jour* have doors in inlaid wood, unless, indeed, their cupboard is closed by a sliding panel the articulated slats of which may be slipped back into the sides, or is "made in bookcase form"—in other words, furnished with a row of sham books.

Many writing-tables were neither men's bureaux nor ladies' bureaux, but real little tables, arranged conveniently for writing, though their purpose was not patent at the first glance. They had movable tops, running in grooves; when the

owner wanted to write he pulled out a tablet mounted with leather or velvet, and opened on the right a little drawer which contained writing-paper, a seal and sealing-wax, an inkstand with its inkhorns of plated metal, its pounce-box, its sponge-box for wiping pens, and the elongated tray which held pens and penknife. This was the simplest form; others were more complicated. These had a blind or a screen, a movable desk rising from the centre of the top, like the mirror on a dressing-table, to support a book or a sheet of music. Sometimes the entire top of the table could be inclined at will; this was a table with a top that lifts up. Others were still more elaborate; Lazare Duvaux, prudently refraining from a detailed description of such complexities, says briefly: "a very elaborate little table (*petite table très composée*)."

Again, for the boudoir or the small reception-room where intimate friends were welcomed, there was a whole graceful family of work-tables or *chiffonnières* (Figs. 48 and 49), "generally used by women," says the *Encyclopædia*, "to keep their work or trifles in." The top was of marble or wood, with a gallery on three sides; two or three drawers were superposed; sometimes at the bottom the legs were connected by a shelf enclosed in a high network, for balls of wool. The drawers were lined with silk of some light colour, and was sometimes divided into compartments; they were used as receptacles for the piece of embroidery in progress when this was not on a

frame, the box for ravelling galoon, the gold needle-case, the scissors and prints for cutting out, when this was in vogue—in short, all the little boxes and accessories indispensable to the lady of fashion—not forgetting *Pamela*, *Le Paysan parvenu*, or some other novel of the day. It is not always easy to distinguish between these *chiffonnière* tables with three drawers and certain small chests of drawers on high legs. There are also simpler tables, very small and light, intended to be moved about easily; they have a single drawer, and an upper shelf with curving sides; there are holes in these, into which the hands were slipped when the table was lifted (Fig. 50).

We must not forget all the slim, little round tables, and all the "crescent" or "bean"-shaped tables (sometimes less elegantly described as "kidney"-tables), with tiny drawers and spindle-legs, looking as if a flick of the finger would upset them, and many others besides, miniature pieces that bear witness to the sense of grace the French possessed to such a supreme degree at this period.

But this is not all; we have still to examine the bedroom, and we must not forget that the dressing-room did not exist, even after 1750, in any but the most luxurious houses.[1] There was, accordingly, a toilet-table in every bedroom, a *poudreuse*, as the modern dealers call them; the word is an invention of their own; they consider it more "eighteenth century" no doubt. A

[1] Even so, there was only one at Versailles, the Queen's!

dressing-table, whether inlaid with rosewood or lemon-wood, or made of simple wild cherrywood, whether furnished with costly bronze fittings or not, was nearly always designed as follows (Fig. 41): it was of small dimensions (80 cm. by 45 cm.); the top was divided into three parts; the centre was fitted with a mirror, which was made to lift up and slide forward on two grooves, inclining backwards a little like a reading-desk; the two sides were fixed on hinges; when they were opened right and left, they formed two horizontal shelves on which toilet articles could be arranged, and disclosed two compartments or coffers (*caissons*). In the more carefully finished models these, again, had covers which opened backwards. The compartments were lined with tabby or satin, and the inner covers were wadded. The divisions of the left compartment contained the scent-bottles, the china pomade-pots, the pincushion, the silver-gilt cup, the powder-box, the knife for removing powder, and little boxes for almond paste, rouge, patches, and orris-root, etc., for cleaning the teeth; the right compartment was the receptacle for the minute basin which sufficed for the relative cleanliness of our forbears. In the centre of the front was a flap that pulled out, and under it a drawer for brushes and combs; right and left, four smaller drawers, two false ones above, corresponding to the coffers, and two real ones below. This was one of the best-designed and the most graceful pieces of furniture invented in the eighteenth century.

In addition to this classic type, there were toilet-tables in "butterfly," chest of drawers, cupboard, heart or crescent form, and also corner toilet-tables. These little tables were frequently fitted with castors, at a time when castors were still rare, showing that they were moved about from place to place. As we know from all the *mémoires*, novels, and letters of the period, to say nothing of pictures and prints, the women of Louis XV's time used to receive their admirers and friends who came to bring them all the latest news, seated at their dressing-tables in a coquettish *déshabillé*, while the hairdresser arranged their powdered curls *en équivoque* or *en galante*, and they themselves equalized the rouge on their cheeks with a hare's-foot, or anxiously debated the exact spot on which a patch was to be applied. And when the visitors were numerous the important process had to be carried out, not in the bedroom, but in the boudoir or the small reception-room.

Other little tables used in the bedroom were: the *vide-poche* (pocket-emptier), a small round table with a raised edge; the jewel-table, with its compartments of material; the bed-table for the early breakfast, the top of which was a movable tray of lacquer or china, very convenient for meals in bed; and, finally, the night-table, open or closed, an innovation of the Regency necessitated by the disappearance of the great bed of an earlier age, with its columns and discreet curtains.

In this epistolary age, *par excellence*, many tables not primarily writing-tables were provided with a

supplemental flap covered with morocco, and a drawer containing an inkstand. Notes were constantly arriving, and the servant waited for an answer, which had to be scribbled forthwith, when the recipient was perhaps busy making up her face, or working at her embroidery, or in bed; dressing-tables had therefore their writing-flaps and inkstands, and their paper cases, as had also certain *chiffonnières*, certain bed-tables, and even certain night-tables.

CHAPTER VI: SEATS AND VARIOUS ARTICLES OF FURNITURE

No articles of furniture reveal the character of a period more fully than its seats. Place side by side a large Louis XIV arm-chair, rigid, solemn, and uncomfortable, with its strongly marked structure, its high back, made to enframe the huge wig of the day, and a Louis XV *bergère*, soft and low, restful as a bed, and covered with gaily flowered silk; do they not convey to you, as clearly as two portraits or two pages of prose, the antinomy between two generations separated by a whole world? The one seems made for an archbishop, the other for a courtesan.

Louis XV seats are above all things portable and comfortable; comfortable, because the period was epicurean, and portable, because it favoured gatherings from which etiquette was banished, and at which the guests fell into informal groups, determined by the attraction of affinities. They were simplified in the same manner as tables, by the suppression of their bars, or of their X-shaped reinforcements; these were only retained by the straw chairs, for without them, the latter, joined together as they were, would have lacked solidity. The legs are always curved; the back, save in the case of a very comfortable *bergère*, in which one could sleep (Figs. 53 and 75), became

low, as in the time of Louis XIII, though not to the same degree. "Chair-backs," says Roubo Junior,[1] "rising from above the back legs to the height of from eighteen to nineteen inches from the seat, to enable the sitter to rest his shoulders against them comfortably while leaving the head entirely free, to avoid disarranging the hair either of ladies or gentlemen, the latter being often quite as particular in this respect as the former." A contemporary of Louis XIV would never have leant against the back of his chair; what would have become of his elaborately curled wig? The wood of these backs was but rarely visible (Figs. 52 and 53); they were generally upholstered. The shape is very variable. If the back was concave, the chair was said to be "*en cabriolet*" (Figs. 55, 58, 61, 62, 64).

Nearly all the backs were more or less "fiddle-back"—that is to say slightly contracted about half-way up (Figs. 52 and 54 to 67). Their summits had the double S-curve when the woodwork was upholstered; if this was not the case they might terminate in an undulating line unbroken by any carved ornament (Figs. 64 to 66), or might be of a more or less complicated design, with a void in the centre, or on either side, acanthus leaves carved on the "epaulettes" (Figs. 54, 56, etc.), and a central motive composed of one, two, or three florets (Figs. 58, 68, 69, etc.), a cartouche (Fig. 72), or a shell (Fig. 56), or the two together (Fig. 60). A similar motive appears

[1] *L'Art du Menuisier*, Paris, 1769–74.

in the centre of the frame beneath the seat and at the tops of the legs; the acanthus leaf occurs very frequently at the feet (Figs. 53, 54, etc), and also at the junction of the legs with the frame (Fig. 60), especially in the earlier phase of the style.

The little padded cushion (*manchette*) on the arms was *de rigueur*.[1] The consoles of the arms no longer continue to the legs, but are always set back a little further, and mortised into the side traverses of the frame. This modification was a concession to feminine fashions. A hundred and fifty years earlier the enormous hooped petticoats of the day (*vertugadins*) had led to the introduction of "hoop-chairs"—that is to say, chairs without arms; and under the Regency the fashion of panniers caused the invention of chairs with receding arms, which allowed skirts to spread out fully round their wearers. "The panniers worn are so full," says Barbier in his *Journal* (1728), "that the action of sitting down pushes out the whalebones, and causes such an astonishing distension of the skirt that it has been necessary to make special chairs." Sometimes the junction of the console and the frame is visible (Figs. 55, 71, etc.), sometimes it is covered by the material used for upholstering (Fig. 58, etc.). The latter, a less architectural arrangement, is certainly the less happy of the two. In other chairs the arms are not set back, but thrown out (Figs. 63 and 64);

[1] With a few exceptions certain small "*cabriolet*" chairs, such as the elegant example of Fig 58, have no *manchettes*.

the consoles start from the legs, but at once curve backwards and outwards, and the consequent twisting and expansion of the mouldings has a most excellent effect.

Chairs for the writing-table were made in a special shape; the backs were very low and rounded "gondola-shape," as it was called; in plan they are sometimes circular (Fig. 68), and in this case they are occasionally made to revolve on a pivot; sometimes they are rather singular in shape, semicircular at the back, and curved in front with one convex curve between two concave ones; these chairs have three legs in front and a single leg behind, like the toilet-chairs which we shall describe presently. They are generally mounted with morocco.

The most characteristic Louis XV seat was the *bergère* (Figs. 69 to 75) invented about 1720. It is a wide, low, deep arm-chair, very capacious. These *bergères* were made in a variety of forms, but the essential features of a *bergère* were the solid sides (*joues pleines*)—that is to say, without voids between the arms and the seat—and the movable cushion on the seat, the "mattress," which was stuffed with down in such a manner as to be very elastic, and laid upon a foundation of interlaced bands of webbing.[1] The most seductive names

[1] Two of the *bergères* here reproduced (Figs. 73 and 74) are only included because of the interest of their wooden framework Towards the end of the nineteenth century they were disfigured by upholstery with elastics, which destroy their character. The same remark applies to the arm-chairs, Figs. 53, 54, 56–58, and the sofa, Fig. 70

were given to the various types of *bergères* as they made their appearance: *obligeante*, *convalescente*, *boudoir*, etc. There are three principal types: that which is closely akin to the ordinary armchair (Figs. 69 to 71); that of which the general line is more envelóping, more rounded, more of the gondola shape (Figs. 72 to 74); and the "confessional shape," the back of which is furnished with two ears, serving to support the head (Fig. 75).

The stuffs with which seats were covered were very numerous, and fashion often introduced new ones. For costly seats the material most used was tapestry, made principally at Beauvais, the motives on which were bouquets and running bands of flowers, draperies with cords and tassels, La Fontaine's fables, pastorals, monkey-pieces, and pagodas.

A much cheaper sort of tapestry was woven at Elbeuf and at Rouen, under the name of *bergame*, the designs for this were chiefly stripes and chevrons in graduated tones; it was used to cover seats in anterooms.

Then there was tapestry worked with the needle on canvas, in coarse or fine stitch, or a combination of the two. This was generally made at home by women working by the day under the direction of the lady of the house. The greatest ladies in the land, beginning with the Queen and her daughters, practised the art. There had been a terrible quarrel between Louis XV and Madame de Mailly in connection with tapestry; one day

the fair countess was so busy counting her stitches that she did not hear the King when he spoke to her. Greatly irritated, he snatched the frame from her hand, drew a penknife from his pocket, and cut the tapestry into four pieces. This did not prevent the King, some months later, from indulging the caprice of the perennially bored person by starting to make tapestry himself; it is unnecessary to say that his courtiers vied with each other in imitating him, and that it became a fashionable masculine pursuit.

The richest, the most admired, and also the most durable of the silken materials other than velvet for covering seats was damask. The finest sorts, three-coloured damask and Genoa damask, were worth from fifteen to twenty *livres* an ell of twenty inches in width. It took two ells to cover a large arm-chair, one ell and a quarter for a *cabriolet*. The most popular colour by far was crimson; then came green; yellow and blue were less fashionable; on yellow damask the nails had to be silver-plated.

Taffeta, the thickest variety of which is *gros de Tours*, was reserved for summer furniture; loose covers were made of it to slip on in summer over tapestry or damask chairs, "unless," as Bimont says, "our citizens choose to have duplicate chairs." Pekin, a kind of silk painted with flowers, was also a summer material; Madame de Pompadour preferred it to all others. Finally, a good deal of satin was used, plain, striped, brocaded or embroidered, and *moire*, less fragile, but rather harsh in appearance.

The handsomest of the velvets was the cut velvet of Genoa, a costly, sumptuous, and incomparably splendid material, which cost no less than fifty *livres* an ell; then stamped velvets, and velvets with stripes and ribs, were also in vogue; it is, indeed, a mistake to think that striped stuffs belong more particularly to the Louis XVI period. All were more expensive than damask; upholsterers charged from twenty-four to thirty-six *livres* per ell; but Bimont gives us this amusing detail: "Velvet which has served as dresses for women and coats for men is used to cover *bergères*, Queen's arm-chairs, *cabriolets*, and even Duchess chairs."

After these beautiful stuffs in pure silk came the mixtures and the stuffs made of other materials. Brocatelle is as pretty as its name, with its satiny ground, patterned with freshly coloured flowers; gayer than damask, it is cheaper and less durable, being a mixture of silk and thread. It was not so popular under Louis XV as at the end of the century. Then there were *moire* of thread and silk, damask with a thread foundation, Bruges satin or sham satin, which was interwoven with thread like *satinade*, and was often made with bands or stripes of very vivid colour in strong contrast: green and crimson, crimson and jonquil, yellow striped with blue; *siamoise*, a mixture of thread and wool, with which squares to lay on the seats of straw chairs were covered; camlet, plain, watered or striped, made of wool, or wool and thread mixed: "this is the most worthy of

stuffs after *moire*, but it is rather subject to the attacks of worms."

For seats in constant use, on which costly and fragile stuffs would have been out of place, there was *moquette*, a velvety woollen material, generally woven in bands, which was used indifferently for carpets and table-covers, hangings, and dining room, anteroom and library chairs. Those high-backed chairs covered with striped material which appear so often in Chardin's pictures were of *moquette*. *Tripe* was a variety of *moquette*, with a hairy surface of wool on a foundation of hemp. Utrecht velvet, plain or gauffered, which was still a novelty about 1750, was used for the same purpose. The goat's-hair of which it was made was said to rub the silk or velvet garments of those who used it; but, on the other hand, it was practically everlasting. "Painted canvases," in reality cotton materials, were printed with black outline patterns, and the contours were then filled in by hand with colours; these were, of course, summer stuffs.

Every one who acquires Louis XV chairs has a somewhat delicate problem to solve: how to cover them. And should they be already covered, are we to accept the statements of the dealer, who is certain to assure us that the covers are authentic, and "of the period"? It may be roundly asserted that no arm-chair nearly two centuries old wears its original dress; it has been re-covered at least four or five times. What avatars it has experienced, from its natal damask to the frag-

ments of Flemish *verdure*, badly pieced together, with which the dealer in antiquities absurdly endowed it a week before selling it! Memorable among the intermediate stages are those bands of woolwork mounted between strips of green or black cloth, the hideous industry of two or three generations of worthy provincial ladies. What is to be done then? In the first place, we must firmly refuse the said fragments of *verdure*, which are an absurdity; we must get authentic Beauvais, or old needlework tapestries, if possible; there are some well-preserved or carefully mended specimens which are still in good condition, but the price of these is exorbitant. We must be on our guard, above all, against "antique" damasks. Nothing is easier to "fake" than stuffs; the action of the sun, of time, of dust, of wear, of rusty nails, are all imitated to perfection. The one thing that is not easily reproduced, be it said in passing, is the necessary irregularity of ancient stuffs, which were woven by hand. When antique silks are really antique (for everything is possible), they are rubbed, burnt by the light, and almost falling to pieces; there would be no wear in them. We must therefore resign ourselves to covering old wood with new material; admirable reproductions of ancient stuffs are made nowadays; for modest furniture, the whole range of velvets, with bands, stripes, ribbed, or chiné effects, is open to us, and the use of these could never result in any grave error of style.

We may now pass on to cane chairs. These

were made in the same shapes as the upholstered chairs (Figs. 76 to 81); the frames were of varnished or painted beech, cherry, or walnut, and sometimes of gilded wood; in this case, the cane trellis was also gilded. In summer the cane was left bare; in winter square cushions of *siamoise* and even of damask, fastened at the corners by ribbons either tied or hooked, were laid upon the seats and backs. Cane arm-chairs often had morocco pads on the arms, and the square cushions were then covered with leather to match. It must be mentioned that these seats were very unequal in height; the lowest were intended for thick mattress-cushions, which remained on them permanently; the others for thin padded squares; we must remember this when we cushion them.

Toilet-chairs (Figs. 80 and 81), a very charming type of Louis XV chairs, are always mounted with cane. As powder would have soon spoilt material, they were generally cushioned with morocco squares. Those belonging to the daughters of Louis XV were covered, some with red morocco, others with lemon morocco.

Straw chairs (Figs. 82 to 86) made *à la capucine* —that is to say, turned, and put together rather roughly—were nevertheless very durable, for great numbers of them still exist. The commonest, which are as a fact kitchen-chairs, are very slightly turned, rudimentary in structure, and owe their interest merely to the design of the two or three carved traverses of their backs, which is often

extremely graceful. The most frequent motive of the Louis XV period consists of two figures like notes of interrogation set one against the other lengthwise (Fig. 86). The arm-chairs either have consoles rising from the legs or, more frequently, set further back on the seat. The two bars, on front, back, and sides, are generally curved in front (Fig. 83); sometimes they are replaced by X-shaped crossbars from leg to leg (Fig. 85).[1] Some less rustic examples (Fig. 82) had "doe's-feet" and curved lines everywhere; these latter were extremely elegant.

They were sometimes furnished with two flat, square cushions (Fig. 83), sometimes with loose covers. The straw chairs with which Madame de Pompadour did not disdain to furnish her bedroom at Marly had square cushions of striped blue and white Rouen *siamoise*. We see in Greuze's *Malédiction paternelle* how these square cushions were fastened (to the father's arm-chair). As to the loose covers, which were padded and buttoned at the back and seat, unless they had a separate seat-cushion as in a *bergère*, they came down to the first bar, leaving the lower one bare, and they were either nailed to the frame or fastened by cords.

The Louis XV period perfected and multiplied *chaises longues* and sofas, inventions of the preceding reign. There is a whole gamut of intermediaries between the lounge, the *chaise longue*,

[1] This chair, which is more carefully made than the others, was decorated with carvings long after it was made

and the sofa, which makes classification difficult. There were, for instance, veritable beds, "Turkish beds," which had three backs, and differed from sofas only in dimensions.

The lounge, or rest-bed, which we reproduce (Fig. 87) serves a dual purpose. It is long enough to allow the occupant to lie stretched out at full length, and has a back high enough to support a seated person with legs extended. The end at the foot is movable. Such a piece of furniture was, of course, fitted with loose cushions: a mattress of down or horsehair, a round cushion (*rondin**), and a flat, square one. Others, without the end-pieces, had a jointed back, which could be adjusted at various angles. The *turquoise* had two back-pieces of equal size, a mattress, two round and two square cushions; the *veilleuse** or "English bed" was a large ottoman which could be used as a bed upon occasion, with special bedding which was concealed in an adjoining cupboard. The sofa was a couch sometimes as much as ten feet long with a loose mattress. The *paphose* and the *sultane* were variations on these seats.

The *chaise longue*, properly so called, was the *duchesse*,* which had a back curved like a gondola, and a mattress. The *duchesse brisée** was in three pieces, one of which was a *bergère*, the second a stool with two concave sides, and the last a low *bergère*, called a foot-end (*bout de pied*). Another kind of *bout de pied* brought up close to a *bergère* transformed it into a *chaise longue* in two parts.

Long before the time of Madame Récamier the indolent belles of the day were fond of receiving *en déshabillé*, reclining on their "*turquoises*" or "*duchesses*"; for languishing beauty with weary attitudes already existed, side by side with the more general type of sparkling and mutinous beauty; but what seems strange at a period of so much licence, these ladies, far from showing their bare feet, were expected to conceal them with a coverlet of embroidered silk as a concession to decency.

The type of sofa known as a *canapé* was merely an improved kind of bench; it differs little from a mediæval bench with a back. There were some of small size, on which it was difficult to sit beside a lady in panniers without disappearing under her skirts, and some of monumental dimensions, with eight or nine "doe's-feet" legs to support them. Some are merely enlarged arm-chairs (Fig. 90), others are like three arm-chairs made into one (Fig. 88); they have side-arms like arm-chairs, set back behind the legs, or the upholstered cheeks and ears of the "confessional" *bergère*; others were "basket-shaped," and were called "ottomans" (Fig. 91). "The ottoman," says Bimont, "is the same thing as the sofa, save that it has no end-pieces; but in default of these, the two ends of the back curve round, forming a semicircle. Two pillows are placed at the two ends of the ottoman; they are edged with a double gimp like the mattress of the seat, and are finished with a tassel at each corner."

The stool (*tabouret*), the all-important seat which caused so much ink to flow during the ceremonious century of Louis XIV, was very much neglected under Louis XV. A few were made, nevertheless, which have doe's-feet legs and a curved frame with florets round the seat. In her bedroom at the Château de Saint-Hubert, Madame de Pompadour had a stool covered with damask, which was also a kennel for the little dogs from which she was never parted.

Finally, the seventeenth-century *form* gradually became the bench (*banquette*), "an insignificant seat placed in anterooms, halls, etc." The benches were covered with *moquette* or Utrecht velvet; others of a more elegant kind, covered with velvet or damask, were used at balls, concerts, and all kinds of assemblies.

We shall have little to say concerning beds, for Louis XV beds are very rare. This is owing to the fact that for the most part the woodwork was not visible, but was entirely concealed either by draperies nailed to the frame, or loose covers. If they were rather less enveloped in curtains than in preceding centuries (for the rooms were less draughty), they were still encumbered with the looped and draped hangings which are anathema to modern hygiene.

The ancient four-post bed gradually disappeared during the reign of Louis XV, and the shapes most in vogue were the Duchess bed, the Angel bed, and the Polish bed (*lit duchesse*, *lit*

d'ange, and *lit à la polonaise*). The first had a flat tester, as long as the bed itself, surrounded by a scalloping, two narrow lengths of stuff falling straight on either side of the head, a single end with a curving top covered with stuff, and a counterpane covering the sides of the bed entirely, and falling to the ground. The "angel bed" had a shorter tester, two looped side draperies, and two similar ends, unless that at the foot were somewhat lower. The "Polish bed" had also two ends, and no tester; the four posts supported four iron rods which curved inwards and upheld a curving dome or baldachuin, from which fell four curtains, looped up at the corners.

With good luck it is still possible to pick up a charming "angel bedstead," especially in the provinces. The very beautiful Provençal bed we reproduce (Fig. 93), which is purely Louis XV in its lines, was acquired some years back from a local dealer for an absurdly small sum. There are also some Provençal beds (Fig. 92) which have one end higher than the other, or no footboard, but only two posts at the foot, continuing the legs.

Screens, like curtained beds, were no longer so essential, since rooms had become smaller and warmer; they did not disappear, but they became much smaller; made with three or four leaves, they were reduced to the proportions of fire-screens. The wooden framework was rarely visible; the leaves, often curved at the top, were covered with tapestry, embroideries, or with some

material, sometimes matching that of the chairs and hangings; sometimes, again, with painted canvas, Coromandel lacquer, and very often with "India paper" patterned with flowers and figures, and even with English or French wall-papers. Mirrors were sometimes let into the upper part.

Fire-screens were covered in the same manner. The classic type (Fig. 94) had a double frame, mounted on two supports, in which the sash, covered with stuff, tapestry, or paper, could run up and down freely. It was pulled up like a carriage window by means of a silk braid fixed to the lower part and terminating in a leaden drop; this, acting as a counterweight, held the sash at the desired height, making it possible to warm the feet and legs without scorching the face.

Some, such as the screen with a shelf of Fig. 95, were more elaborate than this. A screen covered with India paper, for instance, had a jointed shelf of Chinese lacquer, which could be let down by means of two metal arms to receive a cup of tea, an inkstand, a work-bag, a case of implements, or inclined so as to form a reading-desk. A screen of this sort was furnished with two adjustable branches with candlesticks.[1] The lower shelf between the supports was used as a footstool. Just such a screen protects the youthful dreamer in Chardin's picture, *l'Instant de la méditation.*

The screens "made in the manner of secre-

[1] At the top of the uprights of the screen, Fig 95, the square sockets into which the branches fitted are visible.

taries" were provided with a fixed shelf to which was added a little drawer with an inkstand.

Much might be written about clocks, which are among the most interesting of all pieces of furniture; but I must keep this enumeration, already over long, within bounds. The tall clock with a case was an invention of the seventeenth century, made even before the advent of the long pendulum; the end it served was the protection of the weights; the case was then always narrow, with uninterrupted vertical lines. When the long pendulum was introduced, it was necessary to give it room to swing to and fro. The finest clocks are those the form of which adapts itself frankly to this exigency by expanding a little just below the centre of the case. This form is pleasing, because it is rigorously determined by an organic necessity, and it lends itself admirably to decoration with gilded bronzes. A clock is almost a living thing, and it is well that it should convey the impression of life both to the eye and to the ear; this was why the excellent artisans of the past instinctively made an opening in their cases, through which one can see the solemn swing of the large brass disc. Fine timepieces of the Louis XV period are admirable objects. The one we reproduce has superb bronzes, a firm and simple elegance of lines, amplitude in the masses, judgment in the asymmetry, which, like the lightness of the motives, increases gradually, as is logical, in its course from base to summit.

In contrast to this we have a simple country clock (Fig. 97) in pine and oak, the decoration of which is very graceful. It is by no means crushed by its beautiful neighbour.

We shall have passed nearly every kind of furniture in review when we have have said a word about frames or, as they were more generally called, "borders" for pictures and mirrors. Under Louis XV these were always of carved and gilded wood, and not of plaster, as now; hence they had a delicacy of profile and a purity of line unknown in these days. Their rectangular shape is always masked more or less [1]; the top, which was more decorated and more important than the rest, took the name of "capital"; it was either of open-work or its gilded ornaments were relieved against a painted background. One which we reproduce (Fig. 101) is very amusing by reason of the exaggerations into which a desire for lightness and asymmetry has led the maker; in the result it is not ungraceful.

[1] It is entirely concealed in the first two examples (Figs. 98 and 99); they date from the early days of the style.

CHAPTER VII: A SET OF LOUIS XV FURNITURE

We now come to the question, how are we to get furniture for our houses such as we have been describing? From dealers? In public sale-rooms? In the houses of the peasants we visit during our holiday rambles? Some happy finds may still be made in the remoter parts of the provinces, though they are few and far between. But beware! In Normandy, and in Brittany more especially, the peasant is often more astute than the buyer; very often his old dresser, blackened with venerable dirt, worm-eaten in the legs, rubbed at the corners, and peppered all over with minute holes came to him last winter from a faking establishment at Rouen or Quimper. The maker and the rustic will share the profits, a new ancestral dresser will take the place of the other—and no one will pity the dupe.

Beware also—beware, indeed, above all!—of the "ruined gentleman" to whose stronghold some tout has cunningly enticed you, and who, cut to the heart, is obliged to part with a few of his heirlooms. Beware, again, of the little dealer with the dark and squalid shop, where you—for you are a person of perception!—have discovered some fine thing, which he, the ignoramus, had left to moulder behind pitch-pine wardrobes and plush divans. Beware of all and sundry, for in

spite of all your caution you will yet be taken in now and again.

What are you to do then? Interesting finds are still to be made at public sales in small towns where one or two old pieces may have strayed by chance into a house full of vulgar furniture; but it is useless to expect anything of the sort in Paris; the dealers are too expert and too assiduous in their visits to the Hôtel Drouot to let anything good escape them. The safest plan is to apply to some honest and reasonable dealer—there are more of these than is supposed—and to pay the actual value of things. You must also try to acquire a little knowledge and to distinguish between true and false antiquities. The art is hardly to be taught, and there is nothing like practice; but perhaps a few summary hints may be of use.

It is a principle with forgers—and this is, of course, a truism—only to forge with a view to profit. It is a long and minute, and hence a costly business to make a copy of an ancient original. Consequently the more simple pieces of furniture—and as I have already said, these are not the least beautiful—are much more likely to be genuine than the very elaborate ones; for if they were faked in a satisfactory manner the game would not be worth the candle. And there is not only the work to consider, but the material, which, as well as handicraft, costs a great deal more now than in the past. How many petty dealers would be able to get the walnut-wood necessary for copying some fine antique cupboard? We shall do well,

therefore, to distrust oak and prefer walnut. As to massive mahogany—I mean real mahogany of fine quality—it fetches such prices that a simple piece of furniture made of it will almost certainly be genuine. It is here that the Louis XV Style triumphs, for its undulating lines entail a terrible waste of wood. We must therefore be on the look-out primarily for the tell-tale economy of labour, and more especially of material. In panelled furniture, if the panels are thin, and above all, if they are made with two planks joined together, and not with a solid piece of wood, let us beware! Very often the breadth of a piece of wood will betray the modern form of plank, mechanical and uniform.

Joins in the wood are also very significant; those of the past were always, save in drawers, made with tenons and mortices, boldly cut right into the wood, and then fitted without glue, very precisely, and finished off with good pegs cut by the apprentice, and more or less square, whereas the modern ones are machine-made, and are always identical and cylindrical.

Finally, the appearance of the wood, if it has not been painted and then scraped and pickled, will give us valuable information. Surfaces that have been rubbed with dusters for a century and a half, and over which many hands have passed, present to the eye, and above all to the touch, a mellow, unctuous surface which one soon learns to recognize and which is not to be imitated.

What furniture should be chosen for a given flat or house, and with what accessories should they be surrounded in order to constitute an harmonious whole, which, without being a historical reconstruction, will avoid glaring anachronisms? The problem varies enormously, for the conditions are so diverse. The aspirant has only a certain sum to spend, has to furnish rooms of a certain character, has some furniture already, and personal tastes which have a right to exist—not to mention the taste of his or her husband or wife. In short, it is only possible to give the most general indications, a sort of ideal plan to which we may approach more or less according to our means and our individual preferences.

The most difficult interior in which to arrange old furniture, and notably Louis XV furniture, is a Parisian flat, because of the smallness of the rooms, their lowness, and their decorations, the ugliness of which is no less depressing than trivial. Let us try, nevertheless. We will begin with the drawing-room.

Given the dimensions and the actual use of most Parisian drawing-rooms, it is clear that they have much less affinity with the reception-rooms, or great drawing-rooms of the past, than with the "company-rooms" and "conversation cabinets." We will therefore take these for our models. If they were panelled, it was with natural oak, polished—we are not likely to find this in a modern Parisian flat!—or they were

painted to imitate wood with a plain colour, jonquil, lemon, rather a deep sea-green, but not white. The panels were sometimes hung with stuff, which, if plain, was generally red and outlined with a gold gimp. But many other colours were popular, especially yellow and green, and after these striped and flowered materials. The following is the advertisement of the furniture of a "company-room" which was offered for sale in 1768: "A charming set of drawing-room furniture, namely: a very handsome chandelier, perfectly new hangings of green and white *moiré*; a fine ottoman; two *bergères* and six arm-chairs of green and white Utrecht velvet, the woodwork painted to match; a six-leaved screen, matching the hangings; a *moquette* carpet with lozenges on a white ground, surrounded by garlands in shades of green, with a poppy in each; a table of white Italian marble and violet breccia, arched and convex, with a gilded leg[1] and two fine chimney brackets. Price of the whole, 100 louis."

Wall-papers were already in use much more than is supposed. Diderot wrote in the *Encyclopædia*: "This kind of wall-decoration had for a long time been confined to country folks and the humbler classes of Paris. . . . But towards the close of the seventeenth century, it was brought to such perfection and beauty that there was no house in Paris, however magnificent, which had not some room hung with it, and very agreeably

[1] This was a console table.

decorated by it." This paper was known as: *papier de tontisse*, or *papier drappé*, or again, *papier d'Angleterre* (i.e. flock papers)—that is to say, a species of paper which was laid on a board, covered with a design, and coloured by means of the waste of cloth-clippings reduced to powder. It was an imitation of cut velvet, Utrecht velvet, and even damask and chintz. The motives were bouquets united by ribbons and laid upon stripes, baskets and garlands of flowers "arranged in the most gallant fashion," Chinese cartouches with figures. Modern paper manufacturers continue to reproduce these Louis XV flock-papers.

It is noteworthy that the curtains are absent in the above enumeration. This is because they were different from the other hangings; they were often of white cotton with borders of coloured linen. The window-blinds were of muslin.

We should try to have a sofa, arm-chairs, and ordinary chairs covered with a material to match that on the walls; one or two *bergères*, which will look well near the fire-place; a console-table to put under a mirror—if we have one—facing that over the fire-place; an inlaid commode, preferably on high legs; in the angles, two "corners" with their shelves; a mahogany table of fair size, and another little movable table. As to the carpet, it is quite certain that we shall not be able to get an old French one, so we must be content with a plain *moquette*, an Anatolian, or a Persian carpet; Eastern carpets were in great favour in

the eighteenth century, and they "go with everything."

The question of lighting is a thorny one. The ideal method would be to have either an old chandelier, of crystal or gilded bronze, or a "glass lantern," square or cylindrical, with branches of china flowers, and two girandoles right and left of the chimney-piece, and to burn nothing but candles. Candle-light is delicious —velvety, lively, and palpitating; it calls forth such exquisitely warm, soft vibrations from old gilding, silks, lacquers, and polished woods, whereas our electric lights are so hard and dead! But we must resign ourselves to the inevitable! In spite of the anachronism, and the fact that watts and volts are very incongruous with ormolu and china flowers, we shall no doubt install false candles with electric bulbs in gilded sockets.

Shall we be able to put a real Louis XV clock on our chimney-piece? This would be too much to hope; they are so scarce. But why not a good reproduction of a bust by Houdon or Caffieri? Then two Chinese vases with bouquets of china flowers, the stalks and leaves of copper lacquered in natural colours, those "Vincennes flowers" of which Madame de Pompadour was so fond; d'Argenson tells us that she bought 800,000 *livres* worth, at a *livre* a flower. They were used for *épergnes* which looked like great flowering bushes; mirrors were encircled with them, and ladies even wore them in their hair

and in their bodices. We need not fear to put these "Vincennes" (or "Dresden") flowers everywhere, if we have a fancy for them.

Nor need we hesitate to scatter ornaments and knick-knacks everywhere, for there was a craze for them at this period. We shall not, perhaps, go so far as painted ostrich eggs or branches of coral mounted in silver-gilt, but china animals on the chimney-piece, the corner-shelves, and the tables would be very "Louis-Quinze." We may again invoke the highest authority, that of Madame de Pompadour. On one occasion, in 1751, she received a consignment from Duvaux of "a dovecote with pigeons on the roof, mounted on a terrace with two figures and other pigeons; four sheep lying down, six ducklings, two cocks, four pigeons, six cygnets, two guinea-fowls, four turkeys, and a stag lying down."

But, above all, we may draw upon the resources of the Far East without fear of abuse; its porcelains, lacquers, jades, enamels, and little bronzes will be an inexhaustible treasure-house. Grotesque figures (*magots*) were almost *de rigueur* on chimney-pieces. "'Upon my word,' said the Marquis, 'that set of ornaments you have on your chimney-shelf is magnificent; the figures are most striking, especially this one; it and your fool of a husband are as like as two peas in a pod.'"[1] You must have a screen of China paper or stuff in front of the fire-place, which in summer

[1] Angola. *An Indian Story* (1546).

must be filled in with a "fire-place paper." This is a covered frame, which, in spite of its name, may be made of stuff or paper indifferently.

On the walls there must be no pictures, or at any rate very few. These were generally hung in a special gallery, and painting in drawing-rooms was relegated to door-heads; but a few engravings by Jeaurat or Cochin in old frames would be admissible. Above all, do not follow the example of some contemporary amateurs and introduce a Neo-Impressionist canvas, blazing with cadmiums and cobalts, into a Louis XV or Louis XVI interior.

In a little sitting-room, or boudoir, a lady's writing-table with a drop front would be very appropriate; then a work-table (*chiffonnière*), a Duchess chair, or a miniature sofa, and one or two *cabriolet* chairs covered with light brocatelle.

In the study library, which, as Blondel tells us, "should have an air of virtue and simplicity," books will occupy plain shelves, without any pretensions to style; a writing-table, an arm-chair with three legs in front, upholstered with leather, arm-chairs with low seats and high backs, some large chairs covered with leather or *moquette*, and, finally, a secretary-cupboard, will furnish it very completely.

Dining-rooms were very sparingly furnished in the time of Louis XV. Large cupboards simulating doors were made in the walls, which were panelled and painted white; console-tables

were used for the service, and, in a niche, there was generally an ornamental waterspout with a basin, where the servants rinsed glasses in full view of the guests ; at most there was a low commode against the wall. This would not do in a modern dining-room ; we should be obliged to have a sideboard, a serving-table, and shelves for glass and silver. The best way of furnishing this room, perhaps, would be to borrow its furniture from the kitchen of an Arlesian farm-house ; although rustic, the joiner's work of Arles is so graceful that it is not out of place in the most refined interior. As, for the best of reasons, we cannot have a Louis XV dining-table with adjustable leaves, we will choose a table of the most neutral kind, preferably round, and will cover it with a cloth which will hide it as much as possible The seats shall be cane-chairs, on which we may lay flat, square cushions of leather or velvet. A credence-sideboard, on which gilded wicker-baskets, filled with fruit shall stand permanently, will be very "Louis XV" ; a piece of engraved Oriental brass (an Indian brass kettle) and a vegetable dish of gaily coloured Marseilles china may be added. Above the credence-table, in accordance with traditional arrangement, must hang the pewter-shelves. Those of the *Museon Arlaten* (Fig. 15) are much too large for a town flat, but smaller ones, very graceful in design, are to be had. Opposite the sideboard the kneading-trough (Fig. 12) might be used as a service-table ; it might be surmounted by the bread-bin (Fig. 17),

which will be useless, but may be allowed a place, seeing how decorative it is with its turned balusters; it might even be flanked by the salt-box (Fig. 16) and the flour-box (Fig. 18) which was used to flour fish before frying them. A little further, a glazed cupboard, an abbreviated press in which the more costly glass articles were kept, may be fixed to the walls.

This manner of furnishing a Parisian dining-room is certainly questionable from the logical standpoint, but it is graceful, and, on the whole, practical; besides, it would be difficult to find any sideboard but the Arlesian credence-table at once small enough and elegant looking; and if we accept the credence-table, it entails all the rest.

If the dining-room is fairly large, a medium-sized cupboard would be very useful there, though, strictly speaking, this is not the place for it. But never dishonour a fine old piece of furniture by tearing out its oak or walnut panels to replace them by glass; this would be as bad as using a kneading-trough as a *jardinière* or a bread-bin as a music-stand!

In the bedroom the bed is the object that will present most difficulty. If, as is very likely, we are unable to find one with the woodwork showing, we cannot do better than drape with loose covers of some good material a bedstead with curved head and footboards copied by a cabinet-maker from some old model. Then we must have a wardrobe, not too large, of walnut or cherry,

so that the wood may present a cheerful surface; a commode with three drawers or a chiffonier, or both if possible; a little looking-glass in a gilt frame over the commode; a dressing-table, a special toilet-chair, with flat, square cushions; or, failing a dressing-table, a plain table of some sort with muslin draperies and a swing looking-glass. An open night-table, with a good marble top. A comfortable *bergère*, or perhaps a straw arm-chair with its square cushions; a *duchesse*, or lounge, if space permits. The hangings should be of some light, cheerful material—for instance, blue and white or red and white striped cotton. The bed-curtains will have to be suppressed, for hygiene is uncompromising. Then it will be necessary to have a dressing-room, for a modern washing-stand would be strangely out of place with the rest.

If we have a country house to furnish, our task will be much easier; we shall have more room for the large pieces of furniture of the period, and if a certain genial simplicity is not displeasing to us, real peasant furniture will be just what we want. We may, indeed, have the good luck to buy, to inherit, or to rent one of the old French houses of the eighteenth century, those dignified and attractive dwellings, with their large casements with little greenish panes and semicircular heads, their wide staircases with hammered iron balustrades, their lofty rooms with painted panelling, their beautiful openwork iron fittings to the inner doors, their old glasses with tarnished quicksilver

would be appropriate; they belong to no particular style, but they are not out of keeping with any, and the material of the counterpane and tester, if carefully chosen, would bring them into harmony with the rest.

A last question arises: is it necessary to furnish in an absolutely homogeneous manner, to have everything, for instance, purely Louis XV in style down to the smallest details? Or is it permissible to have a mixture of furniture of different periods? The question has been hotly debated, and each of the two theories has its warm partisans. It is certain that there is something very satisfying to the reason in a house or a room that gives one an impression of complete unity; it is also certain that if one is not quite confident in one's own taste, one is less likely to make mistakes if one obeys such a rigid rule. But in so doing, one increases the already great difficulty of furnishing with authentic and well-preserved examples. And then there is less scope for individual taste, one's surroundings are less intimate, less an emanation of one's personality, when one is guided by an absolute and external principle, accepted once for all. It is all a matter of taste and tact; two objects of the same style may produce a discord when two others of different styles seem to be made for each other. A question of species, an advocate would say. What is very certain is that certain styles of very opposite tendencies cannot be juxtaposed; pure Louis XIV, for instance and Louis XV or Empire. But the eighteenth

century spirit is, on the whole, so obviously the same in its main lines, from De Troy to Debucourt and from Montesquieu to Chénier, and there was so little change in the manners of the period that there is much more affinity than difference between the men of 1740 and those of 1780. And the styles proclaim this affinity like all the rest. They are very different, but they harmonize wonderfully; this is the story of many happy marriages.

And then the intransigents forget that the subjects of Louis XVI themselves, even those who could afford to change their surroundings frequently, set us an example of eclecticism; more than one inventory attests this, in spite of the vague terms used; but what is perhaps more conclusive is that artists themselves when, about 1775 or 1780, they painted and engraved genre-scenes in which they composed the luxurious furniture at will, continually juxtaposed objects in the two styles. In Moreau the younger's *Petit Souper*, a dumb waiter and a Louis XV lantern jostle seats and woodwork in Louis XVI style; in Jeaurat's *Le Joli dormir*, a young woman is dozing in a Louis XV "confessional" arm-chair; her writing-table with its doe's-foot legs is of the same period; a console and a pier-glass in the background are pure Louis XVI; and, better still, a little turned stool in the foreground evidently dates from the middle of the seventeenth century. In Beaudoin's *Couché de la mariée*, which is so entirely Louis XVI on the whole, the

night-table has doe's-foot legs and rococo bronzes; the list might be prolonged indefinitely.

And when the Revolution broke out we know that Marie Antoinette had a rococo clock in her bedroom at Trianon. Fortified by such an example, let us mix the two styles boldly; why should we be *plus royalistes que . . . la Reine?*

FIGS 1, 2 OAK CHAMBRANLE AND CORNER PANEL

Pl. 1

FIG 3 SMALL DOOR-PANELS OF LIMEWOOD

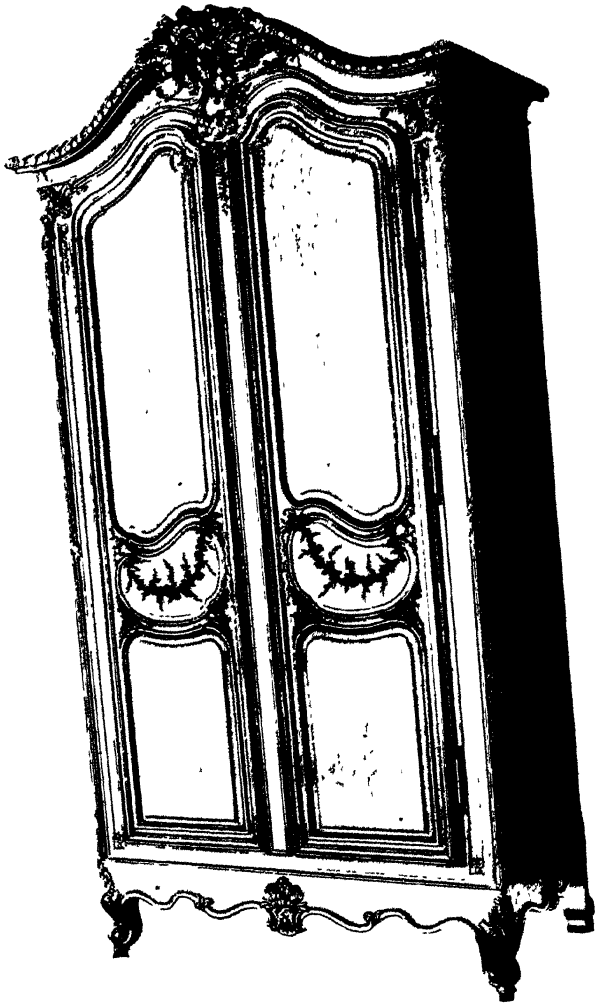


FIG 4. NORMAN OAK CUPBOARD

Pl 3

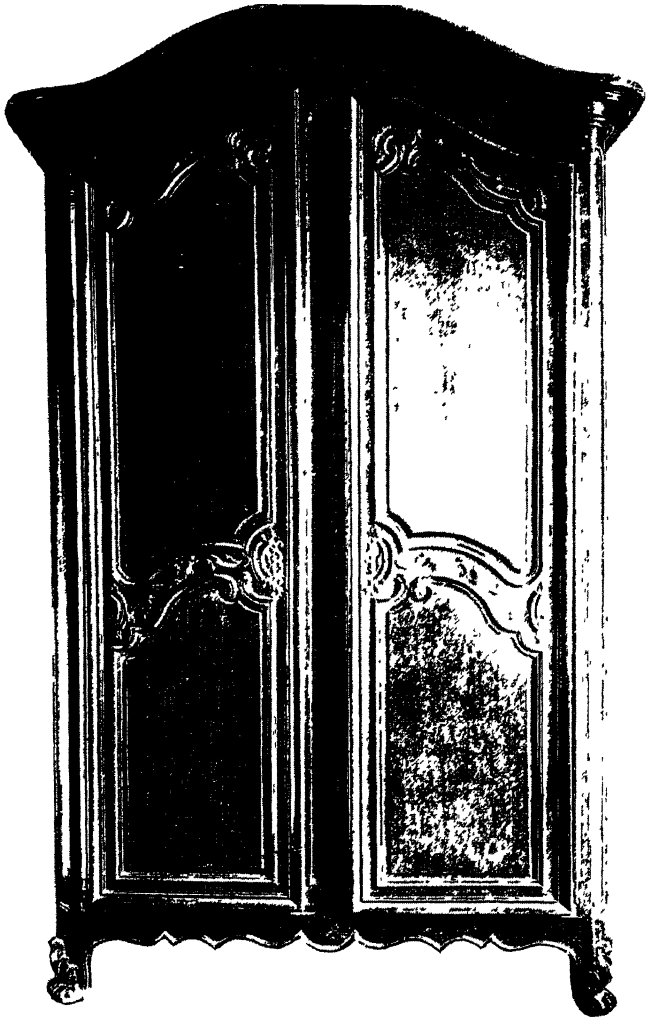


FIG 5 WALNUT CUPBOARD MADE IN THE SOUTH-WEST

Pl

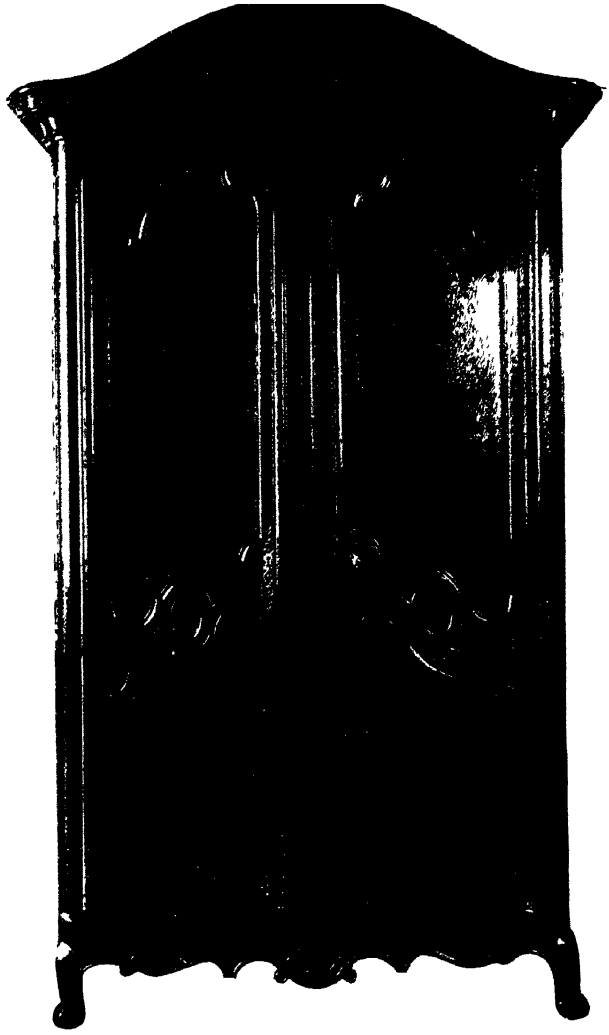


FIG. 6. WALNUT CUPBOARD WITH MOULDINGS MADE IN THE SOUTH-WEST

Pl. 5

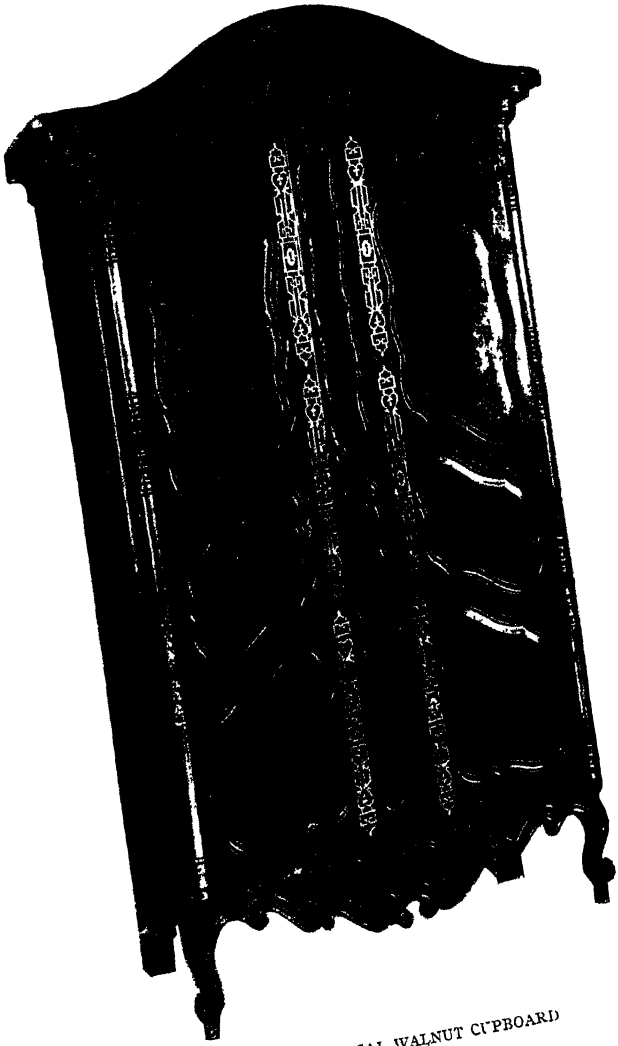
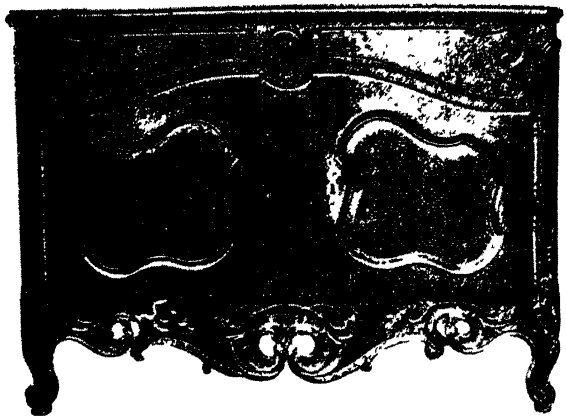


FIG 7 PROVENÇAL WALNUT CUPBOARD

FIG. 8 SAINTONGE CUPBOARD OF WALNUT AND ELM (END OF STYLE)

Pl.



IG. 9. PROVENÇAL UNDER-CUPBOARD USED AS SIDEBOARD, WALNUT

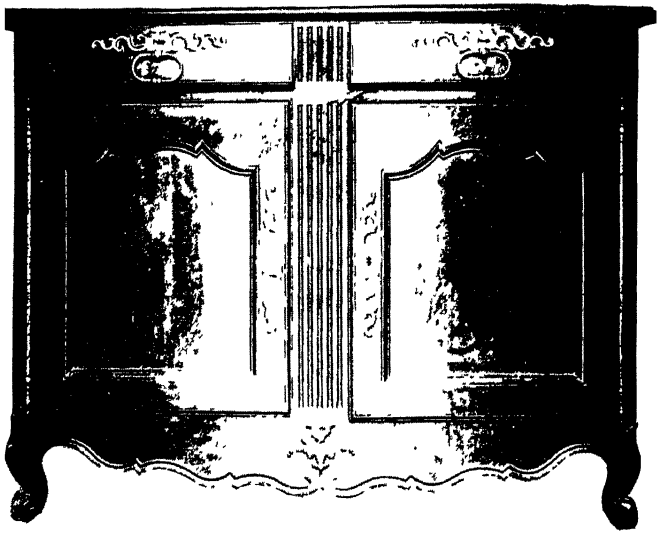


FIG 10. SAINTONGE UNDER-CUPBOARD USED AS SIDEBOARD
(END OF STYLE)

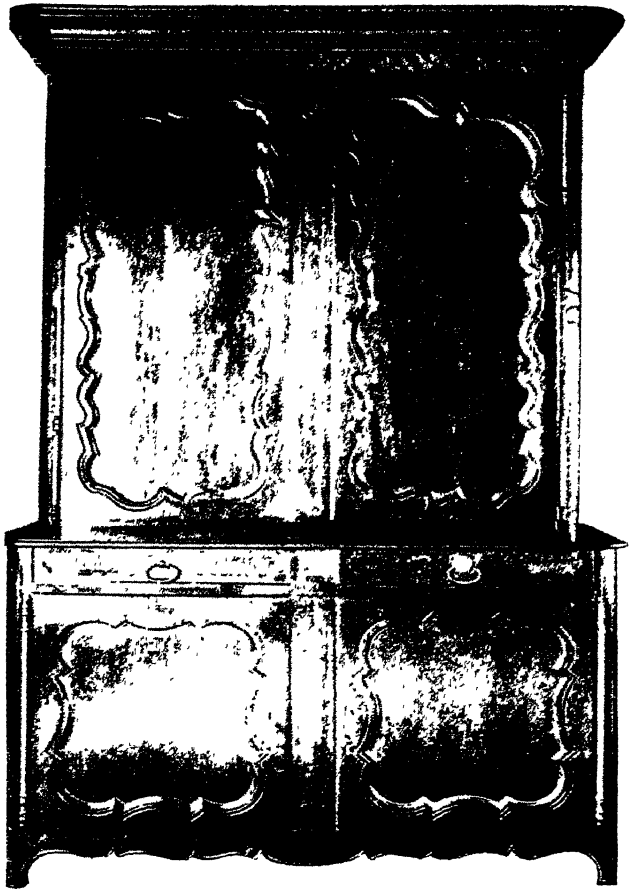
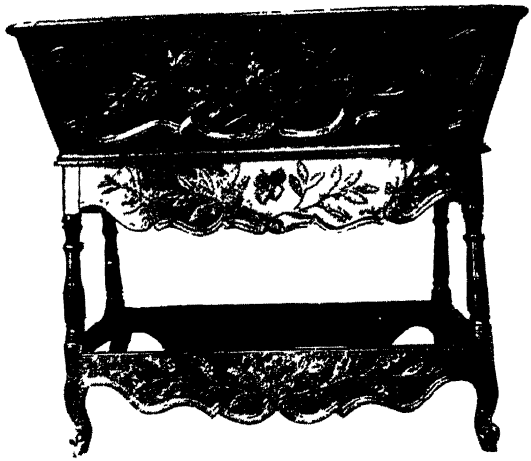


FIG 11 BRETON WALNUT SIDEBOARD, IN TWO PARTS

Pl 9



'IG 12 PROVENÇAL WALNUT KNEADING-TROUGH (END OF STYLE)

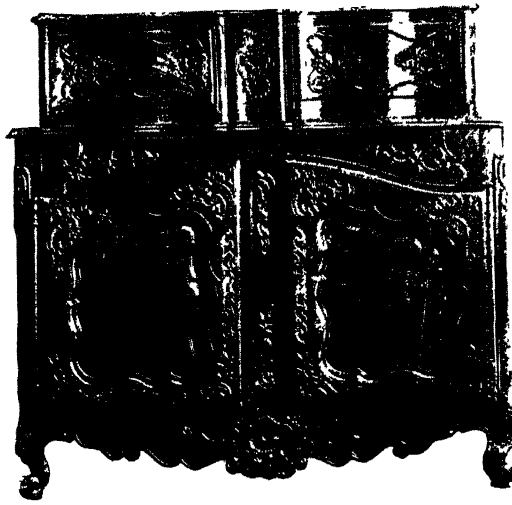


FIG. 13 ARLESIAN WALNUT CREDENCE-SIDEBOARD

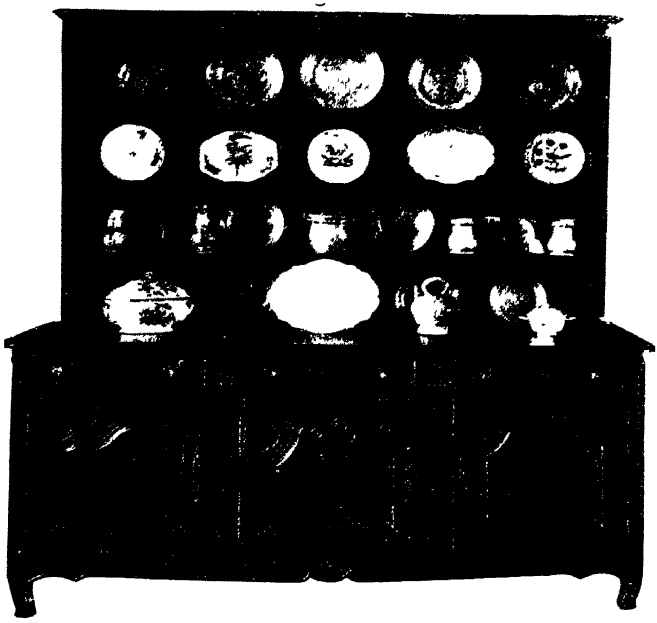


FIG 14. DRESSER MADE IN CHAMPAGNE (END OF STYLE)

Pl 11

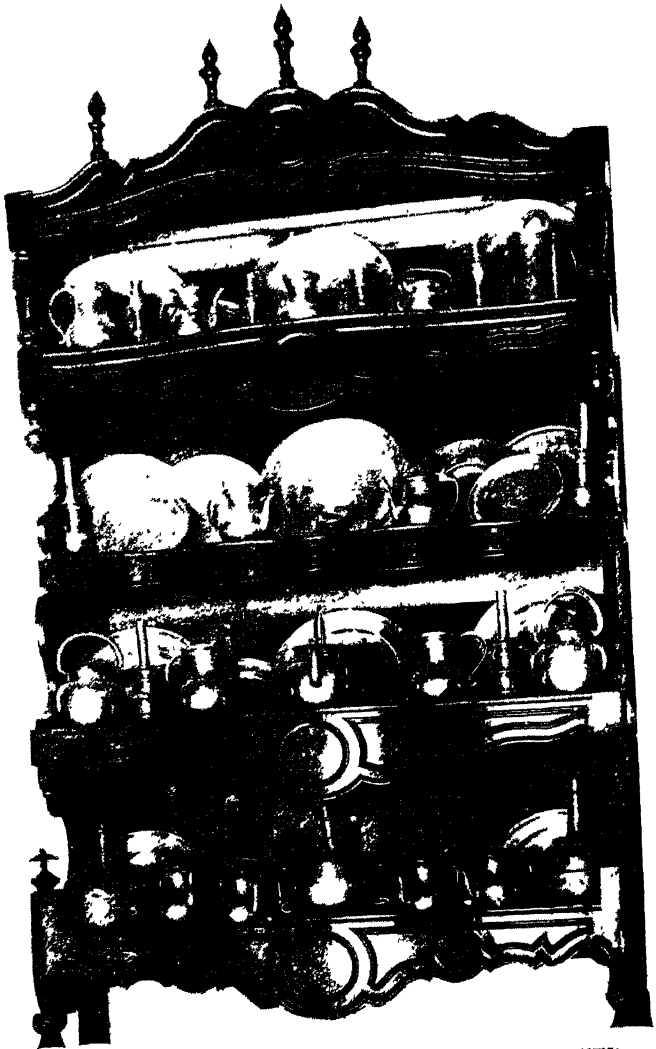


FIG 15 PROVENÇAL WALNUT DRESSER FOR PEWTER

Pl 12

FIG 16. PROVENÇAL OAK FLOUR-BOX

FIG 17 PROVENÇAL WALNUT BREAD CUPBOARD

FIG 18. PROVENÇAL OAK SALT-BOX

FIG. 19. ROSEWOOD SECRETARY-CUPBOARD

Pl 14

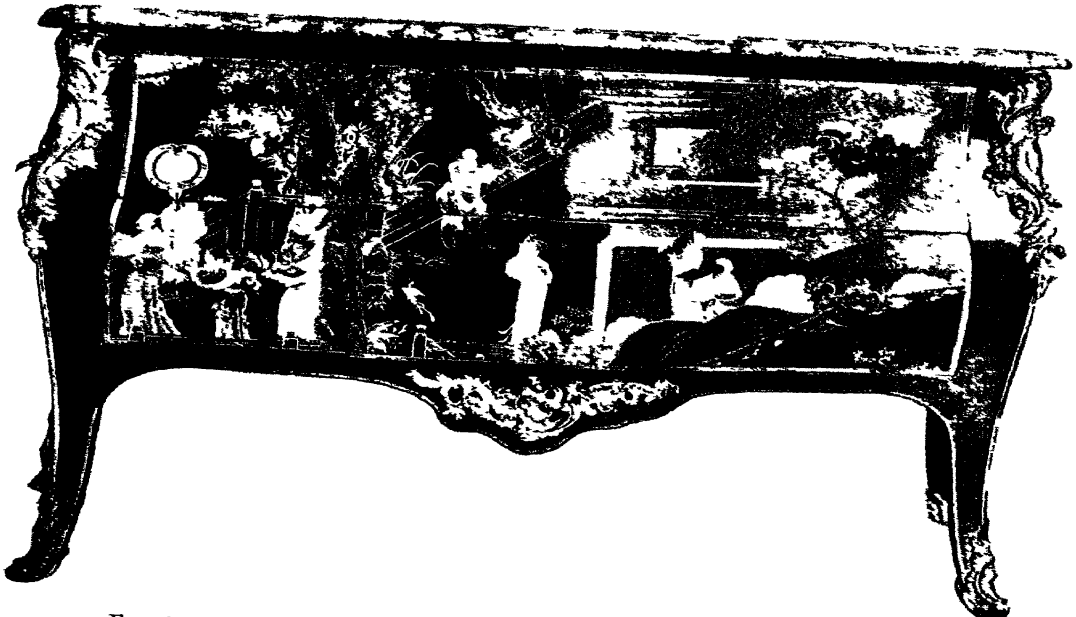


FIG 20 ROCAILLE COMMODE OF COROMANDEL LACQUER

FIG 21 ROCAILLE COMMODE, VENEERED WITH PALISANDER

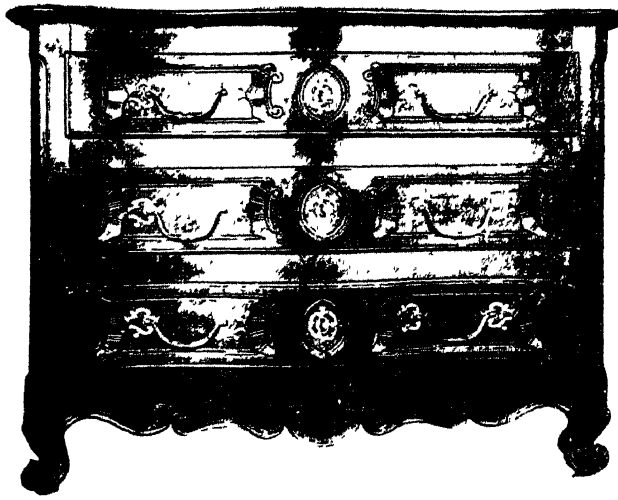


FIG 22 PYRENEAN WALNUT COMMODE

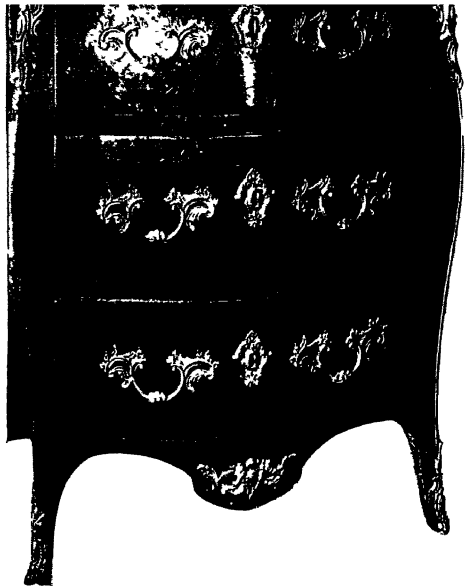


FIG 23 SMALL COMMODE, ROSEWOOD AND PALISANDER

FIG 24 COMMODE, ROSEWOOD AND PALISANDER

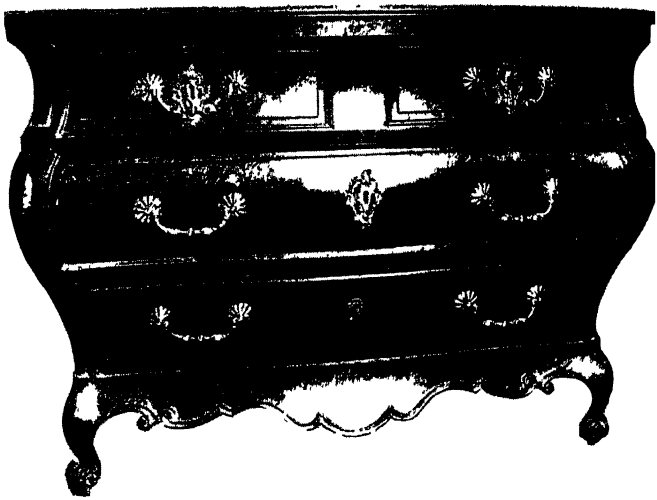


FIG 25 CONSOLE COMMODE, WALNUT

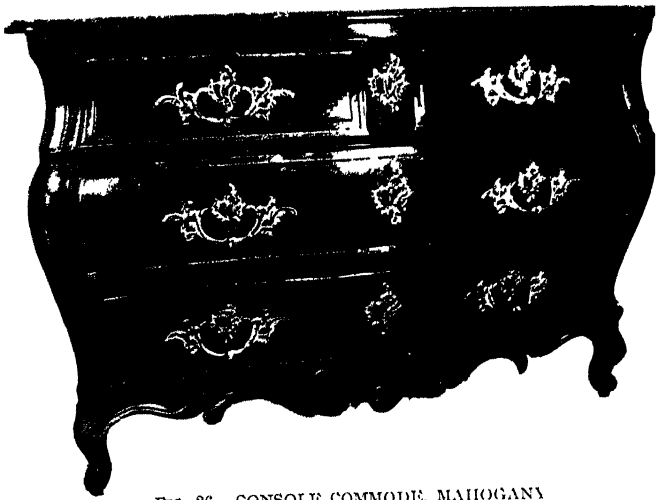


FIG 26 CONSOLE COMMODE, MAHOGANY

FIG 27 GASCON COMMODE, CHERRYWOOD

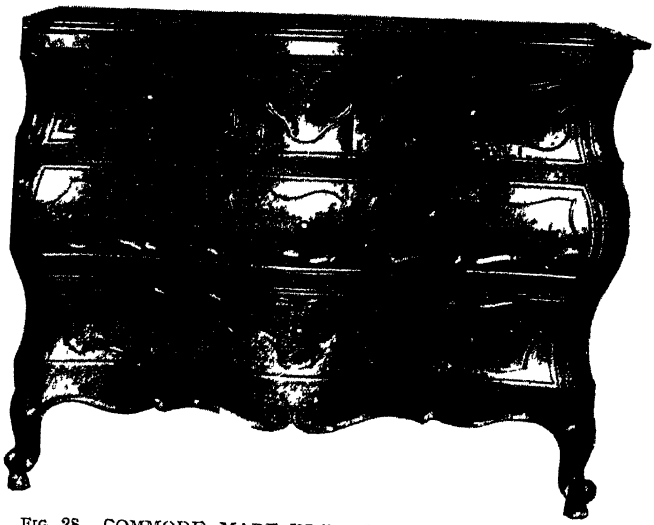


FIG. 28. COMMODE, MADE IN LA GIRONDE, WALNUT

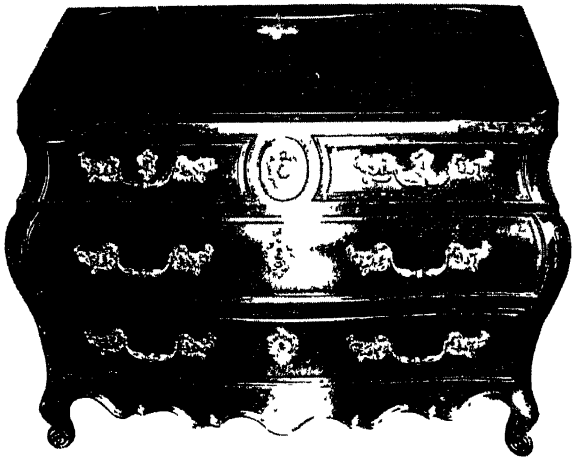


FIG 29. BORDEAUX COMMODE-SECRETARY, OF MAHOGANY

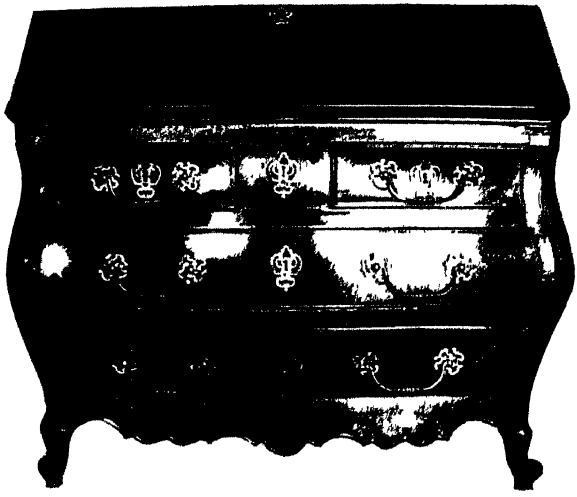


FIG 30 ANJOU COMMODE-SECRETARY, OF WALNUT

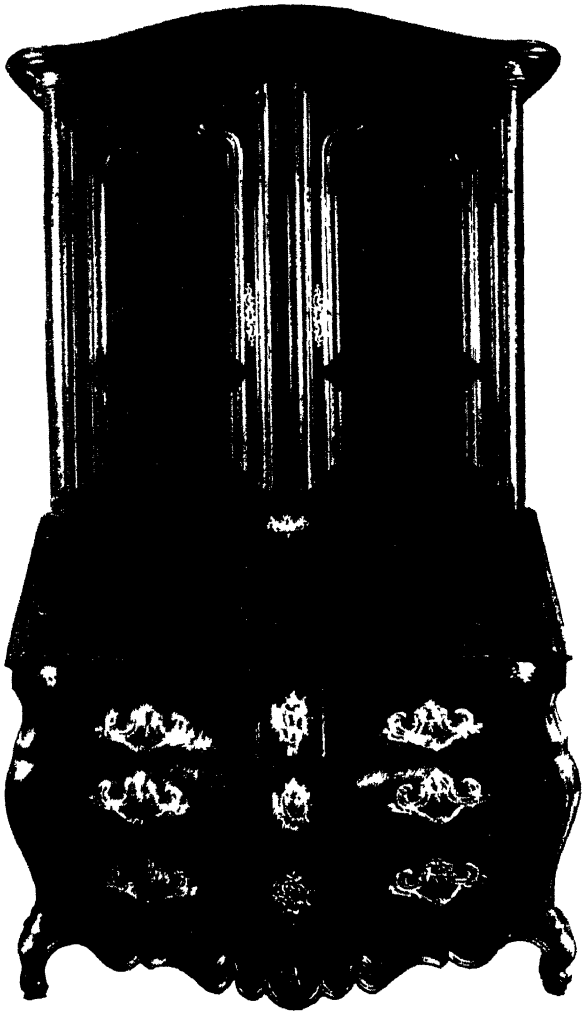


FIG 31 LARGE BORDEAUX SECRETARY, MAHOGANY

Pl :

FIG. 32 TABLE WITH SUNK TOP, MAHOGANY

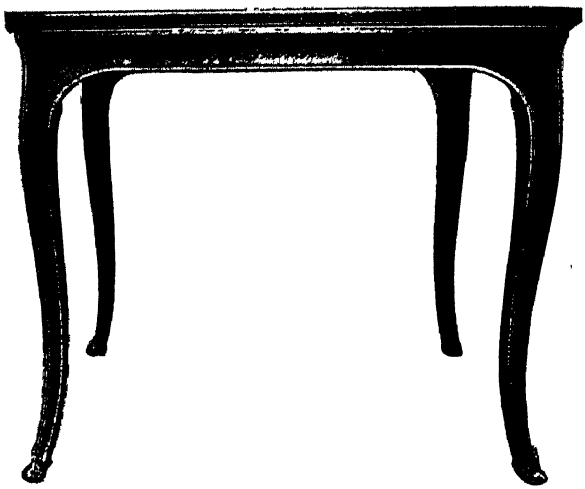


FIG 33 TABLE PAINTED BLACK, WITH STUCCO TOP

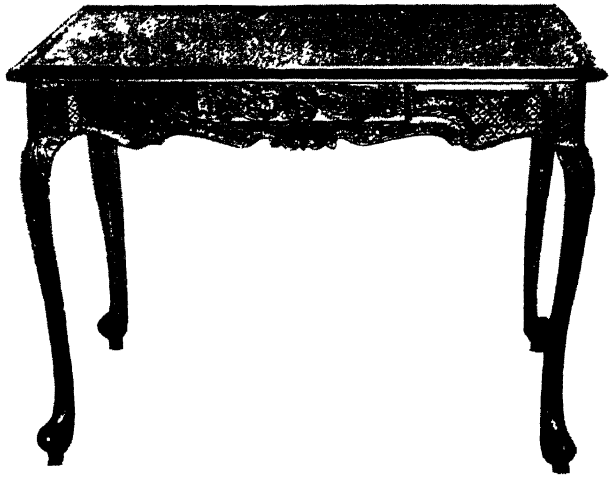


FIG 34 CARVED TABLE WITH RIM, WALNUT (BEGINNING OF THE STYLE)

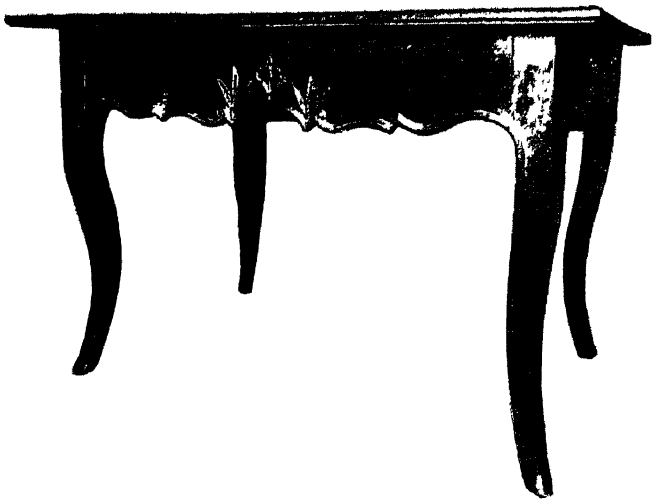


FIG 35 BRETON TABLE, CHERRYWOOD

FIG 36. LARGE CARVED MAHOGANY TABLE

FIG 37. SMALL CARVED TABLE, CHERRYWOOD (BEGINNING OF THE STYLE)

Pl 25

FIG. 38. ROCAILLE CONSOLE TABLE, OAK

FIG 39. ROCAILLE CONSOLE TABLE, GILDED WOOD

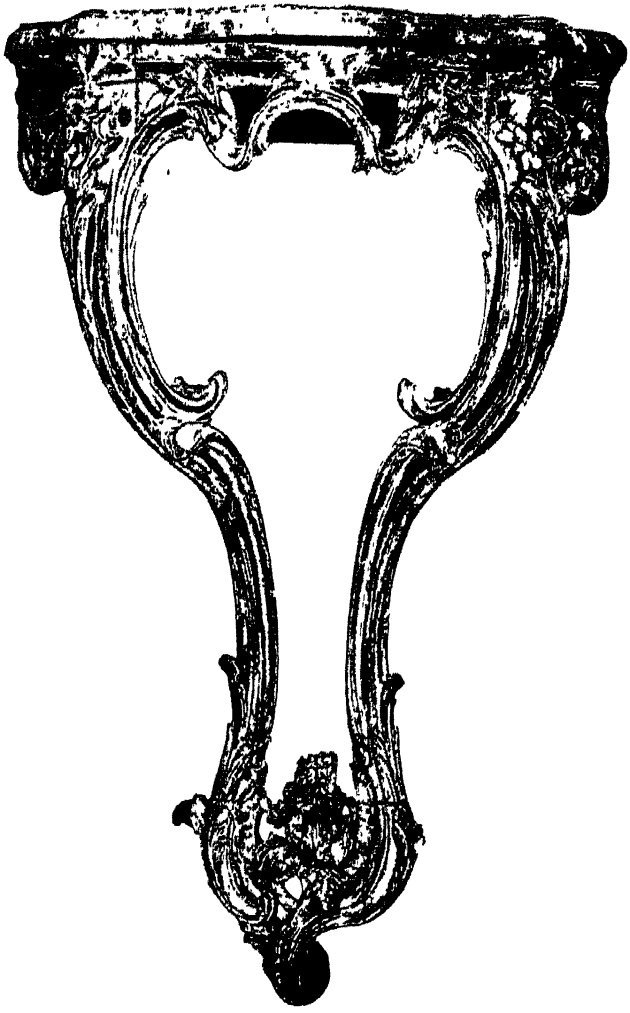


FIG. 40 SMALL CONSOLE TABLE, CUL-DE-LAMPE FORM, GILDED WOOD

Pl 27

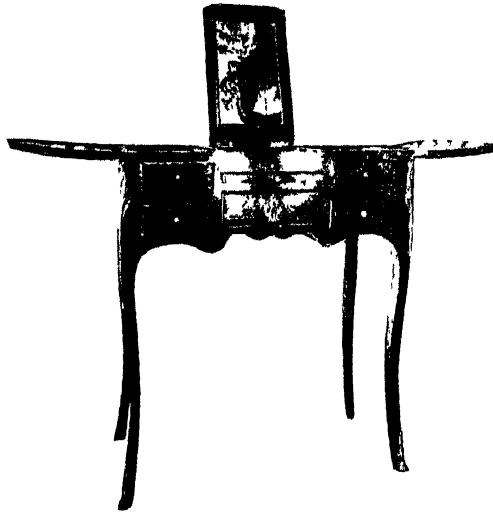


FIG 41 TOILET TABLE, PALISANDER AND ROSEWOOD

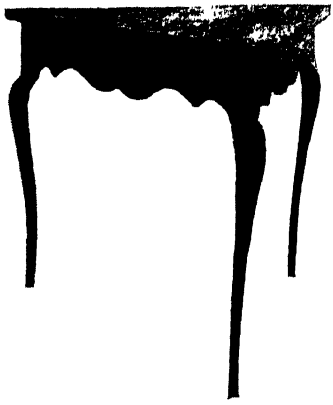


FIG 43 SMALL WALNUT TABLE FOR THE GAME OF TRI

FIG 42 WALNUT TABLE WITH CHAMFERED CORNERS

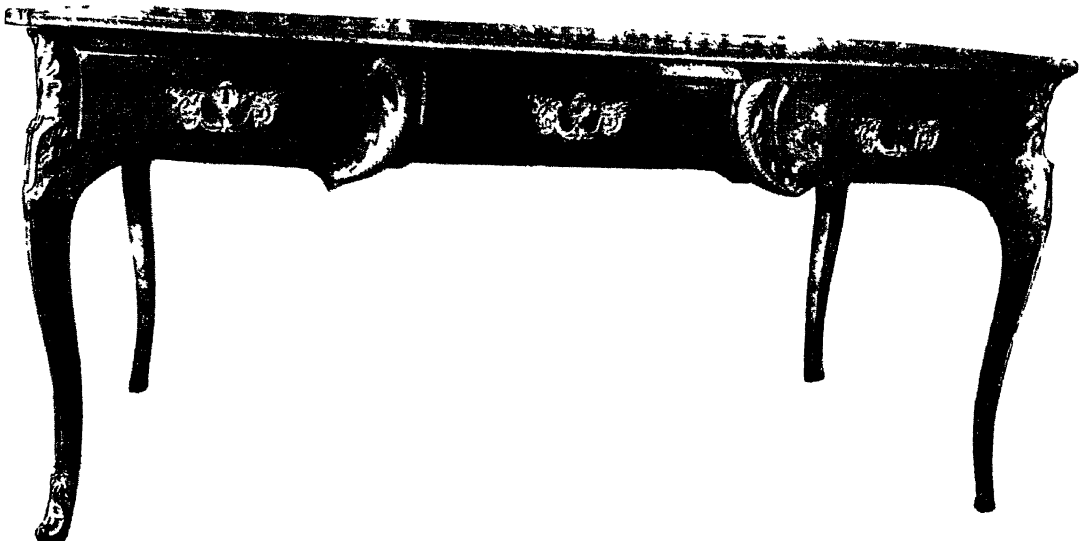


FIG 44. BUREAU TABLE, PALISANDER

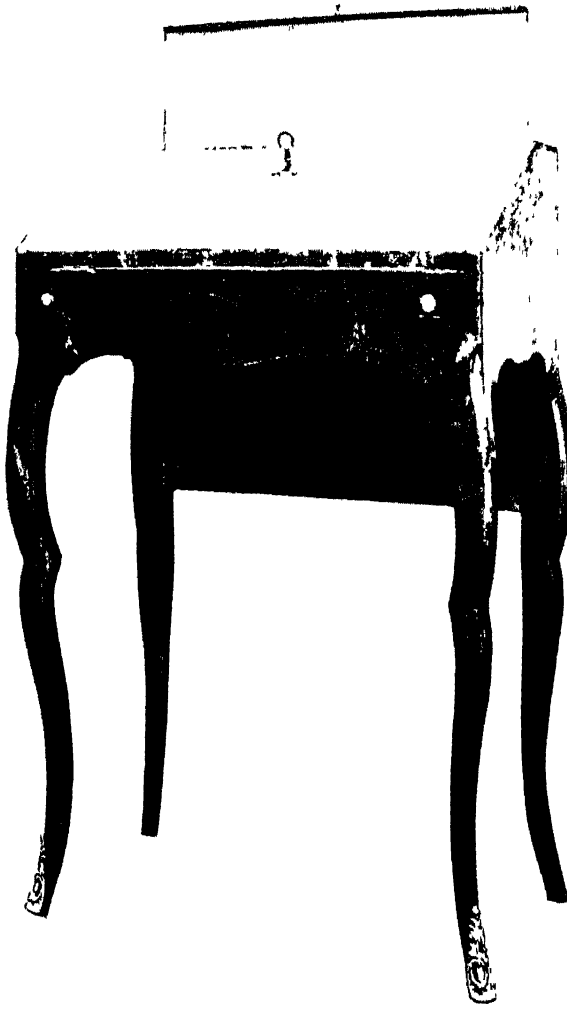


FIG 45 SMALL BUREAU WITH SCREEN, ASH "FIGURE"

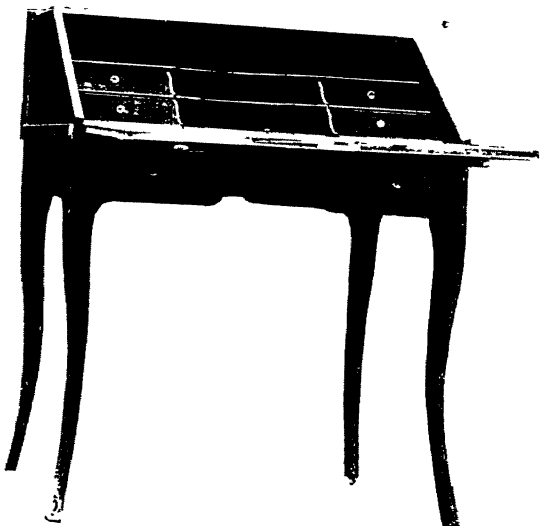


FIG 46. SMALL BUREAU WITH FALL FRONT, CHERRYWOOD

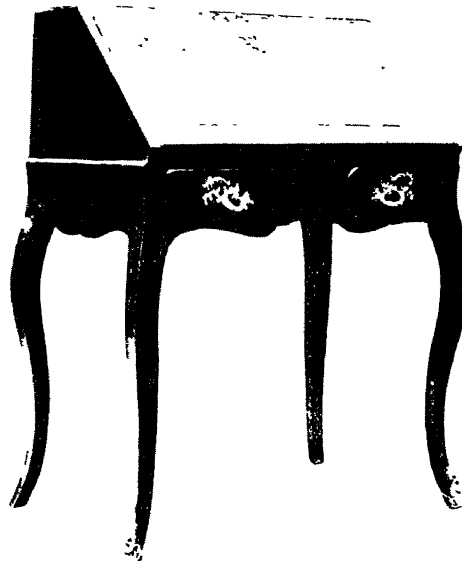


FIG. 47. SMALL BUREAU WITH FALL FRONT PALISANDER AND ROSEWOOD

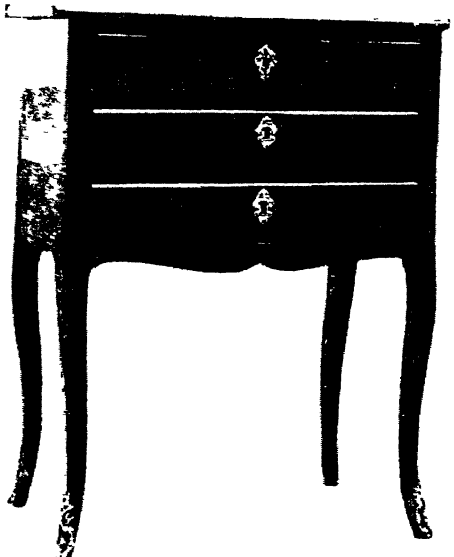


FIG 48 CHIFFONNIÈRE, CHERRY-WOOD

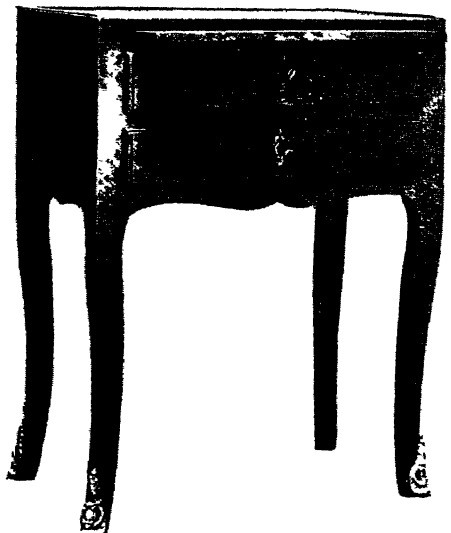


FIG 49 CHIFFONNIÈRE WRITING-TABLE, CHERRYWOOD

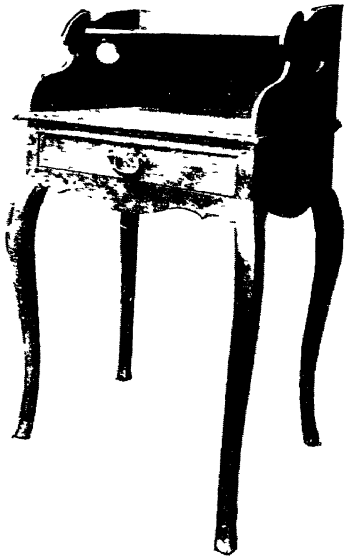


FIG 50 SMALL WALNUT TABLE WITH SHELF

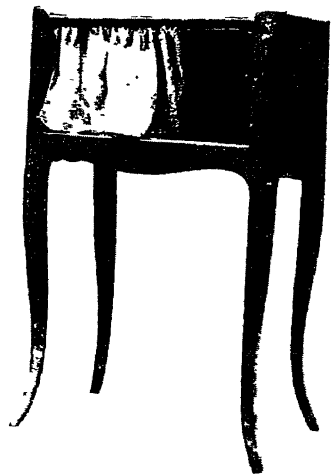


FIG 51 OAK NIGHT TABLE

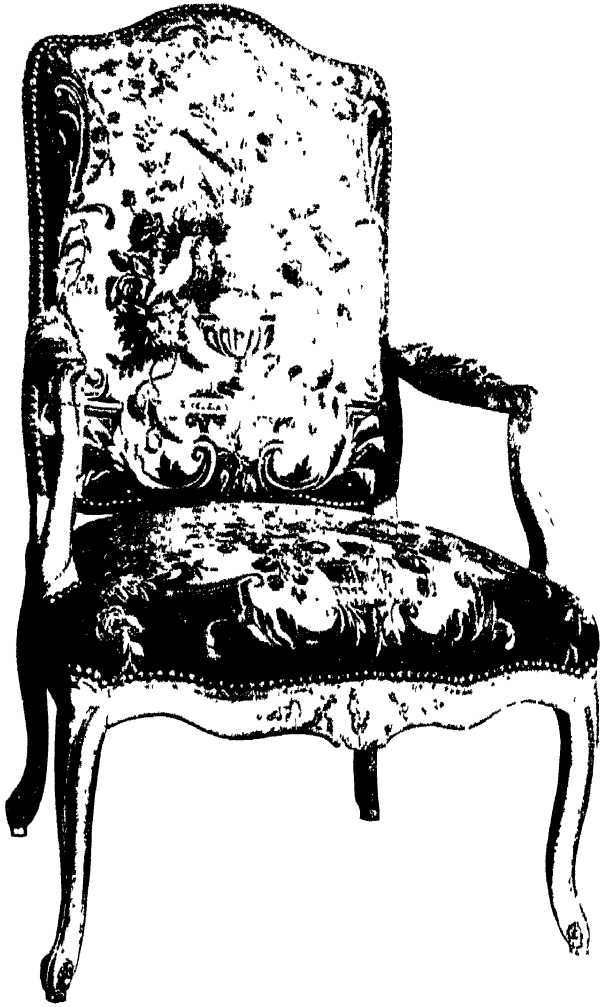


FIG 52 LARGE ARM-CHAIR OF PAINTED WOOD WITH AUBUSSON TAPESTRY

Pl 34

FIG 53. WALNUT ARM-CHAIR WITH HIGH BACK

FIG 54. ARM-CHAIR WITH FLOWER AND ACANTHUS ORNAMENT

FIG 55 "CABRIOLET" CHAIR WALNUT AND AUBUSSON TAPESTRY

FIG 56 WALNUT ARM-CHAIR (BEGINNING OF THE STYLE)

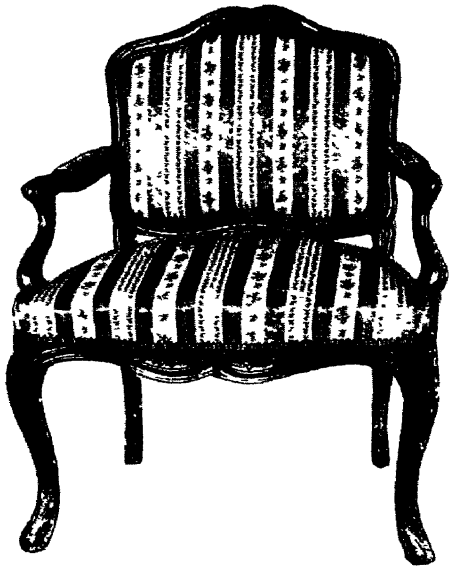


FIG 57 WALNUT ARM CHAIR WITH LOW BACK

FIG 58 SMALL "CABRIOLET" CHAIR WALNUT

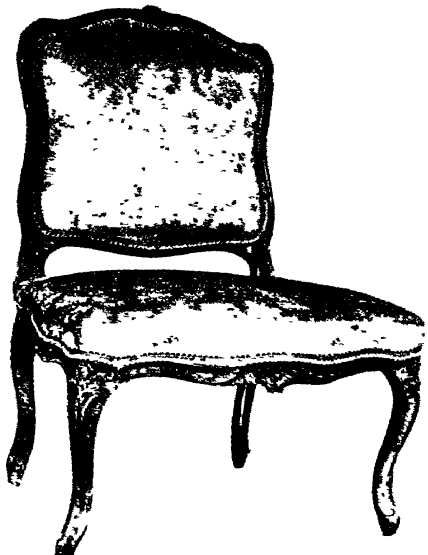


FIG 59 WALNUT CHAIR, COVERED WITH BROCHÉ SILK

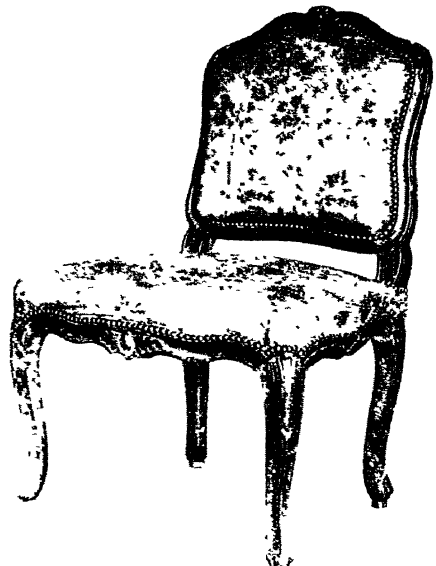


FIG. 60 WALNUT CHAIR, COVERED WITH BROCADE

Pl 38

FIG 61 CHAIR OF GILDED WOOD

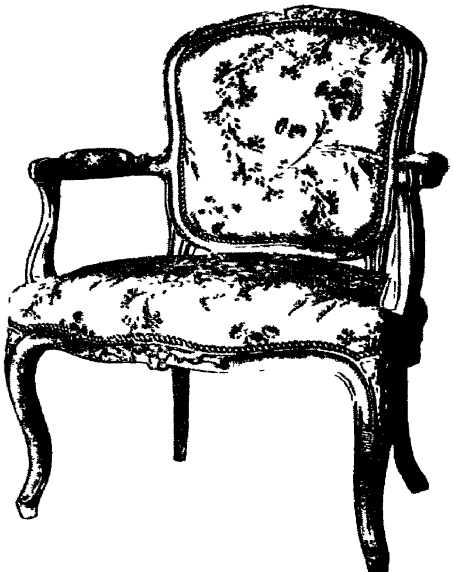


FIG 62 ARM-CHAIR OF GILDED WOOD

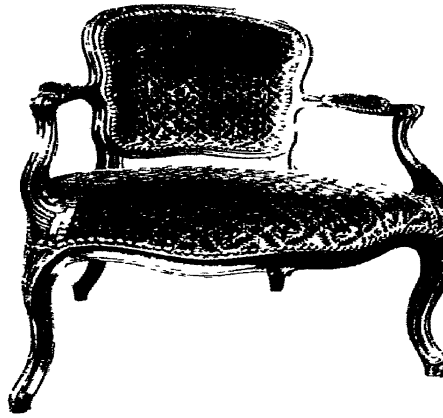


FIG 63 "CABRIOLET" ARM-CHAIR WITH MOULDINGS

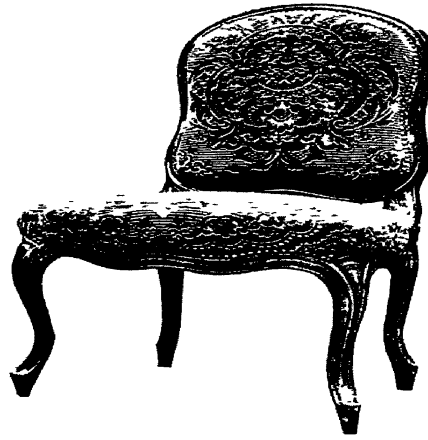


FIG 65 WALNUT CHAIR WITH SIMPLE MOULDINGS

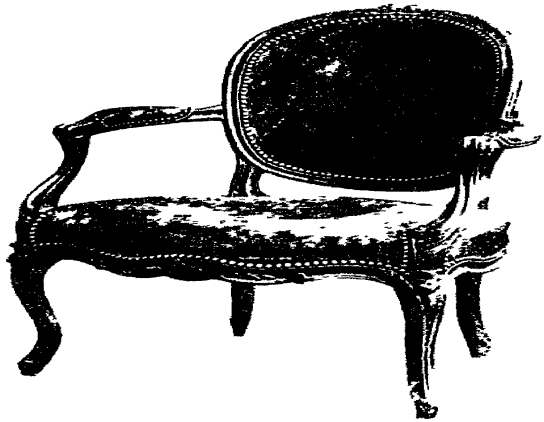


FIG 64 ARM CHAIR (END OF STYLE)

Pl 40

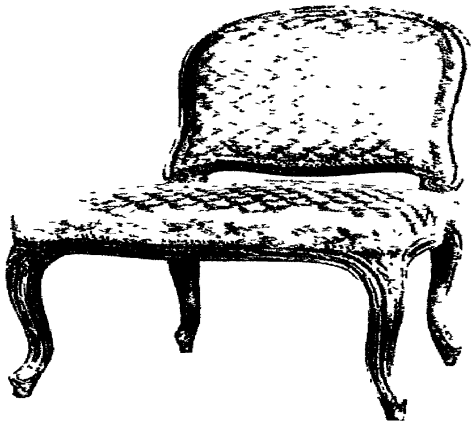


FIG 66 WALNUT CHAIR (END OF STYLE)

Pl 41

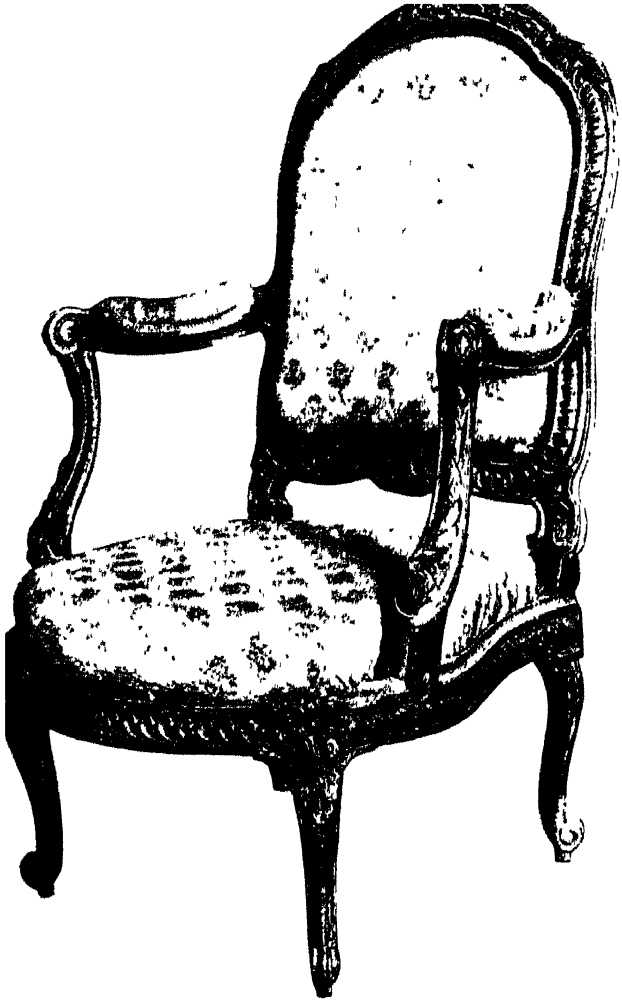


FIG. 67. LARGE ARM-CHAIR OF GILDED WOOD (END OF STYLE)

Pl 42

FIG 68. REVOLVING WRITING CHAIR

Pl 43

FIG 69 BERGÈRE WITH CARVED BACK, GILDED WOOD

Pl 44

FIG 70 "GONDOLA" BERGÈRE, WALNUT

FIG. 71 BERGÈRE WITH SIMPLE MOULDINGS, WALNUT

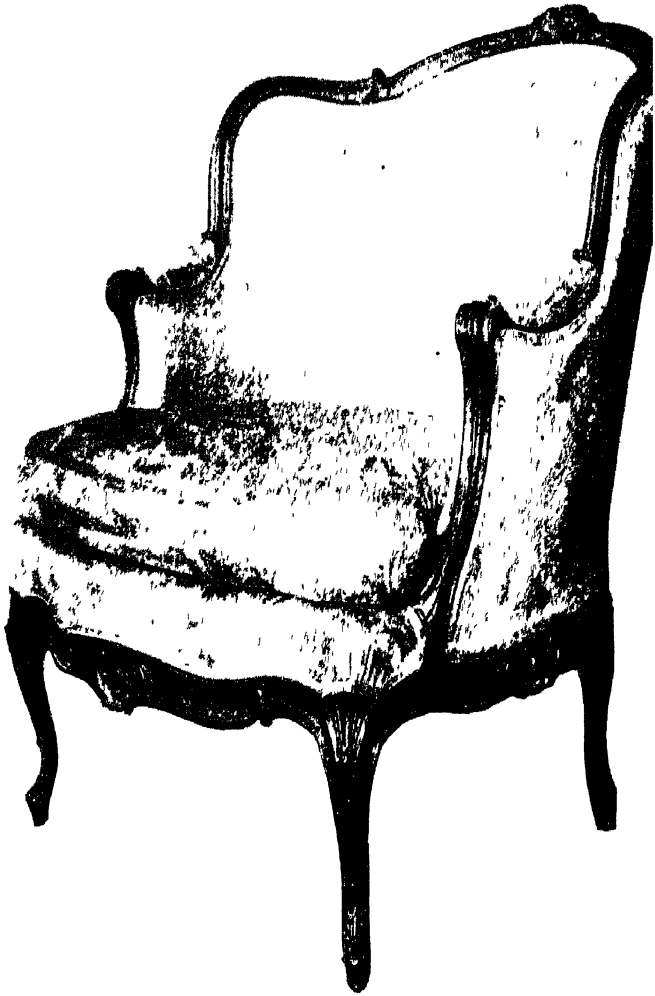


FIG. 72 "GONDOLA" BERGÈRE, WALNUT

FIG 73 "GONDOLA" BERGÈRE, WALNUT

FIG 74 "GONDOLA" BERGÈRE WALNUT

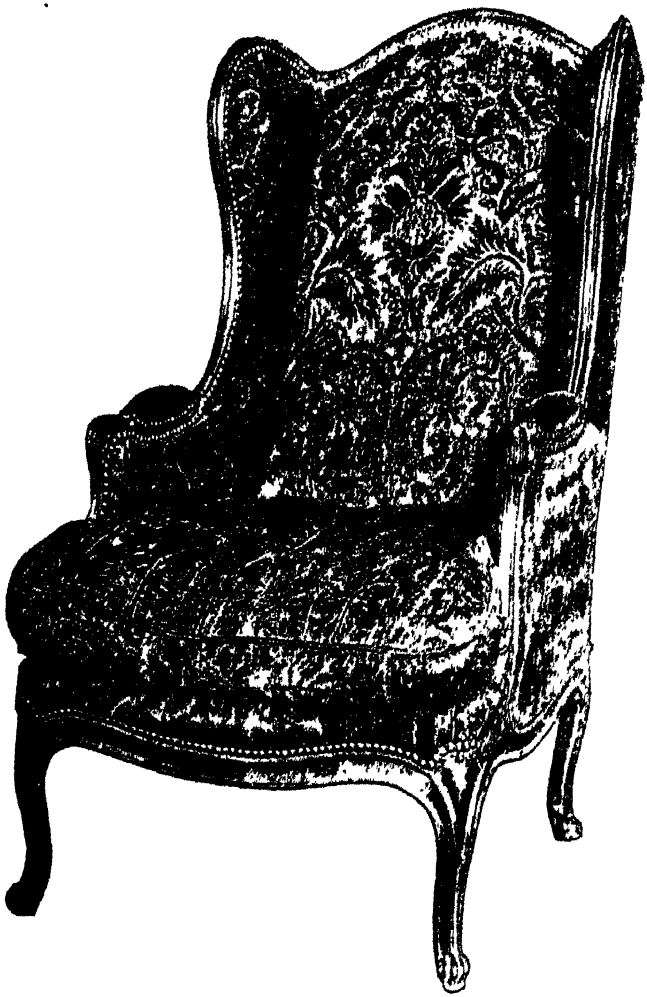


FIG 75 "CONFESSIONAL" BERGÈRE, WALNUT

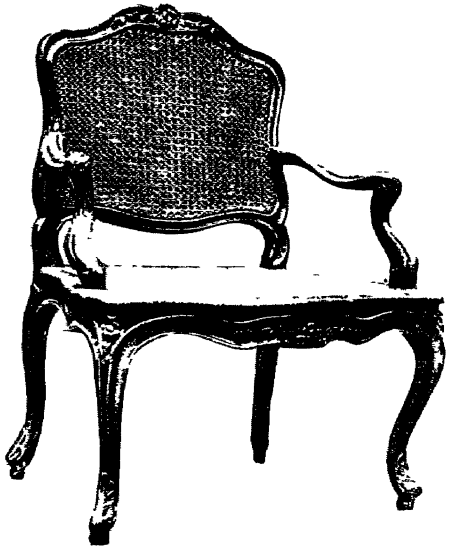


FIG. 76 BEECHWOOD CHAIR, WITH CANED BACK AND SEAT

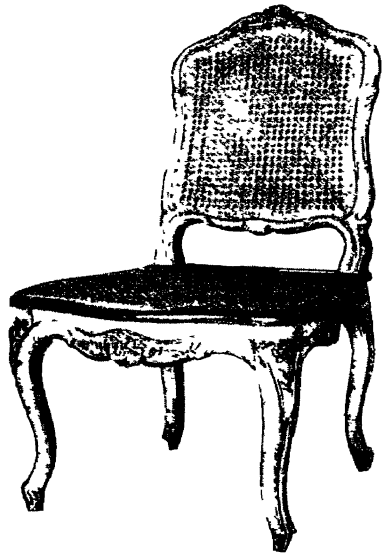


FIG 77 CHAIR OF PAINTED WOOD WITH CANED BACK AND SEAT

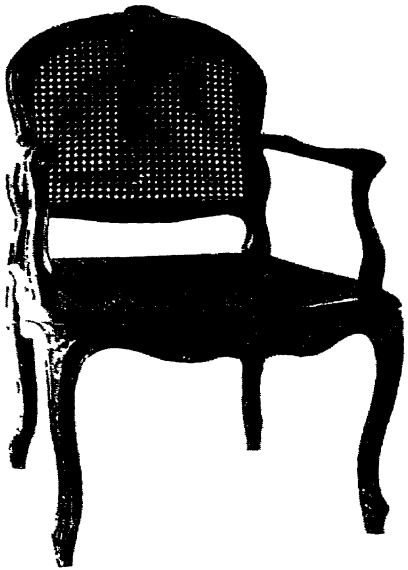


FIG 78 BEECHWOOD CHAIR WITH CANED BACK AND SEAT

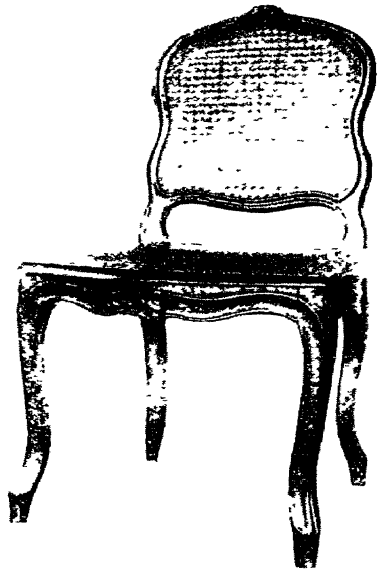


FIG. 79 BEECHWOOD CHAIR WITH CANED BACK AND SEAT

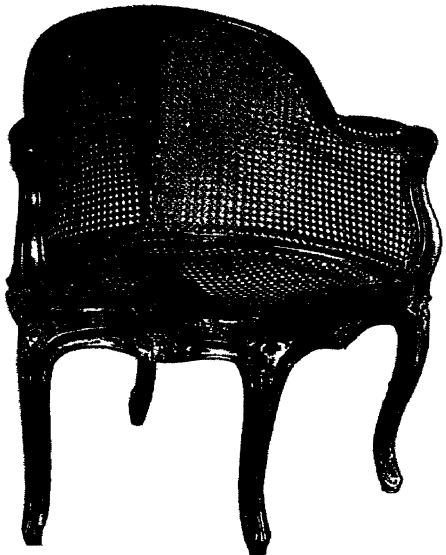


FIG 80 TOILET CHAIR WITH PADDED ARM-RESTS, WALNUT

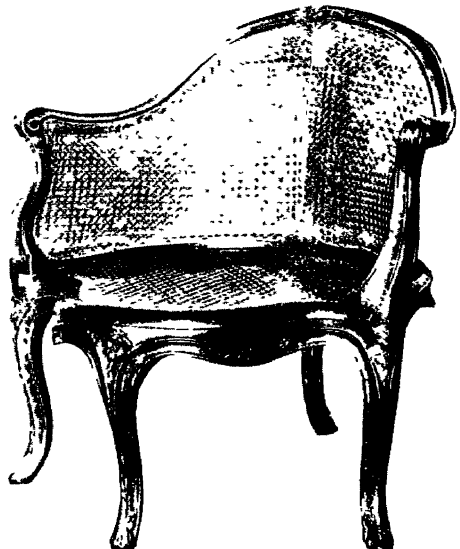


FIG 81 TOILET CHAIR WITHOUT PADDED ARM-RESTS, BEECHWOOD

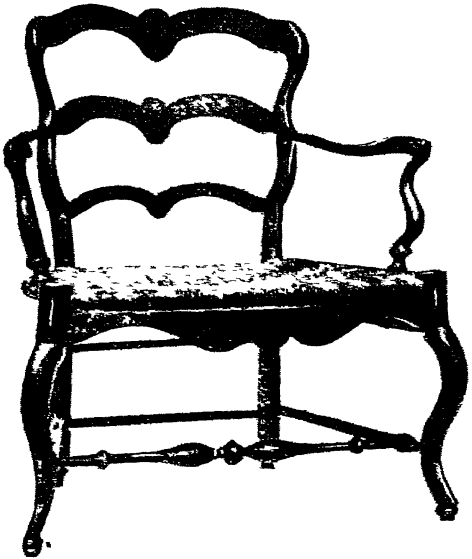


FIG 82 WALNUT CHAIR WITH STRAW SEAT

FIG. 83 STRAW CHAIR WITH CUSHIONS

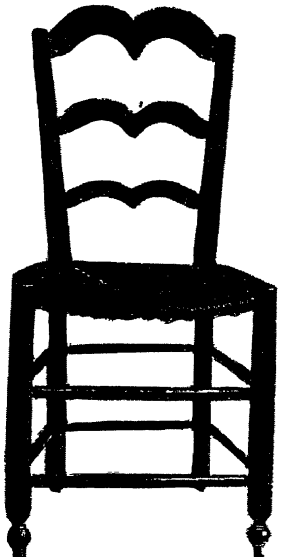


FIG 84 CHERRYWOOD CHAIR WITH STRAW SEAT

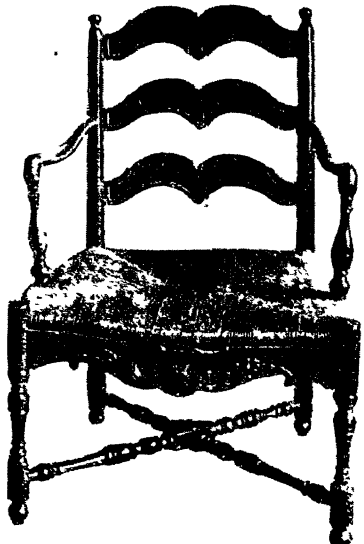


FIG 85 WALNUT ARM-CHAIR WITH STRAW SEAT

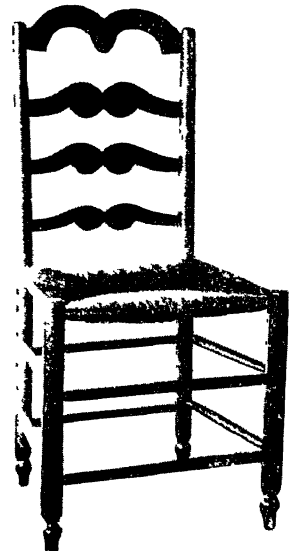


FIG 86 WALNUT CHAIR WITH STRAW SEAT

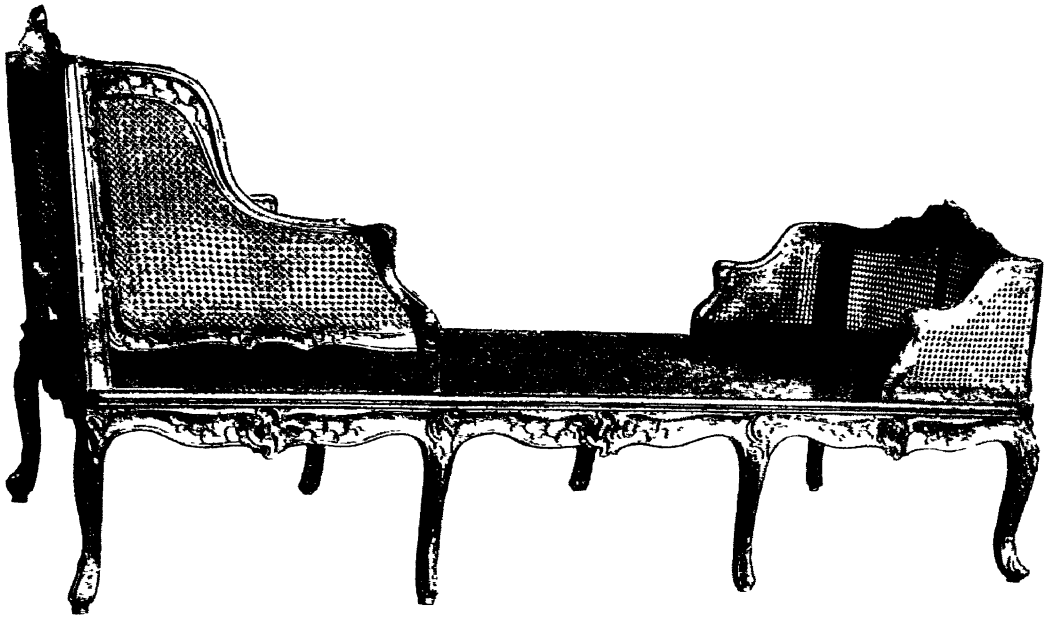


FIG 87 CHAISE LONGUE OF BEECHWOOD AND CANE, WITH SIDE-PIECES AND ADJUSTABLE FOOT

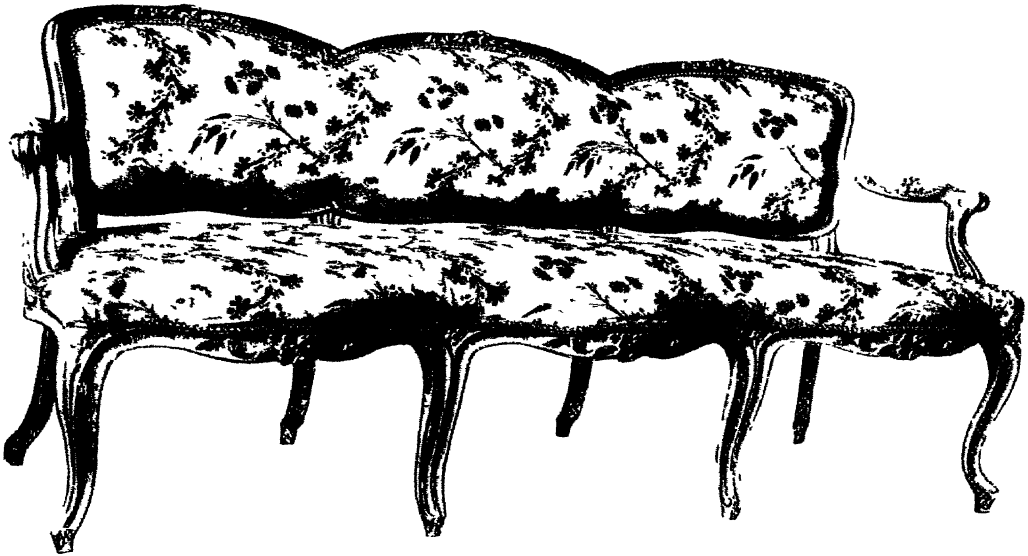


FIG 88 SOFA OF GILDED WOOD

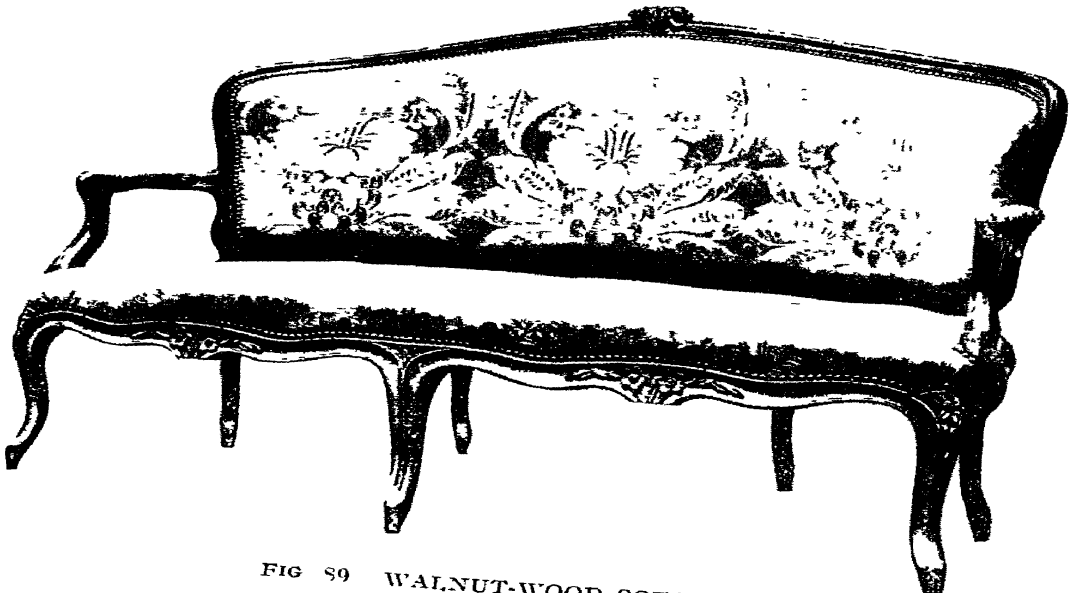


FIG 89 WALNUT-WOOD SOFA

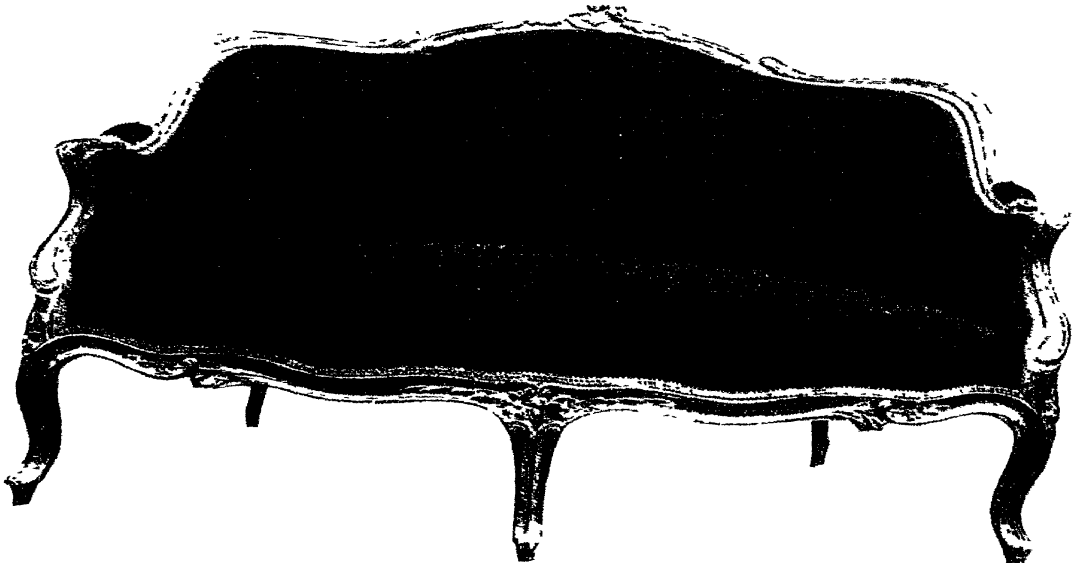


FIG 90 WALNUT-WOOD SOFA

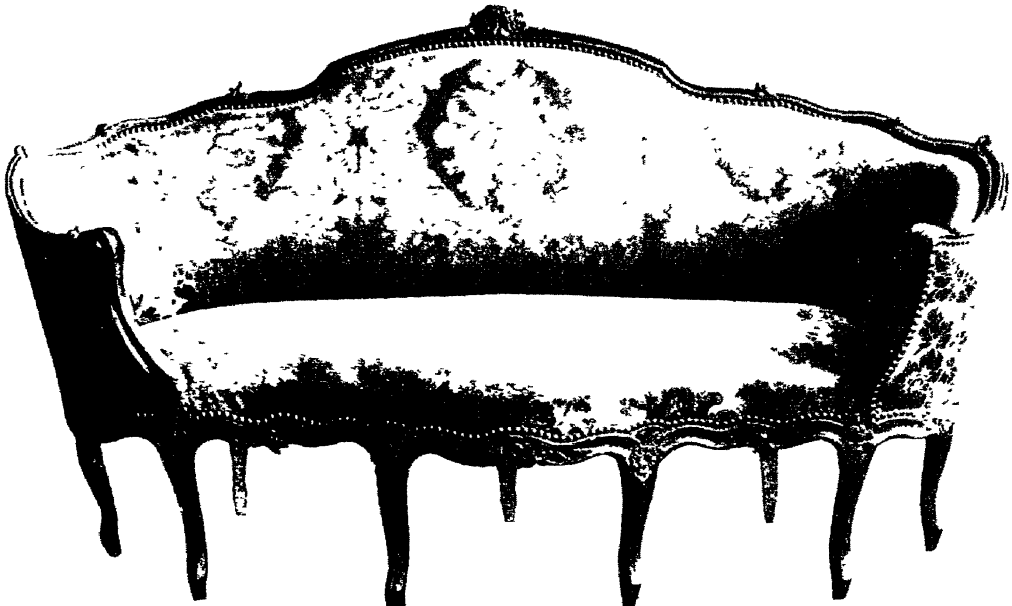


FIG 91 WALNUT-WOOD SOFA

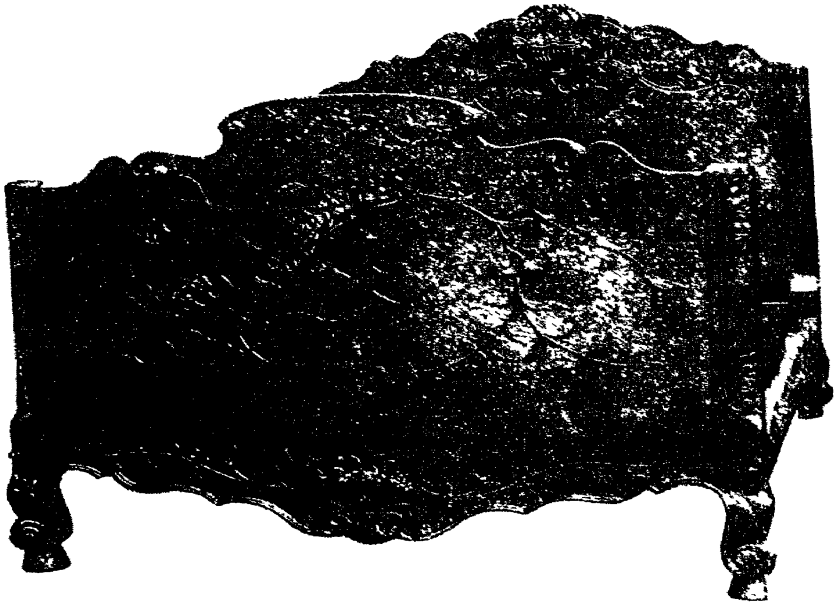


FIG 92 PROVENÇAL BED, WITH HEAD AND FOOT, BEECHWOOD

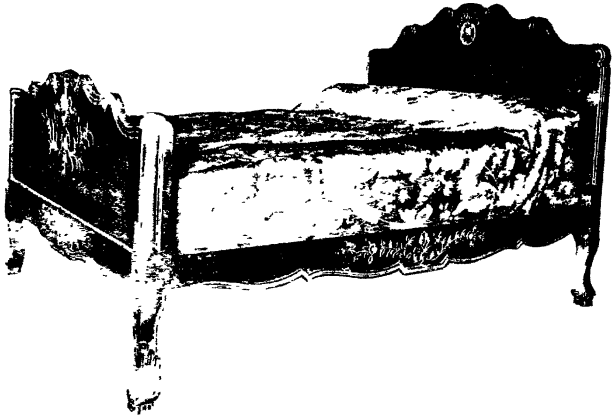


FIG 93 PROVENÇAL BED, WITH HEAD AND FOOT, CHERRYWOOD

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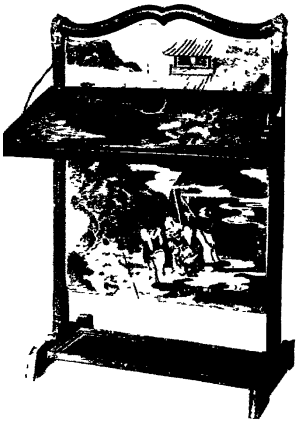


94 SCREEN WITH SHELVES, LACQUER AND INDIA PAPER

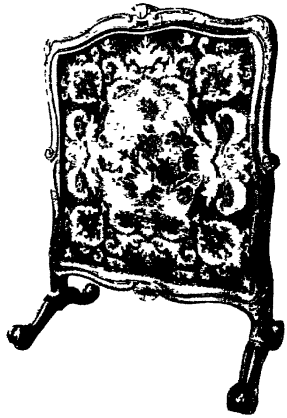


FIG 95 WALNUT SCREEN WITH MODERN TAPESTRY

Pl 61

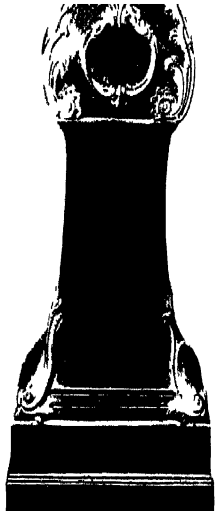


FIG 96 CLOCK OF PALISANDER WOOD

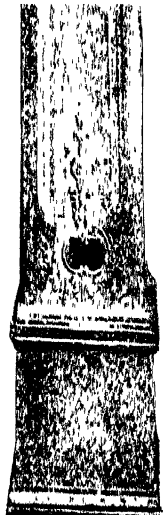


FIG 97. CLOCK OF OAK AND PINE

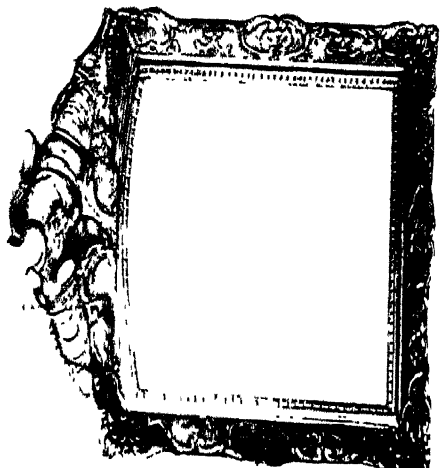
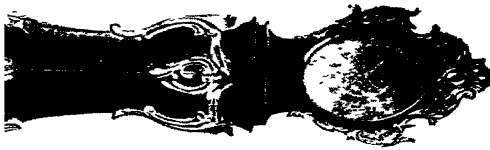


FIG 98 MIRROR FRAME OF GILDED WOOD



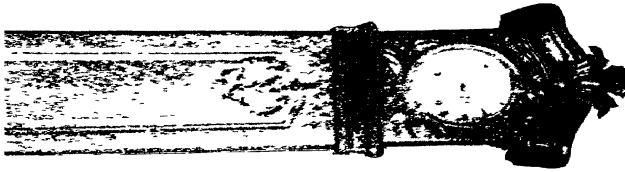


FIG. 99. MIRROR FRAME OF GILDED WOOD

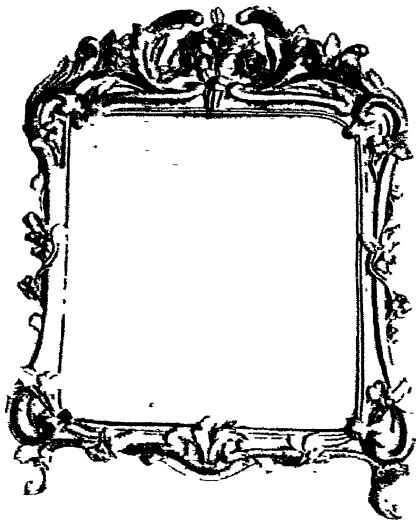


FIG 100. MIRROR FRAME OF GILDED WOOD

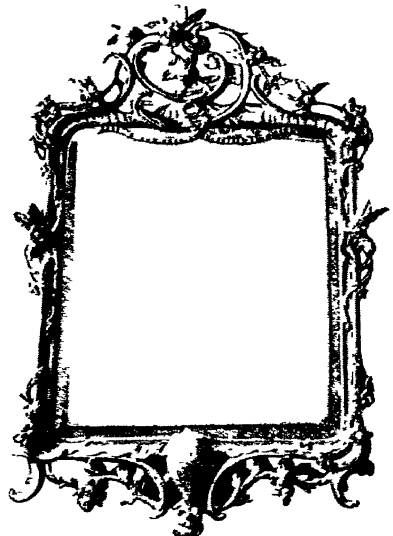


FIG 101 MIRROR FRAME OF GILDED WOOD

INDEX-GLOSSARY

PRINTED AT
THE COMPLETE PRESS
WEST NORWOOD
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