A SHORT DICTIONARY OF FURNITURE

Containing Over 2,600 Entries That Include Terms and Names Used in Britain and the USA

John Gloag

JOHN GLOAG ON INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

ROUTLEDGE

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Volume 10

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A Short Dictionary of Furniture

BY

JOHN GLOAG

F.S.A., Hon. A.R.I.B.A., Hon. F.S.I.A.

CONTAINING OVER 2,600 ENTRIES
THAT INCLUDE TERMS AND NAMES
USED IN BRITAIN AND THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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With over 1,000 illustrations,
reproduced from contemporary sources
or drawn by Ronald Escott, Marcelle Barton
and Maureen Stafford, A.R.C.A.

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Dedicated to Robert Wemyss Symonds
in admiration of his scholarship
and in gratitude for his kindness, advice and help
in making this book

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CONTENTS

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JOHN GLOAG

April, 1951

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: REVISED EDITION

FIFTEEN years ago, after the publication of the original edition of this book, my old friends and advisers, Sir Ambrose Heal, and Robert Symonds, urged me to begin making notes for a revised and enlarged edition. In the few years that passed before they died, Symonds in 1958 and Heal the following year, they suggested many lines of research and subjects for additional entries. The initial advice of such eminent furniture historians has been of incalculable value to me in preparing this new edition; and I am also indebted to many suggestions made by the late Sir Albert Richardson. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the generous help I have received from America, and in particular from Miss Alice Winchester, the Editor, and Miss Edith Gaines, the senior associate editor, of *Antiques*. To Mr E. Milby Burton, the Director of the Charleston Museum, S.C., I owe a special debt for extracting invaluable information from 18th century inventories and records in the Probate Court, Charleston County, and advertisements in the locally printed newspapers, and furnishing me with extensive notes on names and terms used by makers during the Colonial period, and after. To Professor Joseph Ewan, of Tulane University, New Orleans, I am grateful for suggesting areas of research that I have explored with productive results. My thanks are also due to Colonial Williamsburg Inc., for giving me access to the early Journals

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JOHN GLOAG

April 1967

PLAN AND PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

THIS is a short dictionary of furniture and various accessories of furnishing, made and used in England since A.D. 1100 and in North America since the mid-17th century. It is not a concise glossary or a comprehensive encyclopaedia. I have tried to make a book of reference that is more than a barren list of terms, old, new, authentic, or doubtful; and, inevitably, there are omissions. Like architecture, furniture is a visible record of social history. The most authoritative work on the subject is *The Dictionary of English Furniture*, in three superbly illustrated volumes, revised and enlarged by Mr Ralph Edwards, and issued in 1954. *The Shorter Dictionary of English Furniture*, published in 1964, condenses into one volume most of the entries of the earlier work. (Both are published by Country Life Ltd.)

In the original edition of my short dictionary, there were 1,764 entries; and these have been increased to over 2,600. Names and terms of European or Asiatic origin have been included only when they have influenced the design, materials, or nomenclature of English or American furniture. In attempting to define, and, where possible, to trace the age and derivation of the names and terms in Section III, I have tried to identify the contemporary word used for a piece of furniture, a structural or decorative part, a method of construction, or a material. Section III is the main part of the book, and is preceded by two others that deal briefly with: I, the *description*, and II, the *design* of furniture. Interest in the age and terminology of furniture without a corresponding interest in design may easily degenerate into a sterile obsession; an affliction that has transformed many otherwise normal men and women into human magpies. Only when a lively and general interest in design has informed the people of a country has there been a period of great and satisfying accomplishment in the making of furniture.

Following Section III are three supplementary sections, giving: IV, a short list of furniture makers in Britain and America; V, a short list of relevant books and periodicals; and, finally, in the form of a series of tables, VI, an outline of the types of furniture, the materials and craftsmen employed, and the influences that have affected design and promoted styles and fashions during the last eight and a half centuries.

SECTION I

The Description of Furniture

*

MANY of the terms now used for various articles of furniture are of mediaeval origin; some date from the 17th and 18th centuries; some have acquired fresh or additional meaning; and others have been invented by collectors and antique dealers. Invented terms are often deliberately picturesque though sometimes aptly descriptive; there is no harm in them so long as they are recognized as romantic creations or pieces of sales jargon; but as many of them were coined in the Victorian period or the present century, they have through years of use acquired a specious authority, which makes the task of identifying genuine terms from spurious almost as exacting as identifying genuine from spurious antiques. Even the word antique has changed its meaning in relation to architecture and furniture since the 17th century, when the distinction between antique and modern design was recorded by John Evelyn in 1654, when he mentioned a couch and seats being 'carv'd *à l'antique*' (*Diary*, May 8th), and a house 'built *à la moderne*' (June 9th). By antique, Evelyn meant the work of classical antiquity, and he also used the word ancient in that sense; while 'à la moderne' denoted the Renaissance style, as interpreted by Inigo Jones and his successors.

From the mid-17th to the late 19th century the word antique was applied to Greek and Roman remains. In the early 19th century the word ancient, hitherto used exclusively for Greek, Roman and Egyptian antiquities, was also applied to mediaeval architecture and furniture, and to much later periods. In 1836 the first English book on antique furniture was published, entitled *Specimens of Ancient Furniture*, with drawings by Henry Shaw and descriptions by Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick: both illustrator and author were Fellows of the Society of Antiquaries of London, and with a few exceptions the examples they selected were authentic, ranging from the 13th to the late 17th century.[1] In 1838 John Britton, F.S.A., attempted to establish the relative meanings of *ancient* and *antique* in *A Dictionary of Architecture and Archaeology of the Middle Ages*.[2] He defined *Antique* as 'A term used by classical and other writers on the fine arts to imply such works of sculpture and architecture as belong to the best times of the Greeks; hence it is synonymous with "beautiful", "most excellent", "perfect", etc. It is contradistinguished from old, or ancient, being applied only to that period in

[1] London: William Pickering.
[2] London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longmans.

which the best masters produced their most eminent works, particularly in architecture and sculpture. The buildings of the Egyptians, although of much higher antiquity than even those of the Greeks, are called *ancient*, not *antique*.' But under *Antiquities*, he admitted that 'the words *antique* and *antiquity*, are not clearly defined, or applied with precision'. They were not; but the word antique in the middle years of the 19th century was still used as Evelyn had used it two hundred years before. An *Encyclopaedia of Architecture*, issued in 1852, and described as 'A New and Improved edition of Nicholson's Dictionary of the Science and Practice of Architecture, Building, etc.',[1] includes this definition: 'Antique, in a general sense, denotes something ancient; but the term is chiefly employed by architects, sculptors, and painters, and applied to works, in their respective professions, executed by the Romans, or others anterior to their time. . . .' In the previous century Isaac Ware had defined Antique as 'a term at large expressing any thing antient, but appropriated to signify a building, part of a building, or other work, that has been executed by Greeks or Romans, when the arts were in their greatest purity and perfection among those people'.[2]

The 1836 edition of George Smith's *Cabinet-Makers' and Upholsterers' Guide* includes a plate, No. CXLVI, dated November 10, 1827, that illustrates two 'Antique Chairs'. One, described as a French chair, has cabriole legs, an upholstered seat, and a back elaborately carved with scroll-work: the other, labelled Indian, has turned legs, an upholstered seat, and is highly ornamented with unrelated and ill-chosen motifs. These designs have no relation to mediaeval or pre-Georgian furniture or to a classical antique prototype. The use of the word antique on this plate appears to be purely fortuitous; but it is the earliest use in connection with furniture that I have been able to trace. Antique had not replaced ancient in relation to furniture either at the Great Exhibition of 1851 or at the International Exhibition of 1862; and in 1869, in the second edition of Charles Locke Eastlake's *Hints on Household Taste*, ancient is used for the illustrated examples of old furniture. Robert W. Edis delivered a series of Cantor Lectures before the Society of Arts in 1880, that were published in book form the following year, under the title of *Decoration and Furniture of Town Houses*,[3] and when he referred to the revived interest in mid-18th century styles of furniture, he said: 'It is to be regretted, however, that the craze for all this kind of work should practically not only give the dealers the chance of charging exorbitant prices for old examples, but, to a certain extent, encourage a somewhat extravagant idea of the worth of modern imitations.'[4] He uses the word *old*; and perhaps in the 1880s the word *ancient* was beginning to sound a little mannered in connection with the fashionable pastime of collecting old furniture.

A book of drawings by William Sharp Ogden, an architect, published in 1888, was entitled *Sketches of Antique Furniture*, with a sub-title explaining

[1] Edited by Edward Lomax, C.E., and Thomas Gunyon, Architect and C.E., and published in two volumes by Peter Jackson, London, 1852.
[2] *A Complete Body of Architecture*, 1767 edition.
[3] London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1881.
[4] Lecture III, page 102.

that they were 'Taken from eighty examples, not hitherto illustrated, of chiefly 17th-century English carved oak furniture'. The book had a morally instructive purpose, and was intended to be both a protest against the practice of faking and a guide to those who wished to detect the difference between the genuine and the doctored article; but the drawings were neither helpful nor accomplished examples of draughtsmanship. In the introduction, the author said:

'The Fabrication of antique furniture, generally richly and sometimes tastefully carved, is an outrage of very old standing, and one the wary collector is well acquainted with. With reference to this, it is curious to note how, in deference to the more intelligent appreciation that has grown up of late years, there is practised a skilful but most mischievous falsification of really old furniture, by covering the plain faces with new carving, often well executed; this, copied from old examples and carefully manipulated, is too frequently passed off by the dealer as genuine old work and will serve as effectually to put the judicious collector on his mettle as that other species of forgery, the framing up into attractive pieces of furniture of carvings gathered from widely different sources.

'It is hoped that this little series of unpretentious sketches will be found of interest and service to the Student and Collector, they are taken from genuine and hitherto unpublished examples of the old middle-class furniture, such as rejoiced the heart of the citizen, the well-to-do yeoman, and the squire of yore, and similar to many which still remain the cherished heir-looms of old families—or buildings that have undergone no change for centuries.'[1]

Those paragraphs suggest that during the 1880s the antique furniture trade was enjoying the patronage both of 'the judicious collector' and of the undiscriminate innocents who amplified their enthusiasm for old things by adopting a word that seemed to be suffused with romance. The description 'antique furniture' was probably current among dealers and amateur collectors long before it was printed anywhere; but its adoption during the 20th century as a generic term for furniture over a hundred years old has made us forget how misleading and inappropriate it would have sounded to anybody with a classical education during the Victorian period.

Many misleading and inappropriate terms have gained popularity; often because some particular word evokes a vision of 'the good old times', or some article, made perhaps three hundred years ago, is assumed to have served a modern purpose. Post-dating the function of some old design does not offer such romantic possibilities as ante-dating it; and examples of this are afforded by monk's bench, or monk's seat, both modern names for what was originally called a chair-table, or a table-chairewise in the 16th and 17th centuries; and by refectory table, for the four- or six-legged Elizabethan or Jacobean dining table, described in contemporary inventories as a 'long table'. R. W. Symonds selects monk's bench and refectory table as characteristic examples of invented terms, suggesting that the latter was used 'in order to conjure up a picture of jovial monks dining. . . .'[2]

The word refectory, though still current in the 17th century, was generally used in an antiquarian or specialized sense, as when John Evelyn sent some

[1] London: B. T. Batsford.

[2] 'The Renaming of Old English Furniture', by R. W. Symonds, *The Antique Collector* vol. 19, No. 4, August 1948, page 127.

proposals to Robert Boyle for a philosophical society. His letter, dated September 3, 1659, described the daily programme which included, 'study till half an hour after eleven. Dinner in the refectory till one'.

Terms like monk's bench and refectory table are picturesque fakes. Wassail table is in the same class, and seems to have been first used by Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick, who applied it to a small, light, late 17th-century table. An example of romantic ante-dating is the name Glastonbury for a form of late 16th-century folding chair, of which the prototype is supposed to be a chair owned by the last Abbot of Glastonbury, who was executed in 1539, some fifty years before such chairs were in use. Drunkard's chair, courting chair, love-seat, grandfather clock and its offspring grandfather chair, all date from the late 19th century. Designers occasionally contributed to the general confusion by inventing obscure terms for various types of dual-purpose furniture; a practice that became increasingly popular during the 19th century. Of these, perhaps, the ambuscade bed is the most mysterious, for it suggests a bed that suddenly materializes and expands, like a genii from a bottle; but I have not been able to identify the design, which was sketchily described by the inventor, W. H. Leeds, in *The Architectural Magazine* in 1835.

The credulity of Victorian collectors about the names of the pieces they acquired is shared by their 20th-century successors. A revival of taste for Victorian furniture since the 1950s has given fresh encouragement to the invention of names, particularly for chairs. For instance, a variation of the balloon-back type has been called a buckle-back, not inappropriately, because the cross piece of the back is shaped and carved like a belt buckle; but the name was unknown to Victorian makers, and has originated I suspect in the United States. Cusp-back is another aptly descriptive invention. (*See* illustrations on page 701.) Names given by makers to different types of chair in the mid-19th century are still in current use in centres of manufacture like High Wycombe, such as Quaker, Caxton, pear-top, heart-back, crown-back, double-crown, and double-C. Pear-top, heart-back, crown-back, double-crown, and double-C are descriptive; but the origin of Quaker and Caxton is obscure. Trade names often have no meaning at all, and are the result of a brainwave on the part of some maker who wanted a distinctive and easily remembered label for his wares. It is at least possible that the unpretentious simplicity of the Quaker chair suggested the name; but it was used exclusively for one particular type of balloon-back chair with a rounded upholstered seat, and other equally simple balloon-back chairs were known as round backs, if the back was completely circular, or by other names.

A few names used in the furniture trade in the late 18th and early 19th centuries were derived from the designer of some particular article, or the customer for whom it was first made. Cobb's reading, writing, and drawing table, and the Croft writing cabinet are examples; the former designed by John Cobb, the cabinet-maker, the latter by the Rev. Sir Herbert Croft; then there are the Davenport, made by Gillows in the late 18th century for a Captain Davenport; the Rudd, an elaborately fitted 'reflecting dressing table', probably made specially for the notorious courtesan, Margaret Caroline Rudd; and the cabinet with six to twelve drawers of equal depth known as a

Self-portrait of William Hogarth, seated in a bended-back elbow chair, which was obviously part of the furnishing of his studio. Such chairs, both single and elbow, appear frequently in his work, and probably suggested the Victorian description, Hogarth chair. Reproduced from an engraving. The original painting is in the National Portrait Gallery.

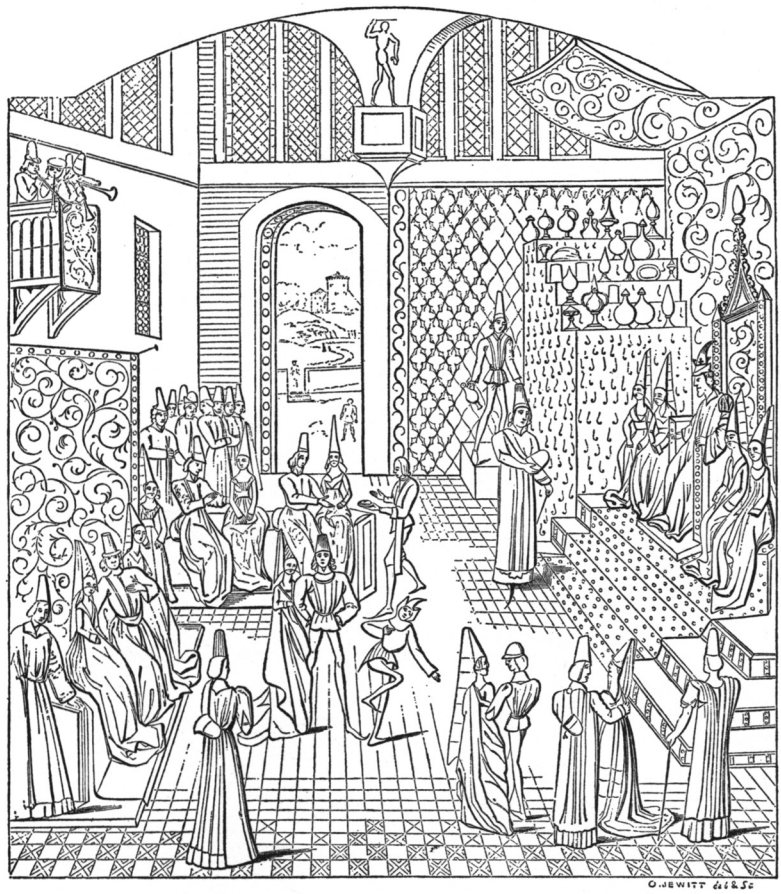
Wellington chest, that may or may not have been designed for the first Duke, but was certainly made and known by that name during his lifetime. Some attributions are casually fanciful, like the case of the Hogarth chair. At some time, probably in the mid-Victorian period, Hogarth's name became associated with a type of bended-back chair, made in the opening decades of the 18th century. The painter owned one or more of such chairs, and in his self-portrait he is seated in one with arms. He used chairs of this type in various drawings and paintings, and a good example is a single bended-back chair in his caricature of John Wilkes. Hogarth made the sketch for this caricature in the Court of Common Pleas when Wilkes appeared there; but finishing it off in his studio, he seated his victim in a bended-back chair—a type which had

Hogarth's caricature of John Wilkes, published on May 16, 1763. He is shown seated in a single bended-back chair of a type that had been out of date for thirty years. *From an engraving in the author's possession.*

then been out of fashion for some thirty years, for the caricature of Wilkes was published in 1763. This Victorian label for the bended-back chair implies that it was either designed by or was made for Hogarth; and although there may be some substance in the belief that Hogarth liked this type of chair, used it himself, and occasionally introduced it in his interiors, there was certainly no contemporary association of this design with his name. (*See* illustrations above, on previous page, and opposite.)

JOHN WILKES Eſq.r

Another portrait of John Wilkes, published in 1763, seated on a simple, single chair of the period, with square-sectioned straight legs, connected by stretchers, a vase-shaped splat in the back, and brass-headed nails on the seat. *From an engraving in the author's possession.*



Interior of a 15th century hall. At the right, on a dais approached by steps, is a high-backed chair of state, with a curved canopy above suspended from the ceiling. Beyond, a buffet or plate cupboard projects at right-angles from the wall, with a platform behind for the butler. At the left, guests are seated on a low-backed settle and a form. (Reproduced from a drawing in Parker's *Domestic Architecture in England*, XVth Century, Part I, copied from a MS. of Quintas Curtius in the Bodleian Library. Ref: 751 f 127R. A reproduction in colour from the original manuscript is included in *A Social History of Furniture Design*, by the author. Cassell, 1966.)

Descriptive terms used by furniture historians are in a different category: some relate to use, others to function, shape or decorative character. For example, a type of cupboard with a recessed superstructure made in the late 16th and throughout the 17th century is described by some writers as a hall cupboard if large, and a parlour cupboard, if smaller and more ornamental. These are convenient modern descriptions, based on the conjectural use of such articles; but the contemporary name was press cupboard. Architectural furniture, another term used by writers, first appeared in the 1830s, and applies

to large pieces of case furniture, generally those made during the Queen Anne and Early Georgian periods. The descriptions, Lion Mahogany or Lion Period, denote a phase of Early Georgian design when lions' masks were carved on the knees of cabriole legs, the arms of chairs, and the underframing of side tables: both were coined by Haldane Macfall in 1909. Some terms have an architectural origin, such as anthemion back, baluster back, frieze rail, guttae feet, and pediment; and many now in use are derived from some form of ornamental device, like eagle bracket or table, eagle mirror, and dolphin foot. They are not contemporary terms, but are included because they are popular and accepted descriptions. Dolphin hinge, also derived from an ornamental motif, is a description used by cabinet-makers, and, like swan-neck hinge, mentioned by Sheraton, is a traditional term.

Many of the terms still used by cabinet-makers and upholsterers in England and America were current in the 18th century. Craftsmen on both sides of the Atlantic spoke the same language, used the same technical terms, and followed the same fashions. Some familiar terms were very much older, and of these the word cupboard has a long history of varied meanings, though originally it meant exactly what it sounded like: a board for cups. In the second half of the 16th century, William Harrison's use of the word garnish in his *Description of England*, implied that cupboards were open shelves upon which plate was displayed, like the example shown in the drawing of a 15th century hall opposite, made from a manuscript in the Bodleian Library, which projects at right angles from a wall, with a platform behind for the butler. The relevant passage from Harrison has two references to the furnishing and garnishing of cupboards with silver vessels and other plate, that specify the function and suggest the open character of the cupboard.

'Certes, in noble mens houses it is not rare to see abundance of Arras, rich hangings of tapistrie, silver vessell, and so much other plate, as may furnish sundrie cupbords, to the summe oftentimes of a thousand or two thousand pounds at the least: whereby the value of this and the rest of their stuffe dooth grow to be [almost] inestimable. Likewise in the houses of knights, gentlemen, merchantmen, and some other wealthie citizens, it is not geson to behold generallie their great provision of tapistrie, Turkie worke, pewter, brasse, fine linen, and thereto costlie cupbords of plate, worth five or six hundred [or a thousand] pounds, to be deemed by estimation. But as herein all these sorts doo far exceed their elders and predecessors, [and in neatness and curiositie the merchant all other;] so in time past, the costlie furniture staied there, whereas now it is descended yet lower, even unto the inferiour artificers and manie farmers, who [by vertue of their old and not of their new leases] have [for the most part] learned also to garnish their cupbords with plate, their [joined] beds with tapistrie and silke hangings, and their tables with [carpets &] fine naperie, whereby the wealth of our countrie [God be praised therefore, and give us grace to imploie it well] dooth infinitelie appeare.'[1]

The original name of an article of furniture, often based upon its function, is nearly always agreeably descriptive; though occasionally some later term is more convenient. For instance, bureau bookcase is more compact than desk and bookcase, which was used by mid-18th century cabinet-makers, though

[1] *Description of England in Shakespeare's Youth*, by William Harrison, edited from the first two editions of Holinshed's *Chronicle*, A.D. 1577–87, by Frederick J. Furnivall. Published for the New Shakespere Society by N. Trübner & Co., London, 1877, pages 238–9.

Mediaeval Furnishing. 15th century interior, drawn by F. W. Fairholt, from a manuscript of Lydgate's Metrical Life of St Edmund (MS. Harl. No. 2278), included in *A History of Domestic Manners and Sentiments in England,* by Thomas Wright (London: 1862).

bureau bookcase may well have been a contemporary term. In the *Memoirs of William Hickey* a brief description of one of the cabins of the *Plassey*, an East Indiaman, includes 'a beautiful bureau and bookcase . . .' and the text suggests that Hickey was referring to a single article, and not to separate pieces of furniture.[1] There is a later reference by Hickey to 'a large bureau with a book-case top'.[2] Sheraton uses the term for a small bureau surmounted by a couple of open bookshelves, an entirely different article from the tall bureau bookcases with glazed doors in the upper part, for which designs are shown both in Chippendale's *Director* and Hepplewhite's *Guide*, where they are called desk and bookcase, and also—in the *Guide*—secretary and bookcase. Sheraton describes his version of a bureau bookcase under the entry Bureau in *The Cabinet Dictionary* (1803), on page 111, and on Plate 25 illustrates an example. John Claudius Loudon uses the description for the tall type with glazed doors, in his *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture and Furniture* (1833), proving that the term was current in the 19th century, though not in the sense in which Sheraton used it.

[1] London: Hurst & Blackett, Ltd. (10th edition, 1948). Vol. I (1749–75). Chapter X, page 121.
[2] *Ibid.* Vol. III (1782–90). Chapter ii, page 21.

Some names have changed their meaning completely in the course of a century. The word toilet, for example, was a common abbreviation for toilet table in the late 17th and 18th centuries; and toilet table an alternative term for dressing table, occasionally called a toiletta. (*See* illustrations on pages 672 and 673.) William Hickey uses the abbreviation when he says 'her own woman delivered a letter which she had just found upon Mrs Horneck's toilet'.[1] Janet Schaw, describing her visit to Antigua and St Christopher, in 1774, recorded that 'We have seen everybody of fashion in the Island, and our toilet is loaded with cards of Invitation . . .'[2] At some time during the following century, probably in the late '60s or '70s—the exact date is unknown—the word toilet was adopted in America as a polite name for a water closet, and is used throughout the United States in that sense today; while the term dressing-table has supplanted toilet table, save when it is used to describe some antique example. The term survived far into the Victorian period in Britain, and in the popular series of handbooks, *Art at Home*, edited by W. J. Loftie and published in the late '70s, the volume on *The Bedroom and the Boudoir*, written by Lady Mary Anne Broome, better known as Lady Barker, devoted Chapter VI to 'The Toilet'.[3] The author opens that chapter by asserting that 'There is no prettier object in either bedroom or boudoir than the spot where "the toilet stands displayed".' There is no reference to dressing tables; only to toilet tables. The term dressing table was current in the 18th century, and three specifications are included under that name in *The Prices of Cabinet Work* (1797 edition). Loudon uses it in his *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture and Furniture*, both in the first edition, 1833, and in the supplement to the 1846 edition, compiled by his widow; but Eastlake, in his *Hints on Household Taste*, first published in 1868, reverts to toilet table. In the United States, the sanitary significance of the word toilet checked the fluctuations of taste in the descriptions used for toilet or dressing tables that had occurred in England, where they could be freely used because lavatory had become accepted as the genteel and (for foreign visitors to the country) hopelessly misleading euphemism for water closet.

Names and types of furniture increased in number during the 18th century, and were multiplied when makers and designers like Chippendale, Ince and Mayhew, Hepplewhite, and Sheraton issued books of their designs, which were partly trade catalogues directed to potential customers, and partly copy books for sale to the furniture trade. Those books recorded many names in current use among cabinet-makers and upholsterers, such as saddle cheek, that occurs in Hepplewhite's *Guide* (1788), for a high-backed easy chair with saddle-shaped cheeks or wings; and Shearer's harlequin table, in *The Cabinet-Makers' London Book of Prices* (1788). Chippendale's book, first published in 1754, was called *The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director*. It was an obvious catalogue, not only of his works, but of designs that he was prepared to execute. The third edition, published in 1762, fully justified the sub-title

[1] *Ibid.* Vol. I (1749–75). Chapter xxiv, page 307.

[2] *Journal of a Lady of Quality: being the Narrative of a Journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Caroline, and Portugal, in the years 1774 to 1776.* (Yale University Press, 1921). Chapter II, page 93.

[3] London: Macmillan and Co., 1878.

which described it as 'a large collection of the most elegant and useful designs of household furniture in the most fashionable taste'. It included many newly named articles, of which some remained and some disappeared; others, like the term 'commode table', represented a tradesman's catalogue label, for a commode table could equally well be a kneehole table, or a combination of chest and cupboard. What Chippendale was pleased to call a 'French commode table' was a chest of drawers, shaped in imitation of contemporary French design.

Fresh labels derived from old names followed the classical revivals of the 18th century. Those revivals were stimulated by the excavation of the buried Roman cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii; by wealthy travellers, like the members of the Society of Dilettanti, who visited the former provinces of the Roman Empire and collected antique objects in the Balkans, Anatolia, Syria, and Egypt; by architects like Robert and James Adam, who made detailed studies and drawings of classical ruins in Italy and Dalmatia (the modern Yugoslavia); and by such works as *The Antiquities of Athens*, by James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, who published the first of their four volumes in 1762, thus generating the Greek Revival. Recurrent waves of taste for Oriental art had, since the mid-17th century, introduced and established many names that are now commonplace, but were originally modish innovations. Of these tea table and china cabinet are still with us; while japanning and lacquering have survived as technical terms for various surface treatments. The Far East has contributed many names and terms to furniture and furnishing, apart from those implanted by the habit of tea drinking and china collecting. Close association with India was responsible for several names, such as cot, which is derived from the Hindu word *Khāt*, and was adapted by Anglo-Indians and introduced at some time during the 18th century. Another article of furniture once fairly common, but now comparatively rare, is the teapoy, which comes from the Hindu word *Tīpāi*. Professor Weekley points out that the teapoy has been altered 'under the influence of *tea*, from an original which is ultimately identical with "tripod" while a *charpoy*, or light bedstead, is etymologically a "quadruped".'[1]

Sometimes articles of established design and use were introduced, which, when adopted in England, became the progenitors of a large family of recognizably related pieces of furniture, that were often described, rather confusingly, by one all-embracing term. An example of this is the ottoman, that came from the Middle East in the late 18th century, and appeared in Thomas Hope's *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1807), as a continuous wall seat (see page 483), and in George Smith's *Collection of Designs for Household Furniture* (1808), in two forms, as a long, backless cushioned seat, for a gallery (Plate 67), and a long seat with a low back, for a music room (Plate 68). During the early part of the 19th century, its exotic character, suggestive of wicked Eastern luxury, was modified by giving it a variety of forms. Instead of remaining a long, low seat with an air of lascivious abandon, it was briskly buttoned up in the most respectable upholstery of that name, its level was raised, castors sprouted from its feet, it became circular, and,

[1] *Something About Words*, by Ernest Weekley. (London: John Murray, 1935. Chapter X, page 187.

later, with a low back, it was fitted snugly into a corner, thus becoming the ancestor of what is always presumed to be a typical English invention of late Victorian times, the cosy corner. The circular ottoman was a simplified version of the circular French sofa called a *borne*.

The Gothic taste, that fluctuated during the 18th century, contributed its quota of descriptive and archaic terms, occasionally suggested by some borrowed architectural feature, like the 'embattled' bookcase included in the second edition of *Genteel Household Furniture in the Present Taste* (undated, but probably published in 1765); though the presumed mediaeval use of an article was also a potent source of inspiration.

Furniture made between the mid-18th and early 19th century is popularly associated with three designers: Chippendale, Hepplewhite, and Sheraton. Their names have survived because of the influence of their published books. Chippendale's *Director* was a best-seller in its day; the first edition appearing in 1754, with 160 plates; the second in 1755, with the same contents; and a third and enlarged edition in 1762. J. T. Smith, in *Nollekens and his Times*, includes a paragraph about Chippendale in the second volume of his book under the section called 'Recollections of Public Characters'. He lists the houses in St Martin's Lane, and comes to No. 60, which had been known formerly by its sign, 'The Chair'; but at the time Smith was writing, the premises were occupied by a builder named Stuteley. Describing them as extensive premises, Smith says they 'were formerly held by Chippendale, the most famous Upholsterer and Cabinet-maker of his day, to whose folio work on household-furniture the trade formerly made constant reference. It contains, in many instances, specimens of the style of furniture so much in vogue in France in the reign of Louis XIV but which for many years past has been discontinued in England. However, as most fashions come round again, I should not wonder, notwithstanding the beautifully classic change brought in by Thomas Hope, Esq., if we were to see the unmeaning scroll and shell-work, with which the furniture of Louis's reign was so profusely incumbered, revive; when Chippendale's book will again be sought after with redoubled avidity, and, as many of the copies must have been sold as waste paper, the few remaining will probably bear rather a high price'.[1]

He was right. Chippendale's published designs, particularly those which he had styled 'French', had a noticeable effect upon the form of furniture during the mid-19th century; and by the end of that century, respect for the magic of his name was far more potent than the example of his work. To the late Victorians and Edwardians he had ceased to be a man—he had become a label. Chippendale's distinctive terms for contemporary modes and various articles were forgotten, though some of his ideas supplied descriptive prefixes; thus collectors and dealers spoke of 'Chinese Chippendale', and 'Gothic Chippendale', and as more and more people thought of him, not as a great chair maker and cabinet-maker, but as a style, his name was arbitrarily attached to much of the furniture that was made in the middle decades of the 18th century: even the heavy, elaborately carved furniture made in Ireland during that period was called 'Irish Chippendale'.

[1] *Nollekens and His Times*, by J. T. Smith. (London: Henry Colburn, 1828). Vol. II, page 238.

The other two designers whose names are associated with a recognizable style, are George Hepplewhite and Thomas Sheraton. Hepplewhite, who had been apprenticed to Gillow of Lancaster, died in 1786, and two years after his death *The Cabinet Maker and Upholsterers' Guide* was published by the firm of A. Hepplewhite and Co., Cabinet Makers, under which title his widow, Alice, had carried on his business. Many of the designs included in the *Guide* were probably originated by Richard Gillow, but it is Hepplewhite's name that has become the popular, accepted label for much of the furniture that was characteristic of the last three decades of the 18th century. Through the courtesy of Waring and Gillow, Ltd, I have been allowed to examine some of the Gillow records at Lancaster,[1] and have seen in them many of the designs that are usually attributed to Hepplewhite or Shearer. It seems to me highly probable that the shield back chair, with which the name of Hepplewhite has often been associated, was first designed by the firm of Gillow.

Sheraton also has given his name to the styles that prevailed in the last decade of the 18th and the opening years of the 19th centuries; though most of his designs were on paper, and unlike Chippendale and Hepplewhite, he was not a maker publishing an illustrated catalogue. Born at Stockton-on-Tees in 1751, he had worked as a journeyman cabinet-maker; but after settling in London about 1790, he devoted his time to drawing and authorship. He was far from resembling such prosperous and fashionable master makers as Vile and Seddon, and with inappropriate pathos he disclosed his modest circumstances, under the entry of Cabinet, in *The Cabinet Dictionary*, when he wrote: 'I can assure the reader though I am thus employed in racking my invention to design fine and pleasing cabinet work, I can be well content to sit on a wooden bottom chair myself, provided I can but have common food and raiment wherewith to pass through life in peace'.[2] Some of the work attributed to him is either borrowed from or based upon that of Robert Adam and other contemporary designers and makers; but though much of it was original, the label Sheraton is as loose and inexact as the labels Chippendale and Hepplewhite. Sheraton published *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterers' Drawing Book*, in parts between 1791 and 1793, a second edition appearing in 1794, and a third in 1802. He published *The Cabinet Dictionary* in 1803, and his last work, *The Cabinet Maker and Artist's Encyclopaedia*, was to have been issued in one hundred and twenty-five parts, but Sheraton died in 1806 when only a few parts had been printed.

As a record of terms current in the cabinet- and chair-making trade at the beginning of the 19th century, *The Cabinet Dictionary* is invaluable. The entries suggest that as furniture design was still dependent upon classical architecture, a working knowledge of the orders and their various members and characteristic ornaments was an essential part of a cabinet-maker's technical education. Many entries are devoted to materials and such processes as varnishing, polishing, and gilding, and there is a long entry for furnishing, from which some quotations are made in Section II. Sheraton occasionally invented names for special designs, such as curricle, for a type of armchair,

[1] I saw these records in 1949: they have since been acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum.

[2] *Opus cit.* page 118.

and explained his reasons for doing so; but *The Cabinet Dictionary* is disappointing when he attempts to explain the derivation of some name that was in general use. He does little to clear up the mystery of the name Canterbury, though his statement that it had 'of late years been applied to some pieces of cabinet work, because the bishop of that see first gave orders for these pieces', implies that the term was then old enough for its origin to be conjectural. Sheraton does not say whether the original canterbury was for serving food or for storing music. He illustrates both types, and has a separate entry for supper-canterbury. Again, he dismisses the word cabriole, which was used in the late 18th century for a type of easy chair with a semi-circular back, as 'a French easy chair—from the name of the person who invented or introduced them'.

Many of the illustrations in *The Cabinet Dictionary* had been previously published in *The Drawing Book;* some were subsequently incorporated in *The Cabinet-Maker and Artist's Encyclopaedia.* The numbering of the plates in *The Cabinet Dictionary* does not always correspond with the references in the various entries. Sheraton's engraver and printer were often out of step, and although he includes nearly five pages of corrections (335 to 339), he misses a good many errors. Where subjects from the plates have been reproduced in Section III, the correct number of the plate and not the number of Sheraton's reference is given: for example, the sideboard table shown on page 614 is from Plate 71, but in the text of his entry under that heading Sheraton refers to this design as appearing on Plate 73. Though this makes *The Cabinet Dictionary* exasperating as a work of reference, its interest and value are not impaired.

Some of the trade terms used in the latter part of the 18th century are ignored by Sheraton; he may have regarded them as commonplace technicalities unworthy of mention or explanation, but it would have been interesting to have had a contemporary view of the origin of the term Marlboro' leg and the exact nature of a toad back moulding. Both are mentioned in the 1797 edition of *The Prices of Cabinet Work, with Tables and Designs,* as revised and corrected by a Committee of Masters Cabinet Makers.

The Marlboro' leg was a trade name for a tapered leg of square section. A faint clue to its possible origin is supplied by the wording of the dedication in *The Universal System of Household Furniture,* by Ince and Mayhew, which is addressed to George Spencer, the fourth Duke of Marlborough. In the dedication, the authors suggest that the Duke had a close interest in design. This is what they wrote:

'. . . Being sensible of Your Grace's extensive Knowledge, in the Arts and Sciences, but more particularly in Drawing and your being ever willing to promote, and encourage Industry and Ingenuity, will justly account for our presumption in claiming the protection of so worthy a Patron to this work, which if so fortunate as to merit your Grace's approbation will be esteem'd as the greatest Honour ever conferred on your Graces most Respectful, most Obedient and very faithful servants, Mayhew and Ince.'

The Marlboro' leg may have been so called as a compliment to the Duke's artistic sensibilities. The plates of the work were issued between 1759 and 1762, and the book was presumably published in that year, though the title page is undated.

Apart from imported or adopted terms, those derived from the names of famous, notorious, or obscure people, or linked with some original use, are the terms suggested by the shapes that have an obvious affinity with the animal kingdom or the insect world. Whether contemporary or modern, such terms are frequently appropriate. Of these butterfly table, giraffe piano, and kangaroo sofa are the most striking. Some names for contours or ornamental details are suggested by avian, reptilian, or animal characteristics; such as the swan-neck pediment, the bird's beak lock, bird's beak moulding, and the serpentine front. These and similar terms, are in a class apart from those derived from the reproduction of some animal feature, such as the claw, hoof, or paw. There are also what may be called anatomical terms, like the kidney table.

In a different class from the names given to specific pieces or parts of furniture are the terms used in woodworking, both for materials and their condition, for tools, and for various forms of craftsmanship. That some of these terms have been suggested originally by shapes and colours and the nature of some operation in carpentry, cabinet-making, or upholstery, is obvious; but others are baffling. Perhaps one of the strangest is the term 'bodger', that occurs in Buckinghamshire as a description of the turners of chair parts who work in the beech woods and bring their turned stuff for assembly to chair manufacturers in High Wycombe. It is a regional term, apparently of recent origin, and is not elsewhere associated with the work of turners. Boger or Bodger is an English surname, both variations representing 'an archaic spelling of Bowyer', according to Professor Weekley.[1] This surname is found in the northern counties of England, and it is possible that some members of the Bodger family moved south to Buckinghamshire during the late 18th or early 19th centuries; though it seems unlikely that they should have given their name to the practitioners of an established craft, even if they became engaged in it. The oldest industry in High Wycombe was paper making, that had been carried on in several mills there since the late 17th century. It was during the first thirty years of the 19th century that chair making was developed on an increasingly large scale. According to the returns made to Parliament under the Population Act of 1801, the total number of inhabitants in the town and parish was 4,248, and of these 724 only were employed in trade, manufacture, and handicraft. This is recorded in Lyson's *Magna Britannia*, published in 1806.[2] There is no reference to chair making or turnery. But in 1831 Samuel Lewis, in *A Topographical Dictionary of England*, states that chairs 'in great quantities' were made at High Wycombe. It seems likely that at some time during the early 19th century the term bodger came into use in the locality; and I am indebted to Mr L. John Mayes, the Librarian/Curator of the Public Library, Art Gallery, and Museum at High Wycombe, for an interesting suggestion regarding a possible origin of its use in that district. In conversation with an old paper maker, in High Wycombe, he mentioned the term 'bodger', and the reply was that paper makers, who were the really skilled craftsmen, had first applied this term to the wood turners,

[1] *The Romance of Names*, by Ernest Weekley. (London: John Murray, 1914.) Chapter XV, page 149.
[2] Vol. I, page 675.

the phrase used being 'bodging about in the woods and their poky little sheds in the town'. As paper making in High Wycombe is older by a century or more than chair-making, this explanation, which was quite new to Mr Mayes, does sound plausible. Incidentally, the old man's final words were to the effect that paper making was a clean trade, and paper makers 'allus did look down on they bodgers, dirty folk all on 'em, allus'.

Bodger, an old English word, has sometimes been used to describe a pedlar; and in this sense it may first have been applied to the Buckinghamshire turners, who peddled their wares to the chair makers who assembled them; and then loaded them on to farm carts and peddled them as 'White Wycombes' through the countryside and the Midland counties. Halliwell, in *A Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words*, under the word Bodge, gives as one of its meanings, 'To begin a task and not complete it'. This specifically describes what the bodger does: he begins the task of chair making, by turning the legs, stretchers, and back spindles, on his pole lathe, but his work is completed by the chair maker, who assembles those turned members. This is the most complimentary explanation of a term, which, upon the face of it, appears derogatory. (Halliwell compiled his *Dictionary* in the mid-19th century, and dated the Preface to the first edition, February 1, 1847.)

Some words relating to the nature and quality of materials have probably survived from mediaeval times. In George Sturt's book, *The Wheelwright's Shop*, there is a reference to the word 'crips', that was used by a very old craftsman named Cook, whom the author describes. 'When a new plane or chisel proved over-brittle, so that a nick chinked out of it and needed grinding wholly away, Cook used to look disapprovingly at the broken edge and mutter "Crips". What was that word? I never asked. Besides, Cook was too deaf. But after some years it dawned upon me that he had meant crisp.'[1]

Now, the word 'crips' occurs in Chaucer's poem, *The House of Fame*, in these lines (1386–87):

> 'Hir heer, that oundry was and crips,
> As burned gold hit shoon to see.'

In Skeat's edition of Chaucer, 'crips' is defined in the glossary as 'crisp'; but Chaucer uses the word 'crisp' as well, in line 824 of *The Romaunt of the Rose:* 'Crisp was his heer . . .' The transposition of the final letters of a word often occurs, and it would perhaps be too facile to suggest that old Cook in George Sturt's book was using 14th-century English. But many old building terms and names for woods, and, indeed, the uses for woods, have persisted from mediaeval times. Chaucer writes of 'corbets', and the reference is obviously to corbels.

> 'Ne how they hatte in masoneries,
> As, corbets fulle of imageries.'
> (*The House of Fame*, line 1304.]

[1] Cambridge University Press, 1923. Section XI, page 56.

A SHORT DICTIONARY OF FURNITURE

In *The Parlement of Foules*, Chaucer gives a detailed list of woods and their uses (lines 176–80):

> 'The bilder ook, and eek the hardy asshe;
> The piler elm, the cofre unto careyne;
> The boxtree piper; holm to whippes lasshe;
> The sayling firr; the cipres, deth to pleyne;
> The sheter ew, the asp for shaftes pleyne;
> The olyve of pees, and eek the drunken vyne,
> The victor palm, the laurer to devyne.'

This almost constitutes a mediaeval woodworker's guide. The names of many trees have remained unchanged since Chaucer recorded them, and in *The Canterbury Tales* ('The Knightes Tale', lines 2921–23), he gives 'ook, firre, birch, asp, alder, holm, popler, wilow, elm, plane, ash, box, chasteyn [chestnut], lind [lime], laurer, mapul, thorn, beech, hasel, ew, whippletree [the cornelian cherry or dogwood]'. In *The House of Fame* 'a table of sicamour' is mentioned (line 1278); but although Chaucer refers occasionally to chests, tables, chairs—in the sense of state chairs or thrones—stools, and benches (incidentally using the last term both for a seat and, in 'The Shipmannes Tale', line 1548, for a table), it is apparent that the richness and variety of mediaeval furnishing depended upon a lavish use of fabrics, and through the names of many of these, and of the basic articles of furniture, continuity with the Middle Ages is still preserved in our homes.

The social standing of some terms was changed during the Victorian period, and those changes hardened into genteel conventions, that are still respected by some fastidious people, who for example would never use the word mirror, except as a compound, such as shaving-mirror, although it is a mediaeval word which Chaucer used and spelt as *mirour*. I doubt whether many of those who now reject it as a non-U term can identify a mediaeval ancestor of their own. A detailed study of the social significance of various terms was made by Professor Alan S. C. Ross, in an essay on 'Linguistic class-indicators', that appeared in 1954 in the Finnish philological periodical, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, and was later shortened, simplified, entitled 'U and Non-U', and included in *Noblesse Oblige*,[1] an entertaining and informative collection of essays edited by Nancy Mitford.

[1] London: 1956. Hamish Hamilton Ltd. Reissued by Penguin Books in 1959 and reprinted many times.

SECTION II

The Design of Furniture

*

FOR over eight hundred years, from before the Norman Conquest until the mid-20th century, the history of furniture design in England has been a record of fluctuating independence for craftsmen, alternating with periods of direct or remote control by architects or fashionable, non-executant designers. The periods of independence, when craftsmen ordered their own affairs, regulated their working conditions, and established standards of workmanship, were won by the cumulative skill of many generations of workers in wood. The periods of control have followed some great social or economic change, such as the revolution that took place in the first half of the 16th century, when the structure of society was altered and a new mercantile class came into power. That class discovered in the Italian Renaissance and its various manifestations in Europe a stimulant of remarkable potency. It went to the heads of the new, well-travelled English aristocrats; and their 'Italianate' taste, imposed upon their houses and furniture, was satisfied by variously malformed versions of the external features of classical architecture.

Craftsmen may have struggled against those fashions in ornament; the furniture of the second half of the 16th century frequently suggests a conflict of purpose; for a sturdy form is often bedizened with applied decoration that is ill chosen, ill placed, and executed without sympathy or understanding. The furniture is structurally as robust as the society that it served; but the profusion and meretricious character of the ornamentation disclose an intemperate appetite for foreign ideas accompanied by an incapacity to digest them. Elizabethan and Jacobean furniture resembles that of the Victorian period, which was also robust, overburdened with applied ornament, and made to satisfy the taste of a rich and undiscriminating class. The Victorian appetite was for Romantic Gothic ideas, derived from the mediaeval civilization that had ended with the Tudor kings.

During the middle decades of the 17th century, craftsmen regained some of their independence, for fashionable taste was in eclipse; the Puritans would have none of it; they believed in austerity for its own sake, and the sturdy simplicity of furniture reflected their beliefs. By the end of the 17th century, fashion was again in charge of furniture design; the introduction of the highly-skilled craft of veneering had established a new specialist craftsman, the cabinet-maker; and the architect was gradually assuming an overall responsibility for design.

To architects practising in the 18th century, it seemed eminently right and

obvious that they should be the guardians of taste and directors of design. Their fitness for these offices was sanctioned by a classical precedent; and classical precedents were highly respected in the Augustan age. So they were prepared to apply literally to all aspects of their contemporary environment their belief that architecture was the mistress art; and they would have accepted as a basic truth the views H. G. Wells once condensed into a memorable sentence, when he wrote: 'Painting, sculpture, all furnishing and decoration, are the escaped subsidiaries of architecture, and may return, very largely to their old dependence.'[1]

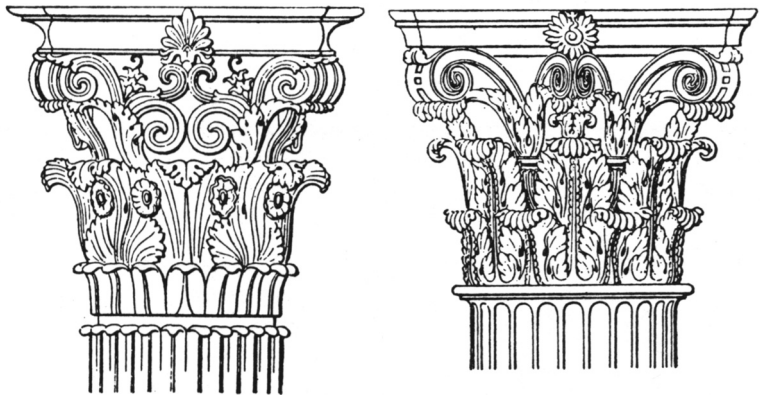
During the Graeco-Roman civilization, the relationship between furniture and architecture was established and maintained in terms of design, and the dependence of the former was ornamental rather than structural. Greek and Roman furniture was shaped and ornamented in accordance with a set of conventions that employed a variety of formalized natural objects. From the earliest times men have copied the shapes of plants and animals; in a static civilization such shapes become first petrified and dully repetitive, and finally debased; in a lively, growing, intellectually and artistically alert civilization they are fluent, expressing with an infinity of subtle inflections the vitality of the men who carved or painted them and the people who used and appreciated the articles they adorned. Both the fauna and flora of furniture began their evolution in the old kingdom of Egypt, certainly as early as 3,000 B.C., perhaps much earlier. Centuries later, in the service of the classic orders of architecture, they developed an apparently inexhaustible decorative quality, of a kind that the frustrating rigidity of Egyptian design had never permitted. The original Greek orders, Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian, were adapted by the Romans, who added two others: the Tuscan and the Composite, the last allowing abundant scope for the exuberant vulgarity that occasionally disfigured Roman architecture. Nearly all the ornamentation associated with the five orders was derived from organic sources: the labryinth, or Greek fret, and the bead and reel being among the few devices that were independently conceived, without reference to any natural prototype.

Of all the forms adopted and employed with various refinements, that of the acanthus leaf became ubiquitous: it has, since its use in the Greek Corinthian order, spread to all parts of the habitable globe, and may indeed be regarded as symbolic of the formalism and discipline of classic architecture. In the fourth of his ten books on Architecture, Marcus Vitruvius Pollio records a legend about the origin of the Corinthian capital. According to this story, the elegant form incorporating the feathery acanthus leaves was suggested to one Callimachus, whom the Athenians called Catatechnos, when he was passing the tomb of a young Corinthian girl, whose nurse had collected in a basket a number of small articles of which the dead girl had been fond, and had put them on her tomb, with a tile on the top of the basket to preserve the contents. The basket had been placed accidentally on a root of an acanthus plant, which, in the spring, put forth its stems and foliage, and in the course of growth reached the corners of the tile, forming volutes at the extremities. Callimachus was so impressed by the sight of this basket sur-

[1] *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, by H. G. Wells (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1932). Chapter xiv, page 711.

THE CORINTHIAN CAPITAL

Right: Legendary origin, according to Vitruvius. (From *The Encyclopaedia of Architecture*, by Lomax and Gunyon.)



Left: Greek Corinthian capital, from the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates, Athens. *Right:* Roman Corinthian capital from the temple of Mars Ultor. *After Nicholson.*

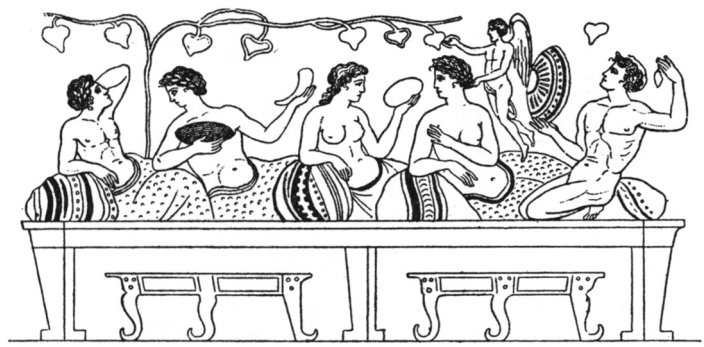
rounded by delicate foliage, that he was prompted to invent the Corinthian order. It is obvious from the context that Vitruvius liked this story, even though he may not have taken it seriously.

While a picturesque fable may have stimulated conjecture about the origin of familiar forms, there are many obvious models in nature to encourage such speculation: for instance, it has been suggested that the shape of the nautilus shell is imitated by the scroll or spiral ornaments that form the volutes on the Ionic and Corinthian capitals. The volute is an ancient device, which appears on the capitals of some Egyptian columns, and was used by Persian architects in the palaces of Persepolis. In Egypt the buds and flowers of the lotus and papyrus were as popular as the acanthus ultimately became in the Graeco-Roman civilization; and the tendrils, leaves, and grapes of the vine have since the earliest times provided a motif for the carver and decorator.

The honeysuckle or palmette inspired a type of Greek ornament, which supplied to the Doric order the motif for those ornamental blocks called antefixae, that were set upright at regular intervals along the lower edge of a roof to hide the ends of the tiles, and was used to decorate the necking on the Ionic capital, appearing also on the upper part of some Corinthian capitals, and on entablatures and elsewhere in Greek and Roman architecture.

Many ornamental and structural forms that were ultimately carved in stone were probably tried out first in other materials; but sometimes a shape may have been brought to its final perfection in stone. In Greece the klismos may

The Greek klismos provided the prototype of the sabre leg, and inspired the design of chairs in the late 18th and early 19th century. (*See* illustrations on pages 373, and 375.)



A Greek festival, showing a dining couch with loose cushions, and small tables below, with a rudimentary form of cabriole leg. Drawn from the Hamilton vases, and illustrated in Fosbroke's *Encyclopaedia of Antiquities* (1825), Vol. II.

have evolved from a stone prototype. The elegant concave curve below some of the solid stone seats in the Theatre of Dionysos at Athens is reproduced in the legs of chairs shown in detail on many Greek vases. The free standing chair in ancient Greece may have developed from the marble seat, set against a wall, or carved complete from one solid block of stone. Although some of the later refinements of form were probably derived from stone models, as early as the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., stools and chairs with turned legs are depicted on the reliefs of the Parthenon and on some Athenian tombs.

Examples of Roman furniture have survived, in marble and bronze. They are recognizably a part of the architectural background, for the Roman architect, like the architect in Georgian England, was the master designer, exerting control over the form and colour and ornamentation of houses and their contents. The Roman patrician would have found himself very much at home visually, in an 18th century English town or country house. Though he might have been rather surprised by open fireplaces—for Roman houses

were centrally heated—and have found the custom of sitting on chairs at meal times awkward—for, like the Greeks, the Romans reclined upon cushioned couches when they ate—he would have been agreeably impressed by the various appointments and the proportions and decoration of the furniture. Both Roman patrician and Georgian gentleman would have regarded mediaeval furnishing, and the mediaeval interior, as barbarous.

After the collapse of western Roman civilization, the refinements of life disappeared. In Saxon England, architecture reverted to primitive woodwork, to wattle and daub walls, and once again furniture began to evolve from the simplest beginnings, as it had evolved centuries earlier in Egypt and Asia Minor and Greece.

At first, furniture was structurally dependent upon building, because it was an extension of or closely associated with the wall. Receptacles were put against the walls of a room, or were hollowed out of them, and covered by a crude wooden door. Beds were built as a series of cabins against a wall, and closed with curtains or doors; forms and benches stood along a wall. From the days of the Anglo-Saxon states, and throughout the Middle Ages, furniture and building remained in this close relationship, from which furniture only escaped during the 15th century. For luxury, and the alleviation of discomfort, fabrics were used. For example, the bench placed against the wall was provided with a dorcer, a piece of fabric hung on the wall against which people could lean back. Recesses were furnished with seats; and by the early 16th century the bay window was provided with a fixed wooden seat that was supported and backed by a continuation of the panelling that covered and took the chill off the walls of a room. After the beginning of the 16th century, furniture was structurally separated from the wall, and became free standing, although certain pieces still stood against a wall. (Since the mid-20th century, designers of furniture have resumed a mediaeval dependence upon the wall, for the small rooms of modern houses and flats demand the use of fitted furniture, and architects, who have regained some of their former control of furniture design, make provision for such fitments.)

The evolution of the bed and bedstead from pre-Norman times illustrates the long battle for warmth and comfort, from the Anglo-Saxon shut-bed or the mere elevated platform heaped with cushions and bedding, to the elegant four posters designed by Robert Adam and his contemporaries. The original shut-bed survived as the box-bedstead in Scotland as late as the mid-19th century. (*See* illustrations on pages 119 and 151.) Comfort was provided by a feather mattress; luxury was satisfied by the use of rich fabrics; and dependence on the wall continued until the mid-16th century, with the bedhead framed against the surface, and the canopy suspended from the rafters of the ceiling, like the 15th century example from a French manuscript shown on page 120.

The richness of mediaeval bedroom furnishing is described in a late 15th century document entitled: 'The Co'minge into Englande of the Lorde Grautehuse from the Right High' and myghty Prince Charles Duke of Burgoine.' Edward IV entertained this French nobleman in 1472, and created him Earl of Winchester. The account of the apartments prepared for him reads as follows:

'Then, about ix of the clocke, the Kinge and quene, w^{t} her ladies and gentlewomen, brought the sayde Lorde Grautehuse to iij chaumbres of Pleasance, alt hanged w^{t} whyte Sylke and lynnen clothe, and alt the Floures couered w^{t} carpettes. There was ordeined a Bedde for hym selue, of as good doune as coulde be gotten, the Shetes of Raynys, also fyne Fustyans; the Counterpoynte clothe of golde, furred w^{t} armyn, the Tester and the Celer also shyninge clothe of golde, the Curteyns of whyte Sarsenette; as for his hedde Sute and Pillowes, [they] were of the quenes owen Ordonnance. Itm̃, [in] the ij^{de} chambre was a other of astate, the whiche was alte whyte. Also in the same chambre was made a couche w^{t} Fether beddes, hanged w^{t} a Tente, knytt lyke a nette, and there was a Cuppborde. Itm̃, in the iij^{de} chambre was ordeined a Bayne or ij, which were couered w^{t} Tentes of white clothe. And when the Kinge and the quene, w^{t} alt her ladyes and gentlewemen, had shewed him these chambres, they turned againe to theire owen chambres, and lefte the sayde lorde Grautehuse there, accompanied w^{t} my lorde chamberlein, whiche dispoyled hym, and wente both together to the Bayne [bath].'[1]

Chaucer includes 'clothe of Reynes' in a description of a luxurious bed in *The Book of the Duchesse*, and the relevant lines are given under the entry for Satin in Section III on page 584. Chaucer's descriptions of beds and bedding, the account just quoted, and the evidence of contemporary illustrations, indicate the masking of all framework by richly decorative materials. The couch with feather beds 'hanged w^{t} a Tente, knytt lyke a nette', suggests detachment from the wall, though the 'Tente' may, like the canopy of the bed on page 120, have hung from the ceiling rafters.

During the late 15th and early 16th centuries, the bed, in common with other articles of furniture, became free standing; it could be placed in the middle of a room; the wooden framework of the bedstead was visible, and no longer masked by fabrics. Thereafter, from the 16th century to the end of the 19th, the posted bed with the tester was structurally self-contained, its external appearance being varied chiefly by the prominence given to the decorative wooden framework or to the draperies. In the first decades of the 16th century, the four-post bed, in common with other furniture, exemplified the native English style. As yet there was no hint of the 'Italianate' confusions that afflicted furniture later in that century. The loss of good proportions in shape and congruity in ornamentation is apparent when the early 16th-century posted bed on page 123, is compared with the great bed of Ware on page 124. Both illustrations show the wooden framework of the bedstead without the draperies; but when curtains hung from the rails below the tester and were drawn at night, the bed became a room within a room completely enclosed. Although the great bed of Ware was exceptionally large, its solidity and amplitude were characteristic, for beds did become gigantic in size during the Elizabethan period, their testers being upheld by various malformations of classical columns, and the headboards crammed with elaborately carved decoration.

These big wooden four-post, or posted, beds, which formed ornate frames for curtains, continued in use throughout the 17th century; and the great state beds were far more elaborate, for they were immensely tall, and the whole framework—posts, tester, cornice, and headboard—was covered in

[1] *Archaeologia*, vol. XXVI, section ix, pages 279–80, 'Narratives of the arrival of Louis de Bruges, Seigneur de la Gruthuyse, in England, and of his creation as Earl of Winchester, in 1472'. This includes a copy of a document MS. Add. 6113, f. 103, in which this description of the bedroom furnishing occurs.

fabric, the posts being hidden by the curtains that hung from both ends of the tester. Graceful and decorative four-post beds were made during the 18th century, with slender columns and testers with delicately moulded cornices; there were domed beds and Chinese designs with testers that borrowed their form from the pagoda; and the mediaeval idea of the tent bed was revived in an elaborate manner, and again the framework disappeared beneath draperies. Tent beds and field beds persisted into the 19th century—the curtains of a tent bed shielded Mr Pickwick when he first discovered that he was in the wrong bedroom at the Great White Horse at Ipswich. The idea of a bed as a room within a room survived in a modified form until the end of the Victorian period; but it could never be satisfactorily expressed with a metal bedstead, and the compromise of the half-tester, known and used in the Middle Ages, revived in the 17th and early 18th century as the Angel bed, and popular during the 19th, merely provided curtains that shielded the head of the bed. The heavily curtained, completely enclosed bed was incompatible with the fresh air, open window cult favoured by the young Edwardians; also, its dimensions were an embarrassment in the new houses with small rooms and low ceilings that replaced the big Victorian houses with lofty and spacious apartments.

So the bed, after centuries of association with the wall, and a much shorter period of structural independence when it was virtually an apartment with fabric walls, to be opened or closed at will, has again become a raised platform for bedding as it was in pre-Norman England. This outline sketch of the evolution of the bed from the 9th century to the 20th has been deliberately simplified. There were great variations and elaborations of design, and many are recorded under their appropriate entries in the next Section. The influence of fashion, while considerable, is not always decisive. Fashions in furniture design and the sparing or lavish use of fabrics in furnishing were often determined by the architect and builder. The rooms of 17th- and 18th-century houses where the great curtained beds stood were icily cold in winter; and the improved heating appliances of the 19th century made the creation of a cosy, stuffy cabin within a bedroom unnecessary.

The bed is one of the basic articles of furnishing: the others are seats, receptacles, and tables. All were used in their most elementary forms during the early Middle Ages, acquiring in the late mediaeval period numerous refinements, as the skill of woodworkers increased and fresh techniques were either invented or re-discovered. For a hundred and fifty years, from the end of the 15th to the middle of the 17th century, those basic articles were dominated by new fashions, and when the Puritan period allowed a respite from modish ideas, the makers of furniture provided a simple and vigorous style, recognisably English in character and obviously related to the pre-Italianate native style of the early 16th century. This resumption of a natural development, that had been temporarily diverted by the imperious taste of the Tudor and Jacobean aristocracy, disclosed great advances in skill, and an ingenious and sympathetic mastery of materials.

During the 17th century, many specialized forms of furniture were introduced; and their novel and sometimes exacting needs could always command the appropriate forms of skill, for though English craftsmen might resist

foreign fashions, they were quick to learn and adopt new methods. This was demonstrated when the craft of veneering was introduced, for it created and established the cabinet-maker as a new form of craftsman in England. The choosing and laying of veneers demanded far more advanced skill than the joiners of the early 16th century could command. In the interval between the accession of Elizabeth I and the restoration of Charles II, new materials and techniques had challenged and stimulated the abilities of craftsmen; and the expansion of skill led to specialization, following many demarcation disputes, as they are now called, between joiners, turners and carvers. The fashionable cabinet-makers and chair-makers and the architects of the golden age of English design could rely upon an accomplished body of lively and interpretative skill. That golden age of design began to flourish after the release from Puritan austerity in 1660, and for over a hundred and seventy years it was constantly refreshed by the genius of English and Scottish architects, until the decline of taste in the 1830s.

In the first half of the 17th century, Inigo Jones brought order out of the architectural chaos of the early English Renaissance, and by the example of his work, implanted in the minds of his countrymen a proper understanding of the principles of design represented by the classic orders of architecture. Since then, architects, working in the English tradition, have exercised a profound influence upon the form and embellishment of furniture. At first their influence was barely perceptible, becoming apparent only when furniture makers in the latter part of the 17th century used some architectural features appositely, such as correctly proportioned Tuscan columns for the legs of a table, or the elegant profile of an Ionic cornice for the moulded detail of a cabinet. The direction of the carver and the cabinet-maker by the architect became an accepted practice, which developed into a mutually stimulative form of partnership during the 18th century; and this practice had its beginnings even before Sir Christopher Wren had provided, in St Paul's Cathedral and elsewhere, a majestic framework within whose limits the genius of Grinling Gibbons discovered such a happy exuberance of expression.

Early in the Georgian period, architect and craftsman were united in the person of William Kent, the coach-painter's apprentice who became a master architect and a master decorator. He designed complete interiors; and his furniture fitted into, and was part of, an ornate background: when separated from that background—taken out of the context, as it were—individual pieces may seem ornamentally overpowering, like the marble-topped side table on the upper part of page 620. Because Kent's furniture is as conspicuously decorative as the clothes of ladies and gentlemen of the period, it has often been misjudged by critics who forget that it was originally harmoniously adjusted to the magnificence of a nobly proportioned room. Hogarth's painting of the Assembly at Wanstead House, commissioned in 1727, and probably finished in the fourth decade of the 18th century, is now in the John Howard McFadden Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art,[1] and it depicts the splendour of an interior that has been attributed to Kent. Wanstead House, Essex, was designed by the Scottish architect, Colin

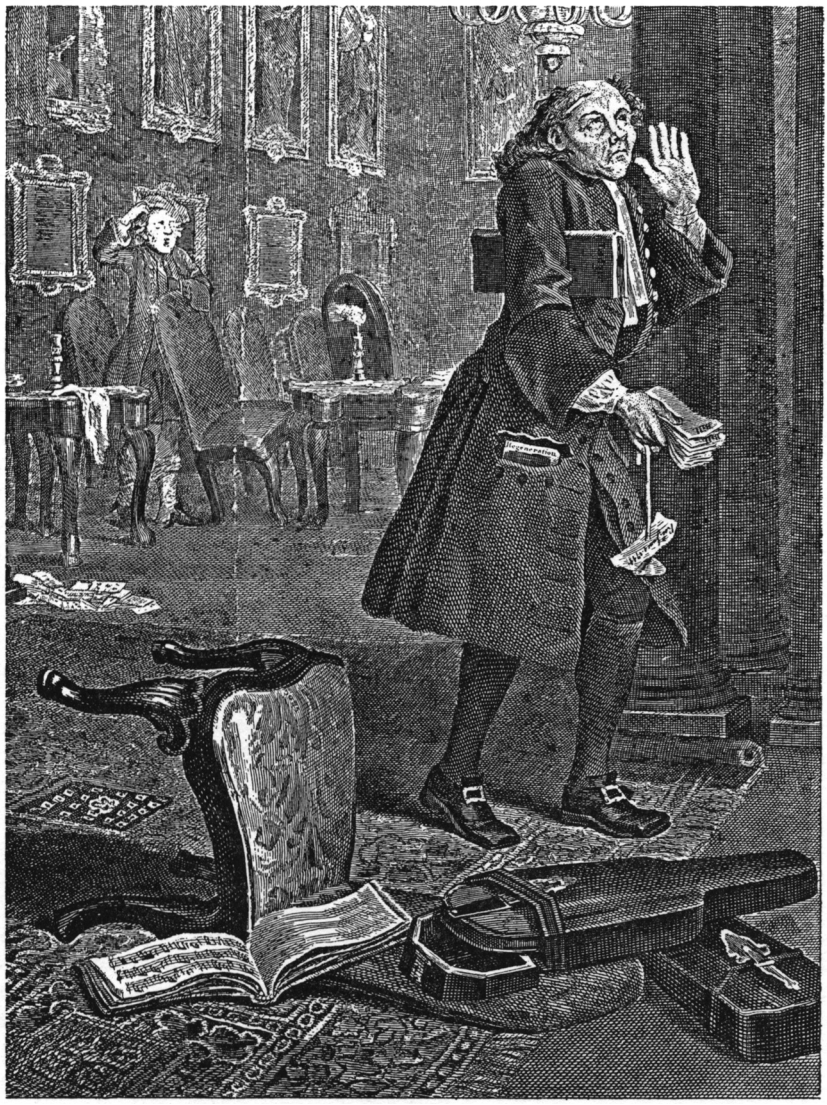
[1] This painting is reproduced in colour in my book, *A Social History of Furniture Design.* (London: Cassell & Company. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc. 1966.)

The mid-18th century farmhouse kitchen, with crude, serviceable furniture, and the traditional type of turned chair, with knobs surmounting the back posts. Hogarth here portrays a scene from *The Farmer's Return from London*, a play written by David Garrick, who produced it at Drury Lane theatre and took the principal part himself. Boswell recorded his appreciation of this piece in his *Journal* (November 22, 1762). *Reproduced, on a slightly smaller scale, from an engraving in the author's possession.*

Campbell, who also designed Houghton Hall, Norfolk, where Kent was responsible for the interior decoration and much of the furniture. (Wanstead House was demolished in 1824.)

Hogarth's work reveals many aspects of contemporary furnishing, from farmhouse kitchens, such as that depicted above in the scene from *The Farmer's Return from London*, and the room shown in 'The Sleeping Housewife' (that is ascribed to him), to the more elaborate interiors of the familiar series, such as 'Marriage à la Mode', and 'The Industrious 'Prentice'.

Part of the interior shown in the second of Hogarth's series of paintings, 'Marriage à la Mode.' The original paintings are in the National Gallery, and in this engraving, by B. Baron (dated April 1, 1745), the scene is shown in reverse. The continuation of the scene, on a slightly larger scale, is shown opposite. The furniture and interior decoration in Hogarth's scenes are seldom later than the 1730s, but here the rococo girandole, with a clock embedded in it, shows an early manifestation of that style in England.



Continuation of the interior, shown opposite, of the second scene in 'Marriage à la Mode'. This gives a more detailed view of the high-backed chairs with cabriole legs: in the background are card tables with rather corpulent cabriole legs. These engravings by Baron were printed and published by William Hogarth. (*See* also page 207.)

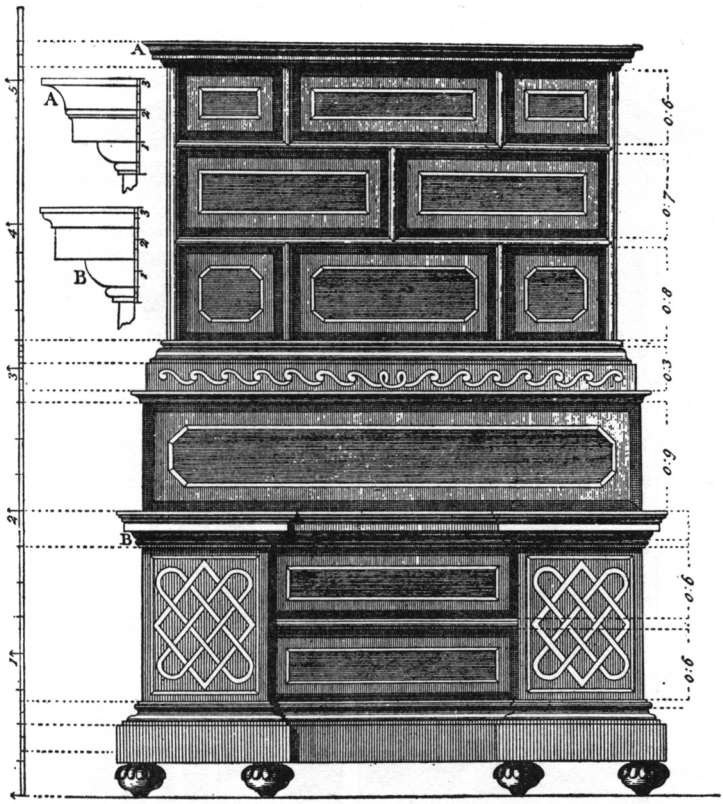
One of the projected subjects of the latter series, which showed the industrious apprentice married and furnishing his house, was never taken beyond the pen-and-ink stage, so the various articles of furniture are only sketchily indicated.[1]

The second plate of 'Marriage à la Mode' shows how completely the character of the mid-18th century interior was controlled by the architect, whose taste influenced the design of everything that went into those spacious rooms. (*See* pages 40 and 41.) The Georgian architects excelled in the selection and use of ornament: the discipline of correct proportion, exercised by the rules for harmonizing horizontal and vertical elements, conferred upon their buildings, inside and outside, a bland serenity: and as cabinet-makers and chair-makers drew upon the same classical treasury for the ornamentation of their work, and revered and thoroughly understood the rules that governed the practice of architecture, the relationship between architecture and furniture design was everywhere happily apparent. Cabinet-makers may occasionally have enjoyed the advantages of an architectural training; Richard Gillow, one of the three sons of Robert Gillow who founded the great Lancaster firm of cabinet-makers, had such training, for he was an accomplished architect, and designed the Customs House at Lancaster. It is an elegant little building, with a fine portico in the Roman Ionic order, with angular capitals on the columns.

Occasionally architects recorded their ideas about furniture design, and in beautifully engraved plates showed their interest in cabinet-making; but that interest was usually conditioned by their approach to the problem, which they thought of in terms of architectural design. The contribution that could be made by the cabinet-maker was apt to be disregarded: not that his skill was ignored, but he was thought of as an interpreter and seldom as a collaborator. This attitude of mind is apparent in the series of designs by Batty Langley, engraved on copper plates and dated 1739, which included interior architecture and furniture—bookcases, chests, and the like. These designs have a slightly monumental air; no cabinet-maker could have conceived them; and they are typical products of the drawing board. Possibly Langley's ideas were influenced by Kent's more massive types of furniture; for even Kent often seemed to forget that what he was designing was to be executed in wood and not in stone, while on paper Langley's larger pieces suggest masonry rather than cabinet-making, as shown by the illustrations on pages 43 and 44. Four hundred of Langley's designs, occupying one hundred and eighty-six plates, were published in book form in 1750, with the title of: *The Builder's and Workman's Treasury of Designs: or the Art of Drawing and Working the Ornamental Parts of Architecture.*

Another architect, William Jones, published and sold at his London house in 1739, a collection of copper-plate engravings in book form, that included some designs for furniture; but they appear to be little more than an architect's rough notes, casually jotted down for the guidance of cabinet-makers. (*See* entry in Section IV.) The form and ornamentation of the tables he included, suggested Roman prototypes. Incidentally, the fragments of

[1] This sketch, in the possession of the Marquess of Exeter, is reproduced in Paul Oppé's monograph on *The Drawings of William Hogarth* (London: Phaidon Press, Ltd, 1948).

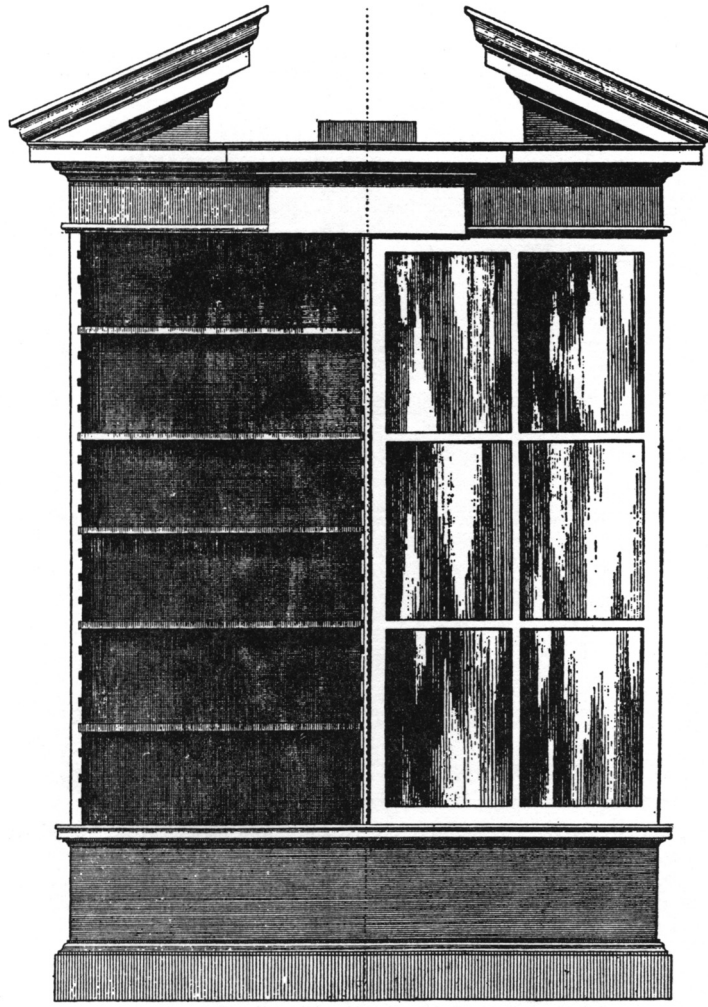


Chest of drawers by Batty Langley. Like the Tuscan bookcase on the next page, this design discloses a complete disregard for the properties of wood. It is a draughtsman's conception, correct in architectural detail, but destitute of the knowledge that a craftsman could command. Reproduced from *The City and County Builder's and Workman's Treasury of Designs* (1739).

Romano-British shale table legs preserved in the Dorset County Museum at Dorchester, with their claw feet and cabriole form, and the heads of animals carved above the knee, could easily be mistaken for parts of some table designed by an English architect in the mid-18th century.[1]

In 1744 John Vardy published in book form *Some Designs of Mr Inigo Jones and Mr Wm Kent*, and the plates included some of Kent's lavishly decorated furniture. (Some illustrations from this book are reproduced in Section III under the entries Kent Style and Side Table, pages 411 and 620.) As copybooks multiplied, the influence of the architect extended, for many of these works on furniture and architectural design came from architects. Thomas Chippendale, the first English cabinet-maker to publish

[1] A detailed description with illustrations of these table legs is given by Joan Liversidge in a well-documented article on 'Tables in Roman Britain', published in *Antiquity*, vol. XXIV, No. 93, pages 25–29.



Tuscan bookcase, by Batty Langley. Monumental in conception, this seems to be designed for execution in stone rather than wood. The architectural details are impeccable; but this was conceived on the drawing board, not in the cabinet-maker's shop. Reproduced from *The City and County Builder's and Workman's Treasury of Designs* (1739).

a book, did not issue *The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director* until 1754. Even in remote country districts, builders and furniture makers shared the prevailing respect for the classic orders and their proportions and ornamentation. Many cabinet-making firms were established throughout the country, and in the American colonies; and some were in business for several generations, like the Elliott family in England, and the Townsend family in America. Such firms accommodated changes in fashion when they worked for the nobility and gentry; but in the countryside traditional forms persisted, and the interior furnishing of the cottage, the farmhouse, or country tavern

would be much the same in the mid-18th century as it was a hundred years earlier.

The gratifying tyranny of fashion was never questioned by the modish, and one of the great assets of the architect's control over design was the establishment of universal understanding of good proportions, as well as respect for them. Because of this, not only architects, but cabinet-makers, joiners, carvers, and other craftsmen, were able to accommodate the innumerable eccentricities of fashionable taste without malforming the shapes of furniture, as the Elizabethan craftsmen, unenlightened by rules and merely copying alien patterns of ornament, had malformed them. Thus, the recurrent waves of taste for Oriental ideas and the genteel interest in romantic Gothic forms, displayed in the middle years of the 18th century, were graciously accommodated.

The interest in so-called Gothic design began long before Horace Walpole had started to embellish his 'little plaything house' at Strawberry Hill. The growth of the taste for Gothic architecture and ornament, and its attenuated connection with mediaeval work, have been traced by Sir Kenneth Clark in his comprehensive study of the subject, *The Gothic Revival.*[1] These waves of taste washed over the fashionable world periodically. Sometimes architects supplied a few exiguous directions for keeping their extravagance in hand; for example, Batty Langley attempted to formalize the taste for Gothic by inventing some unfortunate orders, which he published in 1747 in a book ponderously entitled: *Gothic Architecture, Improved by Rules and Proportions, In many Grand Designs of Columns, Doors, Windows, Chimney-pieces, Arcades, Colonades, Porticos, Umbrellos, Temples and Pavillions, etc., with Plans, Elevations and Profiles, Geometrically Expressed.* The last twenty-five plates of *The Builder's Director or Bench-Mate,* which he published in 1751, were devoted to Gothic details, including six designs for chimneypieces that suggested a pre-view of the Victorian period. The transitory nature of these fashions is indicated by a contribution to *The World* on the subject of 'Taste', that appeared on March 22, 1753, and is attributed to William Whitehead, who was appointed the poet-laureate in 1757.

'A few years ago everything was Gothic; our houses, our beds, our bookcases, and our couches, were all copied from some parts or other of our old cathedrals. The Grecian architecture, where, as Dryden says,

> "Firm Doric pillars found the lower base,
> The gay Corinthian holds the higher space,
> And all below is strength, and all above is grace,"[2]

that architecture, which was taught by nature and polished by the graces, was totally neglected. Tricks and conceits got possession every where. Clumsy buttresses were to shock you with disproportion; or little pillars were to support vast weights; while ignorant people, who knew nothing of centers of gravity, were to tremble at their entrance into every building, lest the roofs should fall upon their heads. This, however odd it might seem, and unworthy of the name of Taste, was cultivated, was admired, and still has its professors in different parts of England.

[1] Constable & Co., 1928.

[2] In Dryden's 'Epistle to Congreve', this is rendered:

> 'Firm Doric pillars found your solid base,
> The fair Corinthian crowns the higher space,
> Thus all below is strength, and all above is grace.'

There is something, they say, in it congenial to our old Gothic constitution; I should rather think to our modern idea of liberty, which allows every one the privilege of playing the fool, and of making himself ridiculous in whatever way he pleases.

'According to the present prevailing whim, every thing is Chinese, or in the Chinese taste: or, as it is sometimes more modestly expressed, "partly after the Chinese manner". Chairs, tables, chimney-pieces, frames for looking-glasses, and even our most vulgar utensils, are all reduced to this new-fangled standard. . . .'[1]

In one of his frivolous assessments of the abilities of his forerunners and contemporaries, Horace Walpole wrote (in a letter to Sir Horace Mann, April 22, 1775): 'As Vanbrugh dealt in quarries and Kent in lumber, Adam, our most admired, is all gingerbread, filigraine and fan painting'. This was grossly unfair to designers of the calibre of Robert and James Adam, whose firmness of touch gave an incisive significance to the delicate ornament which they employed. This was apparent in the carved decoration they used on mahogany furniture; apparent too, in their control over the decorative situation, so to speak, even in the most profusely ornamental examples of their work. Ornament was chosen to give point to the proportions, subtly to emphasize lines and masses; and, as usual, the approach to the problem was essentially an architectural approach. It would have been impossible for people of fashion, apart altogether from architects or craftsmen, to have tolerated in the middle years of the 18th century the casual lavishness that occasionally marred the ornamentation of furniture in the closing years of the previous century. They would never have given house room to many of the things that were made or imported in the reigns of William and Mary and Queen Anne. For example, they would have rejected the clumsy roundabout chairs—the so-called burgomaster chairs—made in the East Indies by the Dutch, and sold in England and Europe in large numbers during the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Compare the illustration of one of these chairs on page 571 with the most extravagant of Chippendale's designs or his ribband back chair shown on page 560, and observe the difference between trained imagination, that has embellishment under control, and the almost primitive enthusiasm which carves for the sake of carving. Differences in nationality or structure do not account for the missing sense of fitness in the use and placing of ornament on the roundabout chair.

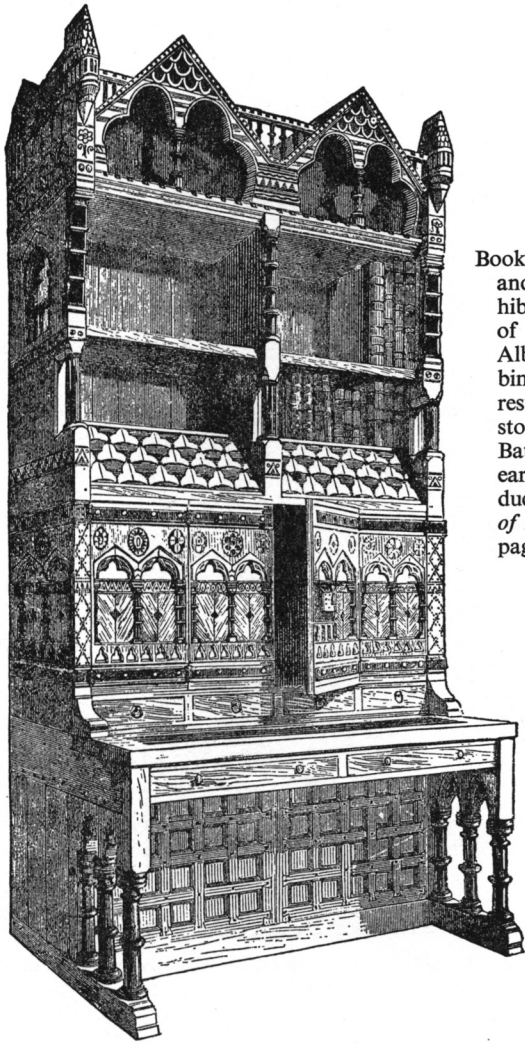
In the half century between the Queen Anne period and the publication of Chippendale's book, chair-making and cabinet-making had been progressively refined, as architectural design had been refined in the previous century; and this was because the will of the architect-designer was increasingly imposed upon the chair maker and cabinet-maker, without ever flouting the canons of good craftsmanship. No Georgian architect made the craftsman wholly subservient to the drawing board; nor were the materials he used expected to perform the impossible at the expense of their capacity for endurance.

Throughout the 18th century the recognizable effect of the architect's influence on furniture design was a sureness of touch in embellishment; for behind the choice, form, and placing of all ornament was the knowledge of good proportion, of work conceived and executed in what Sir Christopher

[1] Edition of 1795, vol. I, pages 68–69.

Interior of a mid-18th century tavern. This shows the crude odds and ends that were used for furnishing the public rooms of a low-grade inn. The table with its baluster legs and clumsy stretcher is a design that belongs to the previous century; though such patterns continued to be made by country craftsmen long after they had been discarded in towns, where fashions were followed with greater attention. (From the frontispiece of the 10th edition of *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, Vol. II, 1778.)

Wren had called a 'good Roman manner'. In America, Samuel McIntire, the Salem architect, gave to his clients that same sureness of touch that distinguished the work of the brothers Adam. McIntire, like every architect whose imagination was disciplined by study of the classic orders, knew his proportions; and knew exactly how to begin and where to stop. Following his own characteristic forms of decoration, he used delicate, floral motifs, with such discretion that even a critic as fastidious as Horace Walpole would have abjured the finicking complaint that it was 'all gingerbread, filigraine and fan painting'. Some of the refinements of form associated with the Greek revival



Bookcase designed by Norman Shaw and executed by James Forsyth, exhibited at the International Exhibition of 1862, and now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. This unhappy combination of architect and sculptor has resulted in wood being mistaken for stone and brick. Compare this with Batty Langley's designs of a century earlier on pages 43 and 44. Reproduced from *The Art-Journal Catalogue of the International Exhibition* (1862), page 180.

are apparent in Samuel McIntire's work, notably in his choice of carved ornaments for sofas and couches, although he did not use Greek motifs. McIntire in America, like the brothers Adam in England, demonstrated how well an architectural training endows the mind of an imaginative designer with fine conceptions for furniture.

Remove the discipline of an architectural training based upon the study of the classic orders, and replace it with enthusiasm generated by the spurious romanticism of the 19th century Gothic revival, and you get monumental furniture indeed—furniture that reflects a basic inability to observe, to compare, or to absorb anything with predictable results. Just over a century after the publication of Batty Langley's book of heavy but orderly designs, a young Victorian architect committed to paper a bureau bookcase, or, as it

was described, a bookcase with writing table. It was made of oak, and was shown at the International Exhibition held in 1862. (Shown on opposite page.) Its designer was the future architect of London's Police Headquarters at New Scotland Yard, and his name was Norman Shaw. Architects at that time in the 19th century had their minds filled with a rag-bag of ideas: tattered bits of Gothic ornament were jumbled against scraps from Byzantine and Saracenic buildings; and as architectural training and taste had sunk back into a period of chaos far worse than that from which it was rescued two hundred and fifty years earlier by Inigo Jones, furniture, always influenced by architectural design, displayed a corresponding complexity of form. Good proportions were abandoned; the sense of style was lost. Architects, bemused by the Gothic Revival, no longer respected the classic orders; even those who still used the classic idiom seemed to be unaware that the orders represented a universal system of design; and as manufacturers and craftsmen no longer accepted the architect as the master-designer, the form and character of furniture and the interior equipment and decoration of houses ceased to be regulated or in any way affected by the judgement of men with trained imaginations. John Ruskin was praising chaos in stirring and splendid words and calling it a new revelation; William Morris was looking backwards, not to the golden age of Stuart and Georgian architecture and design, but far back to the romantic Middle Ages. Eastlake, Bruce Talbert, and other writers and designers were also attracted by the tranquil simplicity of mediaeval forms and the freedom and freshness of Gothic ornament.

Fashionable taste was sobered by a moral outlook, derived from the Gothic Revival that gathered strength and became all powerful during the second quarter of the 19th century. The Gothic revivalists preached a crusade against the orderliness and bland beauty of classical architecture. While Dr Thomas Arnold at Rugby was injecting moral earnestness into his pupils, and ensuring that future generations should be upright, art-proofed philistines, men like Pugin and Ruskin, wholly different in character but each exerting considerable influence on contemporary society, were busy identifying good design with religious emotion, thus ensuring instability of taste and destroying standards of critical judgement. Gradually the discipline that had previously guided designers and their patrons was abandoned: the heritage of the Georgians was rejected.

The magnificence of that heritage had expanded during the second half of the 18th century, following a resurgence of interest in classical architecture, largely owing to the work of the brothers Adam. In the 1790s the Greek revival began, and developed during the opening decades of the 19th century. The writings and designs of Thomas Hope (1770–1831) nourished this fresh interest in classical prototypes; and in 1807 he published a volume entitled *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*, illustrated with drawings, in which he used Roman and Egyptian motifs in his schemes for furnishing. Hope was a wealthy and gifted amateur of architecture; and had travelled extensively in Europe, Asia, and Africa in order to study ancient buildings. His travels supplied him with materials for a novel called *Anastasius*, which was published anonymously in 1819 and caused a great sensation. Of this

work Sydney Smith wrote: 'Is this Mr Thomas Hope?—Is this the man of chairs and tables?—the gentleman of the sphinxes—the Oedipus of coal-boxes—he who has meditated on muffineers and planned pokers,—Where has he hidden all this eloquence and poetry up to this hour?' He was nicknamed 'Anastasius' Hope, though his influence on contemporary taste makes 'the gentleman of the sphinxes' a far better label. 'From an infant, architecture was always my favourite amusement,' he wrote; and his devotion to the subject had a marked effect upon the design and character of furnishing in England during the Regency period.

A few years before Hope's book appeared, Sheraton had given detailed directions for the contents of various types of rooms in *The Cabinet Dictionary* (1803), under the entry for Furnishing. These he set forth with the confidence of Vitruvius, who, two thousand years earlier, had specified in the sixth book of his work on architecture, the forms of houses suited to different ranks of people, and the character and function of the rooms, with their appropriate arrangement and furnishing.[1] Both Sheraton and Vitruvius were writing for a settled and orderly society; their thoughts and ideas were regulated by the acknowledged supremacy of architectural design, and both the Roman architect and the English furniture designer revered the same prototypes. Sheraton, in the opening paragraph of his entry for Furnishing, hinted at the existence of pretentious and vulgar taste, and suggested how it could be discreetly circumvented. He said that 'when any gentleman is so vain and ambitious as to order the furnishing of his house in a style superior to his fortune and rank, it will be prudent in an upholsterer, by some gentle hints, to direct his choice to a more moderate plan'.[2]

Over forty years earlier Ince and Mayhew had concluded their preface to *The Universal System of Household Furniture* by saying: 'In Furnishing all should be with Propriety—Elegance should always be joined with a peculiar Neatness through the whole House, or otherwise an immense Expense may be thrown away to no Purpose, either in Use or Appearance; and with the same Regard any Gentleman may furnish as neat at a small Expense, as he can elegant and superb at a great one.'

Such warnings against excessive lavishness were apparently necessary; and in the 18th and early 19th centuries they were taken to heart. In his directions for furnishing a house, Sheraton advocates fitness and moderation, though his published designs often belied this advice. He wrote with the confidence of a designer who was serving a society that was accustomed to formal behaviour, and was not ashamed or in any way apologetic about the time it gave to the pursuit of pleasure. After dealing with the kitchen, the library, the gallery, the music room, and entrance hall, he described the principal living rooms.

'The dining parlour must be furnished with nothing trifling, or which may seem unnecessary, it being appropriated for the chief repast, and should not be encumbered with any article that would seem to intrude on the accommodation of the guests.

'The large sideboard, inclosed or surrounded with Ionic pillars: the handsome and extensive dining-table; the respectable and substantial looking chairs; the large

[1] Chapters vii, ix, and x.

[2] *The Cabinet Dictionary*, pages 215–16.

The characteristic designs of Chippendale and his contemporaries appear in this interior, which is the setting of Scene I, Act V, of Benjamin Hoadly's comedy, *The Suspicious Husband*, with Mrs Baddeley taking the part of Mrs Strickland. (From a contemporary engraving, published July 6, 1776.) The words of Ince and Mayhew, quoted on the opposite page, certainly apply to this modest interior, where elegance is 'joined with a peculiar Neatness. . . .'

face glass; the family portraits; the marble fire-places; and the Wilton carpet; are the furniture that should supply the dining-room.

'The drawing-room is to concentrate the elegance of the whole house, and is the highest display of richness of furniture. It being appropriated to the formal visits of the highest in rank, and nothing of a scientific nature should be introduced to take up the attention of any individual, from the general conversation that takes place on such occasions. Hence, the walls should be free of pictures, the tables not lined with books, nor the angles of the room filled with globes; as the design of such meetings are not that each visitant should turn to his favourite study, but to contribute his part towards the amusement of the whole company. The grandeur then introduced into the drawing-room is not to be considered, as the ostentatious parade of its proprietor, but the respect he pays to the rank of his visitants.

'The anti-room, is an introduction to the drawing-room, and partakes of the elegance of the apartment to which it leads, serving as a place of repose before the general intercourse be effected in the whole company. Here may be placed a number of sofas of a second order with a piano-forte or harp, and other matters of amusement till the whole of the company be collected.

'The tea-room or breakfast-room, may abound with beaufets, painted chairs, flower-pot stands, hanging book shelves or moving libraries, and the walls may be adorned with landscapes, and pieces of drawings, etc. and all the little things which are engaging to the juvenile mind.'[1]

The transition from orderly furnishing with well made articles of good design, to incoherent assemblies of ill designed and often flimsy pieces of furniture of the kind shown in the bedroom interior on page 54, occurred within fifty years of the publication of *The Cabinet Dictionary*. The Gothic revival had helped to destroy good standards of design; and the use of machinery had debilitated standards of workmanship; but an enormous reserve of skill remained among woodworkers, and an enterprising, experimental spirit existed among those much-abused but able and courageous manufacturers in the Midlands, who were always seeking fresh uses for new industrial materials. In some branches of the woodworking industry mass production had long been established, and was conducted with great ability in such a furniture-making locality as High Wycombe, in Buckinghamshire, where thousands of Windsor chairs were made. The entries in Section III for Windsor Chair and White Wycombe record the ramifications of this traditional craft, and show how the use of turned and bentwood members anticipated the technique of mass production.

Although it was not appreciated at the time, the mid-19th century was a period of experimental design in furniture, both in England and America. The history of the rocking chair, of which some details are given under that entry in Section III, reveals the influence of new materials upon design. The use of metal, and then of bentwood, changed the characteristic appearance of the rocking chair, which began as an ordinary ladder-back chair, mounted like a cradle on rockers; and this original type has retained its popularity in the United States to this day. In England, rocking chairs with flat bent strips of iron or brass were made during the 1840s and '50s; and a few years later the bentwood rocking chair was introduced by a Viennese designer, Michael Thonet (1796–1871), whose bentwood chairs and underframes for tables were shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851. A bentwood table by Thonet, illustrated on page 136, was included in the catalogue of the Exhibition published

[1] *The Cabinet Dictionary*, pages 218–19.

by *The Art Journal.* The top, elaborately inlaid with woods of various colours, covered a receptacle 'of a semispherical form' that had 'some peculiarities of construction'. The table was described as follows: 'It is formed of rosewood, so bent that the grain of the wood invariably follows the line of the curve and shape required, by which means lightness and elasticity is gained with the least possible material. The legs are similarly bent from the solid piece . . .[1]

The unsuspected progenitors of designs that seem to belong to the mid-20th century are occasionally to be found in the illustrated records of the 1851 Exhibition; but earlier still, in the pages of Loudon's *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture and Furniture,* published in 1833, there are some experimental suggestions for chairs in wood and cast iron that show a modern approach to the use of materials and an unusual independence of prototypes. Of these, two designs for chairs by Robert Mallet (1810–81), a young Dublin engineer,[2] display an innovating audacity, for the form is unrelated to any traditional model, and represents a fresh solution to a problem, achieved with a new combination of materials, and an objective regard for function and economy of means. Both chairs have wooden seats supported by legs of cast iron or iron tubing; and amid the pseudo-Gothic chairs which throng the pages of Loudon's *Encyclopaedia,* they are as startling as Marcel Breuer's cantilever chairs of steel tubing seemed at the end of the 1920s. (*See* illustrations on page 454.) The young man whose chairs Loudon illustrated and described was a forerunner of what we now call an industrial designer.

Inventions and new uses for materials seldom came from within the furniture trade; during the first half of the 19th century that trade had expanded, and production methods were mechanized. Manufacturers had inherited a traditional loyalty to wood; their technique of production was based on the use of that material, and nearly all their machines were designed for the conversion and shaping of timber. Experiments in the use of metal for furniture were made by Birmingham manufacturers, and the furniture trade allowed a new industry to grow up, without apparently realizing that they were losing a potentially profitable market. During the 1830s, as a result of improved methods of joining metal parts, the metal bedstead industry was established in Birmingham. In 1833 Loudon illustrated and described an iron half-tester bedstead, made by Cottam and Hallen,[3] 2 feet 6 inches wide, that sold for 46s 6d, and a larger size, 5 feet wide, for 68s; also several other bedsteads, and a couch bed designed by William Mallet of Dublin, Robert Mallet's uncle. During the 1830s and '40s, the production of iron and brass bedsteads increased to a weekly output of 400 to 500 in 1849, rising by 1865 to between 5,000 and 6,000, which seriously diminished the demand for the wooden type.[4]

[1] *The Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue,* page 296.

[2] *The Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture and Furniture,* page 320. Robert Mallet was the son of John Mallet, a Devonshire man who had settled in Dublin as an iron, brass, and copper founder. In 1831 Robert became a partner in his father's business, and subsequently a famous engineer.

[3] *Encyclopaedia,* Sections 656, 657, pages 331–2.

[4] *The Industrial Development of Birmingham and the Black Country,* by G. C. Allen (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1929. Chap. I, page 60).

The Victorian bedroom was filled with an incoherent assembly of flimsy furniture, and a few reproductions of the less attractive examples of 18th century French designs. Reproduced from *The Young Ladies' Treasure Book* (1881–82), page 257.

By the 1860s the furniture trade was satisfying a new and growing market, by producing cheap cabinet work and upholstery; machine-made bedroom and dining-room suites, and flimsy parlour and drawing-room furniture, overcrowded the small rooms of the jerry-built houses erected in rows along the roads of the new suburbs that began to encircle London and other cities. The first effect of machine production on furniture was to debase its quality: design had already been debased, partly by the Gothic revival, but more thoroughly by the general decay of taste. Certainly there were many experiments, but they seldom led to anything except increases in a rather wallowing kind of comfort. The elimination of elegance was typical of this pursuit of comfort, which was eagerly led by the upholsterers of the Victorian period, and the results were aptly described at the very end of that period in Rosamund Marriott Watson's book, *The Art of the House*. Of that typical Victorian invention, the Chesterfield, she wrote: 'An indirect descendant of the Empire sofa, with the comfort kept, but all the grace left out, is the obese, kindly-natured couch known to modern upholsterers as the Chesterfield. It is about as comely as a gigantic pin-cushion, and as little convenient in a room of moderate dimensions as an elephant; plethoric and protuberant with springs and stuffings, it is at best a tiresome piece of goods, decoratively worse than worthless, and not so very easeful after all.'[1]

Furniture making became associated with certain well-defined localities: in London, the trade was concentrated in and around Shoreditch, though when Sheraton made his list of cabinet-makers, upholsterers, and chair-makers in 1803, only a few names appear with addresses in that district—the majority being then settled in Soho, and in the neighbourhood of Golden Square, St Martin's Lane, Long Acre, and further west in Mayfair and north along Oxford Street. Another centre of the industry was St Paul's Church Yard. Many of the firms listed by Sheraton were both makers and retailers; and one of the few for whom he gives a Shoreditch address, J. Cockerill's japanned-chair manufactory in Curtain Road, also had a West End branch at 203 Oxford Street. The separation of manufacturing from selling became a characteristic of the furniture trade after the opening decades of the 19th century; for with the new methods of mechanical production, it was no longer economical to make furniture on a large scale and sell it on the same premises; though the retailer generally maintained a small cabinet and upholstery shop, where a few special articles were made and repairs carried out for his customers. This change in the commercial structure of the trade led to the development of big factories, grouped in a few areas, so that the manufacturers gradually lost touch with the public, and the professional buyers who acted for the retail houses eventually became the arbiters of design.

The nearest large furniture-making centre to London was High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire, where manufacturers concentrated largely on chair production; the trade was also well established in Manchester, in many Lancashire and Yorkshire towns, in the west country at Bath and Bristol, while the principal Scottish centre was at Beith, in Ayrshire, though many makers were established in Glasgow, and a smaller number in Edinburgh.

[1] *The Art of the House*, by Rosamund Marriott Watson (London: George Bell and Sons, 1897). Chap. V, page 75.

Comparable changes in the structure of the furniture trade took place in the United States during the first half of the 19th century; making and retailing were with few exceptions—like Edward Hennessey of Boston—recognized as separate functions; though in England and America retailers, by calling themselves cabinet-makers and complete house furnishers, still claimed a fictitious responsibility for manufacture, but they were primarily distributors. A great American manufacturing centre grew up at Grand Rapids, in Kent County, Michigan. Originally an Indian village, its industrial history began with the building of a saw-mill in 1833.

Throughout the English countryside, a diminishing number of small makers and rural craftsmen maintained a precarious independence, prolonging the life of some traditional forms, and happily immune from the influence of mid-Victorian taste. Their independence was doomed as large-scale mechanical production was organized with increasing efficiency. Apart from rural makers, there was still a large reserve of skill in England, though much of it was misused. The better class cabinet-makers and chair-makers continued to invent variations on Gothic and what were called 'Old English' patterns and French designs. The variety of sources from which they drew their ideas is shown in the copybooks which were in use; and the interest in 'Old English' furniture, and particularly in so-called 'Elizabethan' furniture, was greatly enlarged by the publication in 1836 of the first book on old furniture, Henry Shaw's *Specimens of Ancient Furniture*. Other books on old furniture began to appear, and one that soon followed Shaw's was a conglomeration of designs for furniture based on old models, and a few carefully recorded drawings of authentic examples. It was published in London by William Pickering in 1838, and was entitled *Furniture with Candelabra and Interior Decoration*, the subjects being 'designed' by Richard Bridgens. Twenty-five of the plates were in 'the Grecian Style', twenty-five in 'the Elizabethan Style', and seven in 'the Gothic Style'. (*See* example on page 364). For example, Plate 37 included detailed drawings of a table in the Great Hall at Penshurst Place, and a table in the Chapter Room of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford: both authentic late 16th century examples. Such accurate representations of old furniture were followed and preceded by plates devoted to fantastic, hybrid abominations, masquerading as 'Elizabethan' designs. Books such as these provided the furniture trade with a lot of confusing material; and they also gave the collector of old furniture an assortment of misinformation, which helped the dealer in old furniture to sell plausible rubbish that had a venerable look.

The Victorian vernacular style preserved some of the good proportions and classic tradition of late Georgian furniture, and the balloon-back chair was one of the distinctive examples of mid-19th century design; but the development of that style was interrupted by such fashions as the rococo revival of the 1850s and early '60s. French models were always popular, and were copied by the trade either from contemporary furniture of the Second Empire, or from the fashions of pre-Revolutionary France, the latter described by the equivocal label of 'the Louis style'. The influence of English as well as French 18th-century designers survived, and many copy books remained in circulation, such as *The Cabinet-Makers' London Book of Prices*,

first issued in 1788, with designs by Shearer; and the influence of Chippendale's published designs in the *Director* and those of Robert Adam lasted until the close of the century. The achievements of the great Georgian cabinet- and chair-makers were never forgotten; and the ghosts of Chippendale's chairs haunted the Victorian period.

The possibilities of using materials in new ways that were suggested by the tentative designs of inventive people like Robert Mallet lay dormant: they were hardly ever explored by English makers of domestic furniture. A new movement in design was beginning, and in architecture it found its most spectacular expression in Joseph Paxton's use of prefabricated cast iron units and glass in the Crystal Palace; but this new technique of architectural design was largely ignored. Architects and furniture designers were preoccupied with the past, and Pugin's Mediaeval Court at the Great Exhibition encouraged a fresh enthusiasm for Gothic forms and ornament.

When William Morris attempted to arrest the decay of English handicrafts, and to re-establish good standards of craftsmanship, the movement he started was a revival, inspired by the work of the Middle Ages; he disregarded or rejected new materials and industrial techniques. His splendid and astonishing personal creative gifts did not respond to the challenge and promise of contemporary industry; and his handicraft revival seriously retarded the development of industrial design in England by confusing the whole subject. The Arts and Crafts Movement, generated by the handicraft revival, had a missionary fervour. William Morris had founded a school of thought about design, and the sincerity and passion of the founder were emulated by his disciples, who, unfortunately, often adopted a 'holier than thou' attitude to their fellow-men. An anonymous writer, in *The Cabinet Maker & Art Furnisher*, describing an exhibition of work by the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, observed that 'The pose of some of these Morrisians, especially when they are talking, reminds me of a very worthy but strictly exclusive religious sect, who believed that they only were the elect, and they evidently found great satisfaction in keeping their circle as limited as possible.'[1] The tendency of artist-craftsmen to retire to secluded parts of the Cotswolds, where they made furniture largely by hand in the Morris tradition, restricted the influence of their original and admirable work. Ambrose Heal was the exception: as director of design in a long-established business, his furniture had a formative influence on the Cottage Style of the Edwardian period, enlarged the taste for well-made simple furniture during the first quarter of the 20th century, and because such furniture was economically produced by the wise use of contemporary manufacturing techniques, it reached a far larger market than the exclusive artist-craftsmen could command. Furniture made by craftsmen like Gimson and the brothers Barnsley, or from the designs of such partnerships as Kenton & Company, could be acquired only by a relatively few wealthy and discriminating patrons. Gimson was outspokenly frank about the intentional segregation of the handicraft revival from contemporary commercial and industrial life. His belief that industrial technique was incompatible with the arts and crafts was recorded in the essay contributed by A. H. Powell to the memorial volume, published in

[1] November, 1896, page 115.

1924 under the title of *Ernest Gimson: his Life and Work*[1] 'He desired commercialism might leave handiwork and the arts alone and make use of its own wits and its own machinery,' Powell wrote. 'Let machinery be honest, he said, and make its own machine-buildings and its own machine-furniture; let it make its chairs and tables of stamped aluminium if it likes: why not?'

Only the industrial designer could give such honesty of purpose to furniture produced by industrial techniques, and use, with trained imagination, such industrially-produced materials as aluminium and other light alloys, steel tubing, glass, laminated wood, plywood, and plastics. The knowledge and skill of the modern industrial designer in the selection and use of such materials is comparable to the selective skill and knowledge of wood exercised by Georgian cabinet-makers or the French *ébénistes* of the late 17th and 18th centuries. Although the Arts and Crafts Movement, and the personal preference of a number of highly gifted artist-craftsmen for artistic and economic isolation, delayed the advent of the industrial designer and implanted doubts and prejudices in the minds of manufacturers about his proper function, once his identity as a technician was established, his debt to the pioneer work of men like Gimson and the Barnsleys became apparent. Without the reassessment of the significance and nature of materials fostered by the artist-craftsmen of the late 19th and early 20th century, the industrial designers of the 1920s and '30s would have found it far more difficult to gain acceptance for their innovations.

One of the effects of the Arts and Crafts Movement on contemporary taste was a fashion for articles that looked as if they were 'hand-made'. This encouraged manufacturers to produce furniture with rough, unfinished surfaces, and metalwork, with mechanically impressed hammer marks. Artistically modish people, like the Cimabue Browns, depicted by George du Maurier in *Punch*, were susceptible to the superficial aspects of the Movement, and though incapable of comprehending the sincerity and honesty of its founder, they relished the idea of 'the good old times', and the 'good old craftsmen', singing and praying and carving and weaving, and painting this and that, and fell with glad rapture into the arms of the antique dealers. It was so exciting to buy and so wonderful to live with furniture that was made centuries ago by such joyful workmen. What such furniture looked like was not so important; so long as it was old, and preferably of oak, it passed.

These unintentional and often ridiculous by-products of the teaching and idealism of William Morris do not invalidate the excellence of his own work or that of the artist-craftsmen who followed his example. Gimson's work in wood and metal invariably attained the ideal balance between structure and ornamentation that Morris had described as a characteristic of Popular Art when he said: 'The craftsman, as he fashioned the thing he had under his hand, ornamented it so naturally and so entirely without conscious effort, that it is often difficult to distinguish where the mere utilitarian part of his work ended and the ornamental began.'[2]

[1] London: Ernest Benn Ltd. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
[2] From the essay, 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil'.

The late Victorian period was enlivened by the results of the Arts and Crafts movement, and the drawing room became a battleground of conflicting decorative ideas and experiments, while certain traditional types of furniture reappeared, such as rush-bottomed, ladder-backed chairs. Reproduced from the frontispiece of *Decoration and Furniture of Town Houses*, by Robert W. Edis, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A. published in 1881.

That sentence suggests how ably Morris might have practised the unification of form, function, and decorative character that is the conspicuous achievement of the modern industrial designer; but Morris and his disciples deliberately limited their power and medium of expression. Within those self-imposed limitations they originated a fresh and vigorous style of furniture, that continued an English tradition of woodworking, mediaeval in inspiration, though far more accomplished in technique than anything made by craftsmen in the 15th, 16th, or early 17th centuries. Artist-craftsmen of the Gimson and Barnsley school were uninfluenced by the cabinet-making of the 18th century; they ignored the long golden age of design achieved under the direction of architects; and were unsympathetic to the idea of such orderly control.

Among the artist-craftsmen who worked in the late Victorian period and the opening decades of the present century, few approached the stature of Gimson; and their work frequently suffered from lack of contact with life, for many of them were insulated, by deliberate choice, from contemporary ideas. They paid the penalty for disliking the times they lived in; in England their influence was restricted, though in Europe their work was taken with great seriousness, and so widely imitated that it has since been assumed that modern furniture design originated in Germany, Austria or Scandinavia. The English have a habit of exporting ideas, and when they return after a few years failing to recognize them as re-exports, and enthusing over the sparkling originality of foreign designers.

Many of the pioneers of modern furniture design were architects, like C. F. A. Voysey—who was an early industrial designer—C. R. Mackintosh, and George Walton. Their designs appear in the early volumes of *The Studio*, founded by Charles Holme in 1893, and several of them in a book published in 1901, on *Modern British Domestic Architecture and Decoration*, that Holme edited. This book includes designs by Charles Spooner, M. H. Baillie Scott, William James Neatby, Frances and Herbert McNair, G. M. Ellwood, Edgar Wood, and some of the early work of Sir Ambrose Heal, as well as furniture by Voysey, Walton, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, and Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh. (There is nothing by Gimson.) All the examples illustrated are influenced by Morris; many are affected by the characteristic motifs of New Art, though the anarchical naturalistic forms of that florid Continental fashion have been used soberly and sparingly.

After the 1914–18 war, the work of Gordon Russell brought fresh and vigorous character to furniture in the English tradition of design that Gimson and the Barnsleys had resuscitated. His work, and that of his brother, Richard Drew Russell, have helped to bring about the transition from the early 20th century style, created by the artist-craftsmen, to what is now called the contemporary style, that since the late 1940s, has exhibited an increasing mastery of industrially-produced materials in furniture of light and elegant design. When the first half of the century was ending, Noel Carrington suggested that the country cottage style of furnishing, developed by the middle class settlers in villages, 'bred by the magazines of taste', was the nearest approach to a contemporary style that we possessed, and regarded it as 'a very dim descendant of Petit Trianon rustic . . .'[1] That cottage style, which began

[1] *Life in an English Village*. King Penguin Books, 1949.

in the Edwardian period, was only a makeshift; a way of camping out with odds and ends, an assortment of loot from the past, with genuine antiques side by side with conscientious copies, Windsor chairs, and weathered and limed oak pieces. Since then the clearly recognizable contemporary style has appeared, established by the work of many imaginative designers, such as the late Ernest Race.

The study of furniture design should include far more than the historic periods and styles, made familiar by so many books since the beginning of the century. Some indication of the nature and extent of such literature is given in Section V, but here two books should be mentioned that assess the nature and extent of the impact made by mechanical techniques and industrial materials upon the character of furniture. Both have been published since the Second World War, and the first to appear was *Furniture from Machines*,[1] by Gordon Logie, an architect, who has re-examined the whole subject of furniture production and design, and based his objective survey upon research, personally conducted in various branches of the industry. In the preface he states that the purpose of the book is 'to explore the possibilities of the machine production of furniture', and into that preface he condenses much common sense about the use and abuse of machinery. He describes the structure of the British furniture industry in this paragraph: 'The furniture industry is very sharply divided into groups. There are the makers of wooden domestic furniture; the chair makers; the steel tube furniture makers; the hospital furniture specialists; the office furniture makers; the woven cane furniture makers, and so on, each intent on their own processes and difficulties. Some are bound to traditional ways and are resistant to change. Others, generally the newer branches such as the steel tube makers, are much more enterprising and are trying to extend their activities to new fields. Intruding into all groups are the new moulded plywood and light alloy industries. . . .' The fifteen chapters and excellent illustrations of Logie's book show that all branches of the furniture industry are remarkably well equipped with materials and mechanical techniques.

The other work is Dr Siegfried Giedion's *Mechanization takes Command*,[2] which the author describes as 'a contribution to anonymous history'. The objects that are examined in its sections have collectively 'shaken our mode of living to its very roots'; and the cumulative effect of the changes caused by the mechanization of many forms of activity is certainly not fully apprehended by those who derive benefit, danger, or irritation from them. Dr Giedion brings into focus many diverse views and theories that have been expressed and accepted about the manifestations of mechanized industry; much in the same way that Darwin in the mid-19th century brought into focus many views and theories about natural history that had previously gained only fragmentary acceptance. Dr Giedion can examine a matter ex-

[1] *Furniture from Machines*, by Gordon Logie, A.R.I.B.A. (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd, 1947).

[2] *Mechanization takes Command*, by Siegfried Giedion (Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 1948).

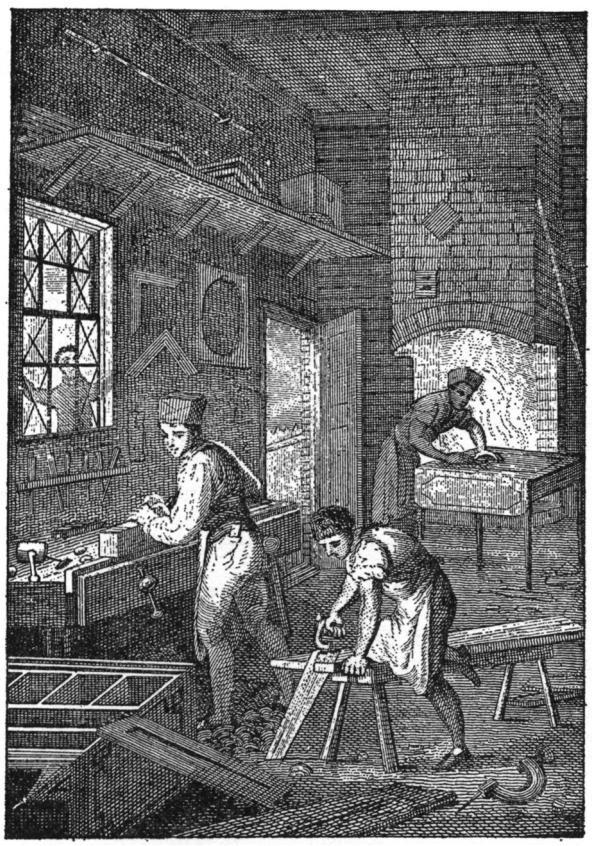
haustively, without exhausting the reader. His book consists of seven sections, and in Section V the growth and changing conceptions of comfort are described, from mediaeval times to the 19th century. By tracing the evolution of various types of furniture, and the transition from handicraft to mechanical production, Dr Giedion has in this section written a history of furniture with new vision. His book is erected upon a plinth of research and scholarship, and reveals that many of the designs that were reverently saluted for their complete break with tradition in the 1920s and '30s, were based upon some early or mid-Victorian prototype, invented in America or England. Continuity of design appears to be inescapable; and this is demonstrated by the development of the patent adjustable and convertible furniture that Dr Giedion describes. These two books bring the history of furniture manufacture and the account of materials available up to the mid-20th century.

In the third quarter of the century, the architect and the industrial designer (who is often the same person) is gaining control over furniture design. The architect, not only by designing furniture, but indirectly through the character of the space he provides for it. Through the houses and apartments he designs, the architect is inexorably determining the future of the furniture trade. The furniture manufacturer may imagine that he controls his own economic destiny; the professional retail buyer may be confident that he 'knows what the public wants', and continues to impress his taste on the manufacturer; but changes in the character of domestic architecture may confine the manufacturer's activities to chair making and upholstery, for by the end of the century all forms of free-standing furniture, all receptacles, and even beds, may have returned to their mediaeval dependence upon and structural partnership with the walls of rooms.

One of the most socially significant characteristics of domestic architecture in the first half of this century was the loss of spaciousness within houses. This loss was apparent in the vernacular architecture of the speculative builder, who had drawn his variously picturesque models from the now forgotten pattern books of the early 19th century—of which Loudon's *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture and Furniture* was the most comprehensive—and also from the attempts by the disciples of William Morris to re-create a native English style. Rooms have become mean in size, and everywhere minimum standards have been imposed. Even in houses designed by architects for private individuals before 1914 and between the wars, the old Victorian and Georgian spaciousness was missing: rooms might be large, but ceilings were low.

Life within doors has consequently become narrower and more congested than it was for our great-grandparents; though it was a long time before the furniture industry realized that because of this tendency the day of the monumental bedroom suite and the vast dining-room sideboard was over. Another development of domestic architecture is generally ignored by that industry, for although the size of rooms in houses has not been increased, the architect has, before and since the second war, released more floor space by filling all the odd corners and recesses that were formerly left to take care of themselves, and in those wasted spaces he has put fitted furniture—book shelves, cupboards, wardrobes, drawers, folding tables, and even bunk beds.

The factory-made house, assembled from standardized, prefabricated units, must inevitably accelerate the tendency to design in advance all receptacles, fittings, and storage equipment, so that houses may perhaps be more than half furnished by the builder as they are erected. The building industry may accept as common practice the supply of all furniture other than chairs and possibly one or two tables, as it now accepts the supply of baths, lavatory basins, water closets and sinks. This may make life a lot less troublesome for most people; although it does represent another step in the control and limitation of personal taste. But we may still have enough room to collect a few things made before life became so comfortable and convenient.



The Cabinet-Maker's shop, 1830. Reproduced on a slightly larger scale from the frontispiece of the fifth edition of *The Cabinet-Maker's Guide, or Rules and Instructions in the art of varnishing, dying, staining, japanning, polishing, lackering, and Beautifying Wood, Ivory, Tortoiseshell, and Metal*, by G. A. Siddons.

SECTION III

Dictionary of Names and Terms

*

AUTHORITIES and sources of quotations are given in the various entries. The principal works of reference used throughout are given below, supplemented by books published in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, that are listed in Section V, beginning on page 779.

GENERAL REFERENCE

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FURNITURE AND RELATED SUBJECTS

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The Arts and Crafts in New York, compiled by Dr Rita Susswein Gottesman. (Three volumes, issued in 1936, 1948 and 1949, covering the following periods: 1726–76. 1777–79. 1800–04. Published by the New York Historical Society.)
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Sports and Pastimes of the People of England, by Joseph Strutt. (Edited by William Hone. London: 1831.)
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Mr. Samuel McIntire, Carver and Architect of Salem. (Portland, Maine. The Southworth-Anthoensen Press, for the Essex Institute, 1940.)
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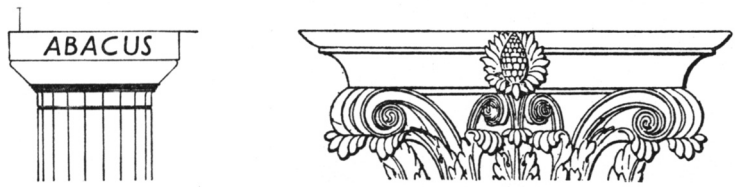
ILLUSTRATIONS

This section is illustrated partly from contemporary sources, such as the published works of Chippendale, Ince and Mayhew, Manwaring, Hepplewhite and Sheraton; trade books, like *The Prices of Cabinet Work* (1797 edition); and books on design, like Thomas Hope's *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1807). Many 19th century examples are reproduced from Loudon's *Encyclopaedia* (1833); A. J. Downing's *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850); the *Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition, 1851;* Eastlake's *Hints on Household Taste* (Second edition, 1869, and Fourth edition, 1878), and from such periodicals as *The Art Journal, Punch, Judy*, and *The Graphic*. Many drawings by Frederick William Fairholt (1814–66), the antiquary and wood engraver, have been reproduced, mainly from the works of Thomas Wright. Mr Ronald Escott's 144 drawings, made for the original edition, are used, with many drawings by the late Miss Marcelle Barton, and by Mrs Maureen Stafford, A.R.C.A. A few of the illustrations are by A. B. Read, R.D.I., A.R.C.A., and the late E. J. Warne. Where space permits, attributions to the artists are made in the captions.

* A *

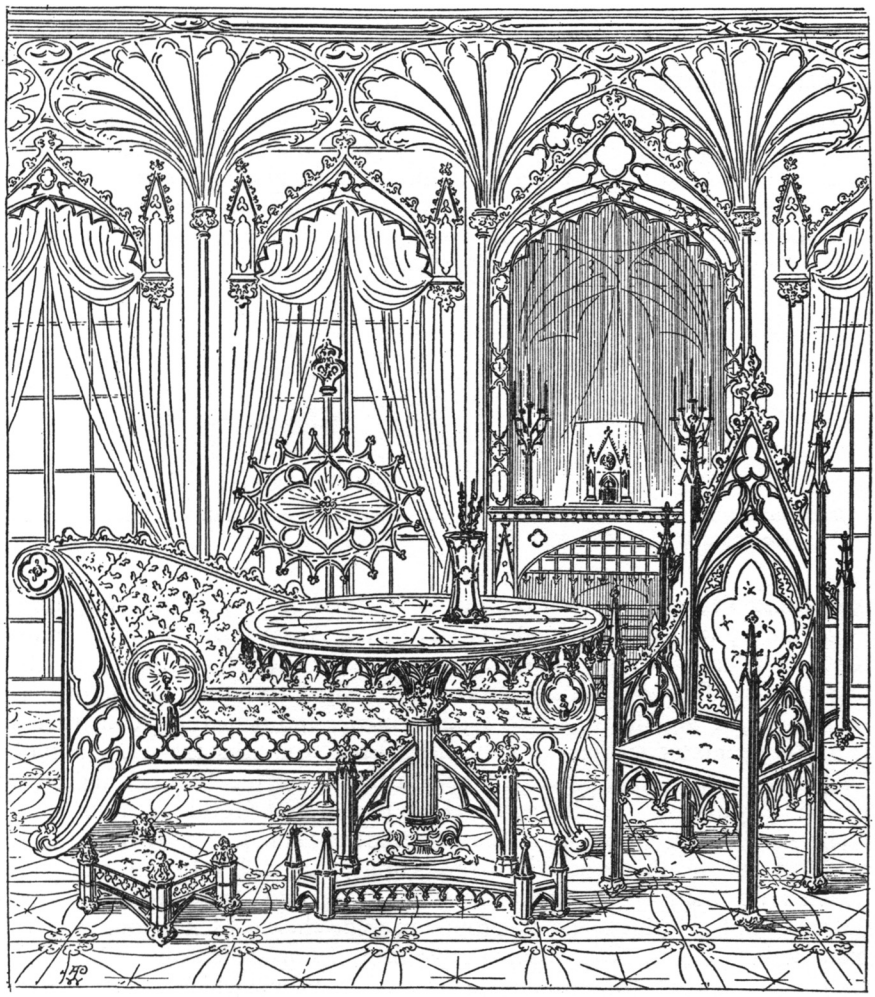
Abachi, *see* **Obeche**

Abacus Architectural term for the flat, upper member of a capital on a column or a pilaster, on which the architrave of an entablature rests. On the Tuscan, Doric and Ionic orders of architecture the abacus is square; on the Corinthian and Composite, each face is convex. The accompanying illustration shows the abacus of a Greek Doric and a Roman Corinthian capital. (*See* details of architectural orders, pages 477 and 478.)



Left: Abacus on a Greek Doric capital. *Right:* Abacus on a Roman Corinthian capital. (*See* also pages 33, 475, 477, and 478.)

Abbotsford Period Late 19th century name for imitation Gothic furniture, made during the 1820s and '30s. Derived from Abbotsford, the house built for Sir Walter Scott in Roxburghshire by Edward Blore from 1816 onwards, and completed by William Atkinson, 1822–3. Such furniture, also known as monastic, *q.v.*, was heavy, often crudely made, and sometimes constructed from fragments of mediaeval woodwork. Fred Roe used the term in 1901 when he wrote: 'During the craze for sham antiques in the Abbotsford Gothic period, England was producing shocking parodies of Gothic furniture . . .' ('The Art of Collecting Oak.' *The Connoisseur*, Vol. I, No. 1. September, 1901.) A. W. N. Pugin described the character of such furniture and condemned the methods of upholsterers who, he said, 'seem to think that nothing can be Gothic unless it is found in some church. Hence your modern man designs a sofa or occasional table from details culled out of Britton's Cathedrals, and all the ordinary articles of furniture, which require to be simple and convenient, are made not only very expensive but very uneasy. We find diminutive flying buttresses about an arm chair; everything is crocketed with angular projections, innumerable mitres, sharp ornaments, and turreted extremities. A man who remains any length of time in a modern Gothic room, and escapes without being wounded by some of its minutiae, may consider himself extremely fortunate. There are often as many pinnacles and gablets about a pier-glass frame as are to be found in an ordinary church. . . .' He admitted that he had 'perpetrated many of these enormities in the furniture I designed some years ago for Windsor Castle.' (*The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture.* London: John Weale. 1841. Pages 40–41.) He illustrated an interior in the 'extravagant style of modern Gothic Furniture and Decoration', which was typical of the Abbotsford period. (*See* next page.) The name had a romantic appeal, not only for the public, but for the furniture trade. Early in the 1880s, Oetzmann & Company,



Pugin's illustration of 'the extravagant style of Modern Gothic Furniture and Decoration'. This commercialised 'Gothic' of the 1820's and '30s was typical of the Abbotsford period. Reproduced from *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, by A. W. N. Pugin. London: 1841, page 41. (*See* illustration of 'Monastic' chair on page 458.)

a big London retail furnishing house established in the Hampstead Road, advertised 'Abbotsford' tapestry curtains, in 'Artistic conventional designs. . . .' (*The Graphic*, No. 660, Vol. XXVI, July 22, 1882. Page 96.) The name was not apparently used in the trade to describe furniture. (*See* above, *also* **Gothic Furniture, Gothic Taste, Monastic Chair** *and* **Strawberry Hill Gothic,** and page 366.)

Abura (*Mitragyna ciliata*) Also known as Bahia. A West African wood, light brown in colour, with a straight grain. Light and soft, but not durable, used occasionally for mouldings and turnery, but seldom for cabinet work.

Acacia (*Robina Pseudoacacia*) A hard, strong durable wood, varying in colour from pale yellow to golden brown with markings of deeper brown. Evelyn included acacia among the woods used by inlayers for yellows and reds. (*Sylva*, third edition, 1679. Chap. XXXI, page 220.) During the 18th and early 19th centuries it was used for country-made furniture, sometimes for chair frames, but chiefly for inlay and bandings, and occasionally as a substitute for tulip wood, *q.v.* Artist-craftsmen, working in the Morris tradition during the late 19th and first quarter of the present century, occasionally used acacia for chairs and small articles of cabinet work, such as boxes. Known in America as Locust. The name acacia has been discontinued, on the recommendation of the British Standards Institution, and the standard name is now Robina.

Acanthus Foot The legs of chairs or tables that terminate in scrolls of formalized acanthus leaves, are sometimes described as finished with acanthus feet. A chair with such feet is shown in Chippendale's *Director*, plate XIII (third edition, 1762). The term is not contemporary. (*See* page 170.)

Left: Acanthus leaf. (*See* Corinthian capitals on page 33.) *Centre:* Acorn turning, from a finial on an early 17th century joined chair. (*See* also back stool, bottom left, page 93.) *Right:* 'Acorn top' on clock case. (*See* page 70.)

Acanthus Ornament Formalized leaves of the *acanthus mollis* (brank-ursine or bears' breech), were used in Greek and Roman architecture, on the capitals of the Corinthian order, *q.v.*, for the enrichment of mouldings and surfaces, and for scrolls and convoluted ornament. The acanthus motif spread to every part of the Graeco-Roman world, and after the Renaissance to every continent where Europeans traded or settled. In England, since the 16th century, acanthus leaves and scrolls have been carved, painted, or inlaid on furniture. (*See* illustration above, also pages 33 and 477.)

Accordion Pleat Term used by upholsterers for a machine-made pleat, formed by the application of heat and pressure, resulting in a series of knife-edge pleats, each one completely overlapping the next. This form of pleating is used only on light materials in furnishing.

Acid Embossing Technical term for obscuring the surface of flat or bent glass by treatment with hydrofluoric acid or its compounds.

Acorn Chair Modern American term for an early 17th century back stool, *q.v.*, with acorn finials on the yoke rail continuing the vertical line of the back uprights, or acorn pendants below the cross rail. (*See* illustration, at bottom left, page 93.)

Acorn Top Modern term for a bookcase, cabinet or clock case when surmounted by an acorn-shaped terminal ornament. Used chiefly in the U.S.A. (*See* page 69.)

Acorn Turning Ornaments turned in the form of an acorn and used to decorate furniture from the late 16th to the end of the 18th century. Often used as finials on early examples of back stools. (*See* illustration, page 69, and bottom left, page 93.)

Act of Parliament Clock *see* **Coaching Inn Clock**

Adam Style The architect Robert Adam (1728–92) created a new, elegant style that became identified with national taste during the last three decades of the 18th century, and profoundly influenced the work of contemporary furniture designers and makers. Adam reinterpreted the classical idiom, after an intensive study of antique remains in Italy, where he lived from 1754 to 1757, and in Dalmatia, where he made a detailed record of the ruins of Diocletian's Palace, at Spalato. He designed complete buildings, with interior decoration and furniture; and such articles as chairs, tables, sideboards and cabinets were elements in a grand composition that included everything: fireplaces, grates, door knockers, carpets, curtains and chandeliers: all related in style, all expressing the delicate characteristics of the Neo-Classical taste, *q.v.* He revolutionised the design of the English interior, and introduced changes as sweeping as those that followed the introduction of curvilinear design, *q.v.*, in the early years of the century. He used gilding extensively and transformed the character of gilded furniture; an achievement condemned by Horace Walpole who observed that 'Adam, our most admired, is all gingerbread, filigraine, and fan-painting'. (Letter to Sir Horace Mann, April 22, 1775.) Gingerbread meant gilding, for gingerbread cakes, sold at fairs, were always ornamented with gold leaf. Hitherto, gilded furniture had been inclined either to corpulence, with bold, heavy carving, as on the work of William Kent, *q.v.*, or else to the restless vivacity of the rococo style, as interpreted by carvers of genius, such as Thomas Johnson, *q.v.* The demand for gilded furniture rapidly increased, so did the number of master carvers and gilders, and it has been estimated that by the last decade of the 18th century there were over one hundred and fifty of them in business in London, and more than thirty specialists in water gilding in addition. ('Costly Elegance of Gilded Chairs', by G. Bernard Hughes. *Country Life*, Vol. CXXXIV, No. 3482. November 28, 1963. Pages 1398–9.) Apart from changing the character of gilded furniture, Adam's subtle use of carved and painted decoration made furniture lighter in appearance; and his introduction of oval and shield-shaped backs gave new graces to chairs. Dr Eileen Harris has distinguished four different periods of the Adam style: 1. Early, 1762–64; 2. Transitional, 1765–68; 3. Mature, 1769–77; 4. Late, 1778–92. She observes that 'In the popular image Adam furniture virtually begins and ends with

his mature style'. (*The Furniture of Robert Adam*, by Eileen Harris. London: Alec Tiranti, 1963. Chap. II, page 15.) The most comprehensive record of Robert Adam's contribution to furniture design is the large collection of his original drawings, housed in Sir John Soane's Museum: the most authoritative and detailed work on the subject is Dr Harris's masterly study, quoted above. (*See* **Hepplewhite Style.**)

Adjustable Furniture Seats, tables, or stands, designed for adjustment to various positions, levels or angles. (*See* illustrations, on pages 550 to 553.)

Adriatic Oak, *see* **Austrian Oak**

Adze A type of axe with the cutting edge at right angles to the haft. For hollowing out the shaped seat of a Windsor chair the cutting edge is curved and dished. Adzing or 'bottoming' a chair seat—which is usually of elm—is a highly skilled operation: the maker puts the seat on the ground, with one foot at each side to hold it down, and uses the long-handled adze rather as a pickaxe is used, chopping with horizontal strokes, at right angles to the run of the grain. (*See* **White Wycombe,** *also* **Windsor Chair.**)

Afara (*Terminalia superba*) The standard name for a light yellow wood with dark grey markings, which comes from tropical Africa. Also known as Limba, or Limbo, and White Afara. The last name has been discontinued, on the recommendation of the British Standards Institution to avoid confusion, as in Africa it is used for the tree as distinct from the timber. Easy to work and used in cabinet-making.

African Mahogany (*Khaya ivorensis*) From the west coast of Africa; sometimes known as Gambia or Lagos. Pale red, almost pink in hue, darkening to a deeper, reddish brown upon exposure. Occasionally well figured. Used for general cabinet work, turnery, mouldings and veneers.

African Teak *see* **Iroko**

African Walnut (*Lovoa klaineana*) From the west coast of Africa; also known as Benin walnut, Nigerian walnut, and Nigerian golden walnut. An easily worked wood, golden brown in colour shading into dark brown. Used for cabinet work and chair making.

African Whitewood, *see* **Obeche**

African Zebrawood, *see* **Zebrano**

Afrormosia (*Afrormosia elata*) A strong, durable wood, almost as hard as teak, varying in colour from warm yellow to pale brown, with dark markings. From Ghana. Used in cabinet work.

Akle (*Albizzia acle*) A hard, heavy dark brown wood that comes from the Philippines. Not unlike black walnut, *q.v.*, in colour, with an irregular ribbon figure, and a fairly fine texture. Easy to work, and used for cabinet-making and good quality joinery.

Alarm Clock Clocks fitted with a bell-ringing device that could be set to ring at a specific time were known as early as the 16th century. An inventory, taken at the 'Palloice at Westminster, 34th Year, Henry VIII', includes: 'Item oone clocke of Iron with a larum to the same with the Kinges Armes crownyd'. The contemporary term was alarum, or alarum clock. In Holbein's

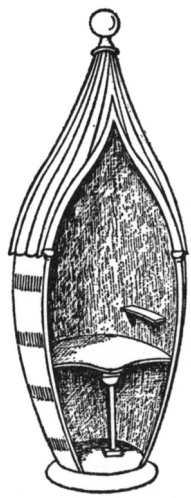
pen drawing of 'The Family of Sir Thomas More', 1527, a clock with a bell is depicted, on a bracket high upon the wall, that resembles in form the 17th-century lantern clock, *q.v.*

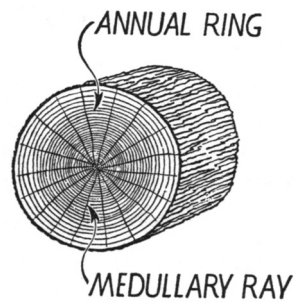
Albany Couch, *see* **Reading Seat**

Album Quilt Mid-Victorian descriptive term for a patchwork quilt, with names and dates stitched on some of the patches, in the manner of a family album. (*See* **Patchwork.**)

Alburnum The white, soft sapwood of a tree, between the inner bark and the heart-wood.

Alcove A recess designed for a seat or a bed. Both word and device are of Arabic origin. Alcoves were used occasionally in the furnishing and decoration of large rooms in the 18th century. A bed in an alcove is shown in 'The Countess's Dressing Room' scene of Hogarth's *Marriage à la Mode.* Also applied to an upright, boat-shaped, hooded garden seat. 'Alcoves and Rural Seats' are advertised on the trade card of John Stubbs, in business 1790–1803 in the City Road and in Brick Lane, Old Street, London. (*The London Furniture Makers, 1660-1840,* by Sir Ambrose Heal, F.S.A., Batsford: 1953. Pages 168 and 177.) *See* illustration below, and page 264.





Left: Alcove hooded garden seat, from the trade card of John Stubbs (*see* page 764). *Drawn by Marcelle Barton. Below:* Section through tree showing annual rings and medullary rays.

Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) Native to Europe and the British Isles. A durable wood, whitish brown when cut, deepening to red, and fading to pale brown after seasoning. Used during the 18th and 19th centuries for country-made furniture, and sometimes for the turned members of Windsor chairs.

Alkanet A dye derived from the root of the plant Anchusa, that belongs to the Borage family, and grows in most European countries and Britain. Sheraton in his entry for 'Alkanet' in *The Cabinet Dictionary* (1803), said that the root was 'much in use amongst cabinet-makers, for making red oil; the best composition for which, as far as I know, is as follows: take a quart

of good linseed oil, to which put a quarter of a pound of alkanet root, as much opened with the hand as possible, that the bark of the root which tinges the oil may fly off; to this put about an ounce of dragon's blood, and another of rose pink, finely pounded in a mortar; set the whole within a moderate heat for twelve hours at least, or better if a day and a night. Then strain it through a flannel into a bottle for use. This staining oil is not properly applicable to every sort of mahogany'. For mahogany that was 'close grained and hard and wants briskness of colour, the above oil will help it much. All hard mahogany of a bad colour should be oiled with it, and should stand unpolished a time, proportioned to its quality and texture of grain; if it be laid on hard wood to be polished off immediately, it is of little use; but if it stand a few days after, the oil penetrates the grain and hardens on the surface, and consequently will bear a better polish, and look brighter in colour'. (Pages 6 and 7. *See* **Dragon's Blood** and **Polish.**)

Alligazant According to Sheraton in *The Cabinet Dictionary* (1803), this is 'a kind of black rose wood'.

Almery, *see* **Aumbry**

Almirah Anglo-Indian term, applied generally to cupboards, but specifically to a movable cupboard or wardrobe.

Alpaca A woven fabric made from the fine, almost silken hair of the alpaca, a Peruvian sheep of the llama species. The material has a plain, close weave, and in the early 19th century was occasionally used for covering the seats of small, single chairs.

Amaranth, *see* **Purpleheart**

Amarillo, *see* **Fustic**

Amboyna (*Pterocarpus indicus*) From the islands of Amboyna and Ceram, in the East Indies. A hard, durable and highly decorative wood, varying in colour from light, reddish brown to orange and deeper brown, with a mottled figure, resembling bird's eye maple, *q.v.*, though darker in hue. Used for veneers, inlays and banding.

Ambry, *see* **Aumbry**

Ambuscade Bed The term is used by William Henry Leeds (1786–1866), and occurs in an article he contributed to *The Architectural Magazine* on 'Plans for Rooms'. (Vol. II, September, 1835, page 397.) 'Where persons occupy only a first floor of two rooms,' he wrote, 'it would be a great accommodation to be able to employ both as sitting-rooms, either occasionally or constantly, and still to retain all the comfort of a separate bedroom, without having recourse to such a miserable apology for a bed as either a sofa bed or a turn-up bedstead. An *ambuscade bed,* which may be so formed as to defy suspicion and scrutiny, and so as to enhance rather than detract from the appearance of the room, is free from all the defects and inconveniences of the substitutes just mentioned, where, to say nothing of the trouble attending them, the bedding is so squeezed up and compressed, as to render it almost indispensible to have it remade up before it can be used.' At that point of his article he concluded abruptly by saying: 'I shall explain what I mean by an ambuscade

bed at some other opportunity.' He never did, although he frequently contributed to the architectural press under his own name and as 'Candidus'. Leeds was an architect, critic and writer. He exhibited six designs and architectural studies at the Royal Academy between 1829 and 1849, and published several works on architecture. (*See* three articles on his life and works by Hyde Clarke, *The Building News*, October 4, 11 and 18, 1867.) He was a somewhat eccentric character, and his *ambuscade bed* may have been no more than a piece of wishful thinking.

American Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*) Known also as Virginia walnut and Black Virginia. From the eastern states of North America. Similar to European Walnut, *q.v.*, but darker in colour, straight-grained and seldom finely figured. Recognized since the 17th century as an excellent wood for furniture, and used throughout the 18th, usually in the solid, sometimes for chairs and tables, and occasionally polished to imitate mahogany. One of the earliest records of its use in the American colonies is a black walnut chest of drawers, appraised at £10, included in a Charleston inventory dated 1722. (*Charleston Furniture*, by E. Milby Burton. The Charleston Museum, 1955. Part 2, page 32.) An advertisement for a sale of goods, published in *The New-York Weekly Journal*, December 31, 1733, included, '1 Black Walnut Table. . .' (*The Arts and Crafts in New York, 1726-1776.* New York Historical Society, 1938. Page 121.) The wood was identified with fashionable design in America in the first half of the 19th century. (*See* **Black Walnut Period.**) Black Virginia, as it was commonly termed, had been grown in England after 1650, and was also imported from America during the first half of the 18th century. In *The Cabinet Dictionary* (1803), Sheraton wrote: 'The black Virginia was much in use for cabinet work about forty or fifty years since in England, but is now quite laid aside since the introduction of mahogany.' (Entry 'Walnut Tree'. Page 331.)

American Boxwood, *see* **Dogwood**

American Cherry, *see* **Cherrywood**

American Cloth An enamelled oilcloth, used as a substitute for leather, introduced in the mid-19th century, and used for covering chairs and the tops of tables and writing desks. 'For dining-room and library furniture, moroccos, roans, American cloth and Utrech velvet are generally used.' (*Practical Upholstery*, by 'A Working Upholsterer'. London: Wyman & Sons. Second edition, 1883. Chap. I, page 5.) For chair covering, 'American cloth is treated in a manner similar to leather, and the same allowances for fullness will answer very well'. (*Opus cit*, Chap. III, page 16.) Eastlake refers to the material as a substitute for leather. (*See* **Cromwell Chair.**)

American Empire Style A modern term for the furniture and furnishing fashions prevalent in the United States during the early part of the 19th century. American designers were directly influenced by French Empire fashions, and French taste had a marked effect on American furniture. Large and rather ponderous designs, incorporating classical motifs, characterize this period. Mahogany and rosewood were used, and during and after the 1820s American black walnut, *q.v.*, was popular. Late American Empire

is a term sometimes used to describe the last phase of this style, when good proportions were often sacrificed in the interests of ill-conceived ornament.

American Federal Style A description used occasionally for American furniture made during the opening decades of the 19th century, on which such patriotic symbols as the spread eagle figured prominently, also military motifs, like crossed cannons. Some of this symbolism was adapted from furniture designed during the Empire period. (*See previous entry.*)

American Lime, *see* **Basswood**

American Plane, *see* **Buttonwood**

American Red Gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) Sometimes known as satin walnut, this wood comes from the south-eastern states of North America. Reddish brown in colour, veined with streaks of darker brown, it has a satiny surface when finished; but is unsatisfactory to work and is used only for cheap furniture.

American Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) Pale, reddish-brown, the lightest shades almost pink; coarse-grained, but takes a good polish after filling.

American White Oak (*Quercus alba*) Pale-brown wood, yellowish in its lighter shades, with a coarse grain that has to be filled before polishing.

American Whitewood, *see* **Canary Wood**

Amorini An Italian word often used for the winged figures of cupids, carved on the cresting or front stretchers of chairs, on tables, and stands for cabinets. Such figures were used extensively in the decoration of furniture during the Carolean period.

Anan (*Fagroea fragrans*) A yellow or pale brown wood, streaked with white; it has a fine grain and texture and a highly decorative mottle. From Burma. Used for cabinet work and veneers.

Ancone Architectural term for the scrolled brackets or consoles on either side of a doorway, that support the cornice. In joinery, known as brackets, *q.v.*

Andaman Marblewood, *see* **Coromandel Wood**

Andaman Padauk or Padouk (*Pterocarpus dalbergioides*) Sometimes known as Andaman redwood. Richly coloured, varying from dark crimson to brown and red. Used for decorative woodwork, cabinet-making and turnery. Imported from the Andaman Islands and Burma, the Andaman variety was used occasionally in the 18th century. A padauk chair, convertible to library steps, *circa* 1720–30, is in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Known in the U.S.A. as Vermilion Wood.

Andirons or **Firedogs** An appliance for use on a hearth to support logs, consisting of an upright stem, supported on feet or a base, with a horizontal billet bar at right angles to the stem, on which billets or small logs of wood were laid. Wrought iron andirons were made in pairs from the 15th to the 18th century, and heavier types in cast iron also came into use after the casting process was introduced during the 15th century. (*See* **Cast Iron.**) Andirons replaced the double-ended dog, *q.v.*, when the wall-hearth replaced

the central hearth (*see* **Hearth**). An early form of the word was awndierns, and in the western counties of England they were sometimes called andogs (Halliwell). The most familiar term is fire-dog or dog. The smaller types that often stood between the tall andirons are known by a variety of names: brand-dogs, chenets, creepers, and dog-irons. (*Iron and Brass Implements of the English House*, by J. Seymour Lindsay. London and Boston: The Medici Society, 1927. Part I, page 4.) When coal had largely replaced wood for the heating of town houses, andirons continued in use only in country houses and cottages, for coal was sea-borne and as expensive in the late 17th and early 18th centuries as it became two hundred and fifty years later. 'The stoves used to burn coal were small and portable, taking the place of the old andirons, and standing unfixed in the somewhat wide chimney pieces.' (*Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne*, by John Ashton. London: Chatto & Windus, 1883. Chap. V, page 55.) Small though they were, they devoured coal. 'I have got some loose bricks at the back of my grate for good husbandry,' Swift wrote to Stella. (November 9, 1711, Letter XXXIV.) The form of the andiron was preserved in the supporting standards of the early 18th century dog-grate, but the resemblance disappeared in the later types. During the mid-19th century andirons were reintroduced, sometimes in their original form, but diminished in scale and performing a completely different function, for they stood at the ends of the front hearth well away from the fire, serving as rests for the shovel, tongs and poker, and usually designed to match the fire irons and fender. (*See* also **Double-Ended Dog** and **Spit-Dog.**) Illustrations on page 224.

Angel Bed Probably a half-tester bedstead, *q.v.* An early 18th century definition was: 'A sort of open bed, without bedposts'. (*The New World of Words, or Universal English Dictionary*, by Edward Phillips. Sixth edition, 1706.) *See* page 125.

Angle Block, *see* **Corner Block**

Angle Chair, *see* **Writing Chair**

Angular Capital An Ionic capital, *q.v.*, formed alike on all four faces. (*See* illustration on page 475.)

Animal Furniture This is the only term that covers an eccentric collaboration between taxidermists and furniture makers in the second half of the 19th century. Contemporary accounts of the fashion disclose the range of articles constructed partly or wholly from defunct animals and birds. *The Art Journal* in December 1872, under 'Minor Topics of the Month', described the work of Ward and Hatchwell, naturalists of Piccadilly, London, who had 'given a new feature to their Art—that of preserving the outward aspect and character of animals. The name of "Ward",' said the anonymous writer, 'has long been honourably associated with that interesting branch of natural history, and any information comes from him with a strong claim to consideration. They have endeavoured to utilize the skins of animals and birds, and their museum contains many striking and interesting proofs that they have succeeded. Chief of them are lamps. Instead of the usual vases they introduce bird-skins, full and perfect in plumage—the owl, the eagle,

the scarlet ibis, the golden pheasant, and the bird of paradise; and for hall-lamps, bears, monkeys, and leopards. There are several other adaptations, such as "game covers" for the table; fire-screens, in which between two sheets of plate-glass humming birds are introduced; rugs of the natural fur. . . . It is difficult to convey an idea of the effect of these borrowings from nature; certainly they are very remarkable, and no doubt would startle those who sat beside them to eat or read—we allude mainly to the lamps, though they form but one of a dozen such adaptations. Messrs Ward have made them really refined objects of Art, not merely curious and novel and interesting.' (Vol. XI, page 314.) Over twenty years later, in 1896, William G. Fitzgerald published an article on 'Animal Furniture', in *The Strand Magazine*, which described the effect that love of realism had on late Victorian taste. For many years the popularity of big game hunting in various parts of the Empire had encouraged the use of real animals, as mounted trophies intended for some practical use, and later as complete pieces of furniture. Elephants' feet, hollowed out, were used as liqueur stands; a bear shot in Russia by the Prince of Wales, was stuffed and set up as a dumb waiter with a tray fixed in its front paws; and a porter's chair was modelled (by Rowland Ward) from a young Ceylon elephant, 'in a perfectly natural position, but adapted for the use of a hall porter'. Although no example was illustrated or described in Fitzgerald's article, hollowed out elephants had apparently been used occasionally to form cosy corners, *q.v.* Another of Rowland Ward's triumphs of realism was a chair made from a baby giraffe, 'shot by Mr Gardiner Muir, near the Kiboko River, in British East Africa'. Sir Edwin Landseer designed an intricate hat stand, consisting entirely of antlers. The jaws of a tiger were clenched on the dial of a hall clock; a stuffed emu supported a lamp and shade, and a giant argus pheasant was mounted as a fire screen. 'For some reason,' said Fitzgerald, 'innumerable monkeys were sold to light up billiard-rooms, the little animals swinging from a hoop with one hand and carrying the lamp in the other. After a time people other than those who had dead pet monkeys wanted to possess these unique lamps, so that defunct simians from the Zoo had to be eagerly bought up, and Mr Jamrach, the famous wild beast importer, was vexed with orders for *dead* monkeys. Later on less uncommon pets—parrots and cockatoos—were utilized in a similar manner, and at length this latter form of the craze reached preposterous dimensions. Will it be believed that the Bond Street house (I have it on the authority of the manager) had actually to keep a stock of *live* parrots and cockatoos, so that aristocratic customers could select one for a swinging lamp? After selection, the doomed bird was sent along to the taxidermist, killed immediately, and then mounted in the style chosen. The parrots swung in brass hoops with outspread wings, and carried the lamps on their back; whilst the cockatoos were "chained" to a perch.' (Vol. XII, pages 273–80.) Few of these fusty relics now survive as evidence of the intense, though contradictory, love of animals, that characterized the Victorians.

Anniversary Clock, *see* **Year Clock**

Annual Rings The concentric rings of wood, added annually to a tree growing

in a temperate zone. Also known as Growth Rings. (*See* diagram on page 72, *also* **Medullary Rays.**)

Annulated Column Alternative term for a clustered column, *q.v.*

Annulet Architectural term for a narrow, flat band, encircling a column: occasionally used by cabinet-makers. In heraldry, a small circle or ring, borne as a charge (that is, contained in an escutcheon) in coats of arms.

Anobium Punctatum, *see* **Furniture Beetle**

Anodizing A hard, protective oxide film, formed by an electro-chemical process, and used as a finish on metal, particularly on aluminium.

Anthemion This form of carved or painted ornament, originally derived from Greek architecture, is 'a succession or alternation of an harmonic group of curves, in a conventional adaptation of floral forms . . .' (*Analysis of Ornament*, by Ralph N. Wornum. London: sixth edition, 1879.) It is characterized by the use of formalized honeysuckle flowers and leaves, linked by a band or by running scrolls. (*See* illustrations on page 479.) Sometimes called Honeysuckle Ornament.

Anthemion Back A modern term for an oval-backed chair, with a pierced splat and curved bars which form the outline of the anthemion ornament. Sometimes called a honeysuckle back. This device was used by chair-makers in the last quarter of the 18th century. (*See* page 201.) One of the designs for hall chairs made by Robert Adam for Sir Abraham Hume's house in Hill Street, 1778, had a circular back with an anthemion device enclosed in an inner circle. The original drawing, in Sir John Soane's Museum, is dated March 28, 1778. A variation of the anthemion back appears in an elbow chair illustrated on the trade card of Vickers and Rutledge, upholders and cabinet-makers, in business, *circa* 1775–80, at Conduit Street, Hanover Square. (*The London Furniture Makers, 1660–1840*, by Sir Ambrose Heal, F.S.A. Batsford: 1953. Pages 182 and 189.)

Antimacassar A detachable covering for chair backs, to protect the upholstery from being stained by the macassar oil that was used extensively in hair-dressing for men during the early and mid-19th century. Introduced originally as a protective device, it became a purely decorative addition to chair backs in the latter part of the century, and was usually of crochet-work, in coloured worsted, cotton or silk. The device was anticipated in the Georgian period, when the materials covering high-backed chairs were protected by a silk flap that hung down between the covering material and the powdered wigs of men and the greasy make-up of women.

Antique A term formerly used to describe ancient Greek and Roman art. Since the mid-Victorian period, antique has become the accepted term for furniture over a century old. (*See* Section I, pages 13 to 15.)

Antique Bevel, *see* **Vauxhall Bevel**

Applewood (*Malus pumila*) English fruit wood, of a rich, reddish brown colour, very hard, and used for turned work, though occasionally for flat surfaces when large boards are available. The legs, stretchers and spindles of

furniture made in the countryside during the 17th and 18th centuries were often of applewood. Also used by modern artist-craftsmen.

Applied Cresting A piece of ornament, carved separately, and attached to the yoke rail of a chair or settee. (*See* **Cresting.**)

Applied Facets Faceted pieces of wood, usually in the shape of lozenges, diamonds, or triangles, applied to flat surfaces, on the panels and framework of chests, cupboards, the headboards of beds and the woodwork of chimney-pieces. Introduced concurrently with strapwork, *q.v.*, often as components of that form of decoration, and used extensively during the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

Applied Mouldings Mouldings, plain or enriched with carved ornament, applied to the surfaces of cabinets and chests for decorative effect. During the early Georgian period applied carved mouldings were used on doors and other surfaces to form panels.

Applied Turning Turned ornaments, such as balusters, split so the flat surface may be applied to the panels or framework of furniture. (*See* **Strap and Jewel Work.**)

Appliqué Surface decoration on fabrics, with shaped pieces of material applied to form a pattern on the ground material. Each separate piece to be applied is cut out, the edges turned in and stitched down before being laid in its place in the design, and finally secured to the ground by an embroidery stitch, or by couching, *q.v.*, a braid or cord round the edges. Appliqué is often enriched by embroidery between the applied parts of the design, or by couched scrolls of cord or braid.

Apron The shaped piece below the seat rail of a chair or settee, or the frieze rail of a table, cabinet stand, or chest, extending between the legs, and usually treated ornamentally: shaped, carved, or pierced. (*See* illustrations on pages 203 and 214, *also* **Skirting Piece** *and* **Valance.**)

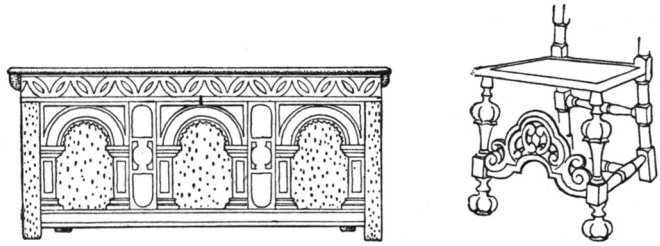
Aquila, *see* **Lectern**

Arabesque The word means Arabian, but is used to describe decorative forms, painted, inlaid or carved, based on the intricate inter-weaving of flowing lines. Such forms are classical in origin; and when revived during the Renaissance were sometimes known as grotesque, though generally as arabesque, a term used previously for Saracenic forms of ornament, introduced from the Near East during the Middle Ages. Thereafter, decorative forms of Saracenic or Arabian origin were frequently known as Moresque.

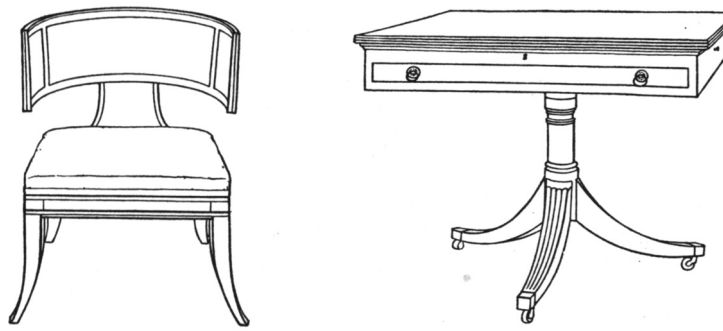
Arcading Arches with semi-circular heads applied as decoration on panels, either singly or in series. Used during the late 16th century and throughout the 17th, on chests, cupboards, chair backs, bed heads and chimneypieces.

Arc-Back A modern name sometimes used for chairs made during the Greek Revival, *q.v.*, with a broad, concave yoke rail. (*See* page 80.)

Arched Stretcher Also known as a hooped stretcher: both descriptive terms are modern. These upward-curving stretchers often appear between the front legs of chairs, or linking the legs on two sides of stools, made during the last quarter of the 17th century. (*See* page 80.)



Left: Simplified drawing of late 16th century chest with arcaded panels. *Right:* Arched stretcher on late 17th century chair. *Drawn by Ronald Escott.* (*See* page 79.)



Left: Arc-back Greek Revival chair, *circa* 1805–10. (*See* other examples of Greek Revival types on page 373.) *Right:* Architect's table in mahogany, with extending leaves, on pillar and tripod base. (*See* combined reading, writing, and artist's table on page 552.) *Drawings by Maureen Stafford.*

Architect's Table One of the many forms of artists' tables, *q.v.*, introduced during the 18th century. (*See* above.)

Architectural Frame The term is used by Ince and Mayhew in *The Universal System of Household Furniture* (1759–62) to describe four frames for glasses, on plate LXXIX of that work. Two of the designs are oval, and two rectangular, with classic mouldings and detail. On plate LXXXI a design is given for an architectural pier-glass, and the use of the word architectural is apparently suggested by the shape of the rectangular frames, which resemble those incorporated in many of the chimneypieces illustrated in James Gibbs' *Book of Architecture* (1728), and in some of those shown in Isaac Ware's, *A Complete Body of Architecture.* In the latter work, directions were given for the moulded detail of 'a continued chimney' to ensure that 'all which is above the place of the mantel-piece, is a kind of repetition of the work in the sides of the room . . .' (London: 1767 edition. Chap. XXVII, page 588.) The architectural frames and pier-glass by Ince and Mayhew corresponded closely with the characteristic mouldings on the panelling and doors of contemporary rooms.

Architectural Furniture A term used occasionally to describe large pieces of case furniture, made during the Queen Anne and early Georgian periods. Many pieces of such monumental furniture were designed by architects like William Kent, who employed architectural features on library bookcases and cabinets; and some unfortunate examples are included by Batty Langley in *The City and Country Builder's and Workman's Treasury of Designs* (1739), who disregarded the properties of wood as a material, and illustrated bookcases and chests and cabinets that were more suitable for execution in stone. (*See* pages 43 and 44.) The term was specifically applied to large bookcases and also to commodes, as early as the 1830s. Volume II of *The Cabinet-maker's Sketch-Book of plain and useful Designs*, by T. King, published in 1836, was reviewed in *The Architectural Magazine*, and among the designs reproduced and commended were, 'a handsome architectural commode, and . . . an architectural bookcase'. (Vol. IV, 1837. August. Page 399.) (*See* library cases illustrated on pages 147 and 188.)

Architrave Architectural term for the lowest member of an entablature, *q.v.* Also used to describe the moulded frame surrounding a doorway or a window opening. (*See* page 477.)

Ark Mediaeval term for a meal bin or receptacle, of boarded construction; usually made of oak boards, split not sawn, wedged together, and pegged. Also called a meale-ark or bolting ark—the word bolting meaning to sift—and, in Eastern and Southern England, a whiche. The term ark was in use in the north country as a name for flour or meal chests as late as the 19th century. The term was also used for the cupboard in the vestry of a church, where vestments were hung.

Arkwright North country name for the craftsman who made receptacles of split wood boards, wedged and pegged.

Armchair A chair with arms, at first called an 'armed' or an 'arming' chair, to distinguish it from the single or side chair. Until the late 16th century all chairs were armchairs, when the single chair in the form of a stool with a back was introduced. (*See* **Back Stool, Carver Chair, Curricle, Easy Chair** *and* **Elbow Chair.**)

Arm Pad The stuffed, upholstered pad on an open-sided armchair. The lounge chairs on page 442 are mid-19th century examples of the use of arm pads.

Arm Rail The curved horizontal member that forms the arms and continues across the back of some types of Windsor chair, becoming the top rail of the smoker's bow, *q.v.*, and pierced to allow the vertical spindles to pass through it when the chair has either a hoop or a comb back. (*See* **Windsor Chair** and illustrations on page 720.)

Arm Stumps American term for the vertical members that support the arms of an elbow chair.

Armada Chest An iron strong-box with a lock fitted in the under side of the lid securing it to the four sides of the chest by a system of bolts, sometimes as many as sixteen. A dummy keyhole appeared on the front of the box. These chests, unconnected with the Spanish Armada, were imported from Flanders, Germany and Austria, where they were made in the 16th and 17th