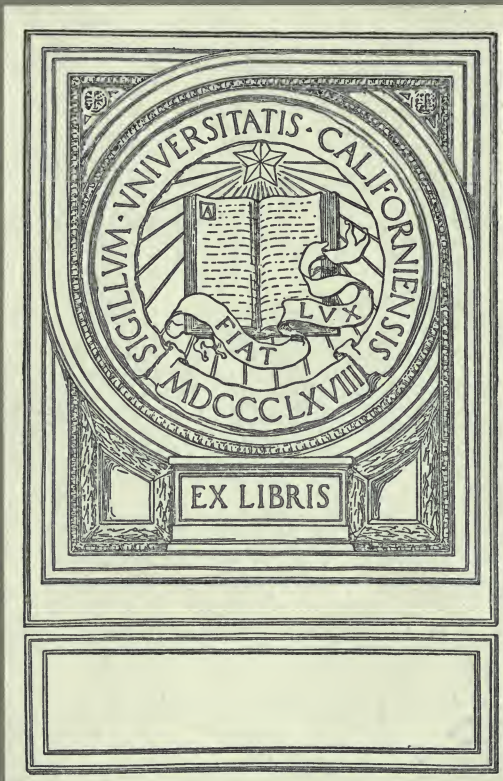
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LITTLE ILLUSTRATED BOOKS ON

OLD FRENCH FURNITURE

IV. FRENCH FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XVI AND THE EMPIRE

FOUR-POSTER BED, MAHOGANY AND BRASS, WITH SATIN HANGINGS

LITTLE ILLUSTRATED BOOKS ON OLD FRENCH FURNITURE IV

FRENCH FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XVI AND THE EMPIRE

BY ROGER DE FÉLICE

TRANSLATED BY
F. M. ATKINSON

ILLUSTRATED

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INTRODUCTION

In this volume Empire furniture will occupy much less space than Louis Seize. It may perhaps be enough to say that, in our opinion, this inequality is amply justified by the differences in merit, comfort, and adaptableness to the needs of ordinary life that exist between the two styles; but there is one more solid and positive reason. The aim of this handbook, like its predecessors, is to impart a better knowledge of the furniture of past times, but most of all the furniture that was simple and practical, the good, honest pieces with no pretentions to sham luxuriousness, belonging to the modest middle classes or even the country folk of old France. Now, the Empire Style never had time to make its way into the depths of the provinces, where everything is so slow to change. In any case, how could that style, so learned and archæological, which had sprung finished and complete from the brain of a few fanatical devotees of antiquity, as once Minerva sprang in full panoply from out of the head of Jupiter—how could that style, so lacking in tradition, ever have found favour with the country people of France? How could they have understood it? And accordingly we find it left no trace in the output of the workshops of Provence or Normandy or Brittany. During the Revolution and the Empire, and still later, the country cabinet-makers, and those in the

small towns, went on quietly with Louis XVI styles, which were often simply Louis XV hardly modified at all, and they continued this up to the moment when industrial production on a large scale, centralised and carried out by machinery, shut, one by one for ever, the little workshops from which throughout two centuries so much simple beauty had issued to spread its boon among the dwellings of the unpretentious.

The Empire Style undoubtedly has its own beauty; it is simple, severe, not very cordial, but sometimes imposing in grandeur, and superb in its air; but it is almost always only the most costly and luxurious pieces that have these qualities; their material must be supremely fine, as it is displayed in large masses with little decoration. The bronzes must be excellent in sculpture, since they often make the whole of the rich effect, and because being isolated, as they usually are, in the middle of large panels of bare wood, they assume an extreme importance, and necessarily hold the eye. The actual composition of these metal appliques can the less permit of mediocrity, inasmuch as it often has to make up for poverty in their invention and design. An Empire piece made on the cheap, with too much veneering, too little bronze or bronzes inferiorly chased or not at all, gives the impression of rubbish made expressly for catch-penny bargain sales; indeed, was it not precisely under the Empire, perhaps during the Revolution, that cheap-jack furniture first came into being? In a

word, the ordinary product of this epoch has nothing to call for any infatuated devotion. A very wide-awake collector may still, from time to time, pick up in the heart of Paris, and for a mere song, authentic Jacobs unrecognised by the seller who has them tucked away in his shop, but they are becoming rare, and by the side of these lovely things, pure in line, sometimes with exquisite curves and of superior craftsmanship, how many dull flat horrors there are that have not even the excuse of being unpretentious!

It has doubtless been observed that the Directoire Style has no place in the title of this volume nor even in the table of chapters. Many styles are badly named, but none so badly as this —if it even exists at all. The government of the Directors endured four years altogether. Did anyone ever see a style spring up and establish itself in so short a time? It would be more correct to say *Revolution Style*, for chairs with shovel backs,*[1] or roll backs,* made of plain wood, either pierced or carved in weak relief, furniture decorated with lozenges, daisies and stars; beds with triangular pediments; all these were being made from 1790; we even find models in collections before the Revolution, such as that of Aubert (1788).

This transition period recalls the Regency by the double character of the furniture it produced. Certain pieces carry on the direct tradition of Louis XVI, while little by little modifying the

[1] The asterisk refers to the index at the end.

lines to which cabinet-makers had been faithful during thirty years; others displaying that excess in novelty which three quarters of a century earlier had characterised *Rocaille*, repudiate all the past like the *sans-culottes*, and are more or less exact copies of Greco-Roman models; of this kind are the celebrated pieces from David's workshop, which were speedily copied on every hand. When the imperial era arrives, it will drop all the exaggeration and retain the essence of these novelties, give them more restraint, more uniformity too, in a word, more style, precisely as the epoch of Louis XV had done for the somewhat disordered imagination of the Regency. And so the Directoire style is Louis XVI ending and also the birth of the Empire; but it is not an independent and finished style in itself.

Without any further preamble, and after expressing our profound gratitude to the owners of antique pieces, and to the keepers of museums in Paris and throughout the country,[1] to whose

[1] Mlle. M. de Félice, Mesdames de Flandreysy and Kahn, Mlle. Mouttet, Messieurs Marius Bernard, Brunschvicg, Cérésole and Briquet, Duchêne, Ladan-Bockairy, La Mazière, Mezzara and Touzain, of Paris; M. André Clamageran, of Rouen; Madame Broquisse, Messieurs Abel and Louis Jay, of Bordeaux; Madame Meyniac, of Saint Médard (Gironde); Mlle. Marie Jay, Madame Larégnère, Messieurs Guillet-Dauban, Loreilhe and Pascaud, of Sainte-Foy-la-Grande (Gironde); Mesdames Colin and Roudier, of La Rivière-de-Prat (Gironde); M. Ducros of Simondie (Dordogne); and the Directors of the Museum of the Union centrale des Arts décoratifs, of the Carnavalet Museum, of the Departmental Museum of Antiquities of Rouen and of the Museon Arlaten.

courtesy we are indebted for the illustrations in this volume, we shall proceed to set forth a summary account of the history of French furniture during the second half of the eighteenth century and the first fifteen years of the nineteenth, and next we shall describe the characteristics and principal shapes of furniture and their possible use in a modern interior, first for the style of Louis XVI and next for the Empire Style.

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PART ONE: A HISTORY OF THE TWO STYLES

EMPIRE furniture differs widely from that of the Louis XVI period; and yet the two styles are derived from the same principle applied from 1760 to the Revolution with a great deal of discretion and respect for the national taste, and from 1789 to 1815 with the most uncompromising rigour. This principle is that of the imitation of Antiquity. That was not merely a particular circumstance, limited to the restricted circle of the art of the cabinet-maker, but, as it is called, a fact of civilisation; something like—in a different proportion—what the Renaissance had been to France in the sixteenth century. This return to Antiquity, in fact, manifested itself in all the arts, in literature, and even, a little later, in the ways and customs of the French people. Its evolution took place pretty much as in the sixteenth century; the art of Louis XV, like the flamboyant Gothic art of the fifteenth century, was an art that was purely French and modern, and which owed nothing, with the exception of certain works of architecture, to Greco-Roman antiquity. The influence of the latter at first transformed it only little by little, with every kind of compromise and accommodation, moving on by regular stages, and never

clashing directly with the national character or modern habits. The first French Renaissance, that of the reigns of Louis XII, and of François the First, had done exactly the same. A little later, as in the time of Philibert Delorme, Pierre Lescot and Androuet du Cerceau, the imitation of antiquity becomes much more severely exact; it has its extreme theorists, whose scorn for everything not Greek and Roman is complete and unmitigated; and now the Empire Style is born, the exact reverse of all that had been purely French in our applied art.

The Empire then is not a reaction against the Louis XVI Style, but its logical outcome. The brains of stiff and undeviating logicians, such as were so numerous in the revolutionary and imperial epochs, like David, Percier, Fontaine, coming after men like Soufflot and Ledoux, were inevitably bound, with the republican manners helping things on, to draw this absolute conclusion from the premises imprudently laid down thirty years earlier. That is why it is fitting to set forth at one and the same time the history of two styles which are quite distinct, but the second of which prolongs the first with an immaculate correctness.

The Louis XV Style had become quite out of fashion, at any rate at Paris, many years before the death of the King whose name has been given to it; to be precise, it was about 1760 that furniture decoration and applied arts in general were seen to turn in a new direction, while

Louis XVI was not to succeed his grandfather until 1774. This first vogue of articles "in the Greek manner," as they were then called, came immediately after the appearance—the coincidence is complete—of a whole series of works on Ancient Greece and Ancient Italy, accounts of travels, collections of documents, archæological studies. Président de Brosses, about 1740, had brought the classical Italian tour into fashion. From 1749 to 1751 Madame Pompadour's brother, then Marquis de Vandières, and later Marquis de Marigny, had been sent by his sister on a mission to Florence, Rome and Venice, with the artist Cochin and the architect Soufflot, fo form his taste by the study of the work to the Renaissance, and above all of the Roman antiquities, before becoming Surintendant des Beaux Arts to Louis XV. In 1754 the architect Leroy paid a visit to the East, and four years after published the *Ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grèce*. The learned Comte de Caylus, a member of the Académie des Inscriptions and the Académie de Peinture et de Sculpture, a great amateur in art and patron of artists, helped in the propagation of the "taste for the antique" with all his influence; he had travelled through Turkey, Greece, Asia Minor. His huge *Recueil d'antiquités egyptiennes, étrusques, grecques, gauloises* began to appear in 1752 and had a brilliant success of curiosity. Five years later came his *Tableaux tirés d'Homère et de Virgile*, a collection of

"subjects" to be treated by sculptors and painters tired of pastorals and *fêtes galantes*.

But what struck men's imaginations most was the discovery of Herculaneum and Pompeii, the two dead towns that were then beginning to lift their shroud of cinders and lava. Archæology was made over again from foundation to coping-stone; it became all at once alive, familiar, interesting to the most frivolous spirit, for what the excavations were on this occasion bringing out once more into the light of day was no longer a mutilated marble torso, a broken architrave, a sarcophagus, but the round whole of ancient life; the temples and the theatres, but above all the houses with their decorations, their furnishings, their utensils, the whole setting and apparatus of daily life. Henceforward we knew how beds and tables were made in a Greco-Roman town of the first century, mural paintings, lamps, silver and bronze table ware; and accordingly nothing was more deeply influenced than the art of the cabinet-maker by this resurrection, which was immediately made known to France by several works. As early as 1748 the Marquis de l'Hôpital and the savant Darthenay were publishing a *Mémoire historique et critique sur la ville souterraine decouverte au pied du mont Vesuve*; in 1750 Président de Brosses was writing *Lettres sur l'état actuel de la ville souterraine d'Herculée;* the next year it was a *Lettre sur les peintures d'Herculanum* from Caylus himself; and in 1754 the *Observations sur les*

antiquités d'Herculanum by Cochin and Bellicard, while waiting for the collection of the *Antiquités d'Herculanum*, by Sylvain Maréchal and F. A. David.

Thus, in the middle of the eighteenth century, archæology is no longer the speciality of the Benedictines, the Académie des Inscriptions and a handful of the erudite exchanging obscure memoranda among one another; it interests folk in the world at large, it is fashionable. But this fashion, which might have been no more than a fleeting caprice, becomes something profound and lasting, a whole new attitude of mind, thanks to the potent patronage of people like Madame de Pompadour, and to the support given it by the "philosophic" writers with their customary enthusiasm. Diderot and Rousseau especially, smitten with Plutarch and Seneca, never cease chanting the praises of antiquity, simple, virtuous antiquity, and enjoining artists like other citizens to learn from it lessons of dignity and good conduct. They never perceive, these worshippers of nature, that the Louis XV Style, clearly understood in its essence, was nature itself.

It is in the domain of architecture and in that of the trinket that the movement of reaction begins. Architecture is a grave personage, a little heavy to set in motion; she does not emancipate herself often, and her vagaries are of short duration; she was only too happy to fall back under the easy yoke of Vitruvius and to find once more, with her beloved triglyphs, her most

restful denticles. And so mansions, palaces, theatres, churches, are all "in the Greek manner"; the curved line that everywhere was supinely drooping now pulls itself together and straightens up. *Rocaille* is banished from the carved stone work and from painted or panelled walls, and is replaced by the classic designs that had fallen for a moment from favour, which the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had already borrowed from the Ancients. "After the Greek" also are chased, are hammered, are enamelled, the thousand and one baubles with which both feminine and masculine dress are finished off, and the trinkets with which, in this century, people delight so much to load their pockets or cover the small pieces of furniture with which they surround themselves. It is natural that these little articles should have been the first to follow the new fashion. Then come goldsmiths' work, bronzes for furniture, and the furniture itself; first the ornamentation, and then the line and structure. Painting and sculpture will bring up the rear, towards the end of the century, under the vigorous impetus of David.

We have noted, in the preceding volume, the first somewhat hot protest that was raised against the agreeable freedom of the Louis XV Style, but it is worth returning to it. It had appeared first of all, unsigned, in the *Mercure de France*, for December, 1754, under the title of a *Supplication aux Orfèvres, Ciseleurs, Sculpteurs en bois pour les appartements et autres, par une*

Société d'Artistes. Grimm and Diderot believed that this witty sally was from the pen of the lively Piron, and inserted it, with strong approbation, in their *Correspondance littéraire*; later it was found to be by the younger Cochin, a good engraver and draughtsman, artistic professor and adviser to Madame de Pompadour.

Three defects above all are in this article charged against this poor Louis XV Style; the lack of good sense and an excess of imagination; the abuse of complicated curves; the mania for vegetable ornament. "Be it most humbly represented to these Gentlemen that, whatever efforts the French nation may have made for several years past to accustom its reason to the vagaries of their imagination, it has been unable wholly to accomplish this; these Gentlemen are therefore entreated to be good enough henceforward to observe certain simple rules, that are dictated by good sense, whose principle we cannot wholly root out of our minds." And Cochin has not enough sarcasm for those lines that all want "to go on the spree" and which "make the prettiest contortions in the world." The supplication goes on: "The wood carvers are accordingly begged to be so good as to give credence to the assurance we give them, we who have no interest in deceiving them, that regular rectilinear, square, round and oval shapes give a decoration as rich as all their inventions; that as their correct execution is more difficult than that of all these herbages, bats' wings and other sorry

trifles that are now customary, it will do more honour to their talent." The flowery elegance of the ornaments, all the ingenious inventions of the designers who venture to "substitute herbages and other paltry prettinesses for the modillions, the denticles and other ornaments invented by men who knew much more about it than they do," find no mercy from this pitiless censor. "If we are asking for too many things at once, let them grant us at least one favour, that henceforth the principal moulding, which they ordinarily torment and contort, shall be and shall remain straight, conformably to the principles of good architecture; we will then consent that they shall make their ornaments writhe around and over it as much as seems good to them; we shall count ourselves not so unlucky, since any man of good taste into whose hands such an apartment may come, will be able with a mere chisel to knock away all these nostrums, and find once more the simple moulding that will provide him with a sober decoration from which his reason will not suffer." In conclusion: "With regard to them, it only remains for us to sigh in secret and to wait until, their invention being exhausted, they themselves grow tired of it. It appears that this time is at hand, for they do nothing now but repeat themselves, and we have grounds for hoping that the desire to do something novel will bring back the ancient architecture."

Ten years later, Cochin's wish was granted;

under the date of 1764, we may read in the *Mémoires Secrets* of Bachaumont: "The mania of the present day is to make everything after the Greek"; and it is also in 1764, ten years before the arrival of Louis XVI, that *l'Amateur* was acted, a comedy by a certain N. T. Barthe, one of whose *dramatis personæ* said:

> "fortunately for us
> The fashion is all for the Greek: our furniture, our jewels,
> Fabrics, head-dress, equipage,
> Everything is Greek, except our souls . . ."

In very truth their souls were hardly Greek, nor their way of living, nor their costumes, and the furniture artists of the time had the good taste and the good sense to bear the fact in mind; progressively, and by slight touches, they modified the articles of furniture which the preceding epoch had created, so well adapted for modern life. First of all it was the bronzes and the carved and inlaid decorations that borrowed their elements from ancient architecture (or what was so called), the form remaining untouched. We can see, for example, armchairs of the transition type, all of whose lines have the sinuosities of the Louis XV Style, but which are ornamented with *rangs de piastres* or with *entrelacs*; tables with crooked legs (*pieds de biche*), whose festooned frame is decorated with flutings (Fig. 34). Many provincial workshops never got beyond this stage, even under the Empire.

Afterwards it is the lines of construction that are gradually transformed; the curves become

simplified, decrease or stiffen one after the other into rectitude. An arm-chair still has a back shaped like a fiddle (Fig. 42), but its legs, turned and fluted, are rigid and square with the frame of the seat. A commode (Fig. 22) still has its legs slightly curved, but its body is already rectangular both in section and elevation. The transition period, whose hybrid character has often much of grace, mainly comes to an end when that Dauphin and Dauphiness, who between them cannot count up forty years, become king and queen of France, acclaimed by the love and the hope of the whole nation.

During about fifteen years (1770-1785) evolution remains practically at a standstill, and the differences that can be noted, in style, between this and that type of article, more or less rectilinear in design, with ornament more florid or more architectural, are not differences due to their period, but are related rather to the diversity of temperament in the artists or divergence of taste in those for whom the pieces were intended.

The first of the great-cabinet makers of the Louis XVI period in point of date and, without any dispute, in point of talent, is Jean Henri Riesener, who after having started, as an apprentice, by making "Louis Quinze" in Oëben's workshop, was to live long enough to see the Empire Style triumphant and his own productions disdained. This great artist, whose works are the very flower of French taste in the age when it was purest, was nevertheless a foreigner,

marvellously assimilated, it is true, but by birth he was German. At the death of Oëben, even before he had been received as *maître ébéniste*, he took over the management of his workshop and then married his widow. He became known by finishing the orders given to his former employer by the royal Garde-Meuble, among other items, the famous bureau of King Louis XV, now in the Louvre; and in the height of the Revolution, in 1791, he delivered to Marie Antoinette the escritoire and the commode that once were the gems of the celebrated Hamilton Collection, and are now the gems of that belonging to Mr. W. K. Vanderbilt.

It might be said that Riesener unites all the qualities of the style with which we are at present concerned. His works are, in their composition as a whole, ample, full of grandeur, proportioned to perfection, architectural in the best sense of the word, and withal always graceful and supple in line; as for their ornament, whether it be marquetry or chased bronze, it is exquisite, now abundant and flowery as a rose garden in May—Marie Antoinette adored roses, and Riesener constantly worked for her—and now displaying a masculine soberness which is of the very highest taste. With him the outline is never arid; according to the excellent custom of the time of Louis XV he almost invariably adorned the sharp edges of his pieces with beaded or corded moulding in bronze ormolu gilt; he understood how to temper with impeccable touch the deliberate

rigidity of the "Greek" Style by means of a supple twining branch boldly bestriding a right line, or an acanthus leaf full of sap and life placed at the right spot. No one ever had to a higher degree the art of interpreting into elegance the elements purveyed by antiquity, and it is noteworthy that the older he became the more he multiplied dainty garlands, showers of blossoms, and draperies with soft flowing curves; it might have been said that by redoubling French grace he was making his protest against the triumphant antiquomania of the time. He even remained faithful—which in 1791 was, to all intents and purposes, an act of defiance—to panels of Chinese lacquer.

Martin Carlin is also an excellent representative of this pleasant Louis XVI manner, which is quite at its ease with antiquity; he also readily employed old black and gold lacquer; his delicate bronzes, deeply chased, perhaps a trifle affected, were frequently tiny garlands embossed upon the mouldings of the framework, or slender, elegant balusters adorning the angles. He loved the striking contrast of gilded bronzes upon polished ebony, dark and shimmering at the same time, which had recovered its bygone favour.

We will be able to group together the cabinet-makers of severer taste, of heavier taste too, who sacrified more to sacrosanct antiquity, banished flowers—too frivolous; and knots of ribbon—too coquettish; and marquetry, whose fault is that it was never (perhaps) known to the Ancients, to

keep all their affection for stiff lines, large uniform unbroken surfaces, and by way of decoration for the ovolos, ogees, modillions, flutings and cablings of the Roman architects. Here will take his place Jean-François Leleu, who was the first to inlay with thin brass the grooves of his flutings and to put metal rings round his pilasters; Claude Charles Saunier, an elegant artist in marquetry at the outset of his career, but towards the end a great upholder of the antique *genre*, whose manner is a trifle poverty stricken; Étienne Avril, whose pieces, vaguely English in appearance, are square, geometrical, with sharp edges, and panels of plain uniform veneer, framed in very narrow mouldings of gilt bronze.

David Roentgen—he was generally called David—was a German like Riesener, but much less Frenchified than he; his principal workshop was at Neuwied, and he only had a depot at Paris, where he came at frequent intervals to pick up his orders, to procure designs and make enquiries as to the fashions. For the general shape of his pieces, which was extremely simple, as well as their inconspicuous and almost rudimentary bronzes, he would be classed with the makers of whom we have just spoken, without equalling them; but he is peerless for his marquetry. The art of making paintings with pieces of wood chosen for their various colours had, it appeared, no advance to make after the epoch of Louis XV; and yet Roentgen managed to give to his persons, emblems or flowers, shadows much more satisfy-

ing than those that were obtained by burning or engraving the wood. He used exceedingly small pieces of darker woods admirably arranged, somewhat in the manner of the small stone mosaics of Florence, which gave to his marquetry a quite novel depth and vividness. The decorations of his panels were most often composed of a subject of flowers, boldly treated and only occupying the centre of the expanse of satin-wood, on which they stood out strongly. They were accompanied by the traditional ribbons, but treated in a sufficiently personal and original way; sometimes stretched out in lozenges to make a frame; sometimes carelessly knotted, they threw their ends boldly across the background; again they fastened roses, anemones, lilies, narcissi, to a Bacchante's thyrsus, terminating in its fir cone.

As the reign of Louis XVI draws near its catastrophe the taste for the antique becomes more exacting and spreads more and more. Choiseul-Gouffier, the Ambassador to Constantinople and a traveller in the East, publishes the first volume of his *Grèce Pittoresque*. The Italianate German, Joachim Winckelmann, Président des Antiquités in Rome, Librarian at the Vatican, writes his *Histoire de l'Art chez les Anciens*, translated in 1781, his *Réflexions sur l'imitation des ouvrages grecs dans la peinture et la sculpture*, and other works, whose influence in France is almost as great as that of the collections of engravings by the two Venetians, Piranesi the father and Piranesi the son, who engrave with

indefatigable needle and burin the antiquities of Rome and Herculaneum. The Piranesis are also inventors of decorations, and the collection of "Various Ways of Ornamenting Chimney-pieces and all other parts of Buildings after Egyptian, Etruscan, Greek and Roman Architecture," is a source from which architects, decorators, cabinet-makers, goldsmiths, are to draw for fifty years. Let us note the appearance of Egypt on the stage with its sphinxes, its sarcophagi, its gods with the head of a hawk or a jackal; their employment in French decorative art dates from long before the campaign of Egypt. The Hamilton collection of Greco-Etruscan ceramics is described and reproduced in the work of Hancarville, which supplied inspiration to all the painters' studios.

These costly folios were produced only for a chosen few, archæologists, amateurs and artists. Antiquity finds also numerous popular exponents, the most celebrated of whom is the Abbé Barthélemy, with his famous *Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis*, which had an enormous success and enabled some notions as to the public and private life of the Greeks to penetrate to what is called the "great public"—the "man in the street." In all this still more attention was paid to Athens than to Rome, and accordingly Hellenic art began to be better known and vaguely distinguished from Roman art.

And now literature joins in the game. Since Montesquieu, "beauteous antiquity" had been

forgotten indeed, once so greatly admired, though for very different reasons, by the poets of the Pleiade, then by the great sixteenth century classicists. Now it was veritably to be discovered anew, especially in its artistic and, so to speak, plastic beauty. This was the aspect by which it charmed the sentimental epicureans of the end of the century. Almost everywhere storytellers and poets strove to evoke before the eyes of their readers groups at the same time sculpturesque and emotional, visibly inspired by Greco-Roman art; *Paul et Virginie* is full of *sujets de pendule*—themes for ornamental clocks—in the purest style of late Louis XVI or the Empire. But the most perfect example of this neo-Alexandrian rather than neo-Attic literature, a little sugary, a trifle mannered, after the manner of Clodion or Canova, are the antique poems of André Chénier, *le Jeune Malade*, *la Jeune Tarentine*, *l'Aveugle*. Even the great Chateaubriand himself will yet offer sacrifice many a time to this taste in *Atala* and in *les Martyres*.

The same applies to painting. Long before the Revolution broke out David had acquired his icy, rigid, grand manner; the *Oath of the Horatii*, exhibited in the Salon of 1785, four years after his *Belisarius*, marked him out as the chief of the French school. Henceforth this new Le Brun, as despotic and narrow in idea as the other, lays upon the unfortunate French painters the brutal injunction to copy "antiquity in the raw." In this same Salon of 1785, which

is a pivotal date, there was nothing else but the Devotion of Alcestis, Priam's Return with the Body of Hector, Mucias Scaevolas burning their hands, and other illustrations of Homer or Livy.

In monumental architecture the Greek triumphs, even the archaic Greek. Much is talked about the temples of Selinus and Paestum and the "Paestum Style," in other words, the heaviest of primitive Doric has its fanatical devotees. Who could believe it? It is not under Napoleon the First, but absolutely beginning from 1780 that the gloomy convent of the Capucins d'Antin was built (now the Lycée Condorcet). Private architecture was naturally less offensive in anachronism; but the Hôtel de Salm (the Palace of the Legion of Honour) was constructed by Rousseau in a style that was already different, for example, from that of Bagatelle; it was almost the Empire Style. And as much might be said for the Hôtel d'Osmont, in the Rue Basse du Rempart, of the Hôtel de Soubise, in the Rue de l'Arcade, and other works of Cellerier, Brongniart or Chalgrin.

Internal decoration was changing at the same time. The boudoir of Marie-Antoinette at Fontainebleau already has the little octagonal panels, with *camaïeux*, the Greek palm leaf ornaments, the slender *rinceaux* out of which the characteristics of the Directoire Style are fashioned. The little mansion of pretty Mlle. d'Hervieux in the Rue Chantèreine, which

Brongniart had built at the beginning of the reign, then passed for the last word of the most refined luxury; the "belle impure" has it newly decorated from top to bottom in the Roman Style. And the sleeping chamber of the Comte d'Artois represents "the tent of the God Mars," as if Percier and Fontaine had already arrived

Many of the pieces belonging to the last years of the reign depart from the pure Louis XVI type. On the one hand, and this is especially true of the most luxurious pieces, tables or commodes of state meant for the royal apartments, a striking resemblance can be found to the decorative spaciousness of the Louis XIV Style. That is quite natural; the principle (borrowed from decorative *motifs* in ancient architecture, but without copying the general Greek or Roman forms) is in the main the same a century earlier. When a cabinet-maker, round about 1785, fears to "sacrifice to the Graces" overmuch, and proposes to make pieces that shall be at the same time rich and severe and majestic, in a word, royal, he inevitably meets his predecessors of the end of the seventeenth century. There are at Fontainebleau and at Versailles certain clock-stands of gilt wood, certain console tables that, if one did not know their true history, one might fancy were made for the Roi-Soleil, although they were in reality made for Louis XVI. Besides, at this period, the Louis XIV Style was frankly copied; the cabinet-makers Montigny, Levasseur, Séverin, had for their

special line the copying or imitation of the sumptuous pieces of André-Charles Boulle in inlay of ebony, shell, and metals.

From these new characteristics we will be able to distinguish another family of cabinet-makers, as different from Riesener and Carlin as Leleu, Saunier or Avril; their chief will incontestably be Guillaume Beneman, who is represented in the Louvre, at Fontainebleau, and in the Wallace Collection, by commodes or under cupboards of a truly monumental kind. They are made of mahogany decorated with bronzes, and not in marquetry, but they make one think of the best works of Boulle by the grandeur of their style. The ornamental part of their façade is nearly always a great elliptical arch, shaped like a basket handle, which takes up the whole width and enframes a trophy of arms, a medallion in biscuit ware flanked by *rinceaux*; the corner uprights are Corinthian pilasters, or sheaves of lances, and the feet toupie-shaped or lions' paws. The celebrated jewel cupboard of Marie Antoinette, by Schwerdfeger, with its polychrome ornamentation, somewhat overdone, and its legs terminating somewhat meanly, is decidedly inferior both to the maker's reputation and to the work of Beneman.

Other pieces belonging to this period, instead of recalling the style of Louis XIV, herald that of the Revolution and the Empire; one may even say that they belong to it already. Certain tables have legs in the form of termini whose

top part is a sphinx's head; others are carried by those bizarre legs, copied from certain Pompeiian tripods, known as "*pieds de biche* surmounted by caryatides," and showing plainly to what extent this generation lacked any critical sense in its admiration for antiquity. Equally displeasing to the reason as to the eye, they are compounded of two parts treated on a totally different scale; a deer's leg, the haunch ornamented with a human head surrounded with *rinceaux*, is cut clean across, and this cross-section supports a little seated sphinx, which itself carries on its head and its uplifted wings the frame of the table.

The collections of the designers of furniture are full of these purely antique models from before 1789; those of Lalonde, for instance, of Dugourc, of Aubert. . . . Besides the Roman tripods, we see in them seats with roll backs and legs curving outwards like those of a *cathedra*, and X-shaped stools that are precisely curule chairs. The cabinet-maker in whom the work of these innovators is summed up is Adam Weisweiler, who makes great use, by way of supports, of elegant metal caryatides, and makes *athéniennes** "in the Herculanean Style," while at the same time admitting strange compromises, as in this ebony commode in which he has combined a pediment turned upside down, acroteria, and palm leaf ornaments come down in direct line from a Grecian tomb, with wonderful panels of old Japanese black and gold lacquer.

To sum up, the Empire Style was formed

under Louis XVI, as the Louis XVI Style was formed under Louis XV, and the Louis XV Style under Louis XIV and the Regency; the nomenclature of our styles invariably lags behind their chronology.

The Revolution then did not, even in Paris, bring a rapid change in the fashion of our ancestors' furnishing, It could not be, as the Goncourt brothers accused it of being, the cause of a movement that had begun several years earlier; but it helped that movement and hastened it in every way, because it was going precisely in the direction that was necessary to satisfy the tastes of the Revolutionary generation, which enthusiastically admired the ancient republics, and which affected a severe austerity in the manner of Lycurgus and Cato.

From the time of the Constituent Assembly, new ideas sweep over decoration and furniture as over every department of art. Everyone makes Greek pieces, more and more Greek; but at the same time pieces that are still altogether Louis XVI are loaded with revolutionary emblems (Figs. 4 and 24). A certain "Sieur Boucher, a merchant upholsterer, well known," according to his own modest statement, "for the purity of his taste in matters of furnishing," advertises in 1790, in the *Journal de la Mode et du Gout, ou Amusements du Salon et de la Toilette*, that he has just "enriched his emporium with various articles in harmony with the circumstances of the

day." These are, for example, "*patriotic beds* with the symbols of liberty; in place of plumes there are bonnets on the end of sheaves of lances, which form the bed posts; they represent the triumphal arch erected on the Champ de Mars on the day of the Federation." Everywhere a disorded taste for allegories runs wild: it is nothing but fasces (strength as the result of union); Phrygian caps (Liberty recovered); spirit levels (equality); pikes (the freedom of man); oaken boughs (social virtues); triangles with an eye in the middle (reason); clasped hands (fraternity); tables of the law, etc., without counting the "Captures of the Bastille" carved on so many cupboards (Fig. 4).

But people tire quickly enough of these emblems. Three years go by (1792-1795) during which the French industry, which lately turned out luxurious furniture for the whole of Europe (in 1789 it exported to the value of four million livres), is reduced by reason of the social agony, the foreign war, and the insurrection in the west, to an almost complete standstill. This is the moment when the goldsmith Odiot shuts his shop and fastens up on the door the following notice: "Placed in the safe keeping of the public, as the head of this house is in the army fighting against the enemies of his country." The few pieces now turned out by the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, and all those that will hereafter be turned out—whilst the provincial workshops go on making Louis XVI without wavering—

are made in the antique style. Here is the description of an "antique arm-chair" at this precise moment: "the wood painted in grey white and varnished; the feet of solid brass, highly polished; the back roll-shaped; the seat covered in silk with an arabesque design on a background of *bleu d'oeil* with a *rosace* in the centre on an Etruscan brown ground, and red ornaments." What is an *Etruscan chair*? Here you are: "a chair in mahogany, the back made of three trumpets and a lyre bound together; the cushion of brown silk stuff with a green *rosace* in the centre with yellow ornaments; antique feet of solid brass, highly polished." These feet, these "genuine antique feet" are simply toupie-shaped, broad and splayed out. As for the "Etruscan brown" (a hideous chocolate brown, vulgar and dull), it is a colour "in a new taste," with which everyone is at present much concerned in the upholsterers' world: "the happy blending"—it is still the *Journal de la Mode et du Gout* speaking—"the happy blending of several colours upon a very deep brown, which forms what is called the Etruscan Style, sets off materials in a way that we had never had any idea of till now." How far we are, with these green and yellow *rosaces* on an Etruscan brown ground, from those harmonies discreet and gay at the same time, that smart and elegant mixture of fresh bright hues the tapestry-weavers and the upholsterers of yore knew the secret of composing!

So now it is that pieces no longer decorated

with antique ornaments, but copied exactly from those that the excavations of Pompeii have brought to light, or that have been disclosed to us from ancient vases and bas-reliefs, are sanctioned by fashion ; still better, this is the official style of the Republic, and to adopt it is to display civic virtue, just like giving up wearing breeches and powder, like wearing the tricolour cockade, like calling your son Astyanax-Scaevola, as the painter Jean Bosio actually did. David did more than anyone else to impose this new style ; he had power to do it, being the important person he was under the Terror. The antique pieces in his studio, which he has brought into nearly all his historical pictures, were so celebrated that they deserve a brief mention. They had been made, in 1789 or 1790, by old Georges Jacob, the head of the dynasty, from designs by David himself and by his pupil Moreau. They were mahogany chairs, a kind of large arm-chair with an all mahogany back, very singular in appearance, round as a tower and ornamented with bronzes, a curule chair whose Xes ended in lions' heads and lions' paws ; and that day-bed of the purest lines, on which the painter stretched out the charming person of Madame Récamier. These chairs were furnished with cushions and draperies in red woollen stuff with palm designs in black : David had naively reproduced in them the colours of Greek vases of red earthenware with black figures, from which, when designing them, he had taken his inspiration.

It was David too who had the order for the furniture for the Convention given to Georges Jacob and two young architects and designers, then quite unknown and very poor, already partners for life, and for whom this affair was the beginning of fortune: Pierre Fontaine and Charles Percier. Soon after the production of this furniture Georges Jacob retired from business, leaving the management of the huge workshop in the Rue Meslay, or Meslée, to his sons, the third one of whom, François Honoré, was destined, under the name of Jacob Desmalter, to eclipse the others and become the king of cabinet-makers in the Imperial epoch.

The Guilds, masterships, wardenships were all, as is well known, suppressed by the Revolution. From the social point of view this was undoubtedly a point of progress; from the technical point of view also, perhaps, in certain industries that heretofore had been matters of routine; but certainly not from the artistic point of view. To suppress all this strict body of rules and regulations governing the ancient trade corporations was to suppress their traditions, the careful, thorough training of the craftsmen, and certain rules of professional honour. Marat himself had expressed fears in the *Ami du Peuple*: "With this doing away of all novitiate, the workers no longer take any trouble about solidity and finish, work is rushed, dashed off. . . . I do not know whether I am mistaken or not, but I should not be surprised if in twenty years time it will be

impossible to find a single workman in Paris who knows how to make a hat or a pair shoes." Marat's fears were excessive with regard to hats and shoes; but it is certain that artistic industries such as furniture-making started to decline, beginning with this reform, except for the magnificent furniture *de luxe* made under the Empire—and in any case made by workmen who had been trained and fashioned in the ancient corporations.

Another reason for this decadence is the change in the *clientèle* of cabinet-makers and joiners. As soon as the Terror was over the various industries returned to life, orders flowed into the re-opened workshops, and if it is true that the "Directoire Style" either scarcely exists at all or actually existed earlier than the government of the Directors and was destined to outlive it, it is also most true that the greater part of the pieces that are grouped under this description were made after 1795, because during the preceding years hardly any had been made at all. But the Directoire is a *plutocracy*, and as nearly all the old fortunes had been swept away, this plutocracy is a regime of *nouveaux riches*. Some are the "nantis," the "corrupted" of the political world, admirers and imitators of Barras; others have speculated in army supplies; the most have grown rich by buying the goods of the nation for a song; all are parvenus without taste, without traditions, who mean to enjoy as rapidly as possible a fortune that may be fragile, and make the

utmost possible display of it. But they do not know the art of spending royally, like a grand seigneur or fermier général of the old time, who set a high value upon fine things; they bargain and are stingy in giving their orders; for them work must be done quickly and cheap, with economy both in material and workmanship. Hence the general meanness of furniture during the last years of the century. They might, those nouveaux riches, have acquired, and could still acquire for a sheaf of *assignats*, the masterpieces of Riesener and Oëben, but they prefer to surround themselves with bran new pieces, made expressly for them, for which we should be wrong to blame them. It is only just to say it: these "articles of furniture and objects of taste" —that is the name La Mésangère, the director of the *Journal des Modes et des Dames*, gives, in his famous collection of models, to the furniture in fashion at the time—were much sought after abroad, and began once more to be exported in spite of the wars waged by the Republic against so many coalitions.

The imitation of the antique was more than ever the supreme law; we know the Merveilleuses all had the ambition to be clothed—or unclothed —like Sappho, and it was about this time that Madame Vigée-Lebrun gave the memorable dinner described in her *Souvenirs*, at which the guests were crowned with roses, draped in the antique fashion, reclining on couches on their elbows, and ate "Spartan black broth," drinking

out of "Etruscan" goblets and singing, to the accompaniment of a lyre, hymns to Bacchus punctuated with cries of "Evoe!"

The most celebrated interior of the last years of the Republic was the one that Madame Recamier had had decorated and furnished by the fashionable upholsterer Berthaud, under the guidance of Percier, Fontaine and Bellangé. The sleeping chamber was all in mahogany, from the pilasters on the walls, the door cases, the doors, down to the smallest article of furniture; all this severe red-brown was relieved by some inlay of citron wood and silver fillets; for hangings red velvet, and on the chairs Beauvais tapestry with flowers and fruits of brilliant colours on a deep brown ground—the famous Etruscan fashion! Furthermore, architraves of polished violet granite, architectural *motifs* in oriental alabaster; curtains of chamois, violet and black, draped in the most complicated fashion. Such were the colours in vogue.

There was much talk too of the little mansion General Buonaparte had bought, on his return from the campaign in Italy, from Talma. It was in the Rue Chantereine, which then became the Rue de la Victoire. The furniture, as befitted the conqueror of Arcola and Rivoli, was nothing but symbols of war and victory; for seats, arm-chairs of ebony inlaid with silver, and stools that were drums, with their cords stretched round a barrel of yellow hide; a mahogany commode with lions' heads; a bed "painted

antique bronze"; a bureau, the bronze ornaments on which were Roman glaives.

After the Egyptian campaign, in which a kind of archæological staff duplicated the military staff of the hero, there could not fail to come a fit of Egyptomania. It did come, and it was then that Vivant-Denon, one of the savants that had followed the expedition, both archæologist and architect at the same time,[1] had a bedroom fitted up by Jacob Desmalter to his own designs, which aimed at being of the purest Pharaonic style. The bed, of mahogany inlaid with silver, had three faces ornamented with bas-reliefs of rows of kneeling figures; its head was decorated with a carved Isis, and the legs with the Uræus symbol. Numerous Egyptian pieces will presently figure in the collection of designs by Percier and Fontaine.

All this was in arguable taste; but what is to be said of so much other allegorical furniture that passed at this time for the latest word in art? For a "warrior" who seeks recreation and relaxation between two campaigns, from the noble works of Bellona, here is a bedroom that is a soldier's tent, whose hangings are held up by pikes; everywhere are hung trophies of weapons, glaives and shields; the posts of the couch, which is in the shape of a camp bed, are surmounted by the helmets of Greek hoplites.

A "disciple of Actæon" (for this read "a great hunter") has his chamber transformed into a temple of Diana. The ceiling has two sloped

[1] The Vendôme Column is his work.

sides, like the roof of a Greek temple; the bed is under a canopy with a pediment, upheld on four slender columns. For ornaments, a bust of Diana flanked by two stags' heads at the peak of the pediment; dogs, bows, arrows, etc. Behind the bed, on the back wall, a bas-relief, Diana and Endymion. In the foreground two termini representing Silence and Night, one with a finger on his lips and holding a cornucopia full of poppies, the other bearing a torch. The roof "appears to be upborne on open pillars, which allow the beholder to perceive," in painting, "the verdure of the trees among which it is supposed this little temple has been erected." And this too is still Percier and Fontaine.

After these extravagances, half archæological half symbolic, the Empire Style, properly so called, will be, in spite of its persistent pedantry, a real return to reason and simplicity.

On the 18th Brumaire, in the year VIII, France gives herself to her hero. It is not yet the Empire, but, as far as the domain of art goes, the reign of Napoleon begins. The First Consul dreams at once of peace, offers peace to England, speaks of nothing but the works of peace. "We must lay aside our jack-boots," he says, "and think of commerce, encourage the arts, give prosperity to our country." One of his first cares is to re-establish French luxury and refinement in its glorious traditions, to remake a court little by little. He wishes to have palaces,

if not built for him, at least decorated and furnished for him. He begins by employing Percier and Fontaine, who are presented to him by David, to restore and furnish Malmaison, which Joséphine has bought in 1798. Henceforward Napoleon will never wish to have any other architect or decorator for his great official fêtes but the two inseparable friends; the doing up of Saint Cloud will come after Malmaison, then the Tuileries, the Louvre, etc. We may say that the *coup d'état* of Brumaire, and all that followed from it, has been an inexpressible boon for our artistic industries. It is not that Napoleon had any passion for art, nor that he had a great deal of taste; the setting in which his devouring activity moved, when he was not on campaign, was a matter of profound indifference to him—he did not even see it. But it was part of his scheme of policy to want to have about him a solid and grandiose luxury, fitted to give a lofty impression of his power; he was imperious, always in a hurry, abounding in colossal projects quickly cast aside; but he opened his coffers wide, and when he had once given an artist his confidence he never withdrew it without good reason. It must be admitted, also, that men like David, Percier, and Fontaine were wonderfully made to fit in with him.

Of the two latter it may be said that they were the creators of the official Empire Style. Was it for the good of French decorative art or the reverse? The answer is not in doubt. The de-

fects of Empire art, coldness, aridness, continual anachronisms, are not to be imputed to them. It would have had those faults without them (for it had them already) even if they had not been the whole-hearted admirers of the Ancients which they always showed themselves. On the other hand, they were architects in their souls, and their architectural qualities they gave to all their projects of decoration and furnishing; they had a lofty imagination, grandeur and simplicity of taste, they understood their epoch and the Napoleonic regime to a hair; their conception may displease us, or chill us, but we cannot deny that it was admirably appropriate to its destined use. Can any praise be greater?

Can there be conceived for this epoch, when national pride straightened every frame, when warlike enthusiasm hovered in the air and swelled every bosom, when glory inflamed every youthful brain, when every will was stiff and proud, when military despotism was imposed upon the nation by virtue of its conquests, can there be conceived other furniture or another style of decoration than those on which, upon broad austere surfaces, marked out by straight lines and sharp edges, there were hung swords and triumphing palms were displayed, and golden Victories postured with widespread wings? It is because they profoundly felt this fitness and harmony that Percier and Fontaine were great artists.

This style, so highly appropriate to Imperial France, was nevertheless, in spite of the slow

elaboration we have described, not in the pure national tradition; it was not sprung spontaneously from our own soil and under our own skies; it had something abstract and arbitrary, something imposed on our taste as the regime itself was imposed on the nation. In short, there have been styles that are far more truly French. There is a contradiction here, someone will say. It is in appearance only. The truth is that France was then at a quite exceptional moment in her long existence. The fever of conquest that had come after the revolutionary fever had broken the equilibrium of her temperament; she was beside herself at this moment when her history seems to be pure legend. The Empire Style was very exactly befitting for France as she was from 1800 to 1815, but to that France only, not the eternal France. When it found favour once more with artists and public, between 1890 and 1895, it was, let us confess it, a quite artificial movement.

What clearly shows that this style is something international—in any case the imitation of antiquity from which it proceeded was by no means specially French; think of Canova, Thorwaldsen, Angelica Kaufmann, and others—is the enthusiasm with which it was adopted at once by all nations, whether they were subjected to Napoleon's domination or not. Never perhaps had French decorative art such expansive force. Jacob Desmalter (almost always following the models of Percier and Fontaine) furnished not

only Malmaison, Compiègne, Saint Cloud, Fontainebleau, the Elysée, without reckoning so many private mansions in Paris, but also the Escurial, Aranjuez, Windsor Castle, and countless palaces and mansions in Antwerp, Mayence, Potsdam, and even as far as Petrogad.

But when this species of exaltation subsided in France, and the Empire was succeeded by the Restoration, that royalty devoid of glory, that peaceful, bourgeois, somewhat flat and dull period of our history, the decadence was immediate and profound; the Empire Style was preserved in a haphazard fashion, for want of knowing what to put in its place, but at the same time its character was changed in the direction of heaviness and flabbiness; it degenerated very speedily, because there was no longer harmony between it and the manners of the time.

SECOND PART
THE LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

CHAPTER ONE: CHARACTERISTICS AND TECHNIQUE OF THE LOUIS XVI STYLE

THE least instructed eye can tell at the first glance a Louis XVI piece from a Louis XV; and yet there is no essential or fundamental difference such as there is between the style of Louis XV and that of Louis XIV. It is because manners and customs are at bottom the same after 1760 as before that date, and will remain the same until 1789; now, only a transformation in manners and customs can bring about a radical change in furniture fashions. We have determined the approximate date when the new style replaced the old; at this date Louis XV is still on the throne, and in spite of his age his ways have not altered. Madame du Barry succeeds Madame de Pompadour, and it is merely one degree more of abasement. It is for this Lange woman, become Comtesse du Barry, that the pavilion of Louveciennes was built and furnished; that vanished marvel which, without any doubt, was the most exquisite masterpiece of the Louis XVI Style. The aristocracy and the wealthy bourgeoisie are always the same in the round, equally eager for the life of society and for pleasure, equally denuded of moral sense; but if they take good care not to practise virtue,

just as Diderot and Rousseau did, they have fallen to adoring it with emotion in other people.

That senile blasé society had its living allegory in old Marquise du Deffand; by dint of adventures, satirical conversations, wit spent with heedless prodigality, by dint of scepticism, and of having been through everything, she had fallen into a state of profound ennui, which was a genuine malady and one that she believed to be incurable; and lo! at seventy years or near it, she was seized with a passion, one of those passions that take complete possession of a soul, an absurd and touching passion for Horace Walpole, whom, as she was blind, she had never seen. . . . Like her, eighteenth century society had its sentimental fit, rather late in life. The virtue, the sensibility (they are the same things in the minds of the people of this epoch), the simplicity of the ancient days and "natural" men are all the fashion, but merely a fashion. Women of quality continue to go every night to the Opera or the new Opéra Comique, and in what extravagant array! but the pieces they listen to are called *le Bon Fils*, *le Bon Seigneur*, *l'Amour Paternal*, or *la Suivante reconnaissante*, and if they are young mothers, as they have read *Émile*, they have their babies brought to them during the interval and suckle them in their box in such a way as to be in full view while doing so. Philanthropy is a novelty which becomes the rage, and on every chiffonier the *Mercure de France* meets with the *Annales*

de la Bienfaisance and the *Étrennes de la Vertu*, newspapers founded to advertise the virtuous doings of fashionable folk. The financier on his way, accompanied by some "modern Terpsichore," to a smart party in the little house in the suburbs, was happy to stop his coach on the way to give alms, shedding gentle tears the while, to some poor but respectable aged man caught sight of on the wayside. Everyone delights to exclaim, "Simplicity! Virtue! what charms ye hold for feeling mortals!" but luxury becomes more and more unbridled. Palates are weary of too learned gravies and over-seasoned bisques, and it is a delicious pleasure to pay a visit to a farm and dip a slice of home-made bread in a pitcher of hot milk; but they will be back for supper again next day. The typical men of this generation are Diderot, who alternates so naively his blackguardism and his tearful exhortations to virtue, and Greuze, who so much delights to slip spicy innuendos into his studies of girls as into his large melodramatic pictures.

Such is the double character of Society under Louis XVI; at bottom epicurean and worldly, just as in the first half of the century, it nevertheless loves simplicity, virtue and reason. Let us repeat that it returns to a taste for Greco-Roman antiquity, and there you have the principal elements of the style. The task of architects, designers, cabinet-makers and joiners, metal casters and engravers, up to the end of the old regime, is to be to harmonise the taste for snug

comfort, intimacy, attaching grace, the most exquisite refinement, which marked the highest and the middle classes in French society of the time, with the noble and simple beauty of antiquity. Refined simplicity, a sober elegance, neatness and precision, softened by abundant grace; such is the ideal, Antiquity will then be interpreted and made French as in the noble days of the Renaissance, and when archælogy is in conflict with what is comfortable and pleasing, so much the worse for archæology; it must needs give way.

In fine, in spite of the progress in the science of antiquity, in spite of exhumed Pompeii, what was best known in ancient art about 1760 was Roman architecture. Accordingly it is Roman architecture that gives the tone to the new style. Furniture falls again under the yoke of architecture, which it had shaken off, for the first time and for a little while during the reign of the grotto.

"There are," said Delacroix, "certain lines that are monsters: the straight line, the regular serpentine, above all two parallel lines." These monsters are henceforth and for a long time to rule in furniture. Roman architecture, in fact, is primarily a family of lines; the straight line and the semi-circular arch, the horizontal parallels of cornices, the vertical parallels of pilasters and their flutings; right angles too; that is to say, the negation of all sinuous lines like those of nature—if indeed there be any lines in nature—

the sweet living lines that the Louis XV Style had placed everywhere for the delight of our eyes. Henceforth commodes no longer fear to look like "a box perched up on four laths," except those that link their façade with the wall against which they stand by two little quarter-cylindrical cupboards, or by shelves shaped to quarter circles full or re-entrant; except again those that will retain supports slightly tending to *pied de biche* shape under their chamfered angles. This kind continued to be made up till towards the end of the style.

Quantities of arches, semi-circular or elliptical, on top of panels of woodwork (Fig. 2), mirrors, chair backs (Figs. 48, 50, 76), numbers of ellipses also; frames of panels (Fig. 2) upon walls, borders for mirrors and pictures, medallion-shaped chair backs (Figs. 41, etc.), tables large and small, console tables (Figs. 31, 32), folding tables, commodes, even armoires (Fig. 5) are very frequently semi-circular in ground plan. In short, the impersonal traced with ruler and square and compass constantly takes the place of freehand designs, the fancy of the crayon and the graving-tool. All this geometry has in it something abstract, something purely rational, calculated to please mathematical minds, like that of d'Alembert, for instance, or Condillac's; but it would be very arid if it was not almost always mitigated by the more living grace of the ornaments. Many Louis XVI pieces follow this principle of the straight line to the very end, and do not comprise a single curve

(Figs. 20, 26, etc.). The excess of abstraction and dryness cannot then be denied. On the other hand, this uncompromising rigidness, these joins that are all made at right angles, satisfy the reason by defining with complete and perfect distinctness every part of the piece, by respecting to the utmost the grain of the wood, and by giving the joints the maximum of solidity and strength. No doubt, but how cold it all is!

Ancient architecture brought back also absolute symmetry in form and in ornament; never more do designers offend, except for insignificant details of decoration (flowers, ribbons, etc.), against the venerable rule of the identity of the corresponding parts to the right and to the left of a centre line.

Another principle, architectural in its origin; the definition of a surface, devoid of ornament, by a border or several parallel borders taking the place of ornamentation. Numbers of pieces have no other decoration (Figs. 6, 17, 21); large bare surfaces are in high favour; "the sublime and virtuous nudity of the Greeks," as David said, exists for mahogany and stone as well as for the human body; and when that mahogany is of a very handsome quality, veined, figured, with a warm patina from age, nothing more by way of ornamentation need be desired. These framings are generally mouldings in gilt bronze, or covered with brass; sometimes, especially at the latter end of the epoch, they are simple bands of brass embedded in the wood (Fig. 35). When the

piece contains no brass, they are thin strips of wood, the colour of which stands out against that of the background.

As for the shape of the panels thus defined, they are squares, rectangles, arches accompanied by corner pieces of the same border or a triangular *rosace* of acanthus leaf, ellipses, circles. The rectangular panels are often sloped off at the angles, either rounded off or squared off, and this slope is adorned with a small round *rosace*. One very favourite panel also, on commodes and escritoires with flaps (those made by Riesener particularly), is a trapezium, the oblique sides of which are concave.

The form of moulding is changed. There is now less than on Louis XV pieces; it is flatter, more austere, more uniform also; in general it obeys the laws of the ancient kinds; ogee, doucine, scotia, cavetto, apophysis, all automatically combined, without any fanciful effects, with fillets and baguets.

These elements are poor enough; they do not offer any very varied resources to artists. How is it then that so many Louis XVI pieces give so full an impression of grace or beauty? First of all by their proportions, which are nearly always exquisitely right, by the faultless equilibrium of balanced masses, the harmonious division of surfaces, the importance of the framing calculated with exactitude according to that of the parts enclosed by the frame. In these matters tact has perhaps never been so sure as

in the epoch of Louis XVI. And then the ornamentation came with the same sureness of taste to add to a somewhat bare whole just what richness was needed within the limits of deliberate sobriety.

The essential difference between the ornamentation of pieces belonging to the Louis XV period and that of Louis XVI pieces is that the latter most frequently proceeds by way of repetition of similar elements arranged in lines or combined in a running *motif*. This also is a legacy from ancient architecture. Such a decoration can be made, so to speak, by the yard, which facilitates to a distressing degree cheap-jack imitation, even machine made imitation of Louis XVI pieces.

Another characteristic common to the majority of the ornaments of the Louis XVI Style is the small scale on which they are treated by carvers, and especially by the artists in bronze. It appears that they never find their motives sufficiently finished and delicate, sufficiently embellished with little details that serve to display the cunning of their engraving tool. A furniture bronze is treated like a piece of goldsmith's work, and a piece of goldsmith's work like a gem. This fault, for it is a fault—let us call it affectation—comes without a doubt, as has been well observed, from the passion both men and women of the time had for small articles, the toys, "brimborions" as they were called, such as were bought at the famous shop, the *Petit Dunkerque*; little fancy

boxes of gold, enamelled or chased (with the inscription *Don d' Amitié*—"friendship's gift"), little boxes of pale tortoise shell, with gold inlay or piqué work, handles of walking canes in painted china, coat buttons with miniatures, incense boxes of mother-of-pearl pierced and engraved. . . . These thousand and one knick-knacks, whose tiny ornamentation, marvellous in its finish, has something Japanese about it, had accustomed the eye to a singularly reduced scale of decoration; so much so that the superb amplitude of the Louis XIV and Louis XV ornaments passed for coarseness. Let us be quite frank; for less sophisticated eyes a bronze by the great Gouthière cuts a sorry figure beside a bronze by Caffieri.

The running ornaments most generally used are *denticules*,[1] *godrons*,[2] *entrelacs*,[3] formed of two interlacing ribbons which very often enclose *rosaces* in their bows; *oves*,[4] a succession of egg-shaped projections, *rais de coeur*, lines of small *feuilles d'eau*, not indented, or *feuilles d'acanthe*; fret decoration on plain friezes; *rinceaux*,[5] *tores* (or *boudins*) of bay or oak leaves[6]; *rubans enroulés*[7] around baguets; *rangs de*

[1] Fig. 5.

[2] See the *chapeau* top of the arm-chair in Fig. 38.

[3] Framing of the cupboard doors in Fig. 4; the drawer of the escritoire (Fig. 16), etc.

[4] Cornice of the cupboard (Fig. 4).

[5] Top of the cupboard (Fig. 4).

[6] Fixed central part of the same cupboard (Fig. 4).

[7] The same (Fig. 4) on the lower part of the cornice; framing on the drawers of the commode (Fig. 24),

piastres[1] that ought rather to be called *rangs de sapèques*, for more than anything else they resemble those coins current in the Far East, pierced in the middle and strung on a rush tie; *joncs* or reeds fastened by an intertwined ribbon; *côtes* bound by acanthus leaves; *chaplets* of olives and beads alternating; *rangs de perles*[2]; and lastly the ornament far the most frequently employed of all, because it is made quickly and easily with a gouge; rows of short *cannelures*[3] or flutings covering friezes, traverses and string courses.

Among the other ornamental *motifs*, the following are the principal that were borrowed from ancient architecture. First and foremost the *column*, detached, or more frequently engaged, at the angles of commodes, escritoires, and chiffoniers.[4] The base is turned, the shaft generally fluted. It is well known how great use this style made of *cannelures*[5] which were called rather *canaux*. Sometimes they were plain, sometimes *rudenté*, that is to say, each one filled to a certain distance from the base with a baguet; if the filling is plain it is given the name of *chandelle*,[6] and if it ends in a carved *motif* like a half opened bud or a head of corn, it is known as *asperge*.[7] Very much used are imitation flutings of marquetry with burnt shading,[8]

[1] Back of the arm-chair (Fig. 38); arm consoles (Figs. 40 and 47)
[2] See the cupboard, Fig. 7.
[3] Figs. 20, 26, 28, etc.
[4] Figs. 14, 25.
[5] Figs. 6, 14, 25, etc.
[6] Figs. 48, 50, etc.
[7] Figs. 29, 47.
[8] Fig. 15.

pilastres * [1] are fluted in a similar way; the *balustres* * that serve as supports for the arms of chairs are frequently, as also are the legs of chairs,[2] given a spiral instead of a vertical fluting. The capitals of columns and pilasters are Ionic or Corinthian; the Ionic capital often carries a garland hanging from the centre of the volutes. Towards the end of the Louis XVI period the capital is replaced by a circular moulding covered with brass.[3] For the column may be substituted the caryatid; in the eighteenth century, this name was given not merely to a human figure or a terminus, but any animal, fabulous or otherwise (a seated female sphinx, for example), any bust or torso acting as a support.

The *console* is employed, such as it is, with two volutes as its extremities, or more or lesss modified, whether as the support of a console table[4] or as a *chute* *; it is often ornamented with a garland. It was also as *chutes*, or *rinceaux* * at the base of the *tabliers* * of commodes that cabinet-makers used triglyphs,[5] ornaments borrowed from the Doric frieze, and composed of two grooves and two half-grooves hollowed or cut through in a bronze plate, under which there hung the *gouttes*, a kind of small pyramid suspended by the apex.

[1] Fig. 21.
[2] Fig. 40
[3] Figs. 14, 17, etc,
[4] Fig. 33.
[5] See the *chutes* of the commode in Fig. 28, etc.

It would be too long to describe all these antique ornaments; let us merely call attention, in the animal kingdom, to the Roman eagles,[1] the dolphins, the heads of lions,[2] rams, goats, the *bucranes*,* or bull's skulls, the *pieds de biche* (an exact reproduction of the animal's leg, and no longer, as under Louis XVI, a far-off interpretation); then the whole series of mythological monsters, sphinxes, male and female, griffons, chimæras, sirens; then in the vegetable world, garlands and *chutes de guirlandes*[3] of every kind, wreaths of ivy, bay, flowers; *rinceaux*[4] of foliage, especially of acanthus leaf,[5] which is so supple in adapting itself to every method of use, alone or combined in "grotesques" with the human face or animals' masks, and which this period has succeeded in making so elegant; the pine cone,[6] the pomegranate, the Bacchante's thyrsus, the caduceus. . . . Lastly, objects made by man: bows, quivers,[7] antique urns[8] (which curio dealers disrespectfully call soup tureens!), garlanded, draped, set up on top of lambrequins; fire balls, perfume burners, tripods, etc.

Certain things were borrowed also from the Renaissance, such as the vertical string courses of

[1] Top of the cupboard in Fig. 4.
[2] Arm of the chair in Fig. 38.
[3] Commode (Fig. 24), consoles in Figs. 31 and 33.
[4] Woodwork in Figs. 1 and 2, etc.
[5] Console (Fig. 33); bergères (Figs. 51 and 52, etc.).
[6] Fig. 76.
[7] Fig. 2.
[8] Figs. 3, 7, 9, etc.

arabesques, imitated from those of Giovanni of Udine in the Loggias of the Vatican, and the grotesque masks or *mascarons*, half human half vegetable. Finally, many of the *motifs* are quite modern, and common to the Louis XV and Louis XVI styles; baskets of flowers, of fruits, branches of laurel, or oak, or ivy, roses, lilies, scattered, crossed, or hung from ribbons; the knots of ribbons[1] so much used and abused by this epoch; little profile medallions and all the symbols; of war, music, the sciences, agriculture, the pastoral life, fishing, commerce; lovers' trophies hung from bows of ribbon; draperies of fringed or tasselled stuff forming a frieze or a *chute*.[2]

Working cabinet-makers, in the time of Louis XV, had carried the perfection of their technique so far that there remained but little of any importance to be discovered in this domain. Certain of their technical secrets are even lost, like that of the Martin lacquer.

The same kinds of wood are used, native woods and foreign; above all mahogany, which comes in greater quantities from the Antilles, enjoys extraordinary favour. Marie Antoinette's boudoir at Fontainebleau is completely parqueted with it. What is something new, chairs are made of it; it is used for the most part in large surfaces of plain veneer. Ebony, rather given up as too austere,

[1] Figs, 37, 43, etc.

[2] Fig. 24.

under Louis XV, now reappears. The method of working the wood does not alter, but the return to straight lines makes it possible to use much more turning, for the legs of furniture, for balusters, and pillars; and the guild of wood turners becomes one with that of the joiners.

The preceding epoch had seen the appearance of porcelain plaques embedded in the panels of very elaborate and costly pieces; this trick, which is assuredly an error in logic and in taste, becomes general in small escritoires for ladies, round breakfast tables, jardinières, and other very refined pieces, in proportion as the Sèvres china becomes more plentiful and more perfect. The little bas-reliefs of Wedgwood in biscuit ware on a blue ground begin to show themselves beside the flowerets of Sèvres.

Towards the end of the reign, the need of finding something novel, though there should be nothing new left under the sun, led cabinet-makers to risk innovations that were more or less happy. For example, the inlaying of brass in wood in the shape of bands and little plaques; mouldings covered with brass, flutings adorned with brass,[1] plaques of gilded bronze with parallel horizontal stripes above the legs of pieces of furniture.[2] Tables, round tripod tables (called *athéniennes*), console tables, are made, except the top, which is porphyry or onyx, all of metal, gilded bronze, bronze with antique green patina,

[1] Figs. 14, 21, etc. [2] Fig. 14.

wrought and gilded iron, steel inlaid with silver; Weisweiler attempts ornaments of pierced brass on a ground of polished steel. At the same time, others had the strange notion of painting designs in oils on the background of natural wood, a decoration that had no permanence when it was left bare, and that was very ugly when it was covered with glass. Still others would cover a piece with lozenges of mother-of-pearl. . . . All these eccentric attempts are clear symptoms of decadence.

CHAPTER II: PANELLED FURNITURE AND TABLES

THE Louis XVI Style, as we have said, only came to its full development in Paris and in the largest cities in the kingdom. In the depths of the provinces, where the fashions hardly changed at all, and especially did not change quickly, it only took its place late and in part in the habits of the furniture makers. They only, it appears, abandoned the goodly Louis XV shapes, with which they had achieved such remarkable results, after having remained obstinately faithful to them as long as they could. Very often the only concession they made to the new fashion was to add the "antique" *motifs* to the repertoire of the ornaments they employed.

That is especially remarkable with regard to the armoires and buffets of the provinces; one might be tempted to catalogue them nearly all as "transition" pieces, if one did not know that the most salient Louis XV characteristics were maintained until the beginning of the nineteenth century. As, on the other hand, the Paris workshops, where fashions were followed, only turned out a small number of cupboards, we must not be surprised at the scarcity of those that are homogeneously Louis XVI in their lines as in their ornamentation.

The Normandy cupboard reproduced in Fig. 3

is one of these; the straight line dominates it, each of its panels is symmetrical, and all the details of its decoration, which is of an exquisite elegance, are borrowed from the architecture of the ancients or of the sixteenth century.

But here (Fig. 4) is the armoire in the Carnavalet Museum, known as the armoire "of the taking of the Bastille." It is precisely dated by the *motif* in bas-relief on the left hand panel, which has given it its name, and by the symbols of the three orders of the nation carved on the middle upright; above, the crosier of the Clergy; in the middle the spade topped by the Phrygian cap, the emblem of the emancipated Third Estate; below the sword denoting the Nobility. Note still other revolutionary emblems; the flags above the leaves of the doors, the pikes on the rounded angles of the armoire. It was made, therefore, in 1790 or 1791; none the less, the shape of the panels and that of the bottom cross piece are completely Louiv XV, as is the contorted shape of the front feet.

The large half-moon armoire from the Gironde, seen in Fig. 5, is also a compromise between the two styles; the shape of the panels, of the lower cross pieces, of the feet is Louis XV; all the rest clearly belongs to the style of the next epoch. So, too, this other armoire from the Gironde (Fig. 6), superb in its refined simplicity (it is made of very beautiful solid mahogany), is hardly Louis XVI except by the flutings of its *fausse partie dormante** and of its chamfered corners,

and by the somewhat dry distinctness of the moulding of the cornice.

On the other hand, many Normandy cupboards of this epoch affect the most tortuous lines, as if the Rococo style was still dominant, and carry a regular medley of carvings in high relief, where rows of ovolos, chaplets of beads, modillions * with acanthus leaves meet with the *rinceaux* and the " haricots " that were the foundation of the Louis XV ornamentation. In Provence it is better stlll; the armoires called *garde robes*, those handsome large armoires of pale cherry, or walnut unctuous to the finger, always date from the Louis XVI epoch when their decoration is all flowery with roses, narcissi, suns intermingled with emblems of love and musical instruments; whilst the pieces that belong to the Louis XV epoch are much more sober, and are only decorated with mouldings. As for the construction lines and the shape of the panels, they remained the same from one style to the othcr.

The Provençal pieces we reproduce here have been selected out of many of their contemporaries as presenting the most recognisable of the Louis XVI *motifs* ; the antique vases on the armoire (Fig. 7), on the kneading trough (Fig. 13), and the whatnot shown in Fig. 9, the fluted columns and the rows of beading on the buffet-crédence (Fig. 8), the lyre, the bow of ribbon, and the crossed palms of the little glass case (Fig. 11).

Under Louis XVI there was invented prac-

tically only one single new piece of furniture with panels, the *vitrine*. Heretofore, knick-knacks, even the most precious, had been placed on the chimney-piece or on the shelves of a *coin* (a little corner whatnot); henceforth a special piece of furniture will keep safe from dust and knocks, while allowing them to be seen, rare porcelains, fragile biscuit ware, Chinese curiosities. The vitrine is either a small cupboard (Fig. 14), or an under cupboard; sometimes it is placed on top of another piece of furniture, for example, a commode. Its ornamentation is sober, often reduced to baguets and flutings in brass, for the container must not "draw the eye" to the prejudice of the contained. The turned and splayed out feet of the vitrine we reproduce are called *toupies*. The top is on three of its sides surrounded by a little gallery or balustrade of pierced brass, which we shall meet again very often, and which is a novelty of the Louis XVI epoch. The general appearance of this little glazed armoire has all the rectilinear effect typical of the end of the style.

The other forms of panelled furniture remain what they were of old, except for certain superficial changes; the corner cupboard (Fig. 15) has no longer its serpentine front, but one with very slight relief in a ressault or forepart of shallow projection, when it is not altogether straight and flat. The surfaces of the flattened angles are decorated with grooves imitated in marquetry; the keyhole is more than simple, although the

piece itself is of sufficiently exquisite workmanship. The vitrine of Fig. 14, the drop-front escritoire (Fig. 16), the *bonheur du jour* with its roll-top front (Fig. 17), the commode (Fig. 18) have the same plain keyholes that are in harmony with their angular austereness.

The *secrétaire à abattant* is one of the favourite pieces of this epoch. Here is the classic shape (Fig. 16) with its typical frieze of *entrelacs à rosaces* in gilded bronze, the *chutes* of triglyphs and *gouttes*, the keyholes (in the doors of the lower part) of the most favoured contemporary model—a medallion surmounted by a bow and with two pendant garlands. The marquetry, at the same time refined and naive in craftsmanship, presents a curious design of a formal French garden, with pavilions and fountain of over fanciful proportions.

That is the large drop-front escritoire, a serious, rather masculine piece; but the cabinet-makers had invented a crowd of quite small kinds, for ladies, in which they had given play to all their ingenuity and their sense of slightly affected grace. These small models are often lightened at the top by detached miniature columns or corner caryatids of gilded brass; the cupboard in the lower part is done away with, replaced by four spindle legs, joined either by a shelf with a piece hollowed out in front or by X-shaped cross bars with interlacing curves. The costliest of these small boudoir pieces have a Sèvres plaque inlaid in the flap, and tiny bronzes, sometimes of

incredible fineness; nothing more delicately feminine could be imagined. In sum, it is merely a return, in miniature, to the shape of the seventeenth-century *cabinet* mounted on legs.

Louis XVI commodes have a great diversity of shapes. To begin with, we can distinguish two great families: commodes with three drawers or rows of drawers, and those that have only two. The latter are much the lighter and more elegant; they are called commodes *à pieds élevés*. If they have retained the *pieds de biche* of the Louis XV epoch, while more or less diminishing their curve, they can be extremely graceful; with their happy combination of straight lines and curves, uniting the qualities of both styles, they are, indeed, one of the most elegant pieces of furniture that have ever been devised. The commode we have photographed (Fig. 18) is particularly delightful for its proportions, and thanks to the excellent bronzes of its legs and its *rinceau*, which have preserved something of the easy suppleness of the Louis XV Style. This other one (Fig. 19) also has a charm of its own, in spite of the rigidity of its terminal-shaped fluted legs. The projection, with double ressault, of its façade is enough to make it interesting, and the pierced brass of its keyholes and handles are of very good design.

Let us remark in this connection that, in the period we are discussing, the handles of drawers or *mains*, are nearly always *mains pendantes*, drop handles; they are very often rectangular

and of absolute simplicity (Figs. 21, 25); but the most frequent form is that of the ring handle framing a circular *motif* which, on simple pieces, is a plaque of embossed brass (Figs. 22, 23). The keyholes are then similar plaques. Sometimes the plaque is oval, and the handle is merely a half ring (Fig. 26). As for *mains fixes* or fixed handles, these are garlands fastened to bows that hold up medallions (Fig, 20) or else held by the teeth of two lion masks.

The Provençal commode with two drawers, in Fig. 24, is contemporary with the revolutionary armoire we have already mentioned, and it also carries in one of the *entrelacs* of the bottom traverse the crosier, the sword, and the spade with the Phrygian cap, the symbols of the three estates. The drapery *motif* is here interpreted naively, but in a very decorative fashion.

Commodes with three lines of drawers of necessity owe a sufficiently heavy aspect to their construction, and nevertheless there are some of them which, raising themselves a little on *pieds de biche* (Fig. 23), arrive at a certain elegance. That in Fig. 20, which is a country made commode from the south-west, testifies to a fairly extensive research; the craftsman, while remaining strictly faithful to the straight line, has endeavoured to lighten the shape by contracting the base, in imitation of the Louis XV commodes called *en console*.

The construction of commodes is sometimes more complicated. The cabinet-maker, anxious

to avoid the aspect of a brutally square case, added to the right and the left quadrant-shaped shelves; in that case, to lighten his piece still further and, so to speak, give it air, he put a mirror back to the compartments formed in this way at the sides. We have seen that these shelves may be replaced by little armoires with curved doors; or indeed the commode is frankly a half-moon, the drawers being themselves convex also; a very graceful shape, perfect to adorn the space between two windows in default of a console pier glass. If in the half-moon commode only the top drawers are retained, and the lower ones replaced by two shelves with brass galleries and mirror back, we have what the dealers called a *commode ouverte à l'anglaise*.

A fault common to many fine commodes of the Louis XVI Style, is that the decoration of their façade is treated without taking into account the division of the drawers, this being disguised as much as possible by the exact fitting of the bronzes or the marquetry designs which continue from one drawer to the other. Cabinet-makers who were so pre-occupied with architecture and its laws never should have fallen into this error of logic, for the first duty of a façade, in good architecture, is to show distinctly the divisions within. It is true that before their eyes they had illustrious examples of falsehoods like that of their furniture pieces; the façades of the two palaces of the Garde-Meubles, built by Gabriel, at the

entrance to the Rue Royale. The little commode in Fig. 18 has, to some extent, this fault, but lessened by the presence of two very obvious and visible keyholes, which frankly declare the existence of the two drawers; it is true that the lower keyhole is at fault in partly hiding the principal *motif* of the marquetry.

The developments of the commode devised under Louis XV became more and more elaborate; *chiffonnières* with five or six drawers one upon another, fluted pillars at the corners, toupie feet, marble tops with open-work galleries; very handsome pieces, and so practical! (Fig. 25) and *secretaires-commodes*, then known as *commodes à dessus brisé* (Fig. 26), whose shape, something too geometrical, does not escape clumsiness, unless it is refined by *pieds de biche*.

Louis XVI tables have vertical legs and straight frames,* without festoons; that is what distinguishes them from Louis XV tables at the first glance. Nevertheless, even more than for commodes, the *pied de biche* of less generous curve was retained sufficiently long for small work tables, breakfast tables, and guéridons.

These vertical legs are of different kinds.[1] Some of them are square in section, tapering off towards the foot (Fig. 28); these are called *pieds en gaine*, terminal-shaped (from the name

[1] What we say here of table legs applies also to the legs of chairs.

of the bust-carrying pedestals which are of the same shape); they often end in projecting dice-shaped feet; there are round legs, turned, slightly conic, with a gorge moulding at the top, and another projecting moulding at the foot; they are fluted vertically, with or without *rudentures*, sometimes in a spiral. That is the classic type. Above the moulding at the top, a part square of section, stouter, decorated with fluting or a rectangular *rosace* (Figs. 27, 28, 29, etc.), is joined with tenon and mortise to the cross pieces of the frame. Far from being disguised, this necessary reinforcement is, in well-planned tables, accentuated by the decoration. Round fluted legs are often called *pieds en carquois*, quiver legs, even when there is no representation of arrow feathers at the top. Towards the end of the Louis XVI period many legs are no longer fluted, but furnished below with a brass shoe with mouldings, above with a ring-capital in plain brass or engine-turned; the "*tête du pied*," as cabinet-makers call it by a bold metaphor, is then decorated with a small plaque of brass, either striated or engine-turned. Other more elaborate legs imitate a bundle of arrows or pikes, fastened by ribbons intercrossed; the feathers and the heads then serve as *motifs* for the ornamented parts at the top and the bottom. The use of castors is becoming general.

Louis XV tables dispensed as much as possible with cross pieces between the legs, for they seldom harmonised with the continuous line of

the *pieds de biche*; they re-appear under Louis XVI; they are even frequently more complicated and elaborate than is needed for solidity and strength, and their complex lines play an important part in the decoration. Their join with each leg is always very openly made with a stout square piece.

The frame of the table is decorated with fluting (Fig. 28), with *entrelacs* (Fig. 29), with framing lines of marquetry (Fig. 27). The table top is no longer wavy in outline, but round, oval, sometimes haricot-shaped (or kidney-shaped), rectangular, square; in the last two cases it may have at each corner a projection, round or square, according to the kind of leg that is below it.

Extending dining tables, invented quite at the end of the preceding epoch, under the name of tables *à l'anglaise*, are still fairly uncommon; they are round or oval, with leaves.

Consoles have a great diversity of aspect, being meant to harmonise with widely different kinds of decoration for apartments. The most simple type, but not the least elegant, is a half-moon, with two vertical feet and a stretcher in the shape of a horizontal concave arch, adorned in the middle with a *motif* which is most frequently an "antique" urn. The console of Fig. 32 is an excellent model, excellent in its perfect simplicity. Most commonly these handsome pieces are enriched with garlands of flowers, bouquets, bows of ribbons (Fig. 31). Other consoles, richer still, and more architectural in style,

like the elegant model made of gilt wood, shown in Fig. 33, remarkable for the large design of its decoration, have legs that come very near to the consoles of architecture properly so called. Another type is that of the console with four legs, joined by stretchers or a shelf between them, half-moon or rectangular in shape; when it is of this last shape it is in reality nothing more than a slightly tall table made to be seen only on three sides.

Card tables (Fig. 27) had nearly all been invented under Louis XV; we will not describe here all their different shapes. But there is one very well known one that properly belongs to the epoch now under review: the *table-bouillotte*, a shape that became highly popular, and of which authentic examples can still be found easily enough. The game of bouillotte was a kind of brelan, played very quickly; but the bouillotte table, an exceedingly practical one, can be used for many other things besides cards. It is round, has a marble top with brass gallery; its four legs are "quiver"-shaped: its frame contains two little drawers and two pull-out shelves (Fig. 30).

Now comes the large family of quite small fancy tables such as no woman worthy of the name could possibly do without having around her; and here is the triumph of this delicate Louis XVI Style. Here again, nearly everything had been said and there was hardly any novelty to be introduced. The toilet table changes nothing but the line of its legs; alongside it

appears the *athénienne*, an antique tripod, made of metal, supporting a vase of malachite or crystal; the Pompeiian Style is indispensable, and hence we have sphinxes, cloven hoofs, swans, rams' heads, etc. The *chiffonnière* (Figs. 36 and 37) which offers every intermediate shape between a simple table and a small commode, is nearly always provided with a brass gallery, useful to keep bobbins and needle-cases from rolling on to the floor. Here is a new word for the cabinet-makers' vocabulary: the *tricoteuse*. Now it is a *chiffonnière* whose top is surrounded with a pretty high wall of gilt brass trellis to keep the balls of wool within bounds; now a work table, exactly like those of to-day, with a top that lifts up, lined with a mirror, and compartments inside; in a word, a *toilette* not greatly modified. Did society ladies knit then? Certainly, and the *ci-devant* marquises could have given lessons to those sinister harridans, the knitting women that used to sit by at their trial before the revolutionary tribunals. Let us not forget that benevolence and good works was the rule, the proper form, and the mania for knitting garments for the poor was already raging. The breakfast table or chocolate table is a guéridon with two tiers; the lower table is carried by four legs, the top by one pillar in the centre; it is exceedingly ugly, a design that went wrong. Many of these tables—for the evil itch of writing is universal,—are provided with a pull-out shelf and a little drawer on the right hand containing a writing desk;

or indeed, the top drawer of a *chiffonnière* has a sliding top inlaid with morocco leather, in place of the shelf. For these light tables new shapes of legs have been invented, lyre-shaped or crossed like an X; as for the top it is frequently oval.

Here is a completely new kind of table: the *table à fleurs*, which will not be called a jardinière till later. People have read Rousseau, everyone admires nature, botanises perhaps; in any case loves to go, wearing a big hat in the fashion of Madame Vigée Lebrun, and gather blossoms at the hour when Aurora has scattered over the meads all the pearls from off her tresses; and then it is discovered that the porcelain *fleurs de Vincennes*, with their foliage of painted copper, are perhaps no more beautiful than the natural ones; in short, one adores flowers, and that is when one takes it into one's head to adorn one's dwelling continually with cut flowers and living flowers. The jardinière from the start found the shape it still has to-day; it was often decorated with Sèvres plaques.

There remain the writing tables, their derivatives and their hybrids. The great flat bureau of the time of Louis XV, with or without the *bout de bureau* or pigeon-holes for papers, is still made, though much less frequent; the roll top bureau, so extremely useful and practical, has dethroned it. A new shape, which will later become the heavy *bureau-ministre*, makes its appearance, a flat bureau provided to left and

right of the space for the writer's knees with drawers one above the other; if they come down to the ground it is altogether our *bureau-ministre*, and it is not a thing of beauty. If the sides do not come so low, they are carried on eight legs; and there we are, back again to the bureau of the time of Louis XIV. It goes as far as combining the round top with the drawers coming down to the ground; and this is nothing more or less than our "American bureau"; so true it is that there is nothing new under the sun.

The small ladies' bureaux are very varied. Some are flat, some round-topped; the most popular is the *bonheur du jour*, which was indeed in existence at the end of the Louis XV epoch, but had not as yet any special name. The *bonheur du jour* is a writing table that carries on top, set back, a small armoire. This is usually glazed, or fitted with mirrors, or indeed with imitation backs of books; above is the inevitable white marble with its brass gallery. For writing there is a pull-out shelf, or a hinged shelf that opens forward, or a drawer with a top in the shape of a writing board. And there are *bonheurs du jour* with roll top (Fig. 17); others are *à pente*, as it is called to-day, that is to say with a flap that occupies a sloping position when the bureau is closed.

Straining for novelties, the cabinet-makers invent the most ingenious but most bizarre combinations. We see advertised, for instance, a

"roll top toilette, that can be used by a lady as an escritoire, with two small strong-boxes and a white marble top," or what is still better, a "*table de nuit* that can be used as a writing table, and as a stove in winter!"

CHAPTER III: CHAIRS AND VARIOUS PIECES: A LOUIS XVI INTERIOR

PERFECTION, from the point of view of comfort, had been reached by the chairs of Louis XV's time; those of the following period, less roomy and more angular, are rather inferior in this regard. On the other hand, they are more varied in shape and ornament. As with all the other kinds of furniture, the essential difference is that the Louis XV chairs have not one single line that can be called straight, while the Louis XVI chairs always have at least their legs rectilinear. The frame of the chair is straight behind, most frequently curved at the sides and front (Figs. 38, 39, etc.). Certain types have their seat horseshoe shaped (Fig. 56); others circular (Fig. 43); but there are some also in which it is trapeze-shaped, without a single curve (Figs. 45, 46). Another important difference is that, all the parts, all the "limbs" of, for example, an arm-chair, are at the same time united and separated by well marked joints (always the architectural influence), while a Louis XV arm-chair is, like a living creature, all made up of continuous curves.

The legs, like the legs of tables, are terminal-shaped (though not often), or turned and "quiver"-shaped and fluted either vertically (Figs. 38, 39, etc.) or spirally (Fig. 40). The

top part of the leg is a cube decorated on two faces with a square *rosace* of acanthus leaf (Fig. 40), later by a marguerite (Fig. 47), or a design of circular mouldings (Fig. 43). Towards the end of the period appear back legs square of section, curved outwards, and with their line directly continued by the uprights of the back; this is a first discreet imitation of the Greek shapes (Fig. 55).[1]

The frame is decorated with simple mouldings (Fig. 41), or carved with one of those running ornaments we have described, *rang de perles* (Fig. 40), *rang de feuilles* (Fig. 52), *rang de piastres* (Fig. 51); or it is decorated with a bow of ribbon or a *rosace* in the middle of the front (Figs. 43, 44, 47).

The arms, or *accotoirs*, always provided with *manchettes*,* are attached to the back by a more or less graceful curve, which may even begin at the very top of the uprights of the back (Fig. 38); this arrangement is sufficiently ungraceful. They end in front in a volute of no great importance, under which the *console de l'accotoir*, the vertical support of the arm, joins it. Certain very ornate armchairs (Fig. 38) have lions' heads at this point, which is a jump of fifty years backwards. During the Regency women wore skirts with panniers, which brought about the invention of arm-chairs with set back

[1] The back of this same chair (Fig. 55) already shows the shovel shape—*en pelle*—which will be a characteristic of the Directoire period.

consoles, *consoles reculées*. During the reign of Louis XVI the panniers did not diminish, but very much the contrary; however, *consoles reculeés* are now only made very rarely (Fig. 43). It is, nevertheless, essential that panniers may be able to spread themselves comfortably, and for that purpose, from the beginning of the reign of Louis XV, consoles have been invented that do indeed continue the top of the leg but immediately turn both outward and back to leave the front of the arm-chair clear. This arrangement still exists under Louis XVI (Fig. 47), but only for very luxurious and costly chairs, as the cutting out of these consoles with their double curve is difficult and requires a great deal of wood. The ordinary console (Figs. 38, etc.) is cut in the shape of an S, but only curved in one plane; it is often decorated at the base with an acanthus leaf (Figs. 38, 40, etc.). A little later the pannier fashion passes, and at once the upright consoles, *consoles montantes* of earlier times, reappear under the shape of balusters (Fig. 46). It is not easy for this kind of *consoles d'accotoirs* to be elegant; the meeting of the base of the baluster with the top of the leg is often very clumsy.

The back may have the most varied shapes. If it is slightly hollowed out, whatever its shape the arm-chair is said to be *en cabriolet*. The medallion back (which was already in existence at the end of the Louis XV epoch) is oval; it is one of the most widespread shapes

(Figs. 41, 43, 44). It is often decorated at the top with a bow of ribbon (Figs. 43, 44), recalling the bow by means of which a medallion or an oval frame for an engraving, a picture or a mirror was hung. A delicate point for the elegance of the line as well as for strength is the connection between the oval and the legs at the back of the chair. The joining pieces are curved outward, or more rarely inward; as always the concave curve is more agreeable to the eye than the convex curve. There are fiddle-shaped backs, as in the time of Louis XV (Fig. 42); there are some that are frankly square (Figs. 45, 46), or square with chamfered angles (Fig. 40), others have the uprights vertical or slightly diverging and the top cross piece arched; or they are rectangular, with the upper angles of the rectangle indented (Figs. 38, 39); they are then called *dossiers en chapeau*, "hat" backs, particularly when the top is slightly arched, with a gadroon moulding in relief on the indented angles. In these last backs the uprights, which are sometimes slender columns detached from the actual framework of the back, terminate in carved *motifs*; pine cones, berries, plumes of feathers exactly like those on beds and catafalques (Fig. 39) or inverted stems of acanthus leaves (Fig. 48).

Bergères continue to be very popular; with their down mattress-cushions, their ample, deep shape, their solid sides (*joues pleines*), they are always the cosiest, softest and most comfortable of

seats. Most bergères are very little different from arm-chairs (Figs. 50, 51); others are gondola-shaped, that is to say, with rounded back and showing a continuous line from the tip of one arm to that of the other; still others are confessional-shaped or "eared" (Fig. 59).

All the seats of which we have just been speaking have upholstered backs; but many costly chairs were made, even gilded chairs, with backs all of wood and open-worked (Figs. 50 to 61). The most popular *motif* for these open designs was the lyre (Figs. 54, 59 to 61), and next the *corbeil de vannerie*, more or less simplified and given a conventional style (Fig. 56), the terminal shape with mouldings and carved (Fig. 53), etc. There were even seen, at the time of the earliest balloon ascents, backs *en montgolfière*. These chairs were fairly often covered in leather for dining rooms and offices, or else caned and made of mahogany.[1]

Cane-seated chairs meant to have *carreaux*, square cushions filled with hair or down, and covered with stuff or morocco leather, are not of any shape peculiar to themselves, except "toilet arm-chairs," whose low back, done with cane like the seat, is round and gondola-shaped; their seat is circular.

A kind of chair that gains greatly under Louis XVI in refinement and elegance is the modest arm-chairs and ordinary chairs of straw,[2]

[1] Mahogany chairs are an innovation introduced in this period.

[2] They were also styled *à la capucine*.

made by turners and not by joiners; but we have seen that the two trade guilds were then amalgamating into one. The most ordinary of these chairs (Figs. 61, 63), simply turned with no carving whatever, may, thanks to their happy proportions and pure lines, have a real artistic value; they are distinguished from their Louis XV predecessors only by the "hat" design of the cross pieces of the back. The seat is equipped with a flat square cushion fastened to the four corners with tapes, and the back with a loose cover over the traverses, or a square cushion fastened with tapes in the same way.

The somewhat more refined models, which include carving, or at least a certain amount of fluting (Figs. 59, 60, etc.), are sometimes exquisite in their simplicity of invention and the rustic flavour of the style of the carving. Of course, those that have decorated backs must not be equipped with more than a cushion for the seat. The "sheaf" back is well known, with its graceful bundle of rods spreading out in fan shape (Fig. 64); the arcaded back (*à arcatures*) has spindle-shaped and fluted slender shafts; the upper traverse is "hat"-shaped or with pediment, and carved by means of the hollow gouge; the lyre back is popular (Figs. 59 to 61); the arrises are often beaded, which gives the line more life. The horse-shoe back of Fig 61 is unusually elegant; and in any case it is a type that is not often met with.

The edge of a straw seat, and the under sur-

face, which is always rough, have nothing elegant about them; they are disguised in the front by a fillet of thin wood, which is nevertheless missing in the simplest shapes (Fig. 63), or actually rather eccentrically placed where it has no reason to be, some three inches underneath the seat, in the guise of a strengthening cross-bar for the front legs. This cross piece is fluted and sometimes (Fig. 62) carved. Straw chairs are made of oak, of walnut, and most frequently of cherry wood; this modest, home-grown wood sometimes has acquired a polish, a warm reddish patina that the finest mahogany might well envy.

The lyre-backed chair of Fig. 59 is a very modest one, very ordinary. And yet who knows what price this relic would reach at a sale? For it is neither more nor less than the very chair on which Marie Antoinette used to sit in her cell at the Conciergerie.

Canapés are naturally of similar shapes to arm-chairs, their backs are square, "hat"-shaped, medallion-shaped; their arm consoles are curved backwards, or vertical in the shape of balusters,[1] the side pieces are full or open. Those with full side pieces are ottomans, rectangular or trapeze-shaped. There are ottomans with medallion backs and curved side pieces; others, again, have preserved the graceful lines of the round "basket"-shaped ottomans of the Louis XV period. There

[1] Fig. 1.—The balusters of this very elegant *canapé* end in crosiers, which indicates the extreme end of the style. We shall find them again in beds, benches, etc., belonging to the succeeding period; they go with rolled backs or side pieces.

is one quite novel shape; the very large *canapés*, called *confidents*, which at both ends are flanked with two supplementary quadrant-shaped pieces outside the arms.

There is nothing particular to be said of the chaises longues, or *duchesses*, of this period; they continue to be made in one piece (Fig. 70), or *brisées*, either in two pieces of equal length (Fig. 71), each of which is by itself a little chaise longue, or in two unequal pieces, a bergère and a long bench seat (Fig. 72); or, again, in three pieces; two similar bergères and a square stool with two hollowed sides, into which the bergères fit closely.

Louis XVI beds are not so scarce as those belonging to the earlier period, because little by little the habit of completely covering up the wood with stuff was dying out; the wood, being visible, was decorated, and has been preserved. Every shape of bed continues to be in use: *à la Polonaise*, *à l'Impériale*, *à l'Italienne*, and *à la Turque*; the upholsterers rack their brains to create new shapes: *à la Panurge*, *à la Militaire*, even to beds *à la tombeau retroussé à la Chinoise*. There is also a revival of types that were out of fashion under Louis XV, like the four-poster bed, a charming specimen of which is reproduced as a frontispiece to this volume, hung with satin striped in yellow and green, with red lines, highly characteristic. But the type most frequently met with was the "angel" bed, the *lit d'ange*, meant to be seen end-wise, and

with two equal or nearly equal *dossiers* at head and foot (Figs. 75 and 76). These *dossiers* affect the same shape as those of arm-chairs, they are square, arched with "basket handle" design (Fig. 76), "hat"-shaped (Fig. 75), etc.

The legs are either *en gaine*—terminal-shaped or quiver-shaped and fluted, the uprights of the *dossiers* are square fluted pilasters, or again they are detached pillars or balusters; and the tops of the uprights have a fir cone (Fig. 76), a pomegranate or some other turned *motif*, and very often a plume of feathers. A bed is styled *à la Polonaise* when four iron rods spring from the top of the uprights, and at a certain height curve up to join one another in holding up a crown, from which the curtains are hung; one wide piece of stuff forming the head curtain, and two narrow widths falling along the iron rods, towards the corners of the foot, and gathered back with bows. This is an extremely graceful arrangement.

Screens are as a rule simple and rectangular, the uprights sometimes flanked by detached pillars (Fig. 78) or slender balusters; the top may have any of the variety of shapes seen in the *dossiers* of arm-chairs or beds. That shown in Fig. 78 has the graceful "S-shaped" pediment of the Louis XV armoires; it is a memory of the preceding style. They have wooden supports, each made of two consoles with acanthus designs; the leaf of the screen is filled with tapestry, figured velvet, damask, or embossed silk, less fre-

quently with those Chinese papers with figures, known as *papiers des Indes*, that were a craze under Louis XV.

The shape of clocks is very little changed at the end of the reign of Louis XV; they simply adopt the new style of ornamentation "after the Greek." As horology, towards the middle of the eighteenth century, made very great progress—the most renowned scientists did not disdain to busy themselves with it—many fine clocks made after 1760, and so in the Louis XVI Style, have very correct works which even to-day, when thoroughly repaired, can give excellent service.

An article belonging to this period still to be found in considerable numbers, and one that the amateur of pretty old pieces will readily enough have the pleasure of unearthing, and which is often an exquisite thing, is the *moyenne* or small mirror in a frame of gilt wood. There are three principal types: first, the simple rectangular frame made of a moulding, either quite plain or with a line of beading, a ribbon rolled round a baguet, etc., and surmounted by a carved pediment called the *chapiteau*. This chapiteau displays an immense variety. Now it is a wreath of laurels accompanied by garlands, now a basket of flowers, an antique vase adorned with garlands, now a trophy of emblems; the quiver, the torch, and the bow of Love, with the inevitable billing doves; the emblems of Agriculture, flail and fork and rake and sheaf of grain, etc. (Fig. 82); emblems of the pastoral life, pipes, straw hat

and crook; of the chase, gun, powder flask, game bag, etc.; the tambourine and Provençal flageolet (Fig. 81), violin, flute, hautbois. . . . All this almost always intertwined with flexible laurel boughs completing and lightening the effect, as a leaf of asparagus fern or a spray of gypsophila does in a well thought out bouquet. Certain of these pediments for mirrors are real little masterpieces of composition. Another type is more architectural (Fig. 83). The lower part of the frame is enlarged by two square additions which are certainly a reminiscence, a distortion of those reversed consoles which architects delight to put at the bottom of mansarde windows; below these are two little consoles which seem to support the whole thing, and in fact allow the glass to be stood on top of a commode or chiffonier. The pediment has two *chutes* of garlands which come pretty well down along the frame and balance with the projections of the base. The third type, finally, more uncommon than the others, is the oval glass, medallion shaped, surmounted by a bow of ribbon, a model that has become just a trifle tiresome, by dint of its modern imitations.

The articles of Louis XVI furniture which we have now rapidly dealt with are those with which it is easiest to furnish a modern room. The Louis XVI Style has in fact been the fashion for some years in architecture as well as in furniture and *objets d'art*, and most of the

houses that let flats are (or at any rate claim to be) built and decorated in this style; the chimney pieces of present-day Paris and the big towns are invariably Louis XVI, and their lifts as well, their composition, *patisseries* or ornaments in the ceilings like their electric switches. . . . At any rate, a mysterious and all-powerful decree has laid it down that the panelling and the doors of the rooms we live in must be uniformly white or very light in colour; now it was under Louis XVI that light colours were most in favour with architects.

How shall we manage to procure furniture of this style for a drawing-room, a dining-room, a bedroom? On this subject we might profitably consult a certain Caillot, a writer something less than mediocre, but a man of much curiosity and with well-opened eyes, who had seen the end of the reign of Louis XVI, the Revolution, the Empire, and the Restoration, when he put together his *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des moeurs et usages des Français*. First of all, what are the drawing-room walls to be covered with? We note to begin with that a simple painted paper will not be a solecism, even costly rooms were papered round about 1780. Speaking of a wealthy bourgeois interior of the pre-Revolutionary days, Caillot says: "Though tapestries held their place in the antechamber, they had given way in the drawing-room to a pretty painted paper of Arthur's make." The celebrated firm of Réveillon, whose pillage and

burning were the prelude to the Revolution, supplied the whole of Europe with papers, which were largely made by hand and were veritable works of art. But although now-a-days excellent imitations of the old papers are made, among the papers of the trade a very drastic choice will have to be made, and the safest plan will perhaps be to be satisfied with plain stripes; in this way one can be at least sure of not making mistakes in taste.

If we can hang the walls with some material, it is obvious that it will only be a very far off reminder of the marvellous products of the Lyons looms under Louis XVI, the designs for which were made by that great artist Philippe de Lassalle. And here also we shall do well to keep to stripes, which have at any rate the advantage of giving an illusion of a little added height to the cramped squat boxes in which we are lodged.

As for colour, Caillot observes that the aristocracy in their mansions remained faithful to the classic "hangings of crimson damask, divided and upheld vertically and horizontally by gilt fillets," or else golden yellow damask; but that in the houses of financiers and bourgeois "the hangings and curtains of yellow or crimson damask had been taken down and sky blue stretched upon the walls or partitions they had deserted." Many other colours besides this "sky blue" were used: bright colours and sober colours, pearl greys, water greens, pinks glazed with white, but also, and very often, hues much less dull and diluted than we give them credit for to-day.

When chairs were not covered with tapestries from the looms of Beauvais and Aubusson or needlework, they were covered as far as possible with the same material as the walls; and when one referred to the furniture of a room it meant the whole *ensemble* of the same material, hangings, curtains, and chairs. It goes without saying that we will very seldom be able to imitate this harmony. If we have got hold of chairs without any covering, we shall be able to have them done either with a good copy of an old silk, or with a figured, striped or corded velvet.

What was the furniture to be found in a drawing-room? Let us once more enquire of Caillot: "On the mantelpiece, the eyes could not tell on what object to fix their admiration; in the centre a clock of the costliest and most beautiful workmanship, and on either side many-branching candelabra, perfume burners ringed round with gold, and vases of Chinese, Japanese, and Dresden porcelain. . . . On each side of the mirror a candelabrum[1] with three or four branches. In the middle of the ceiling hung a lustre[2] of Bohemian glass, all its corners fastened with pins of brass, gilt or even vermilion. Underneath this handsome lustre stood on three feet a table of porphyry or some priceless marble, upon which were set porcelain vases of the most famous makes of the Far East and Europe, and often in

[1] Caillot's vocabulary is not very exact: he means a *bras de lumiere*; we should call it a sconce.

[2] Not a real "lustre," but a *lanterne*.

the summer time baskets full of flowers. Here and there in the corners of the salon might be seen a few gaming tables." Let us add at least one console, the two traditional bergères by the fireplace (these were sometimes replaced by that hideous form of seat, the marquise, too wide for one person and too small for two), and the other seats; canapés, arm-chairs, chairs, and those curving X-shaped stools (Fig. 49) that imitated the curule chair of the Romans.

There you have practically all the furniture proper to a large drawing-room or salon, but we must remember that our drawing-rooms of to-day correspond much more nearly to the *salons de compagnie* and other less formal and ceremonious rooms of the eighteenth century. In these there reigned already, and much more than under Louis XV, that medley for which our modern interiors have so often been blamed, There was, to begin with, "an infinity of little pieces, lightly wrought"; commodes, escritoires, *bonheurs du jour*, small tables of every kind, spinets, vitrines. . . .

And there was no shrinking from mixing styles. "In a certain number of houses the owners, remaining faithful to old ways religously preserved the furniture that had served their forbears; there were also many others whose furniture and decorations had been renewed, in accordance with the new tastes and fashions, or whose old furniture was mixed with more modern articles. . . . In was mainly among young

married folk that this amalgam of old and new had come about. They neither cared to turn their backs on the ways of their fathers, nor to set themselves in opposition to the ways that held sway among their own contemporaries." Besides, it is sufficient to run through a portfolio of engravings of the period to see how very little, when artists wished to represent a very elegant interior of their own day, they hesitated to amalgamate the two styles of their century; and we have tried to show that the differences between the two were not fundamental. But it calls for both tact and taste to choose from among Louis XV and Louis XVI furniture the pieces that have enough affinities to come together without clashing. If one has at his disposal a fairly spacious room, it would be amusing to put together a Louis XV corner in a Louis XVI salon.

Many pieces belonging to the Revolutionary[1] period are still quite sufficiently of their century to be very well able to find a place in a Louis XVI environment. They will have the air of poor relations if you like, but at any rate of relations. If seats are concerned, striped materials, which are equally suitable for the two periods, will be more than ever indicated in order to keep up the harmonious impression.

But it would be much more difficult to group

[1] For example, the escritoire (Fig. 85), the consoles (Figs. 87 and 88), the arm-chair (Fig. 95), the bergère (Fig. 94), the bed (Fig. 99).

Louis XVI furniture with that of another century and still achieve any harmonious effect. We have, it is true, discovered towards the end of the eighteenth century a return to the shapes, the ornaments, and even the technique of the time of Louis XIV, but these characteristics are to be found only in a few commodes, consoles and pieces between these two and of the highest luxury and costliness; and in this book we do not claim to be writing for new Wallaces or Camondos!—And what of the Empire Style?—Without doubt the Empire Style, from one point of view, is merely the logical successor to that of Louis XVI, the strict application of the principles by which the latter purported to be governed. But—apart from the fact that it is the expression of a quite new society—this very rigorousness isolates it, as a fanatic is isolated in a society built upon mutual concessions and compromise. A purely Empire interior is acceptable, but an Empire piece among Louis XVI furniture is a sententious and dowdy pedant in the midst of rather frivolous and smart society, it is ridiculous.

And then there is the very important question of colour. The Louis XIV gamut, if one may use the phrase, and the Empire gamut are by far too different from that of the Louis XVI Style, even though as a last resort for harmonising or general effect we have the old crimson damask, which has in the past resisted so many changes of fashion that under Louis-

Philippe it was still battling against that hideous triumphant rep.

Let us come back to our salon. It now has its hangings, its furniture, its chimney set—a clock and two candelabra, between the candelabra and the clock stand two perfume burners made of marble and mounted in gilt bronze; that is the traditional sacred set which, for the rest, we are allowed to find very banal and to replace by something else. Caillot has told us of porcelain vases from the Far East, or French or Dresden; a bust in marble or terra cotta, a group of biscuit ware, if the chimney-piece is a small one, may take the place of the clock. As for the floor, if it is a handsome one the best thing is to leave it bare; if you wish to cover it, failing an authentic French carpet—extremely costly, probably worn down to the backing, and most certainly full of darnings—you will be quite safe from anachronism by adopting an Eastern carpet of well chosen colouring; it goes with everything. On the walls there will be a barometer in gilt wood, a wall clock, engravings. . . .

Finally let there be, everywhere, in vitrines, on the console, on the tables, as many toys and trinkets as you please; there never was a time that loved them so dearly. They may be of three categories, one as much Louis XVI as another: European articles of the eighteenth century, biscuit ware, figures or animals in Dresden, boxes and cases of every sort and every material, cups, vases, cups and saucers even if

they are of fine porcelain; a pretty tooled leather binding on the corner of a *bonheur du jour* has an agreeable effect. . . . Then come Chinese, Japanese, Indian things; the kindly eclecticism of the time admitted them readily, although they were less of a mania than they were about 1740. Lastly, antiques, either genuine or exact replicas of the originals. Nothing could be better in place in a Louis XVI interior than an Athenian *lecythos*, a little bronze excavated at Pompeii, a Roman lamp, a little statue of Myrrhina in terra cotta.

Now for the dining-room. To furnish this in a modern house will present much the same difficulty, whether the style in question is Louis XVI or Louis XV, for this particular room was still very scantily supplied with furniture. Besides the table and the chairs there was hardly to be found one or two consoles or *tables-dessertes*, very seldom a buffet, its place was filled by cupboards, or else indeed the china and silver, which no one thought it necessary to display for everyone to see, were kept in the kitchen. If you must needs have the traditional buffet, which is, of course, often essential for want of other conveniences, you will have to fall back upon provincial pieces, especially those from Normandy or from Arles, for it was almost entirely in these two districts that buffets were made of sufficient finish to fit them for an interior of any refinement. A Normandy buffet then in two parts, which you will select of the

smallest dimensions and finely carved; or better still an Arlesian *buffet-crédence* (Fig. 8), whose low shape will be better in proportion with the probably none too lofty ceiling, and whose carving will be as elaborate and as florid as you can wish. And why should one not bring in with it its inevitable companions, the kneading trough (Fig. 13), which will do for a service table, the various dressers for glass and pewter (Figs. 9 and 12), the little shelved vitrine—a miniature armoire—and the bread cupboard, the perfection of decorativeness.

As for seats, our obliging Caillot gives us another priceless indication; they will be "chairs of elegant simplicity. In several houses,"—in this passage he is referring to the houses of the old Parisian nobility—"they were straw, in others caned or of horse-hair covered with hide." And so without any fear of perhaps giving our dining-room too countryfied an air we can have in it some simple but handsome straw-seated chairs with sheaf backs, or arcaded, or with plain cross pieces (Figs. 59 to 67), and if we want them to look more elaborate and be more comfortable, let them have square cushions stuffed with horse-hair, covered with silk, or velvet, or printed linen, and tied to the four corners of the seats. Or let us have some of those stout cane chairs with square or oval cane backs, or else let us have mahogany chairs with open-work wooden backs and leather covered seats (Figs. 57 and 58).

In a bedroom we must have a bed, or two

twin beds (they were known already), either angel beds or *à la polonaise*; the curtains, if a regard for hygiene does not forbid them, the bed-spread, the panels of the head and foot of the bed, will all be of the same material, gay coloured silk or Jouy linen. We know the extraordinary vogue under Louis XVI of the productions of this celebrated manufactory of printed linens that Oberkampf had set up at Jouy; those bright materials with their clear pure colour, their designs carried out in *camaïeu* with such ease and sureness, and with old-world subjects of so attaching a charm, are indeed the most becoming attire which, even in the city, can possibly be employed to brighten and enliven a room. In any case these linens were not held unworthy of the royal apartments. Oberkampf and Réveillon were leagued together to produce, the one linens and the other papers in the same designs and the same colours; everyone knows that to-day paper makers and makers of printed stuffs do the same, and that they reproduce the old models with absolute fidelity. The rest of the furniture will be made up of, say, a *chaise-longue* (if it is a *duchesse brisée* it will be the handier) and two or three arm-chairs or plain chairs covered in the same printed linen; a commode surmounted by a little mirror with a narrow gilt frame, a chiffonier—a most practical and useful piece—if we can manage to unearth one; a closed night table (Fig. 35), or indeed an open one (which will be really better here than in a drawing-

room, where they are so often to be seen!), a toilette, which will most certainly not be used as a washing stand, but a dressing table proper; the toilet arm-chair with its flat cushion in morocco leather, perhaps one of those pretty small Normandy armoires with a single door, whose narrow shape makes them easy to find house-room for, and which are called *bonnetières*. Last of all, for the carpet we must have a modern one, and it will be a plain moquette of the same colour as the hangings.

It would be a very interesting task to furnish a country house, especially an old one, in the eighteenth century style—when it comes to country furniture the styles of Louis XV and Louis XVI are very nearly alike—especially if we try to give it the most emphatic local character possible. Here we shall no doubt find the dimensions of the pieces give hardly any trouble, and we shall not be forced to exclude, on account of their excessive height and width, those goodly great armoires of the provinces that can hold a pantechnicon load. What does Caillot say? In the country châteaux "instead of ordinary time-pieces clocks shut up in armoires[1] gave out the hours, and wardrobes of well carven walnut were the principal furniture to be seen in the dining-rooms and the bedrooms." Let us add that they look equally well in a great country drawing-room, in a hall or on a landing. In the dining-room we can replace or reinforce the wardrobe

[1] Cased clocks.

in question by one of those huge buffets in two parts fitted with doors, or shelved and open (*buffets-vaisseliers*), whose lofty height always astonishes the Parisian in the country.[1] Naturally printed linen is indicated in every room for hangings, beds and chair covers; or else *boucassin*, that highly prepared fabric, glazed and rustling like paper, which was once made at Marseilles and which has to-day begun to be made once more, eminently hygienic and bright to look at. For seats we may be satisfied in all the rooms with straw arm-chairs and chairs; sofas like the one shown in Fig. 68 are unhappily scarce. Rustic faience and pottery and brass will be invaluable to finish the decoration of our country dwelling, and in many provinces the modern productions of local industries will "date" so little that they can be mixed with genuine old articles without clashing.

[1] We write this face to face with a buffet from the Pyrenees which stands little less than ten feet high from feet to cornice.

THIRD PART
THE EMPIRE FURNITURE

CHAPTER ONE: CHARACTERISTICS AND TECHNIQUE OF THE STYLE

THE Empire Style is the considered and deliberate work of a revolutionary generation which fostered the cult of antiquity. Revolutionary, and revolutionary in the French fashion, it had a natural tendency to despise the past root and branch, and to turn with set prejudice in everything, cabinet-making as much as politics, to the exact opposite of what went before the fateful date of '89. This was going to an extreme; having founded a new society they were struggling to procure an art that should befit this society, if not as it was, at least as it imagined itself and set up to be, and *this* was perfectly legitimate. But this generation, republican at the outset, soon turned again towards the monarchy; the Empire Style is revolutionary, but it is also monarchical; it displays some of the most fundamental characteristics of the grandiose style of Louis XIV; in short, let us borrow an epithet from the immortal M. de Lapalisse, it is imperial.

There is in existence an authoritative text upon the Empire Style, the preface made by Fontaine for a collection of plates published in 1812 by his friend Percier and himself, under this

title: *Recueil de decorations intérieures, comprenant tout ce qui a rapport à l'ameublement, comme vases, trépieds, candélabres, cassolettes, lustres, tables, secrétaires, lits, canapés, fauteuils, chaises, tabourets, miroirs, écrans, etc.* The very great influence exercised by these two architects upon the whole art of furnishing in their own epoch makes a document of this kind most valuable, since in it they set out their ideas in the form of doctrine. They proclaim above all their bitter contempt for the past—the past of French art, of course—showing mercy only to the sixteenth century, "that century which after a long period of barrenness seemed to be a kind of scion of antiquity, and which the succeeding centuries, in spite of every effort of minds searching for novelty, were as far from equalling as they imagined they had surpassed it," But the full severity of their scorn is reserved for the eighteenth century. "The eighteenth century displays the meanness, falsity, and insignificance of its taste in the gilding of its woodwork, the outlines of its mirrors, the contortions of its door-heads, its carriages, etc., as in the *miscelinear* plans of its buildings and the affected compositions of its painters." Complete rupture, then, and without any transition period, with the past, or rather a very definite intention to carry out this rupture, for the past is always too strong to let itself be effaced in this way by a stroke of the pen.

However they disliked it, Percier and Fontaine continued it in a certain sense, this despised

century that had been unfortunate enough to produce a Cressent and an Oëben, a Riesener and a Carlin, since it was he who had inaugurated the famous return to antiquity; but Percier and Fontaine, Jacob Desmalter and his rivals, the Lignereux, the Rascalons, the Burettes, go to the end of the path on which their predecessors had entered cautiously and without any surrender of their independence, they admire everything in antiquity, pell-mell, without distinction, Egyptian, Greek, Etruscan, Roman, the archaic and the decadent, sculpture and furniture, from the Parthenon down to the most vulgar decorations of the wall daubers of Pompeii. It is antique, therefore it is logical; antique, therefore beautiful; antique, therefore we moderns can do nothing better than copy it, and if anyone ventures to exercise his critical faculties upon these holy things, what sacrilege! "It would be vain to seek for shapes preferable to those handed down to us by the Ancients, whether in the arts of engineering or in those of decoration or industry. . . . If the study of antiquity should come to be neglected, before long the productions of industry would lose that regulating influence which alone can give the best direction to their ornaments, which in some sort prescribes to every substance the limits within which its claims to please must be confined, which indicates to the artist the best utilisation of forms, and fixes their varieties within a circle which they should never overstep," And why should ancient articles of furniture be

our models for ever? Because "in them can be seen the reign of the power of reason, which more than anyone thinks is the true genius of architecture, of ornamentation and furniture."

The ideal thing then would be to have in our houses nothing but furniture copied from that of the Greeks and the Romans. Unhappily there are excellent reasons to prevent this. The Ancients, by reason of their simple and wholly exterior life, had very little furniture and seem to have paid very scanty attention to it. There were beds for the night's sleep, rest beds for the siesta, on which they lay propped up on elbows when they wished to write; couches for dinner, tables that were much lower than ours because of the reclining posture in which they took their food; tripods on which was set indiscriminately a brazier, a wine jar, a tray that turned them into tables; arm-chairs, chairs, stools, folding stools, coffers . . . and that was all. What native of France, even in the best days of the Revolution, would have been Spartan enough to be satisfied with so little?

Since this furniture is so very restricted, how is it we have any knowledge of it? Everything that was made of wood has disappeared, so that we are less familiar with Roman articles of furniture of the first century A.D. than we are with Egyptian furniture of the fifteenth century before the Christian era. The only survivals are articles made of bronze, tripods, legs of tables and couches, frames of stools and folding seats,

and a number of ceremonial thrones in marble, like those of the priests of Dionysus at Athens. We can only conjecture what the rest were like from the representations we find in the bas-reliefs, the figures on vases, and some painted decorations at Pompeii, which is to say that we know them very little, in view of the element of convention there always is in antique art. The Greek *diphros*, for example, the chair with a very sloping back made of a broad cross piece, very deep and fitting the shoulders, and with legs of such a strange curve in front and at back, how was it made? How could those legs, if they were made of wood, have the least solidity or strength? What is certain is that no joiner, either under the Revolution or under the Empire, ever even tried to reproduce them as they were; the full round of the back was indeed imitated and the spreading out of the back legs, though afar off and greatly attenuated, and no one ever dreamed of modifying the normal vertical line of the front legs.

The scanty furniture which the Ancients actually had was then far from well known, and we may add that it was far from comfortable, and meant for a way of life very different from ours, and so it was necessary to invent nearly everything, and to modify the rest. In fact, the strict imitation of antiquity at which they aimed was quite impossible; and Fontaine was obliged to recognise that there was a great deal of compromise and adapting in it. "We have followed

the models of antiquity," he writes, "not blindly but with the discrimination entailed by the manners, customs and materials of the moderns. We have striven to imitate the antique in its spirit, its principles and its maxims, which are of all time." It must be recognised that even if there are errors in taste, incongruities that make us smile, something at once painful, puerile and pedantic in this great labour of accommodation, it was after all carried out with as happy an effect as possible; and it is most remarkable that, starting from a principle so profoundly erroneous, it was possible to arrive at creating a style so homogeneous and imposing as that which, to take an example, displays itself in the smallest details of the Hôtel de Beauharnais.[1]

The interpretation of the ancient models could not avoid the prejudices and fixed ideas of the time, in conformity with the ideas that were held of the Ancients. What then were the Greeks and the Romans in the eyes of the men who created or used the furniture of the Empire Style? Something in the manner of Corneille's *dramatis personæ* as incarnated by Talma, people continually and invariably heroical and grandiloquent, their arms always outstretched for terrific oaths and vows, or their sword brandished against the foes of their country and freedom, who never spoke save in sublime aphorisms, in short, entire nations of Harmodiuses, Leonidases, Brutuses, Catos and Augustuses; they were those emphatic

[1] The late German Embassy in Paris.

fellows out of Plutarch's *Lives* and Livy's histories, who knit their brows and strain their wooden muscles in the great stiff canvases of Louis David. And then it was sought to imagine the furniture that these folk would have had if they had known mahogany and flatted gilding, veneer and glue, China silks and Utrecht velvet. If an arm-chair was designed it was such an arm-chair as Leonidas might have sat in without being ridiculous, stark naked, his sword between his legs and on his head his great casque with its flowing horse-hair crest.

It is quite certain that he could not well be imagined in the flowered brocade of a Louis XV bergère. . . . And so Percier, Fontaine and the rest deliberately turned their backs upon everything that had been the ideal of the eigtheenth century; comfort, intimacy, charming gracefulness, refined and delicate gaiety. They set themselves to work on the grand scale, severe, heroic; if they had to make furniture for a tradesman grown rich, a banker, or a dancer, the interiors of their devising always looked as though they were awaiting some marshal gone to the wars, who would be coming back laden with laurels as soon as peace was made.

It was first of all by the use of new lines that this effect of grandiose severity was aimed at, lines that became more and more simple and rigid, delimiting large even surfaces with trenchant definiteness. The style of Louis XVI had already done away with many curved elements,

and the Empire carried on the war against them. The shape of a box pleased the eyes of this generation, the shape of an obelisk was not without charm for them, and a milestone positively enchanted them. Under the Republic at the outset turners still find a great deal to do in the furniture industry, but the outlines of turned parts, that were spindled to begin with, speedily become rectilinear[1]; under the Empire, supports of circular section, balusters, quiver legs, pillars, are very frequently replaced by pilasters, legs with square section. The pillar continues to be found at the corners of certain pieces, but detached and no longer engaged, no longer serving to replace a right-angled arris so as to soften the contour, it is super-added to it and leaves it plain to be seen; it is cylindrical or slightly conical, with a base and capital of the order known as Tuscan and covered in brass either plain or engine-turned and gilt.

As for mouldings they disappeared almost completely, and with them the interest they were sufficient in themselves to lend to the simplest furniture, thanks to the effects of the light on their round surfaces and projections. When a trace of them appears it is no more than a *listel*,* a fillet in low relief, a rudimentary *doucine* * or *quart de rond*.* What is more vexing still is

[1] Compare the legs of the chair in Fig. 91 with those of the arm-chair in Fig. 93 and the bergère in Fig. 94; the arm consoles of the arm-chair of Fig. 95 with those of the bergère of Fig. 94 and the arm-chair of Fig. 93; the legs of the console table in Fig. 88 with those of Fig. 89.

that this atrophied sort of moulding manages to make the outward view of a piece of furniture deceitful. It runs, for instance, all round the seat frame of an arm-chair, passing without a break from the traverses of the seat to the *têtes de pieds*, as if the legs were set into the frame instead of its being the frame whose four traverses are mortised into the legs.

But what is preferred above everything is a silhouette as clear cut as if it was made with a die; sharp corners, clean arrises, surfaces meeting with no transition such as a chamfer * or a quadrantal. Sharp angles certainly existed in small Louis XVI pieces (very rarely in those of considerable size), but always softened by a fluting, a moulding or a brass fillet following the line of the arris and very close beside it; the eye was not monopolised by the arris, divided as it was, so to say, between it and two or three other neighbouring parallel lines (Figs. 17, 21, etc.). The Empire Style is just the reverse, it emphasises the arris and thrusts it upon the eye as much as possible. It is enough to have seen a single one of those designs by Percier and Fontaine, whose style is so masterly, but so extraordinarily dry and austere, in order to understand the taste of the time for "pure and correct" contours—pure and correct meaning, in this case, of an uncompromising geometry.

Let us take as an example the simplest possible panelled furniture, an armoire, or a closed night table. This is composed of thin panels fitted

into uprights and traverses. In the Louis XVI period these uprights and traverses, in accordance with reason and logic, are in relief and frame the panels clearly and distinctly, the architecture of the whole piece can be grasped at the first glance. Under the Empire the surface of the panels is level with that of their frames, and a uniform veneer, the eternal veneer of polished mahogany, covers everything, conceals the structure and putting together, and gives the piece the desired aspect of a block whose massive appearance no caryatides nor pillar will ever avail to mitigate. See (Fig. 88) what has become of the pleasant *bonheur du jour* of earlier days. A Louis XV piece of furniture has the unity of a living creature, the Empire piece the unity of a monolith. What still further increases this massy monumental look is the heavy base, which is the ordinary medium by which this furniture rests on the ground (Figs. 86 and 89); if it is a table which has to be easily moved, the base in question is elevated upon castors, which in itself is a further serious wrenching of logic.

There is another principle which the new style follows with unflinching rigour, the principle of symmetry. And here, too, it is simply an exaggeration of the Louis XVI Style, it even goes beyond the antique. In a room the decoration is always symmetrical and the furniture is arranged symmetrically, in any piece of furniture all the parts balance one another, right and left,

in their smallest details[1]; a bed, for instance, will have a ridiculous *rondin*,* or round bolster cushion at the foot to balance the one at the head; still better, taking each ornament separately, if it is not symmetrical with another it is so in itself,[2] and that even when it is a human figure. And so a Winged Victory stretches up towards heaven her two hands holding two similar wreaths, and the skirt of her robe spreads out into precise and symmetrical folds, the *antique head* of a caryatid (Figs. 86 and 89) has two absolutely identical plaits or curls of hair falling upon her shoulders.

All this is what Fontaine meant when he wrote: "Simple lines, pure contours, correct shapes replaced the miscelinear, the curving and the irregular."

These pieces have no very comfortable look, and they are not particularly comfortable either; their hard corners are still less agreeable for our limbs to meet with than for our eyes. Armchairs, at any rate at the outset of the style (Fig. 93), often have neither back nor arms upholstered, beds present cruel angles on every side, and consoles have truly formidable corners. There has been quoted a hundred times an amusing page on this theme taken from the *Opuscules* of Roederer (1802), but we cannot

[1] Observe, on the doors of the lady's bureau, the symmetry of the two figures of goddesses, although they are different, the same attitude exactly, the same draperies, etc.

[2] For instance, the ornamentation of the drawer of the same piece, whose flat gilt bronzes are of excellent workmanship.

deny ourselves the pleasure of quoting it once again, so characteristic is it. Roederer feigns to have heard that one of his friends, sick of his antique furniture, which is the purest and finest in all Paris, wishes to get rid of it, and writes him as follows: ". . . You do not realise that you have the most complete collection of antique furniture ever yet brought together, and that every piece has been made from the purest designs. . . . Every one of your apartments is furnished with pieces that belong strictly to the same period, the same year, the same people. . . . Not one single anachronism, not one single slip in geography in the more than seven hundred articles comprised in your furniture. No mixing of the Athenian with the Lacedæmonian, no confusion between the furniture of one Olympiad and that of another. Take care, once more I beg of you, take care of what you are about to do." But the friend is not very susceptible to this wonderful archæology.

"Confess, my dear fellow," he replies, "one is no longer seated, no longer at rest. Not a seat, chair, arm-chair or sofa, whose wood is not bare and of sharpest corners; if I lie back I find a wooden back, if I want to lean on my elbows I find two wooden arms, if I stir in my seat I find angles that cut into my arms and hips. A thousand precautions are needed to avoid being bruised by the most gentle use of your furniture. Heaven keep us to-day from the temptation to

fling ourselves into an arm-chair, we should run the risk of breaking our poor bones. . . ."

The proportions of the mixture, so to say, of the exact imitation of the antique with attention to comfort are the opposite of what prevailed during the Louis XVI period; the latter adopted from the antique only what was compatible with comfort and the requirements of modern life, the Empire period only admits as much comfort as is compatible with its abstract notions of pure beauty. This style is therefore largely an artificial one, in rebellion against life and nature. From this comes the impression one has, in a strictly Empire interior, of being in a museum; anything that speaks of life, the supple beauty of a bunch of flowers, a woman's scarf forgotten on the back of a chair, a seat out of place, is like a clap of thunder; instinctively one wants to put that arm-chair back in its place, to restore the outraged symmetry, to shut this book that has been left open and put it back in the caryatid adorned bookcase, to pat that cushion covered with rich silk, which, between those two funereal sphinxes, has dared to retain the imprint of a living body.

This Empire furniture would be of an impossible poverty—since it neither has lines interesting in themselves, nor moulding, nor carving (except seats perhaps), nor marquetry—if it were not for the caryatid supports it so often borrows from antiquity, and the ornaments in gilt bronze that decorate its shining mahogany

surfaces. A caryatid was, in this period, not merely the statue of a woman playing the part of a pillar, but any living creature, human or not, natural or monstrous, and any mixture of parts of living creatures with geometrical forms, serving as a support. Caryatides in the proper sense of the word, like those of Marie-Antoinette's jewel casket, are hardly ever made, but everywhere are to be found the strange race of sphinxes, male and female, with upraised wings, eagle-headed chimæras, winged lions, acting as table legs and consoles to the arms of arm-chairs; then monsters still more monstrous, monstrous to the point of absurdity, because made up of elements that are of different scales, for example, the lion *monopode*, composed of a head and chest continued by an enormous paw. An odd half human half geometrical *motif* was at least as popular as the sphinx itself. This was a quadrangular stock greatly elongated, from which there evolved at the top a bust, generally a woman's, and below, two human feet; bust and feet sometimes carved out of the wooden stock itself and sometimes made of gilt bronze (Fig. 89). Has not even an arm-chair had to endure the infliction of two of these terminal caryatids acting both as front legs and supports for its arms? Let us add the swans, which this style used up in astonishing quantities; very much employed as arm consoles, or as the whole arms of arm-chairs or sofas, they have even been seen in certain arm-chairs forming the legs with their

bodies and with their wings the arms of that truly monstrous seat. Needless to say that these designs are tolerable only if the carving or the chasing is excellent, the style vigorous, the lines perfectly pure ; it is here that the beauty of the workmanship must make itself felt to render the strangeness of the conception at all possible to accept ; if the workmanship is merely commonplace, without tone, the whole thing is nothing but ridiculous.

Lastly, it was necessary to decorate those vast flat surfaces of dark polished mahogany, which, according to the light, are at one time all gloomy and dull, and at another vanish in dazzling reflections. No period ever made more use of gilt brass for the decoration of its furniture. Here evolution still goes on. Pieces belonging to the Louis XV Style often have a great many bronzes, but, especially on simple furniture, they all have some use, or, if you will, a pretext of usefulness, such as handles, keyhole escutcheons, protective corner fittings, very few are pure ornaments. In the next epoch gilt bronzes and brasses that are purely decorative are multiplied in friezes of *entrelacs*, in framings; under the Empire the great majority of bronzes are nothing more than flat decorations, decorations that might go anywhere, that could be fixed (and were fixed) as well on the traverse of a chimney-piece or the base of a clock as on the flap of an escritoire, for they were made for no definite use or settled place. It seems that Empire furniture disguises

whatever is useful in it, the keyholes are often all but invisible, drawers have no handles, and are pulled out by the key, or if they have, they are hanging rings framing *rosaces*, as under Louis XVI, or *patères* (Figs. 87 and 88), or little flat cups, reductions of those that hold up the bands of curtains; a few feet away they might be taken for ornamental *rosaces* only.

Another characteristic of these bronzes is that they are each isolated in its own place, without connection with the others or the piece of furniture as a whole, and juxtaposed with no attention to the harmony of the scale; each one is interesting in itself and must be considered apart. They are, besides, often very remarkable for the ingenious symmetry of their composition, the incisive clearness of their lines, the feeling the bronze worker had of what a light silhouette showing up against a dark ground ought to be, lastly, and above all, by their chasing and their gilding, which in fine pieces are superb.[1] Once the fixed ideas of the style are admitted, when the eye has grown accustomed to this systematic symmetry and stiffness, and this cold simplification of modelling in the human face, it must be recognised that the bronzes made by Thomire towards the latter part of his life, or by Ravrio, are among the finest in existence.

Almost all the *motifs* that appear in these ornaments are borrowed from Greco-Roman or

[1] The bronzes on the escritoire in Fig. 86 are very good examples of these various qualities.

Egyptian architecture, some from the Italian Renaissance. A deliberate reaction against the past is displayed in the fact that the antique elements already drawn upon by the style of the preceding period are nearly all abandoned, fluting, for example, triglyphs, *entrelacs*, etc. The antique styles from which inspiration is most frequently drawn are the primitive Doric, which is not considered even severe enough, the fluting is taken from its pillars; and that bastard order, that degenerate Doric called Tuscan; next—another Roman invention—that Corinthian style overloaded with ornamentation known as *composite*. To elements taken from temple architecture—acanthus leaves, but stiff and flattened out, heavy *rinceaux*, *rosaces*, big tight-woven wreaths of a funereal aspect (Fig. 89), Greek palm leaves (Figs. 86 and 89), and *rinceaux* made up of the same palm leaves—were added everything that could be gleaned from altars, tombs, the painted walls of Pompeii, pieces of Roman goldsmiths' work. First of all the human figure, Victories with palms or wreaths, sometimes mounted on a triumphal car, goddesses with tunics like ships' sails bellying in the wind, with floating scarves; Greek dancing girls; sacrificial scenes (Fig. 86), heads of Bacchus crowned with vine shoots, Gorgon's heads with snake tresses, heads of Hermes with the winged petasus, heads of Apollo bristling with rays of light. . . . Then the animal world, all the monsters we have seen employed as supports,

chimæras of every kind, with tails flowing away in *rinceaux*; and lions, and swans with beribboned necks, and Psyche's butterfly, rams' heads, horses' heads, masks of wild beasts. . . . The vegetable world supplied very little, garlands of vines, palms (Fig. 97), laurel boughs stiffened, simplified, dried up to a semblance of acacia leaves; flowers of no definite species, with four petals; lastly, poppies greatly used in *rinceaux*, on beds, of course, and night tables. Finally a multitude of objects of every sort and kind: crossed cornucopias, amphoras, shallow cups, craters, Mercury's caduceus, the Bacchantes' thyrsus, the winged thunderbolt of Jupiter, Neptune's trident; weapons, swords, lances, Bœotian casques, bucklers; musical instruments, tubas, sistrums, lyres and clappers; winged torches, winged quivers, winged trumpets, lamps, tripods. . . . Everything is good, so long as it is Greek or Roman. The designers and cabinet-makers of the period are hardly endowed with powers of invention, besides, it is not their duty to invent, but it must be admitted that what they borrow on every hand they know how to turn to account with rare ingenuity of adaptation and handling, ingenuity the more meritorious in that it can only be exercised within limits laid down by the most inflexible discipline that ever existed.

We have already indicated the essential characteristics belonging to the technique of Empire

furniture: very little carving, except on seats, little or no use of moulding, the employment on a large scale of veneering in enormous surfaces, the complete disappearance of marquetry, and in certain very refined furniture the inlaying of metals, even silver, in mahogany. Mahogany was the wood by far the most usually employed, either solid or as veneer; home grown woods, and notably our admirable walnut, were abandoned; several cabinet-makers however, among others Boudon-Goubeau, attempted to bring into fashion, in those days of war with England when exotic woods only arrived with great difficulty in our ports, knot elm, a fine material of a warm reddish colour, with curiously writhed and twisted patterns, and yew tree root; there were made certain furniture for bedrooms of light coloured woods, maple or lemon wood.

Bronzes were always *flat-gilt*; the process had been, it appears, discovered by the great *ciseleur* Gouthière. Some of them had projecting parts and details of ornamentation burnished, or polished and made bright afterwards with the burnisher, a very debatable practice which makes the modelling partly disappear. But bronzes were not the only applied ornaments with which furniture was decorated. Under Louis XVI there had been seen small lady's pieces, and even *tables-bureaux* of pronounced masculinity, adorned with Sèvres plaques patterned with flowers. Naturally under Napoleon this was looked on as in mean and petty taste;

but the English firm of Wedgwood had now for a long time been making its famous plaques with bas-reliefs in white biscuit on a blue ground, which in spite of their affectedness deserved to find a place on the most "antique" pieces of furniture, since they were in the fashion of the moment and had for subjects nothing but ancient scenes; our antiquo-maniacs never looked closer into the matter than this. It is told that when Jacob Desmalter was summoned to England to furnish Windsor Castle anew, he was seized with enthusiasm for these delicate "cameos," and ordered great numbers, which were designed by Henry Howard, and later on he inlaid them in *bureaux de dames*, the frames of tables and of beds; their fragility has made them of extreme rarity to-day. Other cameos were of brass enamelled in relief.

As we have seen, marquetry had completely fallen into disgrace, but inlaying was employed often enough. Lemon wood and maple were inlaid with brown woods; knot elm and mahogany with ebony mixed with brass and even steel; and when it was desired to make a quite exceptional piece, recourse was had to materials and combinations rarer still: the gilt wood throne of Napoleon in Fontainebleau, which is so ungraceful with its back shaped in a perfect circle, has arms terminating with balls of ivory sprinkled with mother-of-pearl stars.

To decorate seats with metal ornaments is rather doubtful in point of logic, yet it was done

under the Empire, though rarely. They have, as a rule, carvings in low relief; if they are made of mahogany these carvings are sometimes gilt; if they are painted the ground is light coloured, grey, white, straw, and the ornaments in relief, like the flat mouldings that enframe them, are in a much darker colour which shows up strongly, unless they are gilt, which is also very frequently the case. Lastly, there are always seats gilt all over. Consoles, tables and screens are also decorated in the same fashion.

These various methods are carried out, in the case of rich pieces, with an absolute and veritable perfection; in craftsmanship there is nothing to surpass the cabinet-maker's art displayed in the fine work of Jacob: the careful selection of the materials, the exquisite exactness of the joints, the meticulous execution of the veneering, the finish—perhaps even excessive—of the bronzes, nothing whatever is lacking. On the other hand, ordinary furniture is very inferior to that of the preceding century. Under the uniform cloak of films of mahogany how much sapwood there is instead of good sound stuff, how many joints where glue takes the place of dowels! Makers less conscientious since the guilds were dissolved; buyers looking for something cheap that gives the same effect; how should the honest workmanship of old days stand against these two cankers? Everything that once was solid is now veneered, down to arm-chairs, down to the round legs of tables and the pillars of commodes; and

if this veneering is not done with the very utmost care its solidity can be imagined. This was the time when one Gardeur devised a way of replacing carvings by ornaments made of moulded and lacquered pasteboard; and for this fine invention he was awarded a medal at an industrial exhibition! "Plaster," say Percier and Fontaine, "takes the place of marble, paper plays at being painting, pasteboard mimics the labours of the graving tool, glass takes the place of precious stones, varnish simulates porphyry." In furniture, as in other things, the era of the counterfeit is beginning.

CHAPTER II : VARIOUS ARTICLES OF FURNITURE AND THEIR USE

The armoires of the time of the Revolution differ very little from those of the pure Louis XVI Style. The one we reproduce (Fig. 84) is a transition piece with very marked characteristics. The flutings of the lower traverse, the legs, the chamfered corners and the neutral part of the façade, the frieze of simplified *entrelacs* that reigns under the cornice, the lower panels of the doors, all that is Louis XVI ; but the following details proclaim a new style : the sharp-ridged flutings of the cornice, which are Doric, and above all the little middle panels of the doors with their lozenges, and the upper panels with blunt-cornered lozenges ; the lozenge either complete or truncated is one of the *motifs* that are most frequently repeated in Directoire furniture.[1] Under the Empire armoires have less decoration : large door panels in a single piece and quite plain, angles often accompanied by pillars with bases, rings and capitals made of gilt and engine-turned brass, the pediment triangular like that of a Greek temple, or else a simple horizontal cornice. And armoires with mirrors now make their disagreeable appearance just at the same

[1] It is hardly necessary to say that the ironwork is not "of the period" ; it is older still than the piece itself ; the curves of the Louis XV Style can readily be recognised in it.

time, strangely enough, as the *psyches* or cheval glasses that rendered them happily unnecessary. The under cupboard, or commode with doors, continues to be commonly met with in salons and in dining-rooms used as a buffet; it is often painted and carved with Pompeiian figures on its doors, or Greek arabesques, if it is not made of mahogany with gilt metal work.

Large or small, for men or ladies, the escritoire with a drop front is more in favour than ever. Under the Republic it cannot be distinguished from that of the Louis XVI period except by its ornamentation. The lozenge still takes the lion's share; in the model which we have photographed (Fig. 85) it is accompanied by stars and by fillets enframing panels, the whole being of brass inlaid in mahogany. Empire escritoires have in the upper part, under the marble top, a cornice filled by a drawer, the uprights are pillars, terminals with heads of gilded bronze or bronze of a dull patina, chimæras, swans with lifted wings. The interior shows a kind of niche with a mirror back. Small ladies' escritoires have the shape, already seen under Louis XVI, of a square box upborne on legs that are now chimæras, lions with one paw or caryatid terminals resting on a base; the back of the lower part is furnished with a mirror that has no occasion or excuse for its existence in this position.

The *bonheur du jour* shares in the general transformation, it becomes monumental, like the rest, within its lesser proportions. We give

(Fig. 86) a very notable specimen. We may not like that base weighing so heavily upon the ground, those square pilaster uprights like beams, those conventional lion's heads, with their Egyptian head-dress, that tall massive superstructure with its wretched projecting cornice, but it cannot be denied that the sum total has a magnificent breadth—very far from feminine, it is true—and that the bronzes are surpassingly fine.

The Greeks and the Romans had hardly any but round tables, and so nearly all the tables of the Empire Style are round. In short, they are magnified *guéridons*. The top, as often as it is possible, is a heavy marble or porphyry disc resting on a framework of wood, plain or decorated with bronzes; some are supported by a thick central pillar, which itself rests on a base nearly always in the shape of a curvilinear triangle with deeply concave sides; other have four, or most frequently three feet. Naturally when these legs are not pillars with base and capital of gilt brass, they are caryatides, every imaginable kind of caryatides, in gilt bronze, in bronze of green or black patina, in mahogany with or without bronze parts. All the monsters that the Greeks had taken from Egypt and the East, or had themselves made up with perverse and exotic ingenuity, met together under these tables, where they are seated as grave and patient as dogs waiting till someone throws them a bone. There are Egyptian sphinxes, as hieratic as heart can wish, the *pschent* on their head and shoulders, Greek sphinxes, more amiable

things with wings aloft and meeting towards the middle of the table; winged lions, their heads dressed up in the Egyptian style, or their manes conventionalised in flat regularly ordered locks; griffins whose cruel eagle heads dart furious looks; and that poor one-legged lion doomed, with the head and paw to which he is reduced, to hop for ever. And again there are *termes*, or caryatid terminals without feet and with a virile bearded head, and even those caryatides with women's heads and busts that are simply maids of all work. These supports rest on a base, a triangle or a cross, according to the number of the feet, which is sometimes adorned with a bronze cup at the centre.

Smaller tables are mostly *guéridons* of circular or octagonal shape, with a central pillar or three incurving legs, joined at their middle by a ring or a small shelf and ending in lions' claws; or else those antique tripods we have seen making their appearance under Louis XVI, with their bronze *pieds de biche* legs surmounted by small sphinxes, or their lion feet. Tea-tables, work-tables (this is the name now given to the *chiffonnières* of other days) often comprise a *cassolette* to burn perfumes; this is a new fashion that is considered to be very Greek.

The consoles are rectangular, occasionally but not often half-moon shaped. At the very outset of the style (Figs. 87 and 88), they have for their supports pillars starting up from an under-shelf, which is itself borne on *toupie* feet; the top

is white marble, the sides are sometimes curved inwards. The classic Empire console rests on a base, its front legs are terminals with an antique head or some other form of caryatid, the back, between the legs, is often fitted with a mirror. It is made of mahogany with a top of dark marble or porphyry. Another type, painted in a light colour with carvings either gilt or painted in a different shade, has a white marble top and its front legs are carved pilasters. Let us note by the way the strange invention of some cabinet-maker hunting for novelty at all costs, the *console-commode*, which is not the "open commode" of 1780, but a commode made of mahogany, with drawers, fitted under a console of carved gilt and painted wood, with a white marble top.

The *toilette* of the eighteenth century, which was perhaps the most characteristic piece of all the furniture of that lovable epoch, disappeared at the end of the century by dividing and duplicating itself. Henceforth a smart woman must have her *table-coiffeuse*, or dressing-table, and her *lavabo*. The *table-coiffeuse* is rectangular and stands on X-shaped or lyre-shaped legs; its white marble is surmounted by a round, or oval, or rectangular mirror *à pans coupés*, which is held up, by means of two pivots allowing it to be sloped as you please, on uprights of gilt bronze in the form of quivers or torches equipped with branching candelabra. Furthermore, it was possible to transform into a *table-*

coiffeuse any table whatever, a console or by simply standing on it a mirror of the same kind, only movable, and not so large, and mounted on a wooden base containing a drawer, in short a miniature cheval glass. As for the *lavabo*, it is the *athénienne* brought to perfection: an antique tripod in two tiers, one carrying a basin, the other, the lower one, a ewer. Two swan-neck uprights carry, above and at the back, a round mirrror and a towel rail.

The bureau continues to have a roll top, or else it is of the shape called *bureau ministre*, with pedestals of superposed drawers on each side of the opening left for the legs of the writer; when this opening is semi-circular the whole piece has exactly the look of a triumphal arch, and if, as it does happen, this monument stands upon eight lions' feet its aspect is not lacking in the unexpected. Let us add the monumental book-case-bureau, on which terminals and caryatides flourish more than ever. Bureaux for ladies are now only of the *bonheur du jour* type we have already described: the last of the bureaux *à dessus brisé*, with sloped fronts, are made during the Revolution. Here (Fig. 90) is a curious specimen on which republican emblems are displayed in marquetry, the red cap and the pike.

Let us not forget the flower-tables, they have become indispensable everywhere. Percier and Fontaine designed some which were regular edifices with two and three stories, embellished with fountains, basins of gold fish, a statue of

Flora, and the rest. Simple models for antechambers were made of sheet iron, painted and lacquered, and stood on legs of wood or metal.

Beds underwent very considerable change of shape from 1790 to 1804 or 1805. Those of the revolutionary epoch are of two main types, not counting the extravagant affairs we have referred to, beds "à la Fédération" and others of the same kind, which were hardly ever actually made. Now it is Louis XVI "angel beds" with a few new details; the head and foot are surmounted by triangular pediments, often decorated in the middle with a kind of antique vase (the *soupière*), the uprights are balusters ending in pine cones, or tiny urns, and carrying at the base and at the top those rectangles with horizontal stripes, those daisies surrounded or not surrounded by lozenges, which distinguish the carved furniture of this period. And now it is beds with head and foot alike and rolled like the backs of the chairs of the same time (Fig. 99). They exhibit the same characteristics, antique legs, marguerites, lozenges, *soupières*, and so on. Beds of this type, being decorated on all four surfaces, have the advantage of being able to be placed either with their end or their side against the wall.

But when the Empire Style is fully established beds assume a totally different shape. They are intended to be seen from the side, or even, most frequently, to be placed in alcoves; of their four faces only one of the side faces is to be visible, and this decides their whole architecture. They

are given the name of "boat beds," and in fact with a little goodwill one can see a vague resemblance to a skiff with very high prow and stern. The head and foot are of exactly the same height, and in shape are closely copied from certain Greek beds, a little sloped with a roll at the top, they deepen towards the lower part and often the traverse forming the side of the bed is of a concave line to continue the curve of the head and foot without a break. The ornamentation of gilt bronze often includes two large palms occupying the whole height of the head and the foot and following their curves. This shape is not without elegance; but the head and foot, being very deep at the base and diminishing towards the top until they end in a small and rather mean volute, are likely to show a poor and arid profile. That is the classic type of Empire bed; there are others with vertical head and foot and columns or pilasters for uprights, crowned with globes sprinkled with gold stars, antique heads and so forth; they are meant like the others to be seen from the side.

The variety of Empire seats is much greater than might be imagined. Less comfortable as a rule than those of the Louis XVI period, they have stiffer and heavier lines, the supports of the arms of the arm-chairs are perpendicular, they are a direct continuation of the line of the legs, and often even leg and arm support form one single *motif*, a caryatid, a one-footed lion, a flat baluster, an antique sword in its scabbard. The

back legs are curved backwards and the front legs are vertical, the back is rectangular, flat or hollowed to "shovel shape." But there are also many other shapes. In fact there perhaps never was any epoch when more attempts were made at new combinations of lines for seats. Certain arm-chairs, quite like those of the time of Louis XV, have hardly a single straight line in them. Indeed, if the Empire Style is prone to seek for broad simple lines, they are by no means always straight lines; we have just seen this in the case of the "boat" beds. And so we meet with chair backs whose profile forms a line of the shape of an elongated S, continuous, with no visible break, through the side traverse of the chair up to the very top of the front leg; "gondola" chairs whose back, hollowed into a half cylinder, is joined to these same front legs by a hollow curve; arms without consoles that end in huge open volutes resting directly on the top of the legs, an arrangement that remained in favour up to the middle of the century; and many other manipulations of lines, variants with more or less logic or grace, but of which some are real happy finds that our contemporary artists have not failed to profit by.

Before the Empire, properly so called, there are two types met with above all others. These are, first, seats still near the Louis XVI type, whose back, stuffed and slightly concave, has sides that spread out towards the top, making "horns" more or less accentuated (Fig. 95); the

uprights of these backs are in one piece with the back legs, which are curved outwards, and these chairs present a very elegant line.

The others are seats with rolled backs (Figs. 91, 92 and 93). The back, curved outwards like the legs that are in continuation with it, is of plain bare wood painted in bright colours when it is not mahogany, and more or less open-worked. The top is made of a broad cambered traverse, which, if solid, carries an ornament carved in relief, a *soupière* (Fig. 91), *rinceaux* or running foliage, sphinxes facing each other, a lozenge with radiating stripes that recall the idea of a daisy, etc.; these carvings are often painted cameo fashion. Below this traverse there is an open-work *motif*, a palm leaf, a grille with lozenge openings, etc. If the top of the back is also pierced, it presents an opening (Fig. 93) that allows the chair to be easily taken hold of in order to move it about, or else (Fig. 92) a turned bar. The supremely pure lines of the best of these chairs, their slender, clear-cut elegance, fined down, a trifle dry and austere, make them articles capable of satisfying the most fastidious taste, which are like nothing else, and are preferred above everything by certain very refined and discriminating connoisseurs. The specimens which we reproduce, as well as the delicate and graceful bergère of Fig. 94, carry the stamp of the brothers Jacob; their faultless workmanship makes them very strong in spite of their slightness.

Whether they are of the one type or the other, chairs of the Revolutionary period have their front legs turned and quiver-shaped or balusters; the arms of the arm-chairs end in round knobs (Fig. 95), in little volutes (Figs. 93 and 94), or else they are cut off square and have a daisy carved in relief on the top of the extremities (Fig. 92). The consoles are balusters or little pillars. The carved ornament, soberer than sober, consists of daisies, lozenges, fillets in relief, serrated lines, etc., which are painted in a dark colour when the chair is painted light. Let us not forget a very characteristic ornament, the little palm leaf (Figs. 93 and 94), or the shell (Fig. 92) that surmounts the point where the arm of the arm-chair springs from the upright.

Under the Empire seats are not so elegant, more massive, richer, more comfortable also, and the back is invariably stuffed. Arm-chair arms are often, in imitation of the Greek ceremonial thrones, winged chimæras or swans, whose wings are brought back and raised at the tips, carrying the stuffed pads, and join the uprights of the back. Wits are stretched, and all ingenuity brought into play to discover antique or near-antique objects that might be turned into arms, for instance, military bell-trumpets in the shape of a dolphin's head. Simpler arms are square or cylindrical, they are often enough mortised into the head of the consoles, on top of which is placed a kind of carved pommel; or else it is the arm into which the console is driven, and which

ends in a flat section ornamented with a *fleuron*. The top of the back as a rule is straight, the traverse forming it is fairly broad and presents, between two flat mouldings, a carved plat-band which answers to that of the front of the seat. The front legs are square pilasters with carved plat-band or turned quiver-shape, frequently pinched in the middle by a bracelet. Seats are now beginning to be regularly upholstered *à élastiques*, that is to say with springs.

It was at this period were created the last models of straw chairs that were in any degree treated with care, the last whose shape is of any interest. The back is made of a row of balusters turned in spindle-shape, and surmounted by a broad traverse more or less cambered. Another type of back shows a flat central *motif*, pierced and carved, and an arched traverse that to right and left projects beyond the uprights. The arms of straw arm-chairs keep the Louis XV and Louis XVI shape with consoles set back or consoles that continue the legs but curve outwards. This last type of straw chair persisted till about 1830.

Empire sofas do not demand any special description as they were hardly anything but magnified arm-chairs. There is one new shape however to chronicle, the sofa *à la Pommier*, whose very low back comes out in front at a right angle to form the arms. As for *chaises longues*, they are hardly ever made *brisée* now, they are of two kinds, each imitated from antique rest

beds. Some have head and foot exactly alike and sloped, like the one in David's studio that has been made famous by the portrait of Madame Récamier, or else unequal (Fig. 98). Others, called *méridiennes*, have three *dossiers*, the one by the head is higher and is joined to that at the foot by a straight line, or, more gracefully, by a long S-shaped curve (Fig. 97). All are more or less akin to the "boat" bed.

We have described the arbitrary and intolerant character of this style; we have shown how it rose in rebellion against all that had gone before it. It follows that Empire furniture seldom takes kindly to the presence near it of Louis XVI or Louis XIV pieces, and still less to Louis XV furniture; they resist any amalgamation. If we wish to have a room or a flat in this style, it will therefore be essential that the furniture should be homogeneous down to the smallest details, or else it would be better to give up the idea.

It is a style, too, that constantly aims at the grandiose, a grave majesty; in short, a heroic and learned style. It lacks intimacy, it is not very lovable, not very comfortable, chilly, and more masculine than feminine. In a royal residence or an ambassadorial mansion it is completely in keeping and will never be unworthy of any greatness. If it adorns and furnishes the library of a savant, an architect's studio, nothing can be better; a magistrate's room will also be marked out as its proper domain, or a lawyer's,

a doctor's, a financier's, for it is calculated to help in impressing simple-minded clients. But a gay babel of laughing ladies, a light and gallant tournament of flirtation, or the untrammelled pouting and petulance of children, and the day-by-day joys of family life would be a sort of incongruity among the austere clan of those antique heads, the winged sphinxes and lions with scowling masks, with their fixed looks, intimidating like a mute reproach. The Empire Style then we consider should be reserved for formal and ceremonious rooms, such as offices, studies, board-rooms, libraries and the like.

Under the Empire the walls of a salon were polished stucco, with pilasters with gilded base and capital, and frequently panels painted in a more or less antique style: flying figures, allegories, trophies, arabesques in light-coloured *camaïeu* upon a background of Etruscan brown; above, a high frieze and a cornice with gilt ornamentation. If the walls were hung, the hangings were no longer flat and stretched, but draped and caught up at regular intervals by gold nails or tassels so as to form curving folds; however, our modern care for hygiene and cleanliness will lead us to put aside with horror a fashion so favourable to the accumulation of dust. The windows were equipped with two or three curtains, one on top of the other and of different colours; violet, brown, and white for example, and draped in the most complicated way. The hangings in the most elegant homes might be

woollen material decorated with appliqué, as well as of silk; and at the same time silks became more and more common, thanks to the newly invented Jacquart loom. Besides the Genoa velvets and the damasks that were continually employed, there were on walls and seats those sumptuous materials known as *grands façonnés*, and *paduasoy*, and *lampas* brocaded in yellow on a bronze green ground, gold on a violet or brown ground, white on sky-blue, with massive wreaths, *rosaces*, compartments laden with arabesques, trophies of weapons, antique figures, bands decorated with Greek palms.

Often the floor was left bare, but Turkey carpets were as a special favour permitted in the most antique of interiors. The indispensable furniture was, in the middle of the room a heavy round table with caryatid supports, and a marble or porphyry top; along the walls consoles on caryatides and fitted with mirrors, monumental sofas symmetrically flanked with armchairs; in one corner the *piano-forte*, a rare and costly novelty; and that other instrument that was above everything characteristically Empire, a harp. On the chimney-piece would be one of those amazing allegorical timepieces in which the oddity of invention is not uncommonly redeemed by the supreme beauty of the chasing; it would be protected by a glass cover and accompanied by two caryatid candelabra and two vases of antique shape made of white porcelain with gold decoration and a painted medallion, these vases—a

horrible detail, but absolutely accurate—would be adorned with artificial flowers and placed under cover. On the console tables still more Greek vases, jardinières of painted iron, alleged to be in "antique lacquer," full of flowers, and those new lamps of Quinquet's which in David's studio it was not thought unbecoming to decorate with paintings.

Beyond its moral propriety, if we might venture on the phrase, the Empire Style has one great merit for furnishing a working study, it is easy to add to the furniture of this period a modern bookcase, or rather bookshelves that will neither be incongruous nor an anachronism, if they are made of polished mahogany with no other ornamentation but a sober and classic moulding. A massive writing-table and commode, a console with chimæras, an escritoire with a flap front or an under cupboard, a round writing-chair whose back will be low, in the antique fashion, and fit well into the sitter's back, on the chimney-piece a square clock of fine polished porphyry and flambeaux of black and gold bronze; all this, which will be free from gaiety or frivolity, will be able to exercise a kind of grave charm favourable to brain work, though one be neither a Frédéric Masson nor a d'Esparbès, provided the carving of the caryatides and the chasing of the metal ornaments are not too vulgar.

Finally, as it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that someone may have a whim to sleep in an Empire room, let us open our good

Caillot for the last time at the page on which he briefly describes the room of a "well-to-do bourgeois," a "tradesman doing good business." "It is not uncommom to find in their bedroom, besides the mirror that adorns the chimney-piece, a nice clock in front of that mirror, two handsome flambeaux of ormolu, coloured wall paper, the commode of mahogany with a white marble top surrounded by a little railing of gilt brass, an escritoire also in mahogany, a mahogany bed adorned with gilt emblems, bronzes by Ravrio, and an Aubusson carpet. At the back of the alcove, which is sheltered by taffeta curtains from the rays of the sun, a mirror repeats the decoration of the room, and serves madame for the beginning of her toilette the moment she lifts her head from her pillow." Caillot might have added, and the picture would then have been complete, the great oval cheval glass, the washing-stand on its three legs and the *méridienne* for hours of careless ease. Can you not see her in this old-world frame, this good bourgeoise of 1810, in her night jacket, undoing her curl-papers as she waited for them to bring her the *Moniteur de l'Empire*, in which she will perhaps learn of the exploits of the handsome colonel of hussars for whom her heart sighs in secret?

And now we have come to the end of these little volumes on French furniture. We shall not go beyond the year 1815, for the Empire Style is verily the last that is worthy, a youngest brother and somewhat weakly, to find a place in

the glorious family of French styles. We have for some years now been having dinned into our ears a certain "Restoration Style" and even a "Louis Philippe Style," which our mania of rehabilitation has taken up with enthusiasm, and which efforts are being made to have pass, if not for beautiful (that would be too hard) at least for *amusing*. Everybody knows that this indulgent adjective serves at the present moment as a password for the most hideous atrocities of every kind, dresses or pictures, furniture, wall papers or theatrical scenery. Naturally, of course, certain dealers are not backward in helping the movement on; they are in hopes of repeating their master stroke of some five-and-twenty years ago when Empire furniture suddenly came into vogue again. Are they beginning to find it difficult to get hold of choice pieces for a song in order to sell them at a high figure, the *méridiennes*, the *flambeaux-bouillotes*, or the jardinières of painted sheet iron of the time of Josephine and of Marie Louise? That's of no consequence! One fine day the fiat will go forth that the wretched so much vilified furniture of 1820 or 1840 is odd, amusing, in short fashionable; what more do you want? Naturally and as a matter of course, the goodly herd of snobs will follow with its customary touching docility, and begin to pay royally for this rubbishy stuff.

We will be very careful not to become in any way, however small, accessory to this wretched farce, which let us hope will not last for long.

The case is judged and well judged. The so-called Restoration Style is not a distinct style, it is nothing else, when it is not essaying shapeless imitations of the Gothic, but a degenerate Empire Style, which keeps growing more and more impoverished and heavy. As for the Louis Philippe pieces they must keep their bad repute. Ill proportioned, flabby and beggarly in lines, both scrimped and heavy at the same time, as ill constructed as they are coarsely carved, they deserve neither to appear again in our houses nor to be imitated by novelty hunters bitten with paradox and empty of invention. Peace therefore to the dust that covers them, and to the worms that are gnawing them away in the depths of provincial garrets!

FIG. 1. LEAF OF A DOOR

FIG. 2. PANEL OF CARVED WOOD

FIG. 3. NORMANDY CUPBOARD IN OAK

FIG. 4. CUPBOARD WITH REVOLUTIONARY EMBLEMS

FIG. 5. LARGE CUPBOARD FROM THE GIRONDE, HALF-MOON SHAPED

FIG. 6. MAHOGANY CUPBOARD FROM THE SOUTH-WEST OF FRANCE, WITH MOULDINGS

FIG. 7. PROVENÇAL CUPBOARD IN WALNUT

FIG. 8. CREDENCE SIDEBOARD FROM ARLES, IN WALNUT

FIG. 9. ÉTAGÈRE

FIG. 10. BREAD CUPBOARD

FIG. 11. PROVENÇAL VITRINE IN WALNUT

FIG. 12. ÉTAGÈRE FROM ARLES, IN WALNUT

FIG. 13. KNEADING TROUGH FROM ARLES, IN WALNUT

FIG. 14. VITRINE IN MAHOGANY WITH BRASS ORNAMENTS

FIG. 15. CORNER CUPBOARD IN MARQUETRY OF DIFFERENT COLOURED WOODS

FIG. 16. DROP FRONT ESCRITOIRE IN MARQUETRY WITH GILT BRONZES

FIG. 17. BONHEUR DU JOUR WITH ROLL FRONT, IN MAHOGANY AND BRASS

FIG. 18. COMMODE WITH TWO DRAWERS AND ON LEGS, IN MARQUETRY

FIG. 19. COMMODE WITH TERMINAL-SHAPED LEGS AND PIERCED BRASSES, IN WALNUT

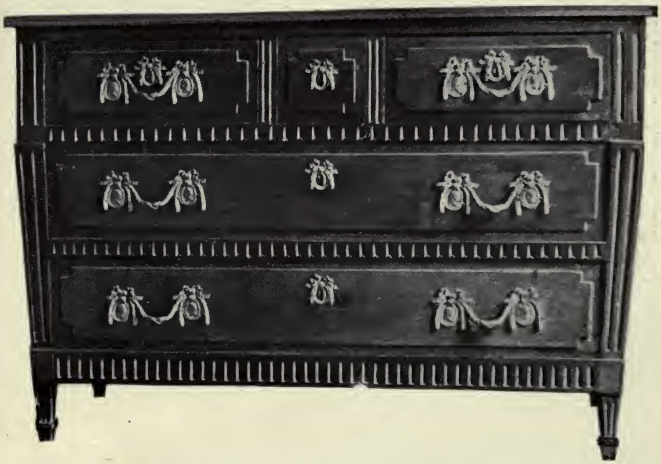

FIG. 20. COMMODE WITH FLUTINGS, DIMINISHED AT THE BASE, IN WALNUT

FIG. 21. COMMODE WITH TOUPIE FEET, IN MAHOGANY AND BRASS

FIG. 22. COMMODE ON LEGS, IN MAHOGANY VENEER

FIG. 23. COMMODE WITH "PIEDS DE BICHE," IN ROSEWOOD, TULIP-WOOD AND LEMON-WOOD

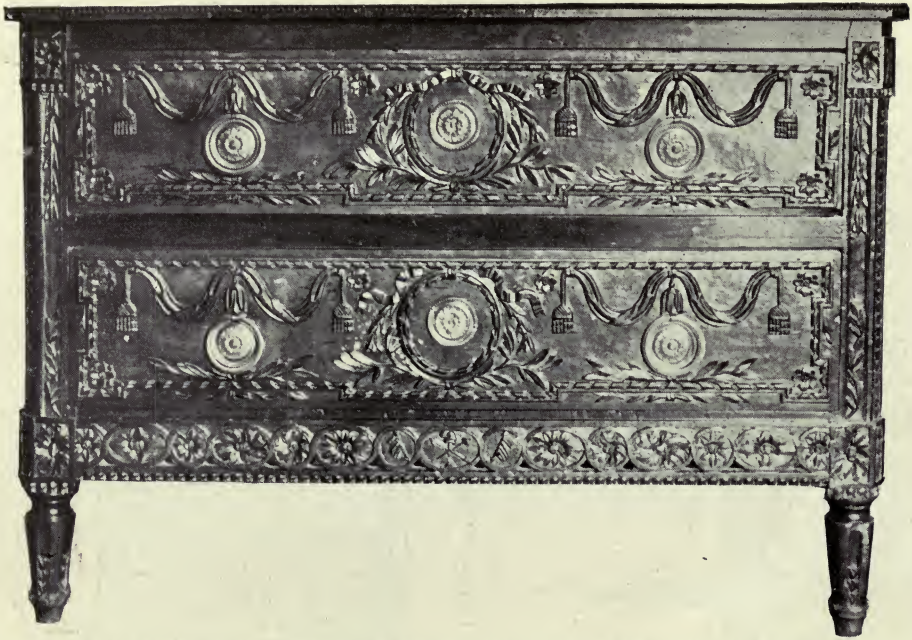

FIG. 24. PROVENCAL COMMODE WITH REVOLUTIONARY EMBLEMS, IN WALNUT

FIG. 25. TALL CHIFFONNIÈRE WITH TOUPIE FEET, IN MAHOGANY AND BRASS

FIG. 26. ESCRITOIRE-COMMODE FROM THE GIRONDE, IN ELM-WOOD

FIG. 27. CARD TABLE ON PIVOT, IN MAHOGANY

FIG. 28. TRIANGULAR FOLDING TABLE, IN WALNUT

FIG. 29. BOUILLOTTE TABLE IN GILT WOOD AND MARBLE

FIG. 30. BOUILLOTTE TABLE IN MAHOGANY, BRASS, AND MARBLE

FIG. 31. CONSOLE WITH TWO LEGS, IN PAINTED WOOD

FIG. 32. CONSOLE WITH TWO LEGS, IN WALNUT

FIG. 33. CONSOLE WITH TWO LEGS, IN GILT WOOD

FIG. 34. SMALL TABLE WITH "PIEDS DE BICHE," IN WALNUT (BEGINNING OF THE STYLE)

FIG. 35. NIGHT TABLE IN MAHOGANY AND BRASS

FIG. 36. CHIFFONNIÈRE IN TULIP-WOOD AND MARBLE

FIG. 37. CHIFFONNIÈRE IN MAHOGANY AND BRASS

FIG. 38. ARM-CHAIR (END OF THE STYLE)

FIG. 39. BERGERE IN WOOD, UPHOLSTERED IN LYONS SATIN BROCADE

FIG. 40. ARM-CHAIR OF PAINTED WOOD, UPHOLSTERED IN UTRECHT VELVET

FIG. 41. CABRIOLET ARM-CHAIR, MEDALLION BACK

FIG. 42. CABRIOLET ARM-CHAIR WITH FIDDLE BACK

FIG. 43. CABRIOLET ARM-CHAIR WITH ROUND SEAT, IN WALNUT

FIG. 44. CABRIOLET ARM-CHAIR IN GILT WOOD

FIG. 45. ARM-CHAIR WITH SQUARE BACK, IN WALNUT

FIG. 46. ARM-CHAIR WITH UPRIGHT CONSOLES, IN GILT WOOD (END OF THE STYLE)

FIG. 47. LARGE ARM-CHAIR COVERED IN AUBUSSON, GILT WOOD

FIG. 48. CHAIR WITH QUIVER-SHAPED LEGS, IN WALNUT

FIG. 49. X-SHAPED STOOL IN GILT WOOD, WITH SQUARE AUBUSSON CUSHION

FIG. 50. BERGÈRE, IN WALNUT, UPHOLSTERED IN UTRECHT VELVET

FIG. 51. SMALL BERGÈRE, IN PAINTED WOOD

FIG. 52. "CONFESSIONAL" BERGERE, IN PAINTED WOOD

FIG. 53. CHAIR WITH FLAT BALUSTER BACK, IN GILT WOOD

FIG. 54. LYRE-BACKED CHAIR, IN GILT WOOD

FIG. 55. CHAIR WITH OPEN BACK, IN PAINTED WOOD

FIGS. 56, 57 AND 58. MAHOGANY DINING CHAIRS WITH CANE SEATS OR COVERED IN LEATHER

FIGS. 59, 60 AND 61. STRAW-SEATED CHAIRS AND ARM-CHAIR WITH LYRE BACKS

FIG. 62. CARVED-STRAW-SEATED CHAIR

FIG. 63. STRAW-SEATED ARM-CHAIR WITH CUSHIONS

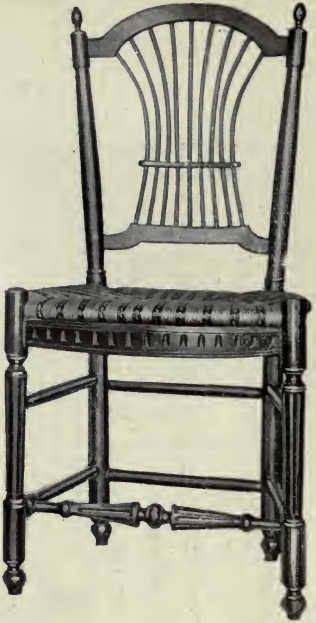

FIG. 64. STRAW-SEATED CHAIR WITH SHEAF BACK

FIG. 65. STRAW-SEATED CHAIR FROM THE DORDOGNE, IN CHERRY-WOOD

FIG. 66. STRAW-SEATED ARM-CHAIR FROM THE DORDOGNE, IN CHERRY-WOOD

FIG. 67. STRAW-SEATED CHAIR FROM THE DORDOGNE, IN CHERRY-WOOD

FIG. 68. STRAW-SEATED SOFA FROM PROVENCE, WITH ITS CUSHIONS

FIG. 69. SOFA IN GILT WOOD, UPHOLSTERED IN BROCHE SILK
(END OF THE STYLE)

FIG. 70. CHAISE LONGUE IN ONE PIECE, GONDOLA SHAPE

FIG. 71. CHAISE LONGUE BRISÉE, IN TWO EQUAL PIECES

FIG. 72. CHAISE LONGUE BRISÉE, IN TWO UNEQUAL PIECES

FIG. 73. CHAISE LONGUE BRISÉE, IN THREE PIECES

FIG. 74. FOUR-POSTER BED FROM LORRAINE, CARVED IN THE RENAISSANCE TRADITION

FIG. 75. ANGEL BED WITH "HAT"-SHAPED DOSSIERS, IN PAINTED WOOD

FIG. 76. ANGEL BED WITH ARCHED DOSSIERS, IN PAINTED WOOD

FIG. 77. SCREEN IN PAINTED WOOD AND BROCHÉ SILK

FIG. 78. SCREEN IN WALNUT AND BROCATELLE

FIG. 79. CASE CLOCK IN OAK, PARIS

FIG. 80. CASE CLOCK IN OAK FROM LORRAINE

FIGS. 81, 82 and 83. SMALL MIRRORS WITH CARVED PEDIMENT, IN GILT WOOD

FIG. 84. CUPBOARD, FROM THE GIRONDE, IN WALNUT
(BEGINNING OF THE STYLE)

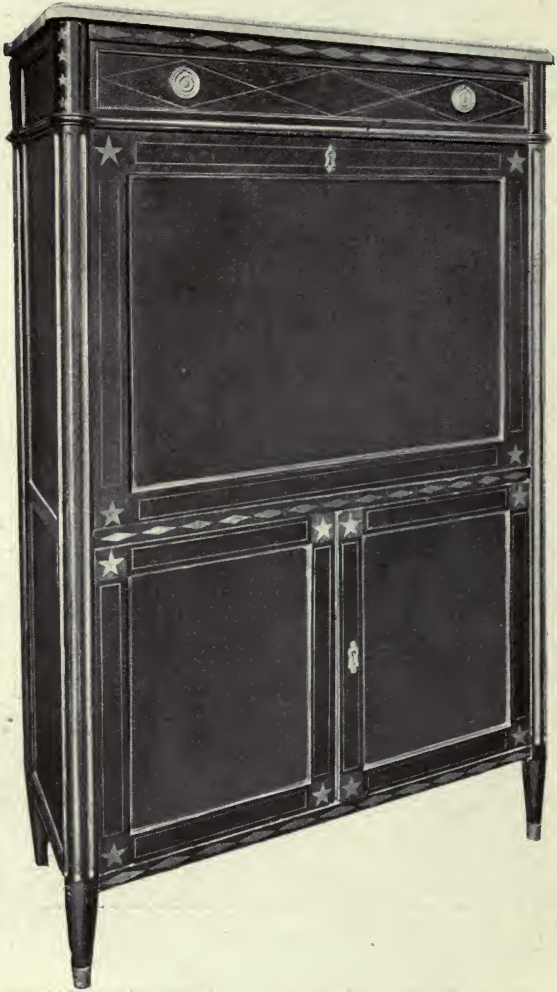

FIG. 85. DROP FRONT ESCRITOIRE IN MAHOGANY WITH BRASS INLAY (BEGINNING OF THE STYLE)

FIG. 86. BONHEUR DU JOUR IN MAHOGANY WITH FLAT-GILT BRONZE ORNAMENTS

FIG. 87. CONSOLE IN ROSEWOOD INLAID WITH BRASS (BEGINNING OF THE STYLE)

FIG. 88. CONSOLE WITH ARCHED SIDES, IN PEARWOOD (BEGINNING OF THE STYLE)

FIG. 89, CONSOLE WITH CARYATIDES, IN MAHOGANY AND BRONZE

FIG. 90. SLOPE-FRONTED BUREAU WITH REVOLUTIONARY EMBLEM

FIG. 91. CHAIR WITH ROLLED BACK IN GILT WOOD

FIG. 92. ARM-CHAIR WITH OPEN ROLLED BACK, IN PAINTED WOOD

FIG. 93. ARM-CHAIR WITH ROLLED BACK, IN PAINTED WOOD

FIG. 94. SMALL BERGÈRE, IN PAINTED WOOD

FIG. 95. ARMCHAIR WITH "HORNED" BACK (BEGINNING OF THE STYLE)

FIG. 96. CHAIR OF THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD, IN MAHOGANY

FIG. 97. MÉRIDIENNE IN MAHOGANY AND GILT BRONZE

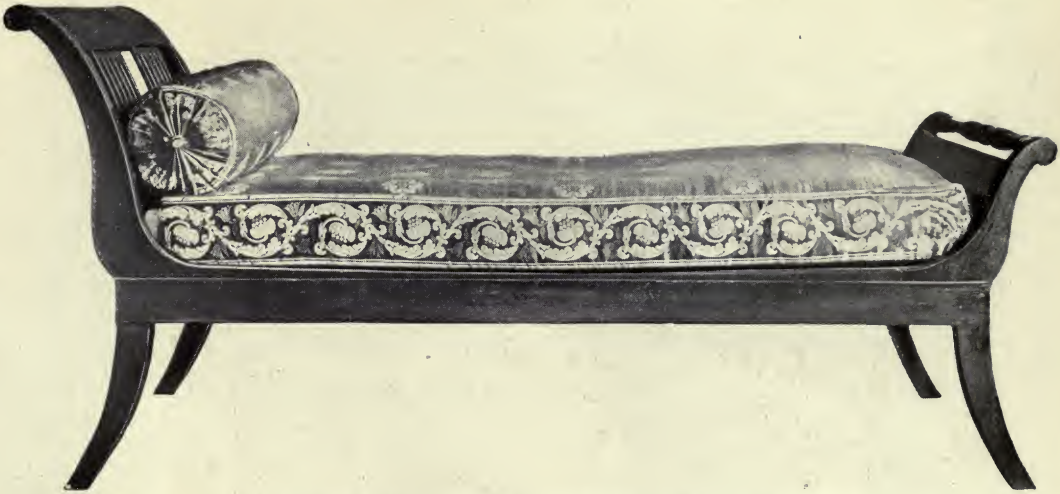

FIG. 98. MAHOGANY CHAISE LONGUE IN THE ANTIQUE STYLE

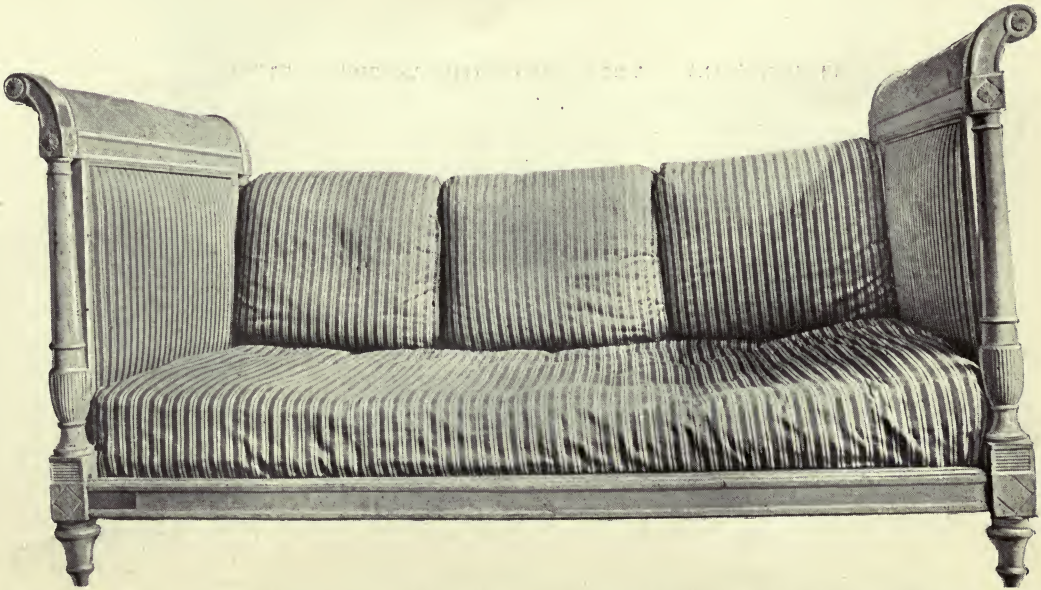

FIG. 99. BED WITH ROLLED DOSSIERS, IN PAINTED WOOD (BEGINNING OF THE STYLE). USED AS A DIVAN

INDEX-GLOSSARY