



IN MEMORIAM



ROBERT HOLMES

R C A

FOR MANY YEARS A TEACHER  
IN THIS COLLEGE  
THIS BOOK IS ONE OF A NUMBER  
FROM THE LIBRARY OF MR HOLMES  
PRESENTED TO THE ONTARIO  
COLLEGE OF ART BY HIS RELATIVES  
JUNE 1930

~~R. Palmer~~



LITTLE ILLUSTRATED BOOKS ON  
OLD FRENCH FURNITURE

- I. FRENCH FURNITURE IN THE  
MIDDLE AGES AND UNDER  
LOUIS XIII

## FRENCH FURNITURE

- I. FRENCH FURNITURE IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND UNDER LOUIS XIII
- II. FRENCH FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XIV
- III. FRENCH FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XV
- IV. FRENCH FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XVI AND THE EMPIRE

## ENGLISH FURNITURE

*(Previously published)*

- I. ENGLISH FURNITURE UNDER THE TUDORS AND STUARTS
- II. ENGLISH FURNITURE OF THE QUEEN ANNE PERIOD
- III. ENGLISH FURNITURE OF THE CHIPPENDALE PERIOD
- IV. ENGLISH FURNITURE OF THE SHERRATON PERIOD

Each volume profusely illustrated with full-page reproductions and coloured frontispieces

*Crown 8vo, Cloth, price 4s. 6d. net*

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD.





CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS  
(Middle of the XVIth Century)



LITTLE ILLUSTRATED BOOKS ON  
OLD FRENCH FURNITURE I

FRENCH FURNITURE  
IN THE MIDDLE AGES  
AND UNDER LOUIS XIII

BY ROGER DE FÉLICE

TRANSLATED BY  
F. M. ATKINSON



LONDON MCMXXIII  
WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD.

1028

53

*First published, 1923*

*Printed in Great Britain by  
Woods & Sons, Ltd., London, N. 1.*

## INTRODUCTION

A CONSECUTIVE and complete history of French furniture—complete in that it should not leave out the furniture used by the lower middle classes, the artisans and the peasants—remains still to be written; and the four little books of this series are far from claiming to fill such a gap. And yet they will perhaps usefully fill their modest place by giving some hints and ideas, as accurate as possible even though very elementary and simple, to those who appreciate the excellent work wrought by old-time joiners out of walnut trees and cherry trees and oaks.

The present passion for those plain pieces of furniture that six or eight generations of the folk of Lorraine, of Provence, of Gascony or Normandy have polished by use and filled with their humble treasures, has more legitimate foundations than the mere craze for running after a fashion and the astute advertising of dealers: they are practical, their solid strength is proof against the lapse of years—if we dared, we might say their soul is dovetailed to their frames—their material the “*bon bois vif, sec loyal et marchand*,” spoken of in every article of the *Statuts et ordonnances des maistres huchiers-menuisiers*, is often most admirable. Their lines and their naive ornamentation,

despite their awkwardness, sometimes possess a real beauty, and nearly always have a most agreeable air. They never hide bad wood badly put together under a pompous raiment of ebony, tortoiseshell and brass, as do the most authentic cabinets by André-Charles Boulle, or under a glossy vermilion lacquering, like the vaguely Chinese tables of certain furniture mongers of to-day. What a splendid lesson they give us, and one of which we stand greatly in need, a lesson of good sense, and honesty, and professional conscience!

The aforesaid statutes and ordinances make no jest of malfeasance and bad workmanship. Let us read over the *Lettres patentes octroyées par Henry, Roy de France et de Pologne, à ses chers et bien améz les maistres huchiers-menuisiers de sa ville de Paris*. Here are a few of their prescripts:—

“The said works are to be well and duly made, both ornaments, architecture, assemblage, turnery, carving in the French, antique or modern fashion, the joints well and duly observed, fitted with tenons, pins and mortices . . . the whole of good sound wood, honest and merchantable, under penalty of ten crowns fine and the work to be burned in front of the workman’s dwelling.”

“Let none make hall sideboards, chamber dressers, cabinets to hold rings and trinkets, chamber tables, service tables, wooden bed for

covering with velvet, green cloth, or any other colour or material, trestle table or other article of furniture that shall not be well and duly made, and the whole both in assemblage, turnery, carving in the French, antique or modern fashion, marquetry or other new invention . . . the whole of good sound wood, honest and merchantable, under penalty of ten crowns fine and the work to be burned in front of the workman's dwelling."

"Let none make chair or stool (*scabelle* \*), whether square, round, octagonal or triangular, *placet*,\* low-backed chair called *caquetouère* . . . coffer legs (*pattes de bahuts*) . . . that shall not be well and duly made and assembled with mortices and tenons."

"Let none make *aumries*<sup>1</sup> to keep clothes, papers, jewellery, plate . . . save that the feet and cross timbers be of fitting width and thickness."

"Let none make bread cupboard or kneading-trough, hutch to keep bread or meat . . . strong boxes, bureaux, counters, *bancs à couches*, *bancs à dossiers* . . . and other commodities within the province of the said hatcher-joiner's trade, for the use and profit of any and sundry persons of whatever sort, save they be well and duly made and assembled, with good sound wood, honest and merchantable, upon the penalties as hereunder."

This old wording is sufficiently quaint, and

<sup>1</sup> Cupboards.

the matter exemplary enough to excuse the length of the quotation.<sup>1</sup> What a contrast they make with the habits that rule in too many workshops of to-day!

“All this is very fine and large,” say certain pessimists, “but this furniture makes us think of the legendary steed of Roland: ‘it has all possible virtues, but it no longer exists—or if it does, it comes out of the factories of the fakers.’” Indeed and indeed, fakes abound in this department of antiques as in all the others, and it would hardly be possible otherwise to account for the incredible multiplication of antique shops in the last few years. But the profession does include honest brokers, and among the pieces called old there are genuine antiques. Many have long ago been swept out of sight throughout the whole of France; but even these must be periodically brought into circulation through the agency of bequests and changing fortunes. And whatever anyone says, there is still a goodly muster surviving among the country folk in the depths of the provinces, except perhaps in Normandy, Brittany, and the Arles district, and they abound in the small towns. What provincial middle-class family of any ancientry fails

<sup>1</sup> These statutes, recast and confirmed in 1645, governed the body of tradesmen until the suppression of the corporations in 1791, which was one of the causes that brought about the profound decadence into which the art of furniture making fell from that date. Similar statutes were in force in all the provinces; but the artists lodged by the king in the galleries of the Louvre, such as Boule, and those belonging to the royal manufactories were not amenable to them.

to preserve monumental cupboards, big-bellied commodes, straw armchairs of the eighteenth century, or some "twist-legged" table (*à piliers tors*) of the days of Louis XIV? And how many of these families of folk once rich, or at least once comfortably well-to-do, are to-day faced with the cruel necessity of selling these family relics?

Everybody who served in the field in the late war was able to see for himself in rest billets, no matter where they might be, how many old pieces are still hidden in the farmhouses, in Champagne for instance, and Lorraine, dresser-sideboards and cupboards and other pieces in the Louis XV or Louis XVI style, and not always pieces of rustic make.

If a personal reminiscence may be allowed, the writer remembers how in 1918, when "resting" in the Vitry-le-François region, he was billeted on an old peasant woman who, besides a sideboard of the finest patina and a very ordinary Louis XVI commode, whose value she greatly exaggerated, possessed a charming little piece of the Louis XIV period in marquetry of coloured woods, with curving counterforts, which served as a tool-cupboard. The marble top had long since disappeared and been replaced by rough boards that were at that moment covered with a thick carapace of hen's droppings; one of the feet, being worm-eaten, had given place to a stump fixed by two horse-shoe nails; but after a wash and brush up and some discreet restoration it

could have taken its place with honour in the most fastidious collection. And it could have readily been bought for ten francs! Another time, in the heart of the ruins of Esnes, on the Verdun front, did we not see, half consumed in the fire by which a handful of territorials were warming their old bones, a Regency arm-chair leg with exquisite carving?

It goes without saying that middle-class furniture becomes more and more rare in proportion as we look for it from earlier periods, and that we never find peasant pieces before the end of the reign of Louis XIV, for the very excellent reason that in the seventeenth century a family of country labourers had no furniture at all, except for a rude bedstead, which has never been preserved, and one or two coffer devoid of ornamentation, which have also long since disappeared. Of the middle-class furniture of the Louis XIII period, or rather the Louis XIII style—for this style in reality persisted in middle-class furniture for a full century, and in certain provinces, Burgundy, and specially Guyenne and Gascony, even longer—there survive cupboards still in goodly numbers, sideboards, tables, arm-chairs, chairs, and stools.

But if we proceed from the seventeenth to the sixteenth century, it becomes all but impossible to find cupboards, cabinets, coffer, seats, or tables belonging to the period, unless costly and luxurious pieces; many are fakes or outrageously restored; and most of them are



immobilized in museums or in great private collections.

As for the furniture of the Middle Ages, undamaged pieces dating from the fifteenth century are infinitely rare, and those of the preceding centuries are, so to speak, non-existent. We know more about the objects that found a place in the home of an Egyptian under Rameses II than about the furniture of a subject of Saint Louis. Viollet-le-Duc has made a pretence of describing the latter for us; but in these affairs that genial archæologist was better equipped with imagination than erudition. If we omit the stalls in churches, the whole of France does not perhaps contain more than half a dozen pieces of furniture of the thirteenth century—coffers and sacristy cupboards.

It is not hard to guess why sixteenth-century pieces are scarce and those of the Middle Ages almost beyond finding. Wooden objects, if they are made of the best material and perfectly wrought, will withstand a good two or three hundred years of wear and tear, or neglect in a loft, damp, drought, gnawing insects; but it is vastly more unlikely that at the end of four or five centuries they should have held out against the agents of slow destruction and escaped the chances of brutal destruction, fire, war, or changes in taste and increasing demands for comfort. But that is not all. The population of our country was far smaller then than now, and the proportion of those who could own furniture was much lower;

and even they had very little furniture, especially in the Middle Ages, and that little was of a very special kind, in accordance with the manners and habits, so different from ours, that prevailed among our ancestors down to the days of the last Valois kings.

Instability and insecurity—those were two dominant characteristics of the lives of the French people in the Middle Ages. The only comparative quiet was behind thick walls; and again, one had to be always ready for instant flight. The most powerful lords, masters of several castles, had only one single set of furniture, which went with them at every move—no one would venture to leave anything of value behind, no, not though it was in a fortress held by a strong garrison. As for the king himself, he had, in the fourteenth century, a summer plenishing and a winter plenishing; and the one not in use was kept in Paris by his officer of the wardrobe, who had at his disposal four trunks and four chests to keep therein the *courtepointerie*\* and chamber hangings, and to take them out of Paris at the terms of Easter and All Saints, wherever the sovereign might be.

And so everything that a man owns is transportable, and every piece of furniture, if not a coffer, has to take to pieces or be small enough to go into a coffer. The only things that stay permanently at home are large, rude, unornamented pieces of furniture, such as bedsteads made of common planks barely roughly planed,

tables that are simply boards set on trestles when they are wanted, and plain wooden benches; in short, things that offer no temptation to pillagers or whose loss will be of no moment. On the return of the travellers, there will be brought out from the chests and *bouges* or leather trunks, which have followed on carts, or most frequently, because there are no roads, on the backs of *sommiers*, pack mules and pack horses, the parti-coloured stuffs and the cushions that are to bedeck those rude oaken frames and make them a little more inviting. The structure and the decoration of most of the furniture will largely, as we shall see, depend on these exigencies, and that down to the seventeenth century.

These nomadic ways did in reality, in a certain measure, continue much longer than might be imagined. We read in the inventory of Catherine de Médicis's furniture, with reference to the sumptuous town house that Jean Bullant had built for her in the Rue des Deux-Écus and the Rue du Four, that "when she desired to eat there or stay in it, which was very often, she had the necessary furniture brought in, and her officers carried it back after her departure." Louis XIV was the first of our kings to have each of his royal mansions completely furnished; which nevertheless did not prevent his annual comings and goings between Versailles and Fontainebleau from being immense "flittings." In 1649, during the troubles of the Fronde, the court must needs leave Paris precipitately to take

refuge at Saint Germain. An often quoted passage from Mme. de Motteville's Memoirs describes the state of destitution in which the royal family found itself on the first day in that magnificent but empty mansion. "The Queen slept in a little bed that the Cardinal had got out a few days before for that purpose. He had also made provision for the King's needs. . . . The Duchess of Orléans lay one night on straw and Mademoiselle also. All who had followed the Court had the same fate, and in a few hours straw became so dear at Saint Germain that it was not to be found for money."

Since it is practically impossible to find authentic and complete furniture belonging to the Middle Ages, and almost the same may be said of the sixteenth century, and since, on the other hand, the scope of this work only covers current, simple furniture of everyday use, we ought strictly to omit everything earlier than the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, it seems necessary to describe very briefly the evolution of French furniture from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, and to give a little more extended space to the history and description of the much better known furniture of what is called the Renaissance<sup>1</sup> period. It will not be surprising, therefore, to find that nearly half this volume and nearly

<sup>1</sup> It is doubtless unnecessary to set forth once more the reasons why this word—whether we are dealing with statues or churches, tapestries or sideboards—is as inaccurate as possible, like the word "gothic," but it is so consecrated by three centuries of use that we must needs use it, however vexing it may be.

two thirds of the illustrations are devoted to the Louis XIII style alone : furniture of this kind—we do not say “of this epoch”—is fairly plentiful, especially in Burgundy, in the old county of Montbéliard, in the valleys of the Garonne and the Dordogne ; it is not yet falling to pieces, far from it ; and as at this moment it is far less in favour, with the public that is satisfied with blindly running after the fashion, than the furniture of the eighteenth century, it is possible to acquire perfectly genuine specimens at reasonable prices.<sup>1</sup>

I We here tender our thanks to the owners of old pieces and to the keepers of museums, to whose kindness we owe the illustrations in this volume, to the Mother Superior of the Hospice of Beaune, Mesdames Boujut, Dumesnil, Dumoulin, Égan ; Mlle. de Félice ; Mme. Roudier ; Messieurs de Brugière de Belrieu, de Charmasse, Clamageran, Desportes, Durbesson, Fichot, Hubert, Say, Lamiray, Larégnère, Loreilhe, Pascaud, Pauvert, Rigault : the Keepers of the Musée de l'Union centrale des Arts décoratifs, the Musée Lorrain de Nancy, the Musée d'Épinal, and the Musée départemental d'Antiquités de Rouen.



## PRINCIPAL AUTHORITIES

- ARNAUD D'AGNEL (L'Abbé Georges): "Le Meuble provençal et comtadin." (Vol. I.) Paris, 1913.
- BAYARD, ÉMILE: "Le Style Renaissance." Paris (n.d.)  
"Le Style Louis XIII." Paris (n.d.)
- BONNAFFÉ, EDMOND: "Le Meuble en France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle." Paris, 1887.
- CATALOGUES DES COLLECTIONS BONNAFFÉ, Paris, 1897: Émile Gaillard, Paris, 1904.—Gavet, Paris, 1897.—Leclanché, Paris, 1892.—Martin le Roy, Paris, 1907.—Moreau-Nélaton, Paris, 1900.—Rougier, Paris, 1904.—Seillière, Paris, 1890.—Soltzkoff, Paris, 1861.—Spitzer, Paris, 1891.—Stein, Paris, 1886.—Waisse, Paris, 1885.
- CHAMPEAUX, ALFRED DE: "Le Meuble" (Bibliothèque de l'Enseignement des Beaux-Arts). (Vol. I.) Paris (n.d.)
- DESHAIRS, LÉON: "La Tapisserie et le Mobilier au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle," in the *Histoire de l'Art*, published under the editorship of André Michel. (Vol. V, part II.) Paris (n.d.)
- FUNCK-BRENTANO: "L'Ameublement français sous la Renaissance." (Bibliothèque de l'Art décoratif.) Paris, 1913.
- HAVARD, HENRI: "Dictionnaire de l'Ameublement et de la Décoration." Paris (n.d.)
- MOLINIER, Émile: "Histoire générale des Arts appliqués." (Vols. II and III.) Paris, 1896.
- Vie à la Campagne.* Special numbers on *l'Art rustique au Pays de France.* (December, 1913, 1919, 1920, and 1921.)
- VIOLLET LE DUC: "Dictionnaire raisonné des Mobilier français." (Vol. I.) Paris, 1858.





# CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	v
PART I	
FURNITURE OF THE MIDDLE AGES	i
PART II	
FURNITURE OF THE RENAISSANCE	29
I. HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STYLE	31
II. DIFFERENT ARTICLES OF FURNITURE	65
PART III	
THE LOUIS XIII STYLE	87
I. HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STYLE	89
II. DIFFERENT PIECES OF FURNITURE	118
INDEX	149



# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

*Frontispiece. Cupboard in two parts (middle of Sixteenth Century)*

FIG.	PLATE
1. <i>Coffer with Fenestrations or "Orbe-voies," in Oak. Fifteenth Century</i>	1
2. <i>Coffer with Fenestrations and Pillars, in Oak. Fifteenth Century</i>	2
3. <i>Buffet with Cant Corners, Iron Fittings "à Orbe-voies," in Oak. End of Fifteenth Century</i>	
4. <i>Chair with Carved "Serviette" or "Parchemins Repliés" Decorations (Linenfold)</i>	4
5. <i>Chair with Coffer Seat, "à Claires-Voies" and "Orbe-voies," in Oak. Fifteenth Century</i>	5
6. <i>Very large Chair with Coffer Seat, with "Orbe-voies" and "Parchemins Simples," in Oak. Fifteenth Century</i>	6
7. <i>Small Bench with Opened End Pieces</i>	7
8. <i>Coffer from Lorraine with Entrelacs, Oak, Sixteenth Century</i>	8
9. <i>Coffer with small Panels, Walnut inlaid with Yellow Wood. Middle of the Sixteenth Century</i>	9
10. <i>Coffer with Medallion Decoration. Middle of the Sixteenth Century</i>	10
11. <i>Norman Coffer with Caryatids, Oak. End of the Style</i>	11
12. <i>"Archebauc-conchette," in Oak. Middle of the Sixteenth Century</i>	12
13. <i>Cupboard in two parts, from Burgundy, Walnut. End of the Style</i>	13
14. <i>Small Cupboard, of Walnut inlaid with Marble, in the style of the Ile-de-France. Period of Henri III.</i>	14
15. <i>Cupboard with long Pillars, Walnut. Period of Henri III.</i>	15
16. <i>Buffet carved with Grotesques, Oak. Period of François I.</i>	16
17. <i>Large Buffet with Pilasters, Walnut</i>	17
18. <i>Expanding Table, Walnut</i>	18
19. <i>Small Table with fixed Trestle Legs carved with Griffins, in Walnut</i>	19
20. <i>Table with six Legs, Walnut inlaid with Fillets of light coloured Wood. End of the Style</i>	20
21. <i>Chair with Coffer Seat, in Walnut. Second half of the Sixteenth Century</i>	21
22 and 23. <i>"Caquetoires" or Small Chairs with Arms, with Medallion Decorations</i>	22
24. <i>"Caquetoire" with Balusters</i>	} 23
25. <i>"Caquetoire" with very high Seat</i>	

FIG.	PLATE
26. "Vertugadin" Chair, in chased Velvet. End of the Style	} 24
27. "Caquetoire" with Scroll Arms. End of the Style	
28. "Caquetoire Garnie" with Consoles	
29. "Caquetoire Garnie" with Plume Decoration	} 25
30. Chair with Arms, in the Spanish-Flemish Style, Gilded Leather. Reign of Henri IV.	
31. Small Norman Coffe on its Stand, in Oak, Louis XIII Style	26
32. Cupboard with four Doors and Small Panels, on its Stand. Normandy, beginning of the Seventeenth Century	27
33. Large Cupboard with four Doors and Small Panels, in Walnut. Beginning of the Style	28
34. Small Cupboard with two Doors, Oak and Walnut. Dated 1659 (Modern Metalwork)	29
35. Cupboard in two Parts from the County of Montbéliard, in Oak	30
36. Large Cupboard in two Parts, Walnut, without its Pediment. Beginning of the Style.	31
37. Small Cupboard in two Parts, with two Drawers, in Walnut	32
38. Small Cupboard in two Parts with Eagle Feet, in Walnut	33
39. Cabinet or Buffet with Balusters and Plumes, in Walnut	34
40. Cabinet in two Parts with Cornice and "Pointes de Gateau" Decoration, in Walnut	35
41. Gascon Cupboard in two Parts, elaborately carved, Walnut	36
42. Gascon Cupboard in two Parts with Interrupted Pediment	37
43. Gascon Cupboard in two Parts in Walnut (Modern Pediment)	38
44. Very large Gascon Cupboard with Cornice and Disengaged Pillars, in Walnut	39
45. Gascon Cupboard with Diamond Point Decoration, Walnut	40
46. Cupboard with one Door with Flat Diamond Points and Circular Motives, in Cherrywood	41
47. Small Cupboard in one Piece, from Burgundy, with Diamond Points, in Oak	42
48. Gascon Cupboard with Large Cornice, in Walnut, partly painted black	43
49. Large Burgundian Cupboard with Diamond Points, in Walnut	44
50. Very large Gascon Cupboard with Diamond Points and Twist Engaged Pillars	45
51. Large Gascon Cupboard with Detached Pillars	46
52. Gascon "Buffet à Vaisselier" (Dresser Buffet), Walnut	47
53. Table with two Flaps and Twist Legs, in Walnut	} 48
54. Table with Moulding on Drawer and Twist Legs, in Walnut	
55. Burgundian Table, in Walnut	49
56. Small Table with Ornate Drawer, in Walnut	} 50
57. Basset or Small Folding Table-Escabeau, in Walnut	

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS xxiii

FIG.	PLATE
58. <i>Cherrywood Table with Turned Balusters</i>	
59. <i>Turned Table from Provence with X-shaped Stretcher, in Walnut</i>	52
60. <i>Folding Table with Folding Under-Frame, coloured Wood Marquetry</i>	53
61. <i>Large Table with Folding Under-Frame, in Oak</i>	54
62. <i>Folding Gaming Table, in Walnut</i>	55
63. <i>Arm-chair with Bead Turnings, in Leather, originally Gilded</i>	56
64. <i>Arm-chair with Bead Turnings, Modern Cover</i>	
65. <i>Arm-chair with Carved Busts</i>	
66. <i>Child's Arm-chair with Baluster Turnings</i>	57
67. <i>"Vertugadin" Chair covered in Chased Velvet</i>	58
68. <i>Arm-chair with Baluster Turnings</i>	
69. <i>"Vertugadin" Chair with Bead Turnings, upholstered in Leather</i>	
70. <i>"Vertugadin" Chair with Twist Legs, stretched with Leather</i>	59
71. <i>Low Chair with High Back, in Modern Needlework Tapestry</i>	
72. <i>Chair with Baluster Turnings, in Modern Needlework Tapestry</i>	60
73. <i>Basset Stool with Baluster Turnings</i>	
74. <i>"Vertugadin" Chair with Movable Cushions</i>	61
75. <i>Sofa, Louis XIV Period, Modern Needlework Tapestry</i>	62
76. <i>Rest-bed with Modern Upholstery</i>	63
77 and 78. <i>Footstools, Point Tapestry</i>	64



PART ONE  
FURNITURE OF THE  
MIDDLE AGES





## PART ONE : FURNITURE OF THE MIDDLE AGES

LET us first of all confess that we are exceedingly ill informed with regard to the furniture of the Middle Ages. Of what our ancestors used before the thirteenth century we know, in a manner of speaking, nothing at all. For the century of Saint Louis and the two next centuries our sources of information are the miniatures in manuscripts, paintings, which were very rare before the fifteenth century, though sufficiently numerous thereafter, but mostly Flemish, and carvings in stone, wood or ivory; ancient documents, and particularly contemporary accounts and inventories; and lastly, the actual pieces that have survived.

From these diverse sources we may draw only with very great caution. The admirable truthfulness of the Van Eycks and the paintings of their school may inspire us with complete confidence; but the illuminators of the preceding centuries misrepresented a great deal, simplified a great deal, and they were inspired by tradition quite as much as by direct observation, and we can say the same thing of the *imagiers*.

The inventories, so captivating to read and so rich in information of every kind for anyone who can interpret them, give rise to strange blunders. Thus, an improvised archæologist of the last

#### 4 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

century, reading that a certain bench was à *coulombes*, quite genuinely thought that pigeons were carved on it, simply because he lacked the knowledge that in the Middle Ages a *coulombe* or *colombe* was any column, stake or upright whatsoever, and in the particular, a bench leg; while another, in commenting upon a text in which it was stated that the queen, in 1316, was followed in her removals by twelve coffers, two for the bed, two for the mattresses, six for the wardrobe, and two "*pour les damoysselles*," thought it meant the trunks for the ladies in waiting, not chests to contain those "*demoiselles à atourner*," which were the dressing tables of the ladies of those days, a kind of round table with central pillar, surmounted with a feminine head of carved and painted wood, on which the *coiffures* were placed.

Furthermore, the lack of precision in their vocabulary is often most embarrassing. What, for example, were *les selles*? A great number of documents inform us: very simple stools with three legs or four. According to certain others, it is clear that they were also little benches "for the feet," and low trestles, on which laundresses set their washing tubs. But here is another text, which speaks of a *selle* "eight feet long, covered with cloth of gold," another of a *selle* on which, at the crowning of the queen, six princesses of the blood were seated. And so on.

Face to face with the pieces still existing in churches, museums, and private collections, the

critical sense must be no less alert. Many are incomplete, many are—*too* complete, many have been denatured by old or recent restoration, over-decorated with more or less avowable aim ; they are now denuded of their paint—how can we know how far they were painted of old? Lastly, and above all, if suspicious specimens are once eliminated, the remainder are so few that it is almost impossible to steer clear of the rock of an arbitrary generalisation.

In any case, here is the essence and the one thing certain—or practically certain. Down to nearly the middle of the fourteenth century there were only carpenters available to work in wood ; it is the very utmost if there is a distinction made among them of “*charpentiers de la petite cognée*,” who execute work slightly less coarse than the squaring and assembling of beams, joists, puncheons, and roof ties. Joining of wood cut thin was almost unknown to them, and the coffers of the thirteenth century<sup>1</sup> are constructed with thick boards, very rudely cut out, that only hold together thanks to the fine braces of wrought iron that cover their whole surface with scrolls. Their wood was without a doubt painted red, or perhaps covered with hide or painted canvas, on which the ironwork stood out. In the same way also were made the sacristry cupboards of the same epoch.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There is one in the Carnavalet Museum, another in the Musée de l'Union centrale des Arts décoratifs.

<sup>2</sup> See the Cathedrals of Noyon and Bayeux, and the church of Obazine (Corrèze).

## 6 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

In the fourteenth century woodworkers are in possession of nearly all the tools of the present day, and distinct progress is achieved. We begin to see coffers that, while still continuing to be made simply of planks, are assembled in such a way that they can dispense with iron. If each of their sides is made of two pieces of planking, they are no longer merely glued together with a plain joint, but dovetailed into each other with tongue and groove, and the corners are made with that jointing with triangular pieces, known as "*en queue d'aronde*" or swallow-tail, which everybody is familiar with, since it is always employed to join the front of a drawer to the sides. So now the sides of the coffer are set free for the carved decoration, a decoration *en taille d'épargne*, or cut out of the thickness of the plank: the *coffre de taille* is born with its brothers the *banc de taille* and the *buffet de taille*.<sup>1</sup>

But soon after there comes a change of great importance in another manner. The coffer constructed in the way just described had still very great faults. To be strong its walls had to be very thick, and so, even though it was rid of its iron carapace, it remained exceedingly heavy. If, for fear of its rotting, it was desired to raise it from the ground, people were reduced to the necessity of cutting out the bottom plank in front and back into the shape of feet, and this was far from strong. These thick planks,

1 Carved.

x the bottom one of the two planks of which the front & the back were made.

alternately subjected to cold and to heat, to moisture and dryness, inevitably split. Some workman, or more probably workmen, in their own sphere men of genius no less than the master masons who created vaulting and the flying buttress, invented panelled furniture and woodwork. For full walls of uniform thickness they substituted a system of frames, made up of uprights and horizontal pieces of thick wood, joined with mortice and tenon; the *feuillures*, the inner edges of the frame, were given deep grooves, in which were fitted, so as to have clear play, a panel which could be quite thin, since it was nothing more than a containing shell, in no way contributing to the solid strength of the whole structure. In its slightly loose setting it could expand in wet weather and contract in dry without danger of splitting. A coffer built in this fashion, while it was lighter, was stronger and more solid, qualities of inestimable value for articles that were constantly being transported to and fro.

In fine, the new system of construction was in every way comparable with that which nearly two centuries earlier had transformed architecture. This stout enframing of thin walls, is it not like the buttresses of the wall of a gothic church, between which open the vast windows full of glass? Or, if it is preferred, like the ribs of a gothic vaulting, the strong elastic armature that allows the panels of the vaulting to be as thin as the builder pleases? The art of joinery was

## 8 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

born : this was indeed the moment when the guild of the *huchiers-menusiers* separated from that of the *charpentiers*.<sup>1</sup>

Hand in hand with this technical progress went artistic progress also, for to the logic and impeccable good sense of the artists and craftsmen of the Middle Ages the decoration of any piece of work whatever must spring strictly from its material and the way it was constructed, and must show up that construction and draw strength from it instead of concealing it. Henceforth the front of a coffer, to keep to this primordial piece of furniture, will be full of life, endowed with a certain rhythm by the alternation of its panels, which will now be carved because they are more sheltered, and its uprights, which will be left plain because they are exposed to knocks, to the rubbing of the pack ropes and other dangers. They will act as the "rest" parts in the decoration of the piece. This method of construction brings about a diversity of planes which is decorative in itself and which necessarily entails the use of mouldings.<sup>2</sup> In short, the impression of beauty must spring at the first glance from the actual construction : elegance and purity of shape are to be the essential thing, and the decoration proper, the local decoration, will only come second. In all this the craftsmen in wood are only following, whether consciously or no,

<sup>1</sup> Coffers continued, to save labour, to be made of planks joined *à queue d'aronde*; but this method was looked on as rude and coarse.

<sup>2</sup> Fig. 1.

the path traced out by the admirable workers in stone when they elaborated the gothic style; whether it be hatcher or image carver or mason, the principles are the same.

When life became something more secure and more sedentary, when all furniture was no longer made so as to be easily transported hither and thither, the solid frame became covered with carving in its turn, as in the little bench of Fig. 7, with its scaly legs; or it became enriched with applied ornament, such as the spindled balusters and half balusters of the much restored coffer reproduced in Fig. 2, which is taken as originally coming from Domrémy.

One of the most salient characteristics of mediæval art is its unity. No style is more homogeneous than the gothic, because at this period religious architecture dominates lay architecture, and architecture reigns over all the other arts. Not only do we find, over and over again, the same decorative motives, but the very same forms—provided the material is not refractory—in jewellery, ivory carving, locksmithery, brasswork, woodwork, as are seen in the work of the masons. The gilded wooden frame of a painted triptych is a miniature façade of a church with triple nave; a reliquary is a miniature chapel; the ornamental openwork frieze of an ivory comb or the pierced iron brace of a buffet is a reduced copy of some flamboyant balustrade of a triforium or a roof gutter. In the same way all the elements of a coffer of the time of

## 10 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

Charles V, a buffet or *chaire*\* made under Louis XI, are borrowed from contemporary architecture.

The Cluny Museum has a very fine fourteenth century oak coffer, the façade of which is all carved work, and is made up of six arcades, which are completely and exactly in all details windows *en tiers-point* of that rather dry style which tradition insists on calling *gothique rayonnant*. Each is subdivided by a vertical mullion into two secondary arcades with the arch *à redents*, the whole forming twelve frames, in which are statuettes of the twelve peers of France armed and holding their shields. The *écoinçons* separating the points of the large arches are carved with *bestions*<sup>1</sup> and grotesque faces. It is impossible not to be struck with the similarity of this decoration to that of the king's gallery in a cathedral.

In a buffet of the fifteenth century there is not a single detail that is not to be seen in the Church of the Trinity at Vendôme, or in the apse of Saint Séverin in Paris. The uprights are flanked by slender counterforts with flat sides, with ribs, pillars either prismatic or ribbed, the feet of which sink down and penetrate<sup>2</sup> into the talus of the base; the finials are sharp-

1 Small fantastic animals such as winged dragons, basilisks, etc.

2 The penetration of mouldings into one another, of the springing of the arches into the piers, the bases of little columns into the bases of pillars, etc., is one of the characteristics of the "flamboyant" style.



pointed tiny steeples; the *culs-de-lampe* are made of sharp-angled mouldings; the top of the framing of the panels is a "basket-handle" (*anse de panier*) or "bracket"-shaped<sup>1</sup> moulding, which sometimes penetrates into the vertical mouldings of the uprights. All this follows the complicated laws of the "flamboyant" style, which the whole of France was borrowing from her English enemies at the very moment when she was driving them from her shores.

But what is characteristic above all is the carved decoration of the panels. Those which fill the most conspicuous places on furniture, such as the *guichets* or doors of buffets, the *façades* of coffers, the backs of tall chairs, are almost invariably *taillés à orbe-voies*.<sup>2</sup> In architecture there was opposed to the *clairevoie*, or pierced arcading, the *orbe-voie*<sup>3</sup> or *fenêtre-morte*, an arcading or a simple blind arcade, in which the mullions were replaced by mouldings jutting out from the plain wall, which reproduced the mullions exactly in detail. The joiner-carpenters did not fail to adopt this form of decoration, complicating it at their own caprice and modifying it in a hundred different ways<sup>4</sup>; but always in even the freest interpretation we can perceive the elements of a flamboyant window: in the lower part, the

1 Fig. 6.

2 Also said to be *ouvrés à osteaux*.

3 *Orbe* means blind.

4 Figs. 1, 2, 3, 8, 5 and 6 show panels à *orbevoie*; Fig. 7 displays panels à *claire-voie*.

## 12 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

subdivision into narrow compartments by vertical mullions; above, the flowing network tracery whose curves form *soufflets* (quatrefoils elongated upwards, with pointed lobes) and *mouchettes* (elongated and wavy-outlined ellipses, with internal tracery). Frequently, near the apex, a *gâble*,\* bracket-shaped with floriated point, stands out against a new series of vertical mullions<sup>1</sup>: once more, this is an imitation of the fronts of churches.

The combination of *soufflets* and *mouchettes* is supple enough to lend itself to quite complicated designs, such as the large *fleurs-de-lis* seen on the canted corners of the buffet reproduced in Fig. 3. As a general rule, *soufflets* are decorated with four-petalled flowers,<sup>2</sup> and often there is a heraldic shield set in the network of the ribs.<sup>3</sup>

Polychromy accentuated the delicate richness of this decoration, the traceries of the fenestration probably being picked out in gilding against a background of bright colours, which still further increased the resemblance to a stained glass window. Polychromy, and polychromy in very vivid colours, was, it must be borne well in mind, one of the fixed principles of the whole art of the Middle Ages: a coffer was variegated with azure, vermilion and gold, just like the saints of the church porticos and the little ivory Virgins. It was from their painters in ordinary that our

1 Figs. 2, 3 and 6.

2 Figs. 1 and 5.

3 Figs. 2 and 3.

kings ordered their chairs of state. In 1352, Girard d'Orléans, who may perhaps be the author of the portrait of John the Good preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, furnished that unlucky monarch with "*deux chaires ouvrées à orbe-voies à deux endroiz et peintes,*" and for his sons, "*chaires ouvrées à orbe-voies à deux endroiz et peintes à leurs armes.*" In 1399, Perrin Balloches, the painter, delivers "*pour Monseigneur Messire Loys de France, deux chaires, c'est assavoir l'une de salle, l'autre de retrait,*<sup>1</sup> *celle de salle peinte de fines couleurs.*" Nearly a hundred years after, we have Master Jean Bourdichon, painter to the king, a person of importance (which did not prevent him from painting banners, daises and lances as well as illuminating the queen's book of hours), who furnished Anne of Brittany with "*deux chaires tournissées*<sup>2</sup> *par luy bainctes et toutes dorées.*"

Another motive, everywhere recurring, now on simple pieces,<sup>3</sup> now associated with *orbe-voies* when it is a more costly piece,<sup>4</sup> but in that case relegated to secondary places, is the *parchemin replié* or *serviette*.<sup>5</sup> In its most elementary form this is a relief with bracket profile<sup>6</sup>; but the

1 The *salle* was a great room of state; the *retrait*, a smaller and more intimate chamber, which was used for ordinary occasions.

2 A kind of armchair turning on a pivot.

3 Fig. 4.

4 Figs. 5, 6 and 7.

5 We read also, for instance: "*un banc ouvré à panneaux de draperie.*"

6 Figs. 5 and 6.

## 14 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

parchment or stuff which this ornamentation is supposed to represent may be folded several times on itself, and in many different ways.<sup>1</sup> This motive is always a little dry and poor; and we must confess that in the fifteenth century and the early sixteenth the joiners really did abuse it.

Lastly, vegetable motives are displayed upon the panels, or wind their way along in the hollow moulding of the cornices. The most usual are the vine leaf<sup>2</sup> and the bunch of grapes, more or less conventionalised, and when the carving is very deeply cut, the thistle and the *chou frisé*, mingled or not mingled with real or fantastic beasts. These are, as is well known, the favourite vegetable motives of stone carvers in the period of the flamboyant style. As for the human figure, it is also met with, but only on exceptional pieces of furniture.

The choicest furniture was made of "Irish wood" or oak from the North, the rest was of common oak; but walnut, which is such a beautiful material, not so rough as oak, finer and closer in grain, soft to the tool and capable of the finest polish, was sometimes used, alone or in conjunction with oak, from the fourteenth century onwards. In the decree of approval, issued in 1371 by Messire Hugues Aubricot, Provost of Paris, for "*huchiers, presentement appelés menuisiers,*" and confirmed by Parliament in 1382, which is as it were the foundation

<sup>1</sup> Figs. 4 and 7.

<sup>2</sup> Fig. 3.

charter of the new corporation, there is already a question of "*aumoires à pans de bois de noyer.*" A buffet in the Cluny Museum, which is still completely gothic in style, although it has no external braces, is made of oak, but the door panels are of carved walnut.<sup>1</sup>

Already one foreign and exotic wood was known, ebony, then called *ybenus*, of which were made boxes, knife handles, and other little objects; there were, in France in the fourteenth century, small pieces of furniture inlaid with ebony and ivory. In 1317, Queen Jeanne in the Louvre was in possession of "two tables for eating, of wood ornamented with small pieces of ivory and ebony, of which one is in two pieces and a half and folding, and the other in two pieces, upon which table the Queen has her meals." Were these inlaid tables—hinged panels that were unfolded on trestles for meals—imported from the East, like so many other articles "of Damascus work," or did they come from Italy, and were they decorated with that *certosina*, that *travail de Chartreux* lately invented, they say, at Siena? However it might be, it was not French work.

The foregoing is a condensed description of the technique and style of the furniture of the Middle Ages. In fine, in spite of polychromy, and despite the fact that up to the sixteenth century many pieces, the majority without a doubt, were made of plain heavy wood intended

<sup>1</sup> It must date from the early years of the sixteenth century

## 16 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

to be continually covered with painted and embroidered stuffs, they were mostly works of mouldings and carving, and never was wood-carving finer; always attacked with admirable boldness, while sometimes it was caressing and full of subtlety, it is above all broad and vigorous, a manner especially proper for work in oak. Have craftsmen of any trade ever been known to possess more complete mastery of it than those who built and carved the miraculous stalls of Amiens Cathedral?

It remains now for us to make a rapid survey of the various kinds of furniture used by the people of the Middle Ages. The list is by no means a long one.

The *coffre* or *huche* is the pre-eminent piece, the ancestor and prototype of the rest. No other takes its place, and it is capable, should need be, of supplanting all the others. The proof of its importance is the name of *huchiers* adopted by all furniture makers. There was a time, and in every period before the seventeenth century there were circles in which it was the only piece in existence besides the bench, and even on occasions took the place of the latter. In sacristies it held the priestly vestments, in the charter-room the archives, in *librairies*<sup>1</sup> the manuscripts not actually chained to the reading desks; in the hall, the chamber and the withdrawing room of nobles or rich burgesses,

<sup>1</sup> The library or study (*estude*), the modern *bibliothèque* or *cabinet de travail*.

a long coffer called a *garde-robe* held clothes without the necessity of folding them; a lover might hide in one at a pinch; another contained linen, another the hangings, the loose covers for furniture, the store of stuffs in the piece; yet another—the *coffre à deniers ferré*—held plate, coined money, valuable papers, and this last coffer was put in the chapel if there was one, so that any theft might be aggravated by the guilt of sacrilege; against the bed there stood a long, narrow, low coffer that served as a step to scale the heights of the couch. A piece of stuff, a flat cushion is laid on a coffer—behold a seat! It is too high, of course, but there are little bench stools expressly made to rest the feet on.<sup>1</sup> With a mattress it can be turned into a bed. To the clerk it is a writing table, for the merchant a counter. In the kitchen it takes the name *maie* and bread is kneaded in it, and when baked kept in it. In a flitting it is loaded on to a *cheval bahutier* or put into a cart. Coffers specially meant for travelling were the leather *bouges* and *malles*, *coffres à fest*, which have a double sloped roof like a shrine, and especially the *coffres à bahut*, or *bahuts*, or again *bahuts sommiers*.

What precisely is a *bahut*? Since the middle of the last century an absurd habit has prevailed of giving this name to every form of panelled

<sup>1</sup> This explains the existence of those Louis XIII style stools, too low to sit on comfortably, too high for foot rests if one is sitting on an ordinary chair.

## 18 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

furniture, whether ancient or faked up in the ancient fashion, cupboards, under-cupboards, buffets, cabinets, coffer. And the habit is so deeply rooted that this twisted word is flaunted through one of the latest (and best) catalogues of the Louvre.<sup>1</sup> Originally the *bahut* was a supplementary case or box, of no great depth, with domed lid, fitting on to an ordinary coffer, and so fitted when people set out on a journey. In it were put clothes and articles wanted while travelling, so that they could readily be got at without undoing the pack load or opening the coffer. The *coffre à bahut* was first of all a coffer equipped with this accessory, then a travelling coffer with domed top, lastly, any coffer whatever was called a *bahut*, but never any other piece of furniture.<sup>2</sup>

The *coffre ouvert* was carved; the *coffre tout plein* was not; the *coffre vermeil* was sheathed in red leather, others were covered with canvas glued down and painted over.

By way of iron fittings, coffer may have, on the lid, two wrought and pierced braces, called *bastons de fer*; or a single one in the middle, to the end of which is jointed the *morailon* or hasp, whose *auberon* penetrates into the lock to be caught by the bolt. The hasp and the

<sup>1</sup> The catalogue of the Arconati-Visconti Collection, in which the celebrated cupboard attributed to Hugues Sambin is described as a *bahut*.

<sup>2</sup> The *arche* or ark seems also to have been, at the outset, a box with domed lid; afterwards it was confounded with the coffer.



*palastre* or case of the lock are sometimes veritable masterpieces of delicate forging and chasing: strange animals, fenestrations and other architectural motives, foliage, repoussé and cut out in the iron beaten out thin under the hammer (for sheet iron was not yet in existence), and riveted on to the lock case, human figures and even complicated scenes are all carried out with marvellous workmanship, if one considers the rudimentary tools with which the locksmith had to content himself.

The coffer was far from convenient, since in order to open it you were obliged to remove whatever had been placed on its lid, which served as a table, and to get at anything in the bottom all the rest of its contents must needs be taken out. Little by little, therefore, it was driven out from noble and wealthy homes by pieces with doors and drawers; but this only came about very slowly, and the coffer did not wholly disappear until the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Nearly all the cupboards dating from the Middle Ages have disappeared. Those for lay use were most frequently part of the *chambrillage*, or wainscoting, of a chamber, and thus were not, strictly speaking, articles of furniture. In Paris there is still to be seen a large cupboard of this kind, still in the very place where it was made. Very interesting and curious, though greatly restored, it is fixed in the wall of the "treasure chamber" of the church of St.

## 20 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

Germain l'Auxerrois.<sup>1</sup> Above a projecting basement ornamented with *serviettes repliées*, which serves as a bench, there are six doors wider than their height, in two rows, with long worked iron braces. The whole is crowned with a pierced cresting. This cupboard dates from the second half of the fifteenth century.

*Buffet*  
The *buffet* is a very ancient piece of furniture, but it began by being a coffer. Does not Benoît de Sainte-More, the twelfth century poet, in his *Roman de Thèbes* make Polynices the son of Oedipus sit on a buffet? In the sixteenth century it was usually a small cupboard in two parts, whose lower part was doorless; it was called a *buffet à armoire*.<sup>2</sup> But there are also buffets without the cupboard; made simply of superimposed shelves, they are much like dressers (*dressoirs*); and also buffets whose lower part has *guichets*, while the upper part has none; others again, open below, have a cupboard in the middle, and on top a back equipped with one or more shelves or *gradins*, used to display beautiful and costly objects, cups of crystal glass, *aquamaniles* (little basins for washing the hands after meals), *noix d'Inde* (coconuts), ivory boxes, goblets made of horn, *bois madré*,<sup>3</sup> or goldsmith's work. This was a noble piece, and

I With its wainscoted walls, its old beams, its pavement, which is partly ancient, and in spite of a table which is a ridiculous forgery, this little room, worked in over the porch, is one of the most curious and interesting spots in Paris, and one of the most evocative of the past, as the phrase goes.

<sup>2</sup> Fig. 3.

<sup>3</sup> "Knot" or figured walnut or maple, much sought after.

the number of shelves was strictly regulated according to etiquette; a queen had the right to five shelves, a princess to four, a countess to three, the lady of a knight banneret to two, the wife of a plain noble to one only; a middle class female might not aspire to such a possession at all.

The least uncommon type is built as follows: The ground plan is rectangular, or very frequently has canted corners. Above a base with short feet, or resting directly on the ground (and not even always present), is the open part, the back of which is divided into panels, decorated or plain; the upper part is sometimes supported in front by two pillars, sometimes it has dummy doors; it opens with one or two *guichets* or cupboards, below which runs a carved frieze. The oldest models sometimes have one or two *layettes-coulisses*, or drawers.<sup>1</sup> The ironwork on these buffets, sometimes exceedingly decorative and worked like a jewel, was nailed on over a strip of hide, of cloth or red velvet, which set off its delicate trceries, and their *vertevelles*<sup>2</sup> were of large dimensions and played an important part in the decoration of the piece. The *huchiers* of this great epoch had too much fine taste to disguise this indispensable ironwork.

<sup>1</sup> The *layette* was for a long time a box, a little wooden coffer placed in a large coffer, for small valuable objects, papers, etc. If it formed part of the coffer it was a *chaîtron*. The *layette-coulisse* or *layette qui se tire* was invented about 1470, and drawers were known by that name until the end of the seventeenth century.

<sup>2</sup> The rings in which the bolts slid.

## 22 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

We have very little to say of the table ; in the Middle Ages it was, so to say, a temporary and intermittent piece of furniture. When the hour came for a meal, the master of the house took his seat "*au chef de la table, en sa chaire,*" the guests on the long heavy bench that had its permanent place along a wall or in front of the fire-place ; the servants put trestles before them, and "set up the table," in other words, laid on these trestles the table properly so called, which might be merely plain deal and made of boards set side by side, spread the cloth, then arranged the trenchers, which took the place of plates, the knives (there were no forks as yet), and the rolls of bread, while others went round with ewers and basins for hand washing ; lastly the dishes were brought on. The meal finished and grace said, the cloth was removed, the table taken down, the trestles carried away, and the diners rose. The tables were very narrow and one side left free for serving ; if the diners were too many, two tables were set up at right angles to one another, or three arranged in horse-shoe fashion.

As may readily be conceived, the tables exist no longer, nor the trestles, which were of wood or iron or brass, and often folded.

Tables for any other purpose but eating were hardly known, except the *lectrin*, of which we shall speak presently, and the *demoiselle*, whose use we have already described. Coffers and small seats, such as *escabeaux*, *blacets*, *selles* and *bassets*, took their place.

The *lectrin* or lectern, and the *pupitre* (desk), the first for reading and the second more especially for writing, but both frequently confounded with one another, were the two articles essential for the *estude* or study. Here may be noted a combination of the two: upon a pillar, carved like the screw of a press and furnished with a very solid base (which might take the form of a book-box), there was mounted a small round table that could be raised or lowered by turning it about; on top of this was a desk with double slope.

The *basset* was a very small square or round table, "made like a stool," but taller.

Down to the end of the fifteenth century beds were either coarse things of carpentry, completely hidden by coverings of stuff, and over which, hung by cords from the roof beams, there was a tester whence curtains fell down, the *dossier* against the wall, and the *gouttières*<sup>1</sup>; or else they were shut beds (*lits clos*), a kind of huge box made of wooden panels, with five walls (the sixth being replaced by curtains), inside which one could find refuge from the draughts that raged about the ill-enclosed dwellings of the olden time. Other beds had only a wall at the back and another along one side, with a slender carven shaft holding up the corner of the tester; of this kind are the pair of beds

<sup>1</sup> The *gouttière* was originally a scalloped strip of stuff round the pavilion of a tent, serving to throw off the rain. The same name was then given, by analogy, to this ornament of a bed tester, which was later to be called a *pente*.

## 24 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

belonging to the Musée de l'Union Centrale des Arts décoratifs, and dating from the end of the fifteenth century. Needless to say that these pieces are extraordinarily rare. During the day the curtains were drawn together at the corners of the bed, lifted up on themselves and fastened so as to make a kind of big purse.

There still remains the numerous company of seats. There were three noble seats: the *faudesteuil*, the *banc à dos* (and still more noble, the *banc à ciel*), and the *chaire*.

The *faudesteuil* (the English fold-stool), a remote descendant of the Roman curule chair, is not very well known; it seems to have been the most honorific of the family of seats. The king sat in it, under his dais, in ceremonial circumstances, but he sat in it also to have his head combed and to have his beard trimmed. It had, therefore, a low back. It was generally an X-shaped seat, with curving limbs, fitted with straps of leather and stuffs for seat and back, similar to the seats that are still fashionable in Italy.

Let us imagine the back wall of a long coffer prolonged upwards, and the two sides also, but only by a foot, and we shall have an *archebanc* or coffer-bench. The earliest church stalls were made in this way. These pieces, meant for two uses, were greatly liked by our forefathers, and many old benches have a coffer for seat, with or without a lock and key. We might also have a backed bench that was not a coffer, and the

sides need not then have full walls; it was then a *banc à colombes* or with legs. Benches are sometimes complicated with a *marchepied* along the front (for it is a good thing to protect the feet of the sitters from the cold damp pavements of the halls), and for great persons by a dais, which is usually a half vault.

The *banc*, and more especially the *archebanc*, is weighty and almost unmovable; as we have said, its place is in front of the fire-place. In order to enable one to warm front or back at will, and at meals to sit, as the saying went, "back to the fire, stomach to the table," the ingenious *banc tournis* was invented. This bench has, for its back, a frame that can play in a fan-shaped groove cut in the wall of the two side pieces, so as to shift now to the front now to the rear. But men find themselves more at ease on a bench with a back of a good height and a good solid thickness: they are sheltered thus, not merely from currents of air but from a treacherous stroke from behind.

The *archebanc* may be an integral part of a bed, backed on to the side. It is then a seat by day, and at night it serves as a bed step, after the owner has laid his clothes away in the coffer.

Diminutives of the *banc*, and pretty hard to distinguish from one another, are the *bancelle*, which seems to have been a light bench, with low back and side-pieces, or side-pieces without a back<sup>1</sup>; the *placet*, a name that appears at the

## 26 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

very end of the Middle Ages; the *escabeau* and the *selle*, which were sometimes made of a long plank, with two planks, by way of feet, more or less cut away and consolidated by means of a cross-piece, sometimes of a square, round, or triangular top, mounted on four or three oblique legs, or else on four or three solid boards put together so as to form a pyramid under the top. Simple as they were, these little seats could be highly decorated with carving. Lastly, the *forme* or *fourme*, which is not necessarily a small *banc*, but a very simple one, without back, without sides, and on four legs. It is this "form" that later on is to become the *banquette*, upholstered and covered with stuff.

Let us go back once more to the common ancestor, the coffer. Suppose it fairly small, almost a cube in shape; raise the two sides moderately and the back wall considerably, up to a height of about six feet; there you have the plan of the *chaire* or *chaière*. This is the seat of the father of the family, the mark of his domestic sovereignty. Often there was only one in a house; its place was at the head of the bed in the room of state. It is a thing of majesty and seldom budes. Is a proof wanted of its dignity? We find it in Olivier de la Marche, the chronicler of Charles the Bold. "The cook within his kitchen shall command, order, and be obeyed, and shall have a *chaière* between the buffet and the fire-place, to sit in and to rest if need is, and the said *chaière* shall be placed in



such a spot as he may see and take cognisance of all that is done in the said kitchen, and shall have in his hand a large wooden ladle, the which to serve him for two ends, the one to taste soup and broth, the other to drive the children out of the kitchen and to beat them if need is."

It is quite natural that this lordly seat should be given the most magnificent habiliments. *Chaires* are carved with *serviettes* (see Fig. 4) and *à orbe-voies* (see Figs. 5 and 6), lightened at the top by an open frieze (see Figs. 4 and 5), the upper part of the back being the part that is most richly wrought, because the lower part is hidden by the *parement* of stuffs and cushions; their uprights have florets for finials; they are painted and gilded. Each has its own *bouge* of leather, made expressly for it, so that it may be taken on journeys. Persons of quality, with rights of high justice and low justice, are empowered to add a dais to the back of their *chaise*.

These seats of the Middle Ages, such as we see them in museums, have a sufficiently repelling air of rude lack of comfort. In very deed, they were never very comfortable, on account of their vertical backs; but they were better than they seem, because their wood was never left bare and naked. A *carreau* or flat cushion of "*camocas* \* *d'oultre-mer*," of red leather "wrought in the Moorish fashion," of red sendal \* brodered with pearls, of azure *veluyau*, was placed on the seat; two others bestrode the arms; a fourth standing

## 28 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

up against the back "shored up" your loins ; or else there was a bear-skin thrown over the chair or a *tapis velu* from Turkey ; there were some even, from the fourteenth century, that boasted a permanent garniture nailed on with gilt nails, but this garniture was not stuffed ; the material covered a seat of stretched hide, lightly upholstered with hair, or straps fitted with felting.

For the rest, all furniture was decked out with bright-coloured stuffs: the *bancs* were covered with *banquiers*, the forms with *fourmiers*, *escabeaux* and *selles* with flat cushions, buffets with Turkey carpet and *touailles* ; just as the walls and even the ceilings disappeared under a profusion of high warp tapestries, of "*tartare vermeil changeant et rayé d'or*," or stuff "*d'azur, brodée à pourcelez* (little pigs) *blancs*," or "*à bestes sauvages et à chasteaulx*."

PART TWO  
FURNITURE OF THE  
RENAISSANCE



## CHAPTER ONE : HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STYLE

DURING the sixteenth century the slow transformation of manners and life continued. Conditions of security were gradually becoming more established—at least until the scourge of the wars of religion raged through the country—wealth increased, the expeditions into Italy brought the rude French to a knowledge of all kinds of ways of making life pleasant, ways they had had no idea of; the taste for luxury spread. Thus the *huchiers* had more and more work on their benches. The working man and the peasant continued to have no furniture, but middle-class people of every grade, always more and more numerous, grew refined, learned a taste for conveniences, even for beautiful things, and without aspiring to lead the life of the gentry, desired to enjoy, at any rate in their own homes, all their ease and comforts. So there came into existence much more plentiful and more varied furniture, more stationary in its use, more delicate in construction. But the change was extremely slow in coming to pass.

We have a very curious document on the *ménage* or equipment of a house as it was towards the end of the reign of François I. This

## 32 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

is a little book—in verse, if you please—of which one Gilles Corrozet, who kept a booksellers shop at the sign of the “Heart and Rose,” was both author and publisher.

The title is : *Les Blasons domestiques, contenantz la décoration d'une maison honneste, et du mesnage estant en icelle : Invention ioyeuse, et moderne, 1539. On le vend en la grand salle du Palais, près la Chappelle de Messieurs, en la boutique de Gilles Corrozet, libraire.*

Our good Corrozet was no Ronsard, nor even a Marot ; but his verses, for all their remarkable flatness, have yet a very pleasant fragrance of simplicity, and, without being too indulgent, we might even find in them a certain intimate poetry. “You have here, my readers,” he tells us in his preface,” to recreate your gentle minds, the descriptions of the household goods and other things useful for domestic and familiar affairs, the which I dedicate to you for the purpose of affording you a pastime.” Could anything be more amiable ? So let us follow Corrozet.

The house he is to bring us through from the cellar

*La cave ténébreuse et obscure  
Cave dont Bacchus brend la cure*

to the garret

*Où on met toutes les relicques  
Des extencilles domestiques,*

*↳ utensils ?  
x pr. domestiques (cave ille) = celle de*

is the house he himself would fain possess, the new-fashioned house of a rich burgess.

*Noble maison de tous grands biens garnye,  
Riche maison de tous meubles fournye.*

First of all the courtyard. It is paved with marble; and it is embellished with medallions

*Et de figures magnifiques,  
Tant de modernes que d'antiques.*

This marble, these antique statues, those medallions sculptured on the façade, are the art of Italy, which is now beginning its invasion. Behind the house stretches the garden:

*Jardin plein de beauté naïve  
Où sont maints berceaux ombrageux,*

and through which run "silver rills, full of various fishes," among

*. . . le lis, la rose franche,  
L'oeillet, et l'aubespine blanche,  
La violette humble et petite,  
Le doux muguet, la marguerite,  
Le romarin, la marjolaine,  
Le baulme qui faict bonne allaine  
Et aultres odoriférentes. . . .*

Let us go within. The house is no longer sullen, folded in upon itself, and only presenting to the street a thick wall as little pierced as possible, like the houses of the Middle Ages. Large windows open in the façade, through which penetrate air and light and gaiety; good-sized rooms, "very clear and well-squared," take the

## 34 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

place of the enormous sombre and chilling halls of the châteaux and seigneurial town mansions of former times, which were divided off into compartments as well as possible by means of tapestries, and the "rat holes and nests," as Henri Estienne called them, of the cramped houses of the middle classes, the bourgeoisie.

Corrozet by no means neglects the kitchen; indeed,

*On a beau voir une maison dorée . . .  
Si on ne void une bonne cuisine,  
Il n'y a rien eu la maison qui plaise.  
Car la cuisine esjouit et faict aise  
Le corps humain. . . .*

However, we will spare our readers of to-day, and mount at once into the "salle et chambre." The "commodités"—what we call comfort—make their appearance here, for

*Pour faire un doux marcher  
On a embrissé le plancher.*

A wooden floor is a great novelty, and what an advance on the uneven, damp and chilly pavement of previous days; but during the whole of the sixteenth century, and even later, it is a rare luxury. Furthermore, the chamber is, "*nattée en toute place*," which means that the walls have been hung with rush matting<sup>1</sup> before hanging the tapestries on them. The tapestries

<sup>1</sup> This is not, strictly speaking, a novelty.



*Où on voit les ruses et tours  
D'armes, de chasses et d'amours,  
Les boys, les champs et les fontaines. . . .*

Lastly, it is so snug that

*. . . le vent rude et divers  
N'entre jamais ès froids hyvers.*

It is further embellished with pictures; it is "gilded . . . painted . . . with richest colours tinted"; the doors, the ceiling, the window frames are covered with painted and gilded ornament.

Now we come to the furnishings, and our bookseller-poet takes each article and makes its *blason*, an invocation and eulogy at the same time. And first of all the bed,

*Beau lict encourtiné de soye,  
Pour musser la clarté qui nuict,*

whose couch is

*. . . ouvrée de menuiserie  
D'images et marqueterie.*

The *images* are statuettes or bas-reliefs; the *marqueterie* is an Italian novelty which is just beginning to be imitated in France. At the bed-head the noble *chaire* has its due and consecrated place, the *chaire*, "companion of the couch,"

*Chaire enlevée à personnages,*  
on which the craftsman carved

*. . . maintes tables d attente\*  
 Fueillages, vignettes, frizures  
 Et aultres plaisantes figures.*

It is a coffer, too, that

*Chaire bien fermée et bien close  
 Où le musq odorant repose  
 Avec le linge délyé,  
 Tant souef, fleurant, tant bien plyé.*

Then comes the *banc*, “*faict à petits marmouzets*,” before which, just as in the full Middle Ages, the table will be brought and set up for meals, “on two trestles borne,” an article of furniture that soon will assume such importance, such extravagant richness, but which is still quite modest and subordinate :—

*Ainsi que la femme prudente  
 Est au Mary obédiente,  
 Tout ainsi la table se jecte  
 Vers le banc, comme à luy subjecte.*

The buffet or *dressouer* is made of “sweet-smelling cypress,” it is “low of shape,”

*Soustenu de pilliers tournéz,  
 De feuilles et fleurs bien aornéz ;*

it has

*Deux guichetz de bonne taille,  
 Ayant chascun une medaille ;*

it is no longer painted, but made of well waxed walnut, for Corrozet insists on the sheen given it from being diligently well kept : this buffet

*En clarté le beau mirouer passe,  
Pour ce qu'on le tient nectement.*

It has none of the features of what we should call a dining-room piece, for it is

*. . . le tabernacle,  
Le lieu secret et habitacle  
Où sont les beaux joyeux et bagues.<sup>1</sup>*

In short, it plays the part that is soon to belong to the cabinet. The cabinet does already exist in this "house in Spain," if we may venture the phrase, of Corrozet's, and a vignette in the little book even gives us a portrait of it; but it is as yet only a kind of little coffer shaped like a desk, with compartments, and two little *layettes-coulisses* or drawers; in short, a mere embryo cabinet. It is the feminine piece in this chamber:

*Paré de veloux cramoisy,  
De drap a'or et de taffetas,*

it contains *antiquailles*, antique objects, portraits of "great and little personages," the musk-perfumed gloves of the lady of the house, pomade "to bring back lost colour," her

*Eaux de Damas, d'oeillets, de roses,  
En fioles de verre encloses;*

her "patenostres cristallines,"<sup>2</sup> her scissors, her mirror, her book of hours.

In the coffer, "smelling sweeter than balm," are shut away "adornments, trimmings, robes."

<sup>1</sup> *Bagues*, jewels of every kind, and not rings only.

<sup>2</sup> Chaplets with beads of rock crystal.

### 38 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

It is made of "figured wood, yellow as wax . . . shining and well rubbed."

The lesser seats are *scabelles*, *selles* and *blacets*, the first "to sit at table for dinner and supper"; the others more for the ladies' conversation. The *placet* of which Corrozet speaks is a stool with four legs and a fixed tapestry covering. There are no *caquetoires* as yet; they were not invented till thirty years later.

Such were, in 1539, the "*chambre et salle*" of a handsome middle-class house, at one and the same time a bedroom, a reception room, and dining room. In more sumptuous dwellings the *chambre* and the *salle* were separate, the *salle* being reserved for feasts and ceremonial occasions.

Our rhymester goes on to speak of the *retrait*, as to which

*Il vaut bien mieux que je me taise,*

he assures us, which yet does not prevent him from speaking of it—a little too much, and with no delicacy whatever; we are in the days of Master François Rabelais. Let us refrain from following his example, and confine ourselves to saying that with regard to this particular point of hygiene and cleanliness the sixteenth century was distinctly behind the Middle Ages, as the seventeenth century was to be behind the sixteenth.

Finally, like the good bookseller he is, he does not fail to celebrate as it deserves

*La bonne estude, où la philosophie  
Son throne tient et là se glorifie,*

but in terms that are no less vaguely general than they are enthusiastic, and without giving us any detail on its furniture, which, in any case, would not have included anything particular, as lectern and desk had been long in existence, and special pieces, such as bookcases and bureaux, were not yet known.

In short, more than the third part of the century has passed, and hardly anything has changed in the general aspect of the furniture in a house. Capital differences are already displayed in architecture; but as for the furniture, the only changes to be seen are in the style of ornament and decoration. The only new articles are cabinets, which have made a first and somewhat timid appearance. In technique a novelty has arrived: polychromy is fading out, the cult of shining, polished, well waxed, and well rubbed furniture is becoming prevalent. There is a strong leaning towards the effect of reliefs, the play of lights and shades rather than that of colours; it is the complete triumph of carving, which entails the supremacy of walnut<sup>1</sup> over oak. And as carving is no longer a costly rarity, furniture is less often hidden under many-coloured stuffs.

Lastly, marquetry no longer is seen only on

<sup>1</sup> Walnut is a wood "good and kindly to work, to make fine pieces of work, because it is smooth and polished of its own nature."—CHARLES ESTIENNE, *Maison rustique*.

## 40 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

small objects of "curiosity," curios imported from Italy or the East. *Certosina*, with small geometrical motives, has long been dethroned across the mountains by *intarsia*, which pretends to rival painting. But it will take a long, long time to become acclimatised in France. It had been from the days of antiquity a thing essentially Italian; a veneer of some costly material, or imitating a costly material, set on a common material—marble or stucco over rubble in architecture, rare and costly wood on common wood in joinery—our French artists and craftsmen will turn away from it always, or for a very long time. Anne de Beaujeu, her inventory<sup>1</sup> tells us, had a "handsome square table, made with marquetry, on which are several towns painted with inlaid pieces"—but this had been "made in Germany," for the Germans very soon had begun to imitate and even to counterfeit the works of the *intarsiatori* of Florence and Venice. François I had a bedstead with marquetry foliage in mother of pearl, but he had acquired it from a Portuguese merchant, and moreover, it was Indian work, "*du pays d'Indye*." He had in his service a specially appointed *marqueteur*, but his name was Giovanni Michele Pantaleone; much later, in 1576, Henry III's was a certain Hans Kraus, whose name sufficiently indicates his origin. On the other hand, there is frequent mention, in contemporary inventories, of marquetry "in the

I *i.e.*, 1523

## EVOLUTION OF TABLES 41

Spanish fashion." It is true that the admirable work in inlaid wood that the Cardinal d'Amboise had made at Gaillon<sup>1</sup> seems to have been carried out by French workmen.

But inlaying of composition, either white or coloured, in the Italian fashion—this process was called white Mauresque—was never to become acclimatised among us; still less reliefs in composition *appliqué* and gilt. Our *huchiers* loved fine homogeneous and sound material too well for that.

The real novelties date from the middle of the century. One of the most important was the transformation of the table, due to the increasing need for luxury and convenience. It is very inconvenient to put down ordinary objects, or the book one may be reading, on a coffer placed against the wall; to leave the whole centre of a large room empty and void becomes impossible as soon as there is any care for an arrangement pleasant to the eye. What can be put in this space, except a table? Once the table is promoted to this dignity, it must be handsome, decorative, important, and soon the Renaissance tables will be all three in perfection. The trestles yield place to a monumental affair of framework, pillars, and feet, upon which the table properly so called is permanently placed in position (*assise*). From the vulgar improvised article it had been, only appearing in the chamber or hall to be hidden under a table cloth, the

<sup>1</sup> The remains of these may be seen in the choir at St. Denis.

## 42 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

table became the piece in which decorative richness displayed itself with the greatest abundance and even extravagant excess; you might think it shows some of the airs of a *parvenue*.

*cupboards*  
The table shares with the cupboard and the cabinet the inheritance of the coffer, which disappears very slowly. The cupboards of the days of Henri II are perhaps the most perfect things created by the sixteenth century, once the tradition of the Middle Ages had been completely abolished. There were some, though not many, large ones, with only two doors; the majority were small, in two sections with four doors, each of the superposed sections forming more or less an independent piece, easy to carry from place to place.

The cabinet, which was not French by birth, enjoyed a great vogue, but what is curious is that it never attained a very distinctive personality in France; it remains hard to define. Cabinets were imported from almost everywhere, from Italy, Germany, Flanders, Spain; and often enough were of native make. In several provinces any cupboard was known as a cabinet; in Paris itself we see in Catherine de Medici's mansion "a cabinet of wood painted and gilt, of eight feet high by three feet wide, with four *guichets*"; this is a very narrow cupboard, of strange proportions, but beautifully carved. Another has only "*un pied en quarré*"—a coffer. Another has two feet. At the same period the Duc de



Roannez had one of "walnut wood with marquetry, six feet high, with four *guichets*," and what is an interesting detail, "lined within, in the upper part, with deep crimson velvet and a ribbon of silver silk." This too is a cupboard. The only feature common to all of them is that they were costly and refined pieces, used to lock away, generally in little interior drawers hidden by the doors, every kind of valuable.

It was not cabinets only that came to us from abroad. Genoese furniture, of walnut inlaid with ivory, mother of pearl, lemon or some other light-coloured wood, much sought after from 1550 onwards, included also arm-chairs, "*en tenaille*"<sup>1</sup> and tables; there were tables with marquetry "in the German fashion," others "Indian fashion," or again "Turkish fashion"; the first Florentine tables, "marquetry of divers kinds and colours of marble, set upon their underframes of gilded wood," which were sent to Catherine de Medici by her relative, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, roused general admiration. Under Henri III, there began to arrive from Flanders those large cabinets and small cupboards veneered in ebony, with wavy mouldings,<sup>2</sup> so highly prized by the French of the first half of the seventeenth century, and even bedsteads of ebony inlaid with ivory. The pamphlet entitled *L'Isle des Hermaphrodites*, which so shrewdly

<sup>1</sup> X-shaped with curving limbs, the seat and back made of broad leather bands.

<sup>2</sup> We shall speak later of this use of ebony.

## 44 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

mocks the effeminate, Italianate and musk-scented manners of Henri III and his favourites, makes them say: "As for wooden furniture, we would have it all gilded, silvered, and marquetry: and the said furniture, and bedsteads in principal, should be, if that be possible, of cedar-wood and rosewood and other sweet-smelling woods, unless it be preferred to make them of ebony and ivory." We have here a vivid picture of the progressive denationalisation, if the barbarous but useful word may be allowed, of costly and luxurious furniture in France, which was to continue in more and more aggravated form until the reaction of the Louis XIV style.

Let us not fail to remark that all this foreign furniture has a polychrome surface decoration, while the French *huchiers*, in all that they turn out, remain faithful to carving in the plain wood; we might even say that they abuse it, carry it too far.

*work* But what passed out of fashion from the end of the reign of François I, and most regrettably, was the handsome ironwork that made such a fine effect on the façades of the buffets and coffers of the mediæval style. Thenceforth hinges are tiny things; there are no more *pentures*,\* or if there are, they are on the inside; locks are nailed on inside the doors, inside the coffers, the key-hole plates, essential to prevent the key from damaging the wood, become a mere insignificant surround.

\* \* \* \* \*  
*x the long decorative ends of the hinges*

There is not a "Renaissance" style in France, but several successive styles overlapping one another throughout the sixteenth century; one can even distinguish several provincial styles, but cautiously and without attempting to be too precise. As in the preceding centuries, it is still architecture that gives the tone, but now it is lay architecture; and to each of the phases of its evolution there corresponds very exactly a period in furniture, for the *huchiers* continue to follow closely and faithfully in the footsteps of the builders of châteaux.

Gothic art was of a surety neither dying nor even in its decline towards the year 1500, when there had just been built, or were actually in the middle of construction, such masterpieces as the châteaux of Plessis-les-Tours, Beaugé, Montpensier, Meillant, the hôtel de Jacques-Cœur at Bourges, the hôtel de Cluny in Paris, the Palais de Justice at Rouen, the hôtel de ville at Compiègne, to quote nothing but lay edifices; the old tree was full of sap when the Italian bough was grafted upon it; and for pure technique, as for abundant decorative fancy, our master masons could have taught something to any Bramante or San Gallo. And thus the real native art made a good defence against the foreign invasion.

Italian ornament, imitated more or less from the antique, introduced itself first, and took its place side by side with the *mouchettes* and the *soufflets*, the cabbage-leaf, aconite, and thistle-eaf, in buildings whose structure remained

## 46 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

purely gothic. This was seen at Solesmes and Amboise under Charles VIII, then under Louis XII at the château of Blois, where the fine gallery of the court alternates on its wholly French pillars fleur-de-lis and heraldic ermines with panels showing *candélabres*,\*<sup>1</sup> gadrooned vases, acanthus stems and symmetrical *rinceaux* in the Genoese or Milanese fashion. Among these sculptures some were the work of Italian artists in the service of the French king, others were ordered in Italy itself; others besides, the most free and fanciful of these "*travaux de basse taille*," or bas reliefs, were made by the first French sculptors to be converted to the new manner.

Wood-working, with, as is natural, a few years delay, followed in the same path as work in stone. Then it was that in churches there were built composite chapels or choirs, the lower blind part of which, with panels of *grotesques*,<sup>2</sup> is Italian-antique, while the upper pierced part is of the pure flamboyant style. This latter style, by the nervous elegance of its forms, the vertical or oblique lines soaring gloriously towards the skies, lent itself far better than the Italian manner to the effects of light *claire-voies*, slender finials, airy crestings, to which men were too well accustomed to discard them between one day and the next.<sup>3</sup> A stall of this kind at the beginning

1 See page 51.

2 See page 51.

3 And yet, on the contrary, a stall at Gaillon, gothic to a great extent, ends above in a horizontal entablature.

of the century had, under the seat, a coffer with folded *serviette* carving, then a *dosseret* with *grotesques* copied from a vignette out of a Venetian book, a half-vault dais with a frieze carved with Italian *rinceaux*, and, to crown the whole, a balustrade of the flamboyant style. A *chaire* had, similarly, above a *serviette*-carved coffer a purely Renaissance back, with pilaster uprights and a horizontal cornice enframing a panel covered with motives of the new fashion: candelabrum, cartouche, *medaille*,\* *putto*,\* pleated ribbons. A frequent combination is that the framework of the article is in the French and the panels in the Italian style.

It must be confessed that these hybrid pieces are often very charming; the two styles are brought together with a fancy and an ingenuous ease that amuse the eye without shocking it by a too violent lack of harmoniousness.

A little later, under François I,<sup>1</sup> a prince much addicted to novelty, architecture becomes still further emancipated. It no longer sets national and Italian elements side by side, it mingles them intimately together; and if the main forms remain, in general, French, many forms

<sup>1</sup> It is convenient, and in accordance with tradition, when studying the art of the Renaissance, to divide the sixteenth century into four periods, which are made to correspond with the reigns of Louis XII, François I, Henri II and Henri III. This is very arbitrary, for Henri II reigned only twelve years, and between him and Henri III there interposed the ephemeral François II and Charles IX (who was king longer than his father), or some fifteen years; on the other hand, Henri III died in 1589. But on the whole this division corresponds with a certain reality.

of the details and the whole of the decoration belong to the new style. Master workers still take symmetry somewhat at their ease; the four corners of a château are still rounded off with feudal towers; the general silhouette is, as in the past, picturesque and full of movement, but the calm horizontal line and the right angle take possession of the façade; as yet there is no coldness, but a general calming down, contradicted by the riot of upward shapes that reigns, for example, over the upper parts of Chambord. Against the steep slopes of the slate roofs there still detach themselves the slender chimney stacks and the elegant white dormer-windows; but the gables are now replaced by pointed pediments and crocketed spires by turned finials. The cabbage-leaf is now only for rabbits and the thistle for donkeys; the olive, laurel and acanthus are triumphant. Now arises that strange notion which would have so much astonished the carvers of the thirteenth century capitals—and the great Lorenzo Ghiberti too—that there are noble vegetables, worthy of a place in decoration, and others that are unworthy.

And now, at the same time as the latest of the flamboyant churches, the first Renaissance churches are erected; the typical example is Saint Eustache, a strange edifice of undeniable beauty, strong and fine, French in Italian raiment. Here, as in Azay-le-Rideau, at Blois, or at Chambord, we may see the first serious attacks delivered among us against good sense;

the tall piers of the nave are plastered with pilasters and columns, each with base and capital, placed one above the other.

This "François I<sup>er</sup>" art is at bottom truly French, vivid, varied, full of gaiety and fancy, and yet almost always reasonable too, transforming in its own fashion what it borrows from strangers and everywhere showing the most delicate sense of elegance. French artists had not then lost, and were never to lose the *assimilating* genius, in the full meaning of the word, which they had already shown in the end of the fourteenth century, when they elaborated the English "Decorated" style to make of it that completely French thing, the Flamboyant style.

The art of furniture followed in the movement, and we might carry to considerable lengths the parallel between a buffet with canted corners belonging to this period, similar in structure to those made under Louis XI, but not one part of it now showing gothic ornament, and one of those dormers which, at a hundred yards distance, you would swear are flamboyant, but in which there is not a single element not carved in the Italian fashion. A *chaire* still has the stiff and imposing forms that have not changed for a hundred years, but the back, for example, has pilasters for the uprights, and for crown a pediment over a frieze with *canaux*\* or flutings; its panel and those of the coffer that still forms the seat are decorated with a laureate medallion

and candelabra flanked by dolphins, whose tails end in *rinceaux* of acanthus.

Of course furniture did not all, at a fixed date and *en bloc*, assume this new decoration and aspect; there were very many belated pieces which, in 1540, had not yet resigned themselves wholly to abandon their "folded parchments" and scaly pillars with bases like a prismatic carafe. Also, and this is important, these pieces were never a copy of Italian pieces. Our *huchiers* always created the architecture of their own works; but for ornament they made use of everything that came before their eyes: bas-reliefs of stone and marble, bronze plaques, vignettes in books, engravings, book-bindings. Everything is good to them, and they show the utmost ingenuity in profiting by everything.

Renaissance decoration thenceforth was in possession of all its formulas, what we might call its "vocabulary." That vocabulary is made up of Italian elements, but Frenchified with the same unceremoniousness as was displayed in changing a Bernardino of Brescia, an artist from the other side of the Alps in the king's service as "worker in wood and marquetry of all colours," into *Bernardin de Brissac!* It is now the proper moment to compile a very summary lexicon of this language of ornament.<sup>1</sup>

The pilaster<sup>2</sup> is found almost everywhere. In

1. We will speak a little later of the motives borrowed direct from ancient architecture.

2 Figs. 16 and 17.



its most simple form it is reduced to a narrow vertical panel, framed by a moulding, in the middle decorated with a circle, and at the two ends with two semi-circles, or a lozenge and two triangles. Pay heed to this modest lozenge<sup>1</sup>, it will make its way in the world, for it sometimes serves as base to a projection in the shape of a very squat pyramid, which is already the "diamond-point" dear to the joiners of the next century.

In a richer form,<sup>2</sup> "carved with enrichments," as they said, the pilaster, like panels,<sup>3</sup> admits the whole family of ornaments called *grotesques*, or *arabesques*, for the two were and are still commonly confounded. In reality the name of "arabesque" should be reserved for a surface ornamentation, very fully covering the surface, made up of more or less geometrical interweavings of a flat uniform band. A panel or a pilaster of grotesques is a decorative whole, most commonly composed of *rinceaux*, developed symmetrically on both sides of a vertical axis, formed by a candelabrum (a motive figuring a kind of superposition of turned balusters sometimes terminating in a torch flame),<sup>4</sup> a vase<sup>5</sup> or a *vasque*, or by the cord of a *chute*, which proceeds from out of the mouth of a *mascaron*,<sup>6</sup> a cherub's

1 Which is also found carved on panels (Fig. 12).

2 Fig. 16.

3 Figs. 9, 12, 16.

4 Fig. 9, panel on the right (much simplified)

5 Fig. 9, on the left.

6 Fig. 16.

head,<sup>1</sup> or a knot of ribbon.<sup>2</sup> The *rinceaux*, whose slender stems carry acanthus leaves or smallage, very greatly altered in shape, often end in heads of animals<sup>3</sup> or cornucopias.

There enters besides into the composition of grotesques a whole real or fantastic fauna : swans, dolphins,<sup>4</sup> chimæras and monstrous beings of every kind, sphinxes, sirens, griffons, and also the human figure in the shape of male or female torsos, with arms or without, ending in acanthus stems, out of which spring *rinceaux*; and targets<sup>5</sup> in the Italian fashion, rectangular cartouches, broader than their height, called *écriteaux*, even when they are innocent of an inscription, and a crowd of other objects, such as the bobbin and the knife carved above the baluster-shaped supports of the buffet shown in Fig. 16.

The capitals of pilasters are usually a very free rendering of the composite capitals of the Romans; we recognise their upright acanthus-leaf and the volutes.<sup>6</sup>

Other motives are the broad oval, or mirror, often surrounded with *entrelacs*<sup>7</sup>; the frieze of *entrelacs*,<sup>8</sup> the *cartouche en cuir découpé* and enrolled<sup>9</sup>; the garland of flowers, foliage, and

1 Fig. 12.

2 Fig. 16, in the middle.

3 Fig. 16.

4 Fig. 9.

5 Shields of a particular shape.

6 Fig. 16.

7 Fig. 8.

8 Fig. 8.

9 Fig. 9, the middle.

fruits (then called *fructage*), often very thin<sup>1</sup>; the *perspective d'architecture*<sup>2</sup>; the *médaille* or medallion, highly characteristic of the period of François I, although it was already in favour under Louis XII; witness the château de Gaillon and the hôtel d'Alluye at Blois. This was a head or bust in profile<sup>3</sup> or full faced<sup>4</sup> of a man, a warrior helmed and bearded, like Hannibal, or of a woman. Certain of these heads, carved almost in alto-relievo, seem to be leaning out of an *œil-de-bœuf*. Their frame is generally round and composed of a wreath of foliage<sup>5</sup> or of a turned moulding,<sup>6</sup> sometimes it is lozenge-shaped.<sup>7</sup> The *coquille*,<sup>8</sup> or shell, most often serves to ornament the top of a niche. The *banderole* turns and folds in a thousand ways; it takes the form of an S,<sup>9</sup> for instance, or becomes incorporated in a *rinceau*.<sup>10</sup> In general, "work with heads and figures" was called *taille*, and all "work of foliage, branching, rosettes" was known as *enrichissement*.

But we must confine ourselves within limits; we should never come to an end of enumerating all the motives adapted so happily to their own

1 Fig. 10, at the top of the left-hand panel.

2 Fig. 16, greatly simplified, and reduced to an arcade whose uprights are figured in perspective.

3 Figs. 25 and 26. 22, 23?

4 Fig. 10.

5 Fig. 25, in this case curiously conventionalised.

6 Fig. 10.

7 Fig. 26. 28

8 Fig. 21, in the pediment.

9 Fig. 21, on the sides of the pediment.

10 Summit of back of the same chair, Fig. 21,

## 54 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

technique and to French taste by the "*tailleurs de bois*," the wood carvers of this delightful period.

By the end of the reign of François I a style of architecture that was no longer Franco-Italian, but already classical and tainted with the beginning of pedantry, had shown itself in the buildings constructed for the king. Fontainebleau and Saint-Germain are already very different from Chambord and Blois. In the first of these châteaux the oval court has a colonnade and a portico with a double row of pillars, like veneering, in front of a staircase; the dormers are capped with correct Greek pediments, while within the Italians intermingled their stucco and painting all along the sumptuous galleries. At Saint-Germain we see a building that is more bizarre than beautiful cover itself with a flat terrace with a balustrade—a sheer absurdity for our climate.

Some years later, and behold, the architects—no longer *masters of the work*, but architects, a Greek name that has a fine sound—have finally turned their back, alas! for centuries, on the national tradition. With complete imperturbability, burrowing in Vitruvius and pillaging Bramante or Scamozzi, taking as their models the monuments of the two Roman Decadences, they will make correct use of the orders—the five sacred orders. They will see in a column not a support, but a casual ornament to be clapped on top of anything, that may be

redoubled and superimposed with no reason, or that can be magnified to gigantic proportions, and which carries nothing at all. Above their windows they will alternate indefinitely the eternal triangular pediment and the unescapable circular pediment. Incontestable masterpieces, such as that part of the Louvre which was by Pierre Lescot and Jean Goujon, and vigorous reactions, here and there, of the French good sense, do not prevent the fact that cold solemnity, monotonous common-place, tiresomeness, and to speak bluntly, untruthfulness, little by little took possession of the art of building, in which the French race had so triumphantly excelled for the previous four centuries.

And what of furniture? Costly furniture conforms itself, towards the middle of the century, to the new taste, but happily only very approximately.

It is now the structure itself which is profoundly modified. We can recognise, especially in the *armoires*—which then, with cabinets, came to be the fashionable pieces, to the detriment of the *buffets*, while the slow decay of the coffer proceeded—the greater part of the elements of this new architecture, which to-day we call classic. The pilaster continues to be much employed, but it is correctly fluted, set on a base and surmounted by a moulding that copy sufficiently closely the “Tuscan” base and capital. Glance at the buffet with three doors reproduced in Fig. 17, which dates from the end

of the sixteenth century; is it not a reduced copy of the façade of a building, with a covered gallery on the ground floor, two orders of pilasters one above the other, with their entablatures interrupted by consoles all alike? Even in the detail of the carved decoration, do we not discover architectural elements, as cornices, triglyphs, bits of circular pediments? Another very marked characteristic—it is above all a decorative piece; the keyholes are disguised as much as possible, the hinges completely; the drawers are only betrayed by the little iron drop handles, then known as *heurtoirs de layettes*, almost lost among the carving.

The small cupboard in two sections, shown in Fig. 14, so fine, so pretty, and so pure in line, is likewise a miniature building in two stories; its pillars with base and capital almost Tuscan swell in accordance with the rules, are set on stylobates, and in each story carry a kind of entablature with simplified consoles. The *fronton entrecoupé*, triangular or sometimes circular, is almost *de rigueur*. A great number of these cupboards no longer retain it, because it was detachable and easily broken, or else it has been remade; but we can perceive that they were intended to have this crown by the fact that we find the mortises in which the tenons of the pediment were inserted. When one considers it, this *fronton entrecoupé* or *brisé* appears absurd; it has a baroque air and presents a very angular and disagreeably jagged outline;

it was a wretched invention of the decadent architects of Italy, speedily adopted by our own. The break in it is equipped with a very tiny edifice with a niche, intended to shelter a statuette, and crowned in its turn with a pediment either entire or itself also interrupted. And the cornice too may be interrupted as well. We must notice that the pillars have no carrying function; they are like those on châteaux and churches, mere superadded ornaments, whose removal would in no way injure the solidity of these cupboards.

Such a piece of furniture, "*tout d'architecture*," according to the expression in contemporary inventories, would be insufferably pedantic if the joiner had sought to conform to the laws of Vitruvius and Vignole<sup>1</sup>; but he interprets them and suits them to his own notions, pushes the rules aside, changes proportions without scruple, so that his work remains living and personal.

Pilasters and columns are not the only real or apparent supports made use of in this period in furniture making. Balusters, both round and flat, play their part too, but much more as table legs and supports or uprights of panelled furniture; the different species of the genus caryatid, in

<sup>1</sup> The age of architectural theory has begun. *L'Architecture, ou art de bien bastir, de Marc Vitruve . . . mis de latin en françois par Jean Martin*, appeared in 1547, with an *Epistre au lecteur* and engravings by Jean Goujon, "student of architecture"; in 1568, the *Règle générale d'Architecture des cinq manières de colonnes . . . par Philibert de l'Orme, conseiller et aulmosnier du Roy, et abbé de Saint-Serge*; in 1570, the *Traité d'Architecture de Palladio*, etc.

## 58 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

which we include, not merely statues bearing weight, but the terminals and the monstrous beings more or less copied from the antique,<sup>1</sup> sphinxes and satyrs, tritons, griffons, chimæras, and all imaginable variations of these typical shapes, as well as their combinations with vegetable forms. The joiners in certain provinces made much greater use than in others of these human and animal figures; which leads us to say a word or two here about the provincial schools of joinery during the second half of the sixteenth century.

In his book, *le Meuble en France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Bonaffé was the first who, thirty-five years ago, took pains to establish a "geography" of French furniture in the Renaissance period. His zeal as explorer was unbounded, and his method was by no means a bad one, but he wanted to prove too much, and showed himself over precise and categorical; it would be rash to follow him in all his conclusions. It is more prudent to stop, as M. Deshairs did in his excellent chapter of André Michel's great *Histoire de l'art*, at distinguishing two great regions with vague boundaries, one of which would include the county of the Loire, the Ile-de-France, and if necessary Normandy, the other Burgundy and its surrounding districts, southern Champagne, Lyonnais, Franche-Comté.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Figs. 18 and 19.

<sup>2</sup> We still find, to quote an example, a number of Norman coffers (see Fig. 11) which present certain features commonly



In the first of these two regions taste is finer, more Attic, so to say; the lines of construction are well marked, calm and rhythmic; the structure is more logical, the sense of proportions often is exquisite. The carving is sober, localised, well distributed, contained within very firm enframing lines; the *repos* or plain surfaces enhance its effect. It is usually in very low relief, and its execution is of the most supple refinement. Panels in low relief are universal, with their long, fluid, nude figures, their draperies with a thousand soft folds, carved by artists dominated by the influence of Jean Goujon, while in the architectural part of the piece we can recognise the influence of Pierre Lescot, Jean Bullant and Philibert de l'Orme.

In Burgundy—where the art of stonework produced so many vigorous masterpieces—and what may be called its artistic annexes, carving on furniture developed exuberantly, almost stifling the architecture under its own abundance; everywhere with its accentuated reliefs it overflows the lines of construction. It was Burgundy that saw the triumph, as uprights and supports, of terminals with shafts twined with branchy foliage, and all the wildest monsters, chimæras with enormously long necks, baroque griffins made with a lion's paw, a woman's bosom and an eagle's head. The eye cannot find a square inch of surface to rest upon that is not

ascribed to the Burgundian school; the use of caryatids at the corners the carving of flat arabesques on mouldings,

## 60 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

“carven with enrichments”; not a moulding, not a piece of turned work is left bare without the carver’s chisel dealing with it. All this, it must be confessed, falls into a rather tiresome brilliance when the joiner was not a craftsman of the highest merit, and does not shine by the purity of its taste. A small cupboard from the Ile-de-France is like a perfect sonnet by Ronsard; a good buffet of Dijon, carved under Charles IX, is like a page of Rabelais, whose unbridled spirits combine the worst possible taste with genius.

But if their conception is not free from reproach, the execution of the best Burgundian pieces is superb, full of life and feeling, of the keenest energy with unpremeditated turns found with the point of the tool as it moved, a fine freedom in the stroke of the gouge in the substantial walnut. And when these qualities of workmanship are joined with a well thought out composition, with simple lines, as in the most perfect productions of the Lyons workmen,<sup>1</sup> the piece then achieves a beauty superior perhaps to that of the most exquisite cupboards of Touraine or Paris, because it is impossible to reproach it with the least touch of chilliness.

Dijon had one industrious *huchier*, Hugues Sambin, “*architecteur et maistre menuisier*,”

<sup>1</sup> The student should see, in the Arconati-Visconti room at the Louvre, a walnut Lyons buffet of admirable harmoniousness and elegance, and compare it with its neighbour, a large cupboard in pine, all gilded and painted in polychrome, the richness of whose decoration is all but overpowering, and which probably came from the workshop of Sambin.

designer and engraver of ornaments, all at one and the same time. Unhappily there remains no piece that can with certainty be attributed to him; his only authentic works are the enclosure of the Palais de Justice and a small door, at Dijon. In 1572 he printed at Lyons a collection of thirty-six plates engraved on wood, entitled *Livre de la diversité des Termes dont on use en architecture, réduit en ordre par maistre Hugues Sambin, architecteur en la ville de Dijon*. This series of somewhat clumsy terminals, with shafts overloaded with ornament, had a very great influence in the district, and must have circulated for a long time in the workshops of the joiners. Sambin can be reproached with a certain turgidness of style, but his chisel was endowed with the qualities of expressive and dramatic vigour in the highest degree.

That once said, at the very most we may add that a very bold, almost brutal execution, often inaccurate in its rendering of the human figure, seems to characterise furniture carved in Auvergne; that the southern provinces delighted to carve knightly horsemen on the panels of their cupboards; that Normandy made great use of oak, much more than the other provinces—and we had better stop at that.

The provincial schools were of no long duration, and in the last quarter of the century a real unification of style was observed, due in great measure to the collections of engraved

models that were multiplied and disseminated everywhere. If the best known are those of Jacques Androuet, called Du Cerceau, there were many others, often anonymous. Du Cerceau was not a specialist in wood like Sambin, but a theoretician and practitioner in architecture, a designer and engraver of ornaments for every kind of craft. He published, like so many others, a *Livre de l'Architecture*, a *Petit traité des cinq ordres*, a collection of *Fragmens antiques*, but also plates of ornaments for no special purpose: *Grotesques*, *Cartouches*, *Fleurons*, *Termes*, *Nielles*; and models for various crafts: *Bijoux*, *Serrurerie*, *Orfèvrerie d'église*, *Fonds de coupes*, *Marqueterie*, and lastly *Meubles*. His plates of furniture—buffets, cabinets, tables, beds and benches—do not, it must be confessed, make any very favourable impression; they are both complicated and cold, and most frequently they are impossible to carry out. Still, it would not be just to reproach him either for the complicated nature or the impracticability of his engravings; they are not models intended to be copied exactly as they are, but rather what we should call suggestions, ideas destined, as he himself puts it in one of his dedications, to “awaken the minds” of the craftsmen and not to spare them the trouble of creating; and if the ornaments are always so multifold and complicated, it was because he meant to give in the smallest possible space many motives that could

be used on many pieces of furniture. In the next century the Le Pautres, the Marots and Bérains will have no different conception of their part as designers of ornamentation. Accordingly, it is impossible to find any piece of furniture that is even a simplified realisation of a model by Jacques Androuet; but there was hardly a workshop, from Burgundy to Normandy, and from the Ile-de-France to Languedoc, that escaped his influence.

Among the motives ordinarily carved on the furniture of the second half of the sixteenth century, we must further note the *plume*, an ornament elongated and standing upright, resembling, if you like, a bird's wing feather, but also like a leaf; there might also be seen in it a conventionalisation and impoverishment of the acanthus<sup>1</sup>; the *masque* of a woman standing out against a drapery<sup>2</sup> and decorating the middle of a panel, either plain or brodered with arabesques; the *mufle de lion*, or lion's face, similarly placed; the eagle with outspread wings, holding a garland in his beak; the winged cherub's head,<sup>3</sup> which becomes a design-of-all-work; it adorns the middle of a bare frieze or softens its corners, under those of the cornice it

1 Fig. 13, on the pedestals of the terminals; Fig. 23, on the sidepieces; Fig. 24, on the legs; Fig. 30, on the flat baluster of the back.

2 A *masque* was a human face seen full and offering no grotesque or monstrous features; a *mascaron* was a head showing such features.

3 Fig. 14.

serves to make the capital of a pillar, to ring it round the middle, etc., etc.

Under the melancholy reign of Henri III,<sup>1</sup> France, devastated by her civil wars, saw all her arts undergoing a real crisis; architecture languished, and furniture was incontestably in decay. The carvers' inspiration and vigour were exhausted, they were repeating themselves and growing heavy-handed. Presently sculpture becomes impoverished, and the *huchier* calls on white inlayings (composition, bone, mother-of-pearl) to give him easier and coarser effects of richness; now it disappears completely, and we see those pieces of an amazing dryness, which are nevertheless encumbered with useless and meaningless details, on which long-necked balusters crowd with neither rhyme nor reason, and frail and over-long pillars; again, it grows heavy, becomes flabby and vulgar, in this betraying the Flemish influence which is beginning to make itself felt.

The coming of Henri IV put an end to the wars of religion and thus restored some security to commerce. At once the importation of foreign furniture increased, cabinets from Germany and Flanders, Flemish seats and tables, and soon Spanish also. The charming art of the Renaissance was to prolong a precarious existence up to the end of the Louis XIII period; but it was already stricken to death by the last years of the sixteenth century.

## CHAPTER II : THE DIFFERENT ARTICLES OF FURNITURE

ONE of our good story-tellers of the sixteenth century, Noël du Fail, seigneur de la Hérissaye, a gentleman of Brittany, in his *Discours d'aucuns propos rustiques, facétieux, et de singulière récréation*, describes as follows a *filerie*, or spinning-room, in the Breton fashion : "The girls, with their distaffs on their hips, were spinning, sitting on a raised place upon a *huche*, in long rows" . . . while "Jehan, Robin, or some other gay bachelor, drumming with his feet on a coffer, said little nothings to Jehanne or Margot." So that coffers were still serving as seats, but this was in Brittany ; where civilisation was more advanced it was no longer usual ; "drumming with the feet" would very speedily have chipped off the carvings in high relief that were then lavished on them by the *huchiers*, and would have knocked away the terminals or caryatids fastened on with much expenditure of glue and dowels.

These very ornate Renaissance *huches*, so large and so heavy, are no longer made so as to be easily transported ; they are state pieces ; but there are always plenty of *coffres de bahut* for travelling, kept in a *galerie*, a *retrait*, or in the

*galetas* (the garret). The king of Navarre, Antoine de Bourbon, the father of Henri IV—an orderly gentleman, it seems, and meticulously particular—had ten merely for the “*joyaux et pierreries de son cabinet*”; each had received a name: Abraham, Jacob, Esau, Job, Moses . . . and the boxes they contained were labelled in their turn, the first was *Je crois* . . . the second, *en Dieu* . . . the third, *le Père* . . . the fourth, *tout-puissant* . . . and so on.

The better to show off the fine carved coffers, and so that it might be more conveniently possible to get at what was packed away in them, it became usual to raise them by means of a base or pedestal, the *support de coffre*, or a low table, whose very short legs were carved like lions' paws, and hence they were called *pattes de bahut*.

The way of making them with narrow panels, divided by upright pieces either plain or scantily ornamented,<sup>1</sup> went out of fashion at the end of the reign of François I. Thenceforth coffers were to have in their façade rather a single large carved panel, flanked with two pilasters, engaged balusters or caryatids,<sup>2</sup> or else a large panel between two narrow panels, the façade then presenting four pilasters or caryatides; or two similar panels and three pilaster uprights.<sup>3</sup> In this last case, there seems at first sight hardly any difference between a coffer and a lower or

1 Figs. 8 and 12.

2 Fig. 11.

3 Fig. 10.



upper cupboard, and it has happened that one has been turned into the other.

Coffers of medium or small size, very ornate in more or less Italian style (carving, painting, inlaying, white *moresque*), provided with a rounded lid, and frequently mounted on four lion feet, are old marriage chests, the receptacle for the bride's presents.

We have said that cupboards tended more and more to take the place of coffers; which means that they are infinitely more convenient, and also much more decorative, more *furnishing* (*meublantes*). The most finished type of Renaissance furniture is the small cupboard in two sections, with four *guichets* and pediment *entrecoupé*,<sup>1</sup> which the workshops of the Ile-de-France and Touraine produced under Henri II and Charles IX. The upper part is a little less wide and less deep than the lower; the whole shape is quite architectural. These delicious cupboards most frequently have corner columns on each section, sometimes twin columns; elegant pillars, with proper entasis, with bases and capitals almost exactly in conformity with the Tuscan, Ionic or Corinthian canon. But there are some without pillars, or with pillars on the upper part, and flat uprights on the lower. The one we choose for reproduction (Fig. 14)—one of the gems of the Musée des Arts décoratifs—is of the most refined artistry, and in proportions absolutely right. It might perhaps be reproached with a

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 14.

## 68 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

semblance of clumsiness in the figures of naked goddesses that adorn the doors. These doors are much wider than they seem, for they occupy the whole width of the façade, the hinges being pushed back on to the sides, hidden behind the corner pillars. The piece is as though enlivened by the most delicate polychromy; the pillars are turned out of a very dark walnut, all the rest is of light walnut; twenty small plaques of black marble finely veined with white, surrounded with a fillet of lemon wood, are inlaid in the wood in places most judiciously chosen<sup>1</sup>; the pedestals of the lower pillars are decorated with the same lemon-wood fillets; all the carving is gilt, and the gold, deadened by the lapse of time, and half obliterated in places, is of an exquisite softness and quiet; the key plates and the little drop handles of the four drawers are of iron half denuded of gilding.

There were of course other types of cupboards; with two unequal sections, but of more squat proportions<sup>2</sup>; cupboards narrow and high, with two equal sections, each with only one door and no pediment; with two equal sections, broad, with four doors and no pediment; these last are very like two coffers one on top of the other, and that is their actual origin, which is recalled, in the French provinces bordering on Germany,

<sup>1</sup> These inlays of foreign material—a wholly Italian fashion—are very debatable in principle; it must be admitted that in this instance the effect is a very happy one.

<sup>2</sup> Fig. 13, this one is incomplete, it should have been crowned with a pediment.

by huge hanging iron handles fixed at the sides of the upper section as well as the lower; cupboards in one single section with two doors, which are much rarer; and lastly, those of a complicated and rather irrational architecture<sup>1</sup> which appeared at the end of the century. In general, it is possible to recognise those that never had a pediment<sup>2</sup> by their more highly developed cornice.

As for *aulmoires à quatre estages*, or even three, and those that had ten or more *guichets*, these were of course fixed cupboards, built into the *garde-robe* or clothes closet.

The *buffet* or *dressoir*—the wording of the inventories of the time proves that the two words were synonymous—also takes to itself the most diverse shapes. It is, in fact, a piece of all-work found indiscriminately in the hall, the chamber, the *retrait*, the study, or the kitchen. In principle it is a cupboard in two parts, low, and with no doors in the lower section; by far the great majority are made in this fashion; but others are *buffets sans fenestres pour servir en salle*, or *buffets sans guichets*, a simple superposition of three shelves upheld by pillars or balusters one above the other, the uppermost shelf thickened by a little cornice, the middle one by two drawers, the lower forming the base; a *meuble de montre* only serving to display

<sup>1</sup> Figs. 1 and 5.

<sup>2</sup> For our vocabulary we may note that pediments were called *frontispices* or *chapiteaux*.

## 70 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

plate, not to lock it up; others, on the contrary, are entirely closed, with four doors; or else the doors are below and the open part above, but this last arrangement is very rare.

Buffets of the first type might themselves assume very different aspects. The greatest diversity occurs among those belonging to Burgundy, a province in which the sometimes a trifle wild fantasy of the carvers bent the architecture of the piece to their own caprices. The Renaissance buffet ordinarily has a base, sometimes fitted with drawers, resting direct on the ground or on balls,<sup>1</sup> sometimes flattened, sometimes left round, cubes,<sup>2</sup> or lions' paws. From the base rise two, three, or four uprights, which are, according to the degree of richness of the piece, and also its origin, turned balusters with or without carving<sup>3</sup>; pilasters or pillars, either plain or fluted or carved; terminals, chimæra-caryatides. . . . The upper part is often subdivided into two unequal stories by a horizontal moulding of high projection; drawers form the *entre-sol*, so to speak, of the little edifice; above are the doors, two or three in number, according to the width. Certain large Burgundian buffets, without corner uprights, have their upper part supported in the middle by a narrow cupboard, on each side of which chimæras or other large carved motives, like those of tables, act the part

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Fig. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Fig. 16.

of consoles and redeem the excess of width in the upper part. This is not particularly successful. Finally, the buffet may terminate in a withdrawn cresting, a kind of *dossier* prolonging the back wall, with a shelf on the cornice, or shaped like a circular pediment. A shape commonly found at the very end of the style, and one that was to persist into the seventeenth century, is that of the buffet with the upper part wide, low, and supported by two heavy balusters of carafe-shape.<sup>1</sup>

Some one may perhaps be surprised not to find the *credence* in this enumeration. This word, like *bahut*, has for now nearly a century had a quite undeserved good fortune. Is it considered more elegant than *buffet*? That was the opinion of the fops of the days of Henri III, who brought it into fashion because it was Italian. It was then gradually forgotten; nevertheless Furetière, at the end of the seventeenth century, included it in his dictionary, but assigned it its proper meaning: "a *buffet* set up (*qu'on dresse*) in the houses of the gentry, on which is placed all their silver plate, on show, when they are at table." It was not, properly speaking, a true piece of furniture, but a temporary structure of shelves made of simple boards, altogether hidden under cloths, to display plate on days of "ceremonious dinners." In Basse-Provence alone—which is explained by the nearness of Italy—the word never ceased to

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 39.

## 72 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

be in current use to indicate low buffets of the type known as Arlesian.

*cabinet from Arles*  
 The cabinet is, like the credence, an Italian thing with an Italian name, but of earlier importation. The "*cabinet-pièce*" and the "*cabinet-meuble*" have this in common, that they are relatively of small dimensions, and both of them contain one's costliest and rarest possessions.<sup>1</sup> The smallest *cabinets-meubles*, as we have seen, are a kind of coffer, opening either with two doors or a single flap, which is held on the level by *bastons de fer* or iron rods that pull out, and serves as a writing table; the interior is composed of a certain number of small drawers. Other larger cabinets are coffers with two iron handles, and are placed on trestles or on an under-frame made for the purpose; others are real cupboards in two sections, or buffets; these latter can only be distinguished by actually opening them, for what characterizes them all is the elegance, the preciousness of their interior, and especially their subdivision into a quantity of small drawers, with frequently a *tabernacle* in the middle. Are they part of a widow's furniture? In that case they are ebony outside, and inside done with black velvet with silver galoons and plaques. But they are never, so to say, quite altogether French; made in the fashion of

<sup>1</sup> We read in the *Dictionnaire* of Nicot (the *doyen* of French dictionaries was compiled by the gentleman who introduced tobacco into France): "a woman's *cabinet*: all the varieties of ornaments, jewels and trinkets she has to accoutre and preen herself."

Genoa, or Germany, or Florence, they are inlaid with bone, with ivory, with mother-of-pearl; Queen Louise, the wife of Henri III, had one of "lapis and agate, covered with carnation velvet and silver embroidery, with the said lady's initials."

When the table was made to remain permanently in the hall or the chamber, it regularly assumed the following shape: the top, usually with extending pieces, is "*assise*" upon a carved *ceinture*, often this is a torus\* or perhaps a quadrantal moulding with gadroons,<sup>1</sup> resting at each end on a substantial fan-shaped support, very ornate, with undulating outline, made of two scrolls or two chimæras back to back; these supports stand up from two *patins* joined by a massive cross-piece that serves as a foot-rest for the diners; these tables are especially meant for meals. The cross-piece carries an arcading with pillars, or a heavy ornamental pierced motive. It is very decorative, but a little clumsy and "loud." If the two ends are by far the most highly ornamented parts, it is because the rest was hidden by the *placets*, *escabelles* and *tabourets*, which were put back under the table between meals, and which were looked upon as its accessories; the phrase ran, "a table with its *escabelles*." . . . These were in turn hidden by a tapestry or carpet, the ends of which hung low over the long sides of the table, but left the two ends of the table clear and showing.

## 74 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

Smaller tables present a similar arrangement, though simplified<sup>1</sup>; others have as their supports pillars, whose bases rest on a kind of pedestal in the form of a double cross, if there are six pillars,<sup>2</sup> and if eight, on a double cross *potencée* \* at its two extremities; this pedestal itself rests on six or eight ball feet.

Other varieties are: the round, square, or octagonal table with big central leg, altogether Italian; the camp table, "placed on a trestle that folds up," and the table that itself folds up<sup>3</sup>; lastly, the special table for games: "*à jeu de dames dessus*" (chess table), and "*à jeu de tables.*"<sup>4</sup>

To sum up then, the table, from 1550 to 1600, is generally more complicated than other pieces of furniture, freer in composition, and above all, more Italian of aspect. The reason is that *huchiers*, where tables were concerned, were without traditions to restrain them and to fight against the influence of the collections of somewhat wild models, such as those of Androuet du Cerceau.

But that was a question of luxurious pieces, and it goes without saying that simpler tables were made when the movable top on trestles went out of fashion even in the homes of modest middle-class folk; they were set on four *piliers*

1 Fig. 19.

2 Fig. 20.

3 Foreshadowing the aspect of the seventeenth century tables, reproduced in Figs. 60 and 61.

4 Trictrac.



*tournoyés* (legs in the shape of turned columns), joined together at the bottom either by a rectangular frame, or by a stretcher either H-shaped or X-shaped, with or without a centre column; in short, already they were "Louis XIII tables," just as the simple tables of the end of the seventeenth century were still "Louis XIII tables."

Let us add that Renaissance tables are always very high, because the seats of those days are appreciably higher than those of to-day.

The beds of this period are to-day so rare that we have hardly anything to say about them. Their tester was not hung from the ceiling, but carried by four pillars, which were highly ornamented with turnings and carvings,<sup>1</sup> or even replaced by terminals, caryatides, for they were in full view; the curtains, as in the Middle Ages, continued to be pulled back during the day. The *dossier* was always a piece of abundant and complicated decoration. It was only at the very end of the sixteenth century that people began to prefer beds, every part of which, including the pillars, was covered with the most magnificent stuffs.

Let us go on to the seats. The great *banc à dossier* disappeared from private interiors after the reign of François I, at least in its quality as seat of honour; banished from hall and chamber, relegated to the antechamber and the kitchen, it is no longer embellished either with *taille* or *enrichissements*. But its diminutive, the *banc*

<sup>1</sup> They were called *colonnes-candelabres*.

## 76 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

with no *dossier*, was very much used to sit down at table, and the *banlit*, or *banc à coucher*, in the shape of the *archebanc*, serving as both coffer and couch,<sup>1</sup> continued its good service, especially in the antechambers, for footmen and chambermaids; the bed clothes quite naturally found their place during the day in the long coffer that served as a seat.

The *chaire*, which under François I preserved its massive build, began in the next reign to grow somewhat lighter. The *dossier*, completely straight, is still always very high, about six feet, and would be exceedingly uncomfortable, with its carving in high relief, if drapings, and especially flat movable cushions,<sup>2</sup> which every sitter could dispose of to his own mind, did not give a certain softness. As many as four cushions were placed on a *chaire*; one to sit on, one for the small of the back,<sup>3</sup> two astride the arms; and in this way, but for the tombstone rectitude of the back, one would not really have been badly seated. On the front, a step, the *estrier*, was often part of the structure of the *chaire*. Sometimes the back was movable; by the help of pivots or hinges it could be lowered forward, and supported on the arms could turn into a bed-side table, uncovering too a little cupboard hollowed out of the wall.

1 Fig. 12.

2 Called *carreaux*.

3 It was almost impossible to lean the shoulders back, because of the ruff or the enormous collar.

It was in the accotoirs or side-pieces that the great monumental thing first became lightened. From full walls they became an open frame with a row of balusters<sup>1</sup>; the arms, freed in this way, were curved, became supple, terminated in a volute or the head of a ram or a lion, and soon people spoke of a "*chaire à bras*." Next, it was the seat that ceased to be a coffer, through the disappearance of its front wall, then of the other three; the back became lower, and at last was pierced, and side by side with the great *chaire* of traditional architecture, seat of honour and of state, which down to the end of the reign of Henri IV continued to mount guard in its unchanging place by the bed, under the name of *chaire de salle*, there were to be found in the hall and in the chamber several *chaires à bras* capable of being moved about as wanted for conversation or various occupations, which could be grouped near a window, or before the fire, around a gaming table or about the bed for the "*caquets de l'accouchée*" (gossip with the lady in bed). These were called *chaires à femmes*, for the men of the sixteenth century were rude creatures, and had, except they were Henri the Thirds or Saint-Mégrins, practically no care for comfort; the *escabeau* was completely sufficient for them.

Of these *chaires* or *chaises*<sup>2</sup> so lightened,

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Called indiscriminately, under Henri III, *chayère*, *chaire*, or *chaise*.

## 78 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

some were made square in plan,<sup>1</sup> and their legs, simple uprights square in section with chamfered arrises,<sup>2</sup> or slender columns with slight entasis and a moulding suggesting base and capital,<sup>3</sup> are joined at the bottom by means of substantial cross-pieces generally put together in the shape of a rectangular frame,<sup>4</sup> sometimes H-shaped,<sup>5</sup> which gives the chair a much more informal aspect. It was long before joiners emancipated their chairs from these low cross-ties. For they always had in mind frequent flittings with all their attendant risks; and furthermore, as long as the earthenware tiles and stone pavements with all their unevennesses had not been replaced by wooden floors, the legs of the chairs were bound to be continually knocking against these rough points, which would speedily have dislocated them but for these strong reinforcements.

The back, if not absolutely upright, was barely sloped at all in the oldest types; it was full, and its panel was most commonly carved with a *médaille*<sup>6</sup>; it was then reduced to a frame and the space occupied by turned balusters,<sup>7</sup> a carved vertical splat, sometimes of the outline of a flat baluster,<sup>8</sup> or, as we shall presently find it, by a stuffed *garniture*. The arms had, from the

1 Figs. 22, 26, 27, 28.

2 Fig. 23.

3 Figs. 22, 24, 26, 28.

4 Figs. 22, 27, 28.

5 Figs. 23 and 26.

6 Figs. 22 and 23.

7 Fig. 25.

8 Fig. 27.

very beginning, a sinuous line, more or less accentuated, and terminated in a volute sometimes complete,<sup>1</sup> sometimes hinted,<sup>2</sup> which is both the most graceful shape possible and the one best adapted to the human arm that is to rest on it. These arms were upborne by prolongations of the front legs, baluster turned<sup>3</sup> or already carved into the similitude of reversed consoles, as they were to be for the next two centuries.<sup>4</sup>

Other chairs with arms are trapeze-shaped, the back being much narrower than the front and the arms curved; others were constructed on a polygonal ground plan—something like an octagon cut in two—with four or six legs<sup>5</sup> and elbowed arms; this last model, it must be admitted, is very ugly. Besides, another defect common to nearly all these chairs is that their limbs are frail and slender as the legs of insects. We may, last of all, mention *chaises à bras tournantes*, mounted on a pivot supported by a tripod.

Two varieties of chair with regard to which historians of French furniture can hardly agree are the *caquetoire* and the *chaise à vertugadin*.

One thing certain is that the picturesque name of *caquetoire* was given to a light chair, easy to move for the convenience of conversation; in other words, to the *chaise à femme*. Speaking

1 Figs. 27 and 28.

2 Figs. 22 and 23.

3 Figs. 22 and 27.

4 Fig. 28.

5 Figs. 24 and 25.

of the women of his own time, the humanist Henri Estienne says, in his *Apologie pour Hérodote*, printed in 1566: "It nowise appears that they have their mouths frozen, at any rate I will answer for it on behalf of the ladies of Paris, who could not refrain from calling their chairs *caquetoires*." But of what shape were they? Certain students (Bonnaffé, Molinier) say, following the dictionaries: it was a low-seated chair, with high back and no arms. But it was in the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* that they found this definition, and this belongs to the early eighteenth century; the date is rather a late one for the validity of the authority. A quarter of a century earlier Furetière had written: "a low, convenient chair, that serves for sitting by the fire"; he did not say that it was a chair without arms. Other writers, like Havard and Champeaux, relying on the inventories, think that it was merely the smallest and lightest variety of the *chaise à bras*; and the texts seem to justify them. In a period when it was a rare exception for a chair to be without arms, and the circumstance never was omitted from a description, we find commonly written: "*une petite chaire basse, autrement dicte caquetteire*." . . . Elsewhere: "*six petites chayres, autrement dit caquetoyres*." And again: "*trois aultres chaises caquetoirs, semblables aux trois chaises cy-dessus*"; now these last-mentioned are "*à bras, toutes garnyes de velourz noir*." . . . But, it will be said, the chairs that

are known to-day as *caquetoires*, in the language of amateurs of old furniture, are not low chairs, but the contrary. The difficulty is perhaps only an apparent one; might not a *low chair* (*chaise basse*) mean a *low-backed* chair? One of Havard's passages seems to indicate this: "six large *caquetoires*, with one arm-chair à *haut dossier*." In fact, we know of no armless chairs, with low seat and high back, dating from the sixteenth century; while chairs with arms, low back and high seat, are not very uncommon.

And the *chaises à vertugadin*—farthingale chairs? The same controversies arise over them. The *vertugadin* or *vertugade* (the word is Spanish like the thing itself) was the arrangement of hoops that lined women's skirts, that incredible amplitude and cylindrical shape out of which emerged the inverted cone of the bust, a fashion that lasted in France during the reigns of Henri III and Henri IV, and in Spain much longer. Certain writers believe that the *chaise à vertugadin* was distinguished by a kind of pad that made the back more comfortable; others have ingeniously said that as these voluminous petticoats prevented women from sitting down on a chair with arms, the *chaise à vertugadin* was nothing else than the chair without arms, invented expressly on the appearance of that very ugly fashion. Havard, who is of this opinion, seems to have brought together in his dictionary texts that completely prove it: "Three chairs with arms and back, two forms and

## 82 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

two *chaises à vertugadin*. . . . Nine chairs of gilded walnut, five *à vertugadin* and four with arms. . . . Six *chaises à vertugadin* of painted wood, covered with coarse stitch tapestry, and three chairs with arms," etc., etc. Later, when the word *fauteuil* takes the place of the expression *chaise à bras*, it is the *fauteuil* that is quoted in contradistinction to the *chaise à vertugadin*: "six *chaises à vertugadin* and two *fauteuils*, covered in tapestry."<sup>1</sup>

fauteuil In the sixteenth century the *fauteuil* is not yet the same thing as the *chaise à bras*; as in the Middle Ages, it is a seat of state, a "*chère brisée*," or folding chair, either in reality or in seeming, but always made *à tenailles*, in other words, X-shaped with curved limbs and low back. A contemporary writer describes its structure very accurately, when he says of a man with hands joined that he has "his fingers interlaced one within the other in the manner of a *chaire brisée*."

Lastly comes the commonalty of seats with neither back nor arms: *escabeau* and *escabelle*, *forme*, *placet*, *basset*, *selle*, *bancelle* and *tabouret*. . . . They resemble one another and are very often confounded; they hardly undergo any modification from one century to the next. Square, rectangular, round, even triangular, standing on legs or solid boards, they abound everywhere; no other seats are known for sitting down at a table; in ordinary circumstances only

<sup>1</sup> Inventory dated 1652.



women have seats with backs . . . and yet! Look at the two little pictures of the time of Henri III in the Louvre, both representing a ball at court. The king, the queen and Catherine de Medici are in *faudesteuils*, but there are great ladies, in the most sumptuous toilette, sitting plump and plain on wooden *escabeaux*, to which a minimum of comfort has been added by means of cushions. The race is very hardy and has a strong backbone.

However, as the seventeenth century draws near, we find the number of *sièges garnis* increasing. The Middle Ages, as we have said, were by no means ignorant of them, but they remained very rare down to the period of Charles IX and Henri III; and people were satisfied with movable garnitures, cushions and tapestry. The *tabouret* alone was regularly provided with a stuff, a tapestry, a piece of leather nailed on and covering a layer of hair, flock, or even feathers. The *chaise à bras* and the *chaise à vertugadin*<sup>1</sup> might have their seat and their back also fitted in this way. Certain seats were *garnis* with leather and *couverts* with stuff; on the frame there was stretched a strong piece of bull hide serving as a support (like webbing or straps also) for the stuffing, which was covered with a stuff.

The woven fabrics for covering chairs were matched with the *garniment* of the bed; they were velvets either plain or figured, damasks,

<sup>1</sup> Figs. 26, 28, and 29.

## 84 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

embellished or not with embroideries, *appliqués*, or enframings in gold or silver cloth, or *reseuil*, which was lace, also of gold or silver, silk fringes with trimmings of precious metal; there was tapestry in coarse or fine stitch, or Hungarian stitch; or quite simply red or yellow serge. The leather, when it was visible, was crimson morocco,<sup>1</sup> or lemon-coloured, either plain or gilt with the little bookbinder's stamps, or *contre-pointé*, or yet again it was *cuir de bœuf ecorché*, in this case simply stretched, by means of gilt or silvered nails, over the frame of the seat and the back, without any other garniture.

Chairs with garnished arms, of the kind shown in Figs. 29 and 30—characterised by the broad flat arms, with scroll ends, the uprights of the back terminated by a reversed console ornament with acanthus leaf, and by the very ornate cross-piece that joins the front legs, and also, sometimes, the back legs—date from the reign of Henri IV; some were made in France, but the majority were imported, and the style is definitely Hispano-Flemish.

Other *chaises à bras*, rudimentary in structure, were "*toutes garnies*," with a nailed-down velvet covering all over, to the very legs.<sup>2</sup> This fashion was to have a long vogue, since if we are to put faith in Le Brun's tapestry, Louis XIV and the Infanta Marie Thérèse, at the ceremony

<sup>1</sup> Then called *cuir de Levant* or *cuir de Turquie*.

<sup>2</sup> See in the Louvre the small full-length portraits of Charles X and Louis de Balzac d'Entragues.

of their marriage in 1660, had for seats *chaises à bras* with low backs, coarsely made with round sticks of wood and full-covered with azure velvet sprinkled with gold fleur-de-lys.

Let us add that the inventories teach us (for none of these common chairs has survived), that in the south of France, and presently in Paris, from around 1580, chairs had begun to be done with straw.

But perhaps the most frequently used of all seats were the *carreaux*, or flat squab cushions, everywhere found in great numbers, which were equipped with a big silk tassel by which they could be carried, and which were placed on *chaises à bras*, *escabeaux* and *placets*, when there were any, or on the corner of a coffer or quite simply on the ground. Middle-class folk were content to have them stuffed with straw. At court "the custom was to sit only on the ground when the Queen was present." The inventory of Catherine de Medici shows no less than 381 *carreaux* (only the covers, of course) in one single coffer, some of tapestry stitch, others of gold and silver embroidery on silk, or cloth of gold. Many of them had been embroidered with her own royal hands: "she spent her time, after dinner," Brantôme tells us, "in diligently toiling at her silk work, in which she was as perfect as could be possible."



PART THREE  
THE LOUIS XIII STYLE



## CHAPTER ONE: HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STYLE.

SOMETIMES we hear of a so-called "Henri IV style." In reality it is over-subtle to try to distinguish two distinct and successive styles in the period stretching from 1594 (the beginning of the effective reign of the Béarnais king) to 1660 (the start of Louis the Fourteenth's personal government). In this long and rather confused epoch—let us say, for the sake of simplicity, in the first half of the seventeenth century—something decays and dies, the art of the Renaissance, and something begins to establish itself, which will be the Louis XIV art; both coherent and easy to define; between them interposes an art that has a claim to recognition, and which may well be called Louis XIII, but which lacks a clearly defined physiognomy, because it is full of contradictions, and, taking it on the whole and with certain exceptions, does not possess a frankly national character.

It was, as has been often said, one of those moments of French civilisation when France received more than she gave. The Italian influence and the Hispano-Flemish influence cross, supplant or overlies one another. The reign of Louis XIII comes between two regencies: his

mother was a Florentine, and had sought to impose a Concini on France ; and yet, when she wanted a palace, it was the good Frenchman Salomon de Brosse who had built her the Luxembourg, and to decorate its galleries she had chosen Rubens, while, they say, Richelieu advised her rather to have Josépin the Roman. She continued to pay a pension to the Flemings, Pourbus and Bril, as Henri IV had done. Anne of Austria was a Spaniard ; when Regent she had as her first minister, favourite, and even more, Giulio Mazarini, a passionate lover of art, who would fain see nothing around him but work that was Italian, either by origin or in style. When she is to have her new apartments in the Louvre decorated, she will turn to the insipid Romanelli. An all-powerful Louis XIV with a Colbert beside him were needed, so that national art might receive the encouragement of the State to the exclusion of rivals.

The greatest artists of the time, in painting at least, were they really French ? Poussin himself, a native of Andelys, in Normandy, with his mind after Descartes and his soul after Corneille, Poussin makes Rome his real fatherland ; he lives there for forty years, and dies there after becoming more than half Italian. Claude Gellée, born in Lorraine before it became a French province, always lived in Rome, never went to Paris, never looked on himself as a subject of the king of France, any more than did his compatriot Jacques Callot. Philippe de Champaigne,



a native of Brussels, whose portraits of Jansenists are so French in their "intellectuality" and by the shade of Christianity they express, spends all his life at Paris, but preserves more than one characteristic of his race. Others, the ready decorators, fluent and empty, the La Hires, the Vouets, the Perriers, represent that art, as international as Jesuit architecture and living on a fund of Italian common-places, which is practically identical with itself from Spain to the Low Countries and from Paris to Boulogne. As for the pale Le Sueur, that painter so prodigiously overrated that the simple-minded dictionaries of sixty years ago still referred to him as the "French Raphael," he never was in Italy at all; it seems that the substance of his art was almost all borrowed from the engravings of Marc Antonio, the Marco Dentés, the Agostino Venezianos, and, in spite of the dainty grace of his celebrated Muses, he is decidedly too weak for it to be possible to declare that he represents the true French school. Alone in their modest corner, not altogether despised, since they were all three members of the Académie de peinture in its earliest days, but without influence and relegated to a category of painting regarded as inferior, the mysterious brothers Le Nain, with their scenes of peasant life, awkward, without brilliance, and so movingly true, are French of the purest metal with no trace of alloy.

The art of the carver and sculptor is more

national in quality. The Italian *gran gusto* doubtless is rampant in it, especially in the decoration of churches and palaces; but for one Francheville, a Fleming disguised as *Francavilla*, how many honest artists there were, touched with something of clumsiness, but also, in default of genius, endowed with a probity and respect for life that compel our esteem, men like Simon Guillain, like Warin and the anonymous authors of so many memorial statues that are life-like and convincing.

Architecture, which will presently bring us to furniture, is highly prosperous and very mixed in character. After the critical wars of religion, great fortunes were built up or restored, the need for ease and comfort increased, and at the same time a feeling of greater security and stability. On the other hand, a marked renewal of Catholic piety was clearly manifested. The result was the construction of a great number of mansions in Paris and the towns throughout the kingdom, châteaux in all the provinces, convents and churches everywhere.

Churches keep departing more and more, in their actual structure, no longer merely in decoration, from the pure gothic tradition. Saint Peter's at Rome and the Gesù were the models imitated throughout the whole of Christendom; the architecture known as *Jesuit*, Italian in origin, is as cosmopolitan as the order that gave it its name. A few churches, like Sainte-Marie of Nevers with its inconceivably

complicated façade, even copied the Hispano-Flemish rendering of the trans-Alpine style.

To set off against this, in the domain of lay architecture—not that of the royal palaces, but that of the hôtels and the châteaux of the nobles, the members of the parliament and the financiers—the resistance to the Italian invasion remained strong and effective; French good sense protested against the passive adoption of building methods appropriate to another climate and different habits. There was a great deal of building for private persons in the Paris of Henri IV, of Marie de Medici, of Louis XIII and Anne of Austria; the Place Royale drew up its line of tricoloured hôtels—slate, stone and brick, with their high-pitched roofs; quantities of new homes rejuvenated the Marais; the whole of the Ile Saint-Louis, the old Ile Notre-Dame, saw its bald meadows transformed into streets and quarters with “*logis de qualité*” such as the hôtels Chenizot, Lambert de Thorigny, Lauzun; there were whole new parishes to the north of the Tuileries, and west of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. . . . This first half of the seventeenth century was a period of extraordinary activity for architects, and Corneille can write almost without the least hyperbole:—

*Toute une ville entière avec pompe bâtie  
Semble d'un vieux fossé par miracle sortie.*

This private architecture had the great merit

## 94 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

of forming itself without deliberate preconception or pedantry on the needs and the tastes of a *clientèle* that were perfectly aware of what they wanted, and imposed that on the artists they employed, however it might be at the expense of Vignole and Palladio.<sup>1</sup>

Now these people, although serious, pious and genuinely severe in manners taken as a whole, had a continually increasing taste for social life and intercourse. They were still rude, and physically hardened by war, the chase, and the rural life they led during a considerable part of the year. And so they were not very exacting with regard to comfort; in a *hôtel* of this period the part intended for private personal life was sacrificed; everything was for "receiving," entertaining. It has often been said that the differentiation of special rooms (salon, dining hall, bedchamber, study, etc.) had not come into existence till the beginning of the eighteenth century. This is true on the whole; but nearly a hundred years earlier certain very complete houses of refined appointments, such as the town

<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps superfluous to say that the anecdote, so often repeated unchallenged since Tallemant des Réaux told it first, of the Marquise de Rambouillet turning architect herself and one fine evening, by sudden inspiration (*Quick, paper! I have found out the way to do what I wanted!*) a new method of arranging suites of rooms, is nothing but legend. A legend too is the great novelty of her famous blue room; one has only to read a few inventories of the period to know that there were rooms hung with blue long before that of the incomparable Arthénice. One has to be a school pedant to believe in this dominating importance, in the domain of social life and manners, of the people talked about in the manuals of literary history.

house of président Tubeuf, already contained a winter dining-room and a summer dining-room.

Sauval gives us, in the *Antiquités de la ville de Paris*, a detailed description of this fine Hôtel Tubeuf, which was a completely typical example of the town house. It was built on the plan then in fashion; a main building between the court and the garden, with two wings to right and left of the court, reaching to the street. The président's suite, on the ground floor, was sufficiently modest: it included a hall, a study, a chamber with an alcove and a small chamber; then, still on the ground floor, there were the two dining-rooms we have just mentioned, the kitchen, the offices and other common apartments. On the "*bel étage*," after ascending an immense staircase, you came to the far more spacious suite of Mme. la présidente: a "*grande salle*"<sup>1</sup> with arched wooden roof, a state chamber with an alcove and a gallery, occupying all of one wing"; the *galerie* was indispensable for all who prided themselves on "*propreté*," as it was then called, that is to say, elegance. This was the entertaining suite. A second suite, much smaller and intimate, "so convenient," Sauval says, "that it is much more often occupied than the other, as being not so vast and more retired, while the first one seems only made for luxury and receiving," was composed of a vestibule, a

<sup>1</sup> The word *salon*, borrowed from the Italian, was not to come into ordinary use until the last quarter of the century.

## 96 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

chamber, a cabinet and a clothes-closet; it was served by a small private staircase.

The state suite was arranged "*en enfilade*," the doors, far larger than in the sixteenth century, opening with double leaves one over against the other, the windows, enormous, without mullions, allowed abundant light to enter through square glass panes of large size and almost perfectly transparent. The ceilings, arched and subdivided into compartments, were ornamented with paintings and high reliefs of painted and gilded stucco; the walls were stretched with goffered leather, gilt and silvered, Flemish tapestries, and silk stuffs, or they were covered with painted wainscoting and gilt in panels made with large high mouldings; the fireplaces, always monumental, made of stone and marble in the large rooms, often of wood in small rooms, as a rule had their overmantel adorned by a painting.<sup>1</sup> All this decoration was rich and pompous, heavy in its details; sometimes quite the contrary, of the most sober severity; the fine and almost winged grace of the Renaissance was far away now.

That, in its main lines, is the frame within which we must imagine the furniture of the Louis XIII style. A room thus decorated, even if unfurnished, never seemed void; by way of furniture nothing was put into it beyond what was necessary, and that was very little.

Let us take up our period from its earliest days. The entry of Henri IV into Paris after

<sup>1</sup> Most frequently a portrait.

his abjuration, and then the Edict of Nantes, put an end to the wars of religion, the "frenzies" of the Ligue, and the Spanish peril, which had dispersed and disorganised everything, threatened the very existence of France and thrown all the arts into a kind of stuporous sleep. The great reconstructor that the first of the Bourbons was in every department was most careful—though personally he was apparently without any taste in such matters—not to neglect these trivialities, as Sully called them grumblingly; "*ladre vert*" as he was, if we are to believe d'Aubigné, a "stingy fellow," he understood the value of sumptuary spendings and helped artists with his pennies at the same time as he encouraged to the best of his ability the industries of art.

In 1608, by letters patent, which inflicted a serious blow upon the privileges of the guilds—whether for greater good or for harm to the industries of art this is not the place to discuss—he granted certain privileged artists and craftsmen lodgings in the great gallery of the Louvre, by which means they escaped from ordinary jurisdiction, and consequently from the regulations of their trade guild. They had power to train apprentices, who became masters in their turn, "both in Paris and in the other towns of the realm, without being called upon to execute any masterpiece, to take letters, to present themselves for mastership, to invite, when passed, the masters of the said towns, or give a feast for them or anything else whatever." There in the

## 98 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

Louvre, on the ground floor of the gallery along the river, there were mathematicians, damaskeners, tapestry makers, embroiderers, painters, sculptors, and joiners also; thus in the first list, that of 1608, there figures Laurent Stabre, "joiner and carpenter in ebony, maker of cabinets to the King."

This title is in itself of a whole revolution in luxury carpentering in France. We have indicated the increasingly marked taste at the end of the sixteenth century for furniture in which the sober effects of reliefs broadly or delicately cut in solid walnut were replaced by the more showy and easier effects of a polychromy obtained by the juxtaposition of different materials. It was a foreign trick, "German fashion," or "Genoa fashion," or "Spanish fashion." At the beginning of the new century it is all over; all luxurious joiner's work, or nearly all, is *ébénisterie*; the glorious and characteristically French tradition of the carvers in oak and walnut is in danger of dying out. Moderate furniture, if the phrase may be permitted, that belonging to the plain middle classes or to that part (the very great majority) of the nobility which cannot follow the fashions of the "great," still continues indeed to be made of massive home-grown wood; but when it is carved it is in a common-place fashion, with neither invention nor character; the joiners confine themselves to clumsily copying Renaissance motives that had become mere stock common-places.



Ebony was the triumphant material before the importation in large quantities of coloured woods from the two Americas. Hard and capable of a perfect polish, it is brittle and very prone to splitting and chapping; it could not be used in large masses, and the supports of the seventeenth century cabinets are generally made of blackened pearwood. The technique of this funereal wood, as practised under Henri IV and Louis XIII, is half-way between that of solid wood and that of veneering. Upon a substructure of common wood, of vulgar deal even, were glued sheets of ebony of sufficient thickness—about eight millimetres—to allow of carving in very shallow bas-relief. These sheets formed compartments geometrically framed with those delicate wavy mouldings, invented, they say, by the German Hans Schwanhard, which had such a great vogue in the Low Countries.<sup>1</sup> Those surfaces which were not carved were often engraved with incised *rinceaux* and flowers. As for the carvings, which were very flat, they were scenes of mythology or religious subjects, so complicated and of such heavy exuberance that they betray their Flemish origin, or the imitation, made in France, of Flemish models. This technique excludes all curving surfaces; and thus furniture made in this way—cabinets, and sometimes

<sup>1</sup> On this subject we might remark that most of the paintings of the Dutch school were meant to be framed in ebony with wavy mouldings, not in gilt wood carved in high relief; the way they have been framed for the last two centuries is a pure misconception.

## 100 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

cupboards in two sections—necessarily are of a simple, square, massive structure. In spite of the gloomy aspect and uniformity of the material, these all-ebony cabinets are very sumptuously splendid. But the shimmer of the black polished surfaces too often kills the modelling; in this respect ebony is by far inferior to walnut.

On other cabinets ivory was wedded to ebony, or else bone; these were "German" cabinets, which does not mean that they were all made beyond the Rhine; they were made also at Antwerp and in France itself, but it is a difficult matter to attribute with any certainty their proper origin to those that have survived, unless it is disclosed by an inscription, by a coat of arms, or by the dress of the persons represented in the decoration.

France continued also to import from Flanders and from Spain (but in this case the Spanish and the Flemish styles intermingle so as to be completely indistinguishable, which is not at all astonishing) those *chaises à bras* and *à vertugadin* fitted with leather fastened on to the wood with big decorative gilt or silvered nails, which we saw make their appearance under Henri III; these also were copied among us, and, just as for the cabinets, it is difficult to establish the actual place where they were made. Generally speaking, however, when they are "*à piliers tors*," with legs and uprights turned to a spiral, the spiral more drawn out and a

softer profile in the turning indicate a Hispano-Flemish origin.

Thirty or forty years after the first installation of artists in the galleries of the Louvre, this slightly humiliating subjection of the French furniture industry to that of the Low Countries still endures, for a certain Jean Macé or Massé, joiner in ebony and a native of Blois, receives his lodging-warrant in 1664 "on account of his long experience in that art acquired in the Low Countries and the proofs he hath given thereof by the examples of cabinet-making in ebony and other woods of divers colours which he presented to the Queen Regent." Note by the way these "woods of divers colours"; we have come to the moment when Holland and Flanders are producing and exporting large quantities of those cupboards, bureaux, and tables (cabinets of this species are uncommon) on which flourish very full and overladen motives of flowers represented "to the life," in marquetry of wood inlaid on an ebony ground. In the interval there had worked for the king, as *menuisiers-ébéniers*<sup>1</sup> a Van Opstal, an Ostermayer, an Equeman, whose names tell their origin sufficiently clearly.

As for Italy (although the second wife of Henri IV, the regent during the minority of Louis XIII, was an Italian), the productions of that country had less vogue than those of the Low Countries, and it is incontestable that the whole of French

<sup>1</sup> The word *ébéniste* was not to be accepted finally until the end of the seventeenth century.

decorative art is much more Flemish than Italian down to about 1645. At the same time, alongside cabinets of Flemish origin or in the Flemish style, the inventories do not fail fairly frequently to note others that are "of lapis and agate," in other words, imported from Florence, or "*filetés d'argent à la mode d'Italie*"; but they are the exception. Similarly, beginning from the moment when the influence of Mazarin in such things was established over Richelieu—who had, it is said, entrusted him with his purchases of works of art of every kind—and then over Anne of Austria and thence over the whole court, there was no sudden change in the fashion, but the ratio between Flemish and Italian furniture was gradually reversed.

We have very little knowledge of the artistic riches brought together by Richelieu in his Palais-Cardinal—the Palais-Royal of to-day—and in his immense Château de Richelieu; they were doubtless very similar to those which, a few years later, Mazarin was to accumulate with all the passion of a collector. The inventory of Mazarin's furniture and possessions has been preserved; it is a prodigious accumulation, overwhelming almost, of furniture, goldsmith's work, jewels and priceless fabrics. It will never be surpassed in magnificence except by the furniture of the Crown under Louis XIV; and the latter will surpass it infinitely in artistic value, for it seems that Mazarin loved above everything richness of material and a luxury that was more showy than refined.

He possessed more than twenty cabinets with niches, statuettes, busts, balustrades, pilasters, pillars, terminals, bas-reliefs, on which were brought together every imaginable kind of precious material, from gilt brass to mother-of-pearl, from cornelian to lapis lazuli, from ebony to tortoiseshell, from ivory to silver, from *tableaux de mignature* to mosaics of precious stones. Here is a description of one : "A cabinet of ebony, of the Ionic order, adorned with six pilasters of lapis with fillets and capitals of gilt brass, in the base of which there are three pictures in miniature representing three parts of the world. In the first stage there are two niches with two figures of gilt brass, one representing Force and the other Temperance, and in the middle a picture in miniature in which is depicted Rome triumphant ; the upper stage is composed of three pictures similarly in miniature representing three Roman legends, the said stage being ornamented with two satyrs in gilt brass, carrying on their heads baskets of fruit, and serving as pilasters. The pediment, adorned with two large cartouches and cornice of ebony with lapis lazuli inlay, between which is painted a miniature dial, in the middle of which is a Venus holding a heart in her right hand, and before her is a Cupid. The whole outlined in gilt brass, and all the said pictures surrounded with a small festoon also of gilt brass." Ebony, lapis, and gilt brass ; that must have made a harmony, or rather a dissonance of unparalleled crudeness.

Another of Mazarin's cabinets was decorated with niches containing ebony vases holding silver bouquets, and by lapis pillars with silver bases and capitals; the doors and the fronts of the innumerable drawers were covered with cornelians, agates, jaspers set in silver; elsewhere silver inlay outlined cartouches and *rinceaux*. Another had its façade overladen with garlands, fruits, flowers, *pots à bouquets*, pictures of flowers and birds, all inlaid with stone, lapis, cornelian, chalcidony, jasper and yellow marble.

Among these bedizened monuments some most certainly came from the workshops of Tuscany; others had been executed in Paris by Italian lapidaries suborned at immense cost by the minister, whom Louis XIV was later to take into his own service, and whose names have been preserved; these were the brothers Ferdinando and Orazio Migliorini, Luigi Giacetti, Branchi and others. The carving and chasing were carried out by Domenico Cucci and Filippo Caffieri, the founder of the illustrious dynasty that was to become so completely French.

Nearly all the *stipi* of this period—to give them their Italian name—were destroyed after the end of the seventeenth century, so contrary were they to French taste; there is one, however, in the Cluny Museum which will give an idea of the kind of thing they were. It is shapeless and of extraordinary ugliness.

Many also, in the Mazarin collection, were the tables of stone mosaic or *pierres de Florence*,

real mineralogical pictures on a black ground of touch. Upon one, shields with ciphers; on another, "trophies of Turkish weapons"; a third was over-flourished largely with flowery *rinceaux*; on it there might be seen "an oval, from all four sides of which spring bouquets of divers kinds of flowers, foliage and fruits, with sundry butterflies and birds on the branches, filling the ground of the said table, and in the midst of the said oval a basket of flowers, all the said flowers, fruits, foliage, branches, birds, oval and basket being of divers stone inlay, to wit, cornelian, chalcedony and lapis."

The frieze and legs of these tables began to be generally made of gilt wood, in spite of the formal prohibition of this issued from time to time by the king; we know that the usual and characteristic fate of sumptuary laws is never to be enforced.

Anne of Austria's favourite was in other respects, in spite of his very natural taste for the things of his own country, an eclectic; he no more scorned the furniture of the Low Countries than his compatriots hesitated to have their portraits painted by a Flemish artist. He had enticed from Holland a cabinet-maker called Pierre Golle, and from him he ordered cabinets that were perhaps a little more sober, but still quite sufficiently garish; one was of ebony "*profilé a'étain*," which means that the surfaces were divided into compartments outlined with inlaid tin filleting; it displayed the inevitable

niches flanked by small marble pillars with capitals of gilt bronze and inhabited by allegorical statuettes; the support was composed of twelve gilt terminals displaying the signs of the zodiac. Another was ornamented with "squares, lozenges, triangles and ovals of tortoiseshell" outlined in waved mouldings. Here we see the principal elements—tortoiseshell, tin and gilt bronzes on an ebony ground—of the art with which the name of André Boule has become inseparably joined, but which was not invented by Boule.

To finish with the Mazarin furniture, which is of the highest historical importance, let us take at random the description of a bed. These are only stuffs now, the wooden parts are completely clad over, the curtains, *cantonnières*,\* *pentes*,\* and *soubassements*\* are crimson velvet embroidered with silver flowers, alternating in stripes with silver cloth embroidered with gold flowers, the whole lined with crimson taffeta and edged with a gold and silver fringe; sheaths of cloth of silver surround the bed posts, which terminate at the top with vases covered with crimson taffeta and each containing a bouquet of solid silver flowers.

This furniture is unique in its own day for richness, but it is not exceptional in style. Fouquet's furniture (and he could almost rival Mazarin in taste for splendour as in the squandering of public wealth) is completely similar, though the Surintendant des Finances seems to have been



rather more refined in taste than the minister ; and many other inventories are available to prove that all the most super-luxurious and costly furniture, down to 1660 or 1670, had the same characteristics.

What was there really French in all this ? Nothing, or hardly anything. The wholesome and honest tradition of France, which would fain have the beauty of a piece of furniture, like that of a building, depend first and foremost on the frank expression of the use it was meant for, on the method of construction and the qualities of the material, that tradition is broken. The part of the Louis XIV period is gradually to restore it.

But it was in princely furniture that the tradition was lost. It was happily different with less costly pieces.

The chronology relating to those of the latter that can be called Louis XIII in style is almost impossible to ascertain. Let us say simply that the oldest may have been made under Henri IV ; as for the most recent, in certain regions they come down at latest to the end of the eighteenth century. One of the most constant and best known characteristics of this style is the use of turning, and especially of spiral turning. Now, if beds and tables "*à piliers tors*" had been made from the end of the sixteenth century, on the other hand, at Paris to the end of the seventeenth, and still later in the provinces, nearly all the seats and the tables in ordinary

## 108 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

sets of furniture still had their legs turned in this fashion, and a goodly number among the royal furniture itself. Let us take two examples, the first that come to hand. The billiard table of Louis XIV, about 1700,<sup>1</sup> had baluster legs, joined by spiral cross pieces; the portrait by Ferdinand Elle<sup>2</sup> of Mme. de Maintenon with her youthful niece Françoise d'Aubigné shows us the foundress of Saint-Cyr sitting, about the same date, in a large gilt arm-chair, "very Louis XIV" in its back and arms, but with spiral turned legs.

Carving on furniture is in a style that is no other than that of the Renaissance in its decline, but overloaded and so to say vulgarized; it has something heavy, borrowed, unoriginal, that makes us regret the light grace, the delicacy in the harmonies, the Attic rightness of the proportions, and also the fancy, that indescribable touch of fineness, sprightliness and happy invention and improvisation, that enchants us in the best productions of the preceding age. This style is akin to that of opulent Flanders, but without falling into the flabby turgidness which is unendurably found in the decorative parts of the cartoons executed by Rubens' studio for Phillip IV, now in the Louvre, the *Triumph of*

<sup>1</sup> See Trouvain's engraving.

<sup>2</sup> At Versailles. In her celebrated portrait by Mignard (in the Louvre) Mme. de Maintenon is seated on a chair the back of which, the only part visible, with its fringed velvet surrounding the uprights, and its turned brass vases, is in the pure Louis XIII style. Now the portrait was painted somewhere about 1690.

*Religion* and the *Prophet Elijah*. The architect Blondel seems to us to have given an excellent definition of the Louis XIII decorative art when he noted in Jean Le Paultre (who engraved his plates of architecture and ornaments about the middle of the seventeenth century) "that air of heaviness . . . in which we nevertheless remark a masculine, firm and well sustained expression."

What are the principal motives? The period invented hardly any at all. Here is the plume,<sup>1</sup> everywhere repeated *ad nauseam*, and a whole gamut of motives half-way between the plume and the acanthus leaf<sup>2</sup>; the acanthus leaf, which is retailed, so to speak, by the fathom as a running ornament,<sup>3</sup> or shapes itself into consoles modillions,<sup>4</sup> the feet of pieces of furniture<sup>5</sup>; running *rinceaux*<sup>6</sup>; *entrelacs* enclosing in their loops rosettes or half rosettes, and employed as running<sup>7</sup> motives or to decorate a rectangular panel<sup>8</sup>; the winged cherub's head<sup>9</sup>; the flower vase, the shell,<sup>10</sup> the oval or *miroir*,<sup>11</sup> the eagle's talon clutching a ball, called *pied a'aiglon*,<sup>12</sup>

1 Figs. 36, 39, 41, 43.

2 Figs. 37 and 38.

3 Fig. 37.

4 Figs. 35—38, 41.

5 Fig. 34.

6 Fig. 35.

7 Fig. 74.

8 Fig. 36.

9 Figs. 34 and 36.

10 Fig. 36. Observe the interesting awkwardness with which a rustic joiner has interpreted in his own way the Renaissance motives on this cupboard in two sections from the Dordogne valley.

11 Fig. 34.

12 Fig. 38.

eagle's foot, which serves as a foot to certain cupboards. None of all these are novelties. We may add the eagle with outspread wings, the garland or festoon of flowers and fruits, at this time compact, thick, and made up of vegetable elements treated in a sufficiently realistic fashion; drapery arranged in festoons or swags; crossed palms; gadroons, etc.

*many*  
 The great majority of Louis XIII furniture, of the kind with which we are concerned, was decorated not with carving but with turnery; never was this method of working wood, which is quick, easy, and highly effective with little trouble, more in use. Not merely were the legs and stretchers of tables<sup>1</sup> turned, the feet of coffers and cabinets,<sup>2</sup> and all parts of chairs,<sup>3</sup> but also corner columns, purely ornamental, for cupboards<sup>4</sup>; similar columns, either entire<sup>5</sup> or split down the middle,<sup>6</sup> were glued on the central upright,<sup>7</sup> whether true or false, of large cupboards with two doors. The most rudimentary form of turning was called *en chapelet*<sup>8</sup>; the most frequent was spiral, sometimes plain,<sup>9</sup> and sometimes embellished with a fillet in the bottom of the groove.<sup>10</sup> A spiral cross-bar was often in-

1 Figs. 53—62.

2 Figs. 31, 32, 39.

3 Figs. 63—78.

4 Figs. 37, 38, 40, etc.

5 Fig. 51.

6 Fig. 50.

7 The *partie dormante*.

8 Figs. 31, 62, 63, etc.

9 Figs. 37, 38, etc.

10 Figs. 40, 44, etc.

errupted in the middle by a certain length of plain circular turning.<sup>1</sup> The legs of many tables from Burgundy are composed, in a rather curious fashion, of two parts, one spiral and the other singularly like the air-cooled radiator of a Hotchkiss gun.<sup>2</sup> Small cupboards of finished workmanship may have twisted columns with ends carved with a kind of tuft of leaves or a tulip.<sup>3</sup> A more refined form of turnery, and one that may be really a work of art, because the outlines are capable of infinite variety, according to the fancy of the craftsman, is turning *en balustre*.<sup>4</sup> It lasted longer than the *piliers tors*, and most of the tables in which it appears are of the Louis XIV period; but the regal balusters in the shape of a carafe which serve as supports to the buffet or cabinet, reproduced in Fig. 39, are highly characteristic of the Louis XIII period.

The legs of tables and seats were turned out of pieces of wood square in section, and this square form was left intact in places where the maximum strength was necessary, and so the greatest possible amount of the material was to be preserved, that is to say, at the joining points (by tenon and mortise) of the frieze or the cross-bars of the stretcher; and as almost always happens, out of this technical necessity there was evolved a very happy shape.<sup>1</sup> These prismatic

1 Figs. 53, 65.

2 Fig. 55.

3 Fig. 37.

4 Figs. 32, 58, 59, etc.

parts are much pleasanter to the eye when the turner was satisfied with chamfering off the angles and left the faces plain than when he fancied he must embellish them with a kind of *rosace* carved into the wood.

Ornamental pieces were also made by turning, such as those *pommés*, vases, or *toupies* that decorated either the middle of the longitudinal cross-piece of an **H**-shaped stretcher, or the point of intersection of the two bars of an **X**-shaped stretcher<sup>2</sup>; such again as the little square panels with concentric mouldings that decorate the doors of certain cupboards.<sup>3</sup>

Symmetry—and we know to what extent the seventeenth century was enamoured of it—demanded that pairs of twisted pillars flanking the façade of an *armoires*, and the legs of a table, taken in pairs, should have their spirals turning in opposite directions. This arrangement is nevertheless rare, and is only found on pieces of very refined workmanship.<sup>4</sup> Almost always the spirals turn from left to right, like a bindweed stem; really a matter of the turner's convenience.

Mouldings have very close kinship with turnery, or rather the work of the lathe is merely a combination of circular mouldings; the play of light

1 Figs. 53, 69, etc.

2 Figs. 54, 59.

3 This motive is common on Breton panelled furniture, much less common elsewhere. It had been occasionally used ever since the sixteenth century.

4 Figs. 37 and 38. See also the sofa, Fig. 75.

and shade is the same on a turned column as on a moulded upright, and hence the perfect unity of a cupboard on which these two elements of woodworking are combined. Louis XIII and Louis XIV moulding—for it is all one and the same thing—is less fine, but more ample, more strongly expressed and much more developed than that of the Renaissance; certain seventeenth century pieces of furniture, and not the least handsome, have only mouldings as their sole decorations. It was then that cupboards were crowned with those noble cornices, complicated, overflowing, on which the horizontal lines were multiplied to infinity, cornices matched below with bases symmetrical with them and almost as strongly projecting; the light seems to stream and pour over them with shimmering ripples like a sheet of water over the steps of a garden cascade in the French style. Other mouldings in large numbers enframe the doors, the drawers; others strongly mark the general divisions of the whole piece and the subdivisions of its parts.<sup>1</sup>

It is not uncommon for the decoration of somewhat narrow surfaces to be entrusted to moulding designs hollowed in the wood, as, for instance, to the right and the left of the doors of the pretty cupboard in two parts seen in Fig. 42. These vertical mouldings very happily clothe the bareness of the neutral parts of the façade, while redeeming the width of the drawers.

<sup>1</sup> See in particular Figs. 48 and 49-51.

Sometimes the drawers have their front entirely covered with horizontal mouldings.<sup>1</sup>

But the following are the two most usual ways in which the surfaces were embellished in these pieces, which are the triumph of pure joiner's work. Sometimes they were covered almost all over with a very wide enframement made up of bevels and mouldings, like the frames of the mirrors of the period, which only leaves plain, in the middle, a small projecting plateau, rectangular<sup>2</sup> or with a quarter circle hollowed out of the corners<sup>3</sup>; sometimes the doors of cupboards, their lateral faces, the façades of table drawers,<sup>4</sup> are subdivided into several surfaces of geometrical outline. In the simplest types, which are also the oldest,<sup>5</sup> each door of a cupboard is divided up into four small panels by means of an upright and a traverse crossing it, which enclose them; otherwise it is a lozenge cut in the solid wood and accompanied by four small triangles. It is this last combination, or that made up of triangles grouped in fours, and separated by a St. Andrew's cross, which is used to decorate the sides of cupboards.

Suppose the bevels of one of these lozenges to be indefinitely increased at the expense of the projecting central table-ground. It will then go through the intermediate stage displayed on

1 Figs. 39, 43, 54.


2 Figs. 35, 39, 44, upper section; 48, the little panels to right and left of the door.

3 Fig. 38.

4 Fig. 56.

5 Figs. 32 and 33.

*Always  
point -*





each of its doors by the cupboard of Fig. 42; then in the end the little central lozenge would be reduced to a point, and we should have a low pyramid with quadrangular base; this is the *pointe de diamant*,<sup>1</sup> or diamond point. In the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, when brilliant-cutting was invented, *pointe naive* was the phrase for a diamond naturally crystallised in the shape of a regular octahedron—two square-based pyramids set base to base. There are also natural diamond crystals whose shape is a *pyramided* cube, that is to say, a cube each face of which carries a low pyramid; this is precisely the “diamond-point” of our cupboards properly so-called. Four small triangular pyramids flank the lozenge pyramid; the whole is cut into a slab of thick wood.

There is the starting point. Soon this faceted motive was diversified and complicated at the same time. Here is a cupboard<sup>2</sup> with four *guichets* on which the lozenge is subdivided into four triangles; altogether the square panel carries eight equal triangular pyramids, or twenty-four facets turned in eight different directions, thus having eight different light-values; the effect is exceedingly happy. Here again is another whose façade perhaps goes wrong for lack of simplicity. Two of the panels have triangular pyramids; but the slopes of these are concave, which makes the play of light more delicate.

<sup>1</sup> Figs. 45, 50, 51, in the lower part of the doors.

<sup>2</sup> Fig. 43. The same motive, in this instance elongated, is found on the door of the cupboard in Fig. 47.

The square panel of the middle has in its centre a tiniest square pyramid surrounded by four L-shaped motives, which are fairly frequent; they often enframe a narrow rectangular panel. We also meet with a lozenge elongated vertically and flanked by six triangles, the whole being outlined by two St. Andrew's crosses . . . and many other combinations as well.

One of the most usual and most agreeable is a kind of star,<sup>1</sup> on a square panel, made of eight grooves marking off eight pyramids, four of which have triangular bases; the other four have an irregular quadrilateral for base<sup>2</sup>; all the apexes are turned towards the centre, which is marked by a round button. Here there are twenty-eight facets and twelve different orientations. This arrangement is called *pointes de gâteau*; the expression conveys a picture, and indeed the whole effect is not altogether unlike a square tart cut into eight sections. An additional refinement was to replace the triangles by a species of arrow heads<sup>3</sup>; taken in fours they form a cross of the order of the Saint-Esprit.

If the bevels of an elongated rectangular panel are increased, they will come together and in that case result in a solid mass known as a *tas de sable* or sand heap. It is not an uncommon motive among these faceted decorations, and we see it in the middle of each door of the monumental armoire shown in Fig. 51.

1 Figs. 40 and 44.

2 A rhomboid, to give it its proper name.

3 Fig. 51.

The furniture with diamond point ornament of which we have spoken up to the present was made by Gascon joiners; nowhere else was this motive so high in favour, employed in such perfection, or so long in going out of fashion as in Gascony and in Guienne. It was largely used in Burgundy as well, but in a different spirit. Sobriety, clear-cutness, purity of lines, were never qualities of the Burgundian style. There<sup>1</sup> pyramids on lozenge and triangular bases were too often used as a surcharge, so to speak, upon rectangular panels with hollowed corners, giving a certain clumsiness of effect, and later, well into the eighteenth century, even on those panels with curved outlines belonging to the Louis XV style, which was indeed one of the worst errors in taste that a craftsman could commit. It made it necessary to curve the sides of the pyramid, and so to destroy its characteristic trenchant firmness, which one may not specially like, but which is the foundation for the quite special, slightly harsh, flavour of this style.

Great horizontal cornices, parallel mouldings regular spirals, triangles and polyhedra, a frequent total absence of curved lines, sharp arrises, angles of every opening; all this is precise, geometrical, abstract, intentional, strict and severe in correctness, without fancifulness, and therefore in harmony with the general spirit of the period of Descartes, of the Arnaulds, of Nicole, of Poussin, of Philippe de Champaigne.

<sup>1</sup> Figs. 47 and 49.

## CHAPTER TWO : DIFFERENT PIECES OF FURNITURE

IN the seventeenth century the decay of the coffer still progresses. It is still indeed, in modest homes, the essential and often even the only piece of furniture ; but it is ceasing to be a thing of elegance—except of course the marriage coffer (or *corbeille*), small, highly decorated, very refined, on which a Boulle will not disdain to lavish all the resources of his art. As with other pieces of furniture, the fashion under Louis XIII is to conceal coffers under stuffs ; for this express purpose there were made *tapis à pentes*, that is to say, with four pieces each prolonging the side of a rectangle ; these pieces hung down to the ground and came together exactly at the corners, or they were often even buttoned edge to edge. Sometimes a garniture of stuff or tapestry was nailed upon a coffer of plain wood. Thus, in the house of Marie Cressé, wife of Jean Poquelin, the king's *tapissier*, and mother of Molière, “a large square coffer *bahut*<sup>1</sup> with lock and key, covered with needlework tapestry, with flowers, with its frame and legs in walnut.” But most frequently these *bahuts*, which continued to serve as trunks upon occasion, were clad in red or black leather and covered with gilt-headed nails forming decorative designs.

<sup>1</sup> That is to say, with flat lid and not arched as was the *bahut* properly so-called.

Large or small, coffers were, even more usually than in the preceding century, placed as we have just seen upon frames with four legs or on real tables made for the purpose and fitted with drawers,<sup>1</sup> or again on a kind of special trestle; we find in an inventory of 1654, "a large *coffre à bahut* covered with black leather with nails, sitting upon two little walnut seats."

In the meantime the coffer resting on the ground and capable of being used as a seat was still in existence, especially in antechambers, and that even in the king's household. Mme. de Montpensier relates in her *Memoirs* how at Fontainebleau Turenne came one morning to pay his court to her as she was about to "take her chemise" . . . and had "to wait half an hour in the antechamber sitting on the coffers." That is a consecrated phrase that shows that such a way of being seated was still customary. But coffers were very speedily to come to seem very old-fashioned among the great folk.

The cabinet, on the contrary, was now at the height of favour, it was the last word in elegant furniture. It was a point of honour to possess one of the finest taste, just as it was to have a handsome state bed. They were brought, as we have seen, at great expense from Germany, the Low Countries, or Italy; there are some to be found of every size, from the little coffer of embroidered velvet placed on the corner of a table to the monumental piece held up by twelve

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 31.

x This is 17th cent. than the preceding one.

terminals; of every material from engraved mother of pearl and gilt *repoussé* iron to ebony, tortoise-shell, ivory, with fine stones set in silver gilt. Some are of unheard-of richness, and others, among the middle classes of moderate wealth, quite plainly made of walnut. These last are very like buffets, and to speak correctly, the word "cabinet" in the seventeenth century, especially in the provinces, denotes not costly pieces filled with small drawers, but buffets or even real cupboards.

The cabinet or buffet from Guyenne, reproduced in Fig. 39, is a very typical example, with its big turned carafe-balusters for supports, its two *guichets* with bevelled high projecting panel, its sober decoration of upright plumes, its hinges, keyhole plates, and drawer handles still very small. As the style evolved, these metal fittings gradually become larger, especially the hinges on pins, and assumed a decorative value; the handles<sup>1</sup> and the buttons on rosettes<sup>2</sup> cut out of sheet-iron were to give place to flattened<sup>3</sup> or gadrooned<sup>4</sup> knobs and to drop handles, often made of two dolphins<sup>5</sup> set face to face; the keyhole plates took what was to remain the traditional shape down to the period of Louis XVI, a winged dragon more or less recognisable.<sup>6</sup>

These details—on the supposition that the

1 Figs. 36 and 39.

2 Fig. 38.

3 Figs. 40 and 44.

4 Fig. 45.

5 Fig. 48.

6 Figs. 44, 46, 48, etc.

metal fittings have not been changed from the original ones—are still the least uncertain data for fixing the date of pieces belonging to this style, a date that in any case is very much an approximation only.

But it was above all the cupboard that triumphed among middle-class furniture in the seventeenth century. There is, so to say, neither shape, nor arrangement, nor size of cupboard that is not found in the Louis XIII style.

Now that life had become more stable, and that seats were to be found everywhere, the cupboard dethroned the coffer, and took its place as the fundamental and essential piece of furniture. It served, in divers shapes, as refuge for all that one possessed and that was worth locking up: clothes, linen, plate, silver, for books among the lettered, for tools among workers; in the kitchen it served as a buffet . . . indeed, was there anything it did not serve for?

Its varieties are legion. To begin with the most ancient types, there was the square cupboard with four doors, with small flat panels, monastic in its simplicity. Modest in its dimensions, it sometimes squats on a frame with four turned legs, like a coffer<sup>1</sup>; if larger it rests on flattened balls.<sup>2</sup> It looks like a mural cup-

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Fig. 33. This one has a cornice that is too small (less projecting than the base) for it not to have originally been crowned with a pediment. Nearly all these pediments, which were fixed and fragile, have disappeared or been replaced. When the cornice projects boldly (Figs. 35, 40, 44, etc.), it forms a sufficient crown and there never has been a pediment.

board (one built-in) that has been detached from the wall.

Then we have a shape recalling the Renaissance by its restricted dimensions and the setting back of its upper story, the small cupboard in two parts with two doors, often delightful for its fine proportions, the delicacy of its decoration made up of mouldings, turning, and pierced iron fittings. We give two good examples of this type. The first<sup>1</sup> of these, with two superimposed drawers, is remarkable because it is complete and completely untouched by the restorer—a very rare combination; it has preserved its graceful pediment with the little platform for a statuette or turned vase; the carving on it is far from commonplace, with its curious rendering of the plume and the acanthus leaf; the pillars are very pretty. The second<sup>2</sup> has unfortunately lost its pediment; its eagle's talons are of excellent workmanship.

Next comes the tall narrow cupboard, with two doors and two parts duplicating one another, or at any rate of the same width, and separated by a drawer; we reproduce two specimens—one<sup>3</sup> with diamond points, or more strictly *pointes de gâteau*, corner columns and a handsome boldly projecting cornice; the other<sup>4</sup> completely covered with carvings, pretty naive in execution, made in the south-west of France

1 Fig. 37.

2 Fig. 38.

3 Fig. 40.

4 Fig. 41.



but slightly Flemish in aspect—which are a very harmonious pair.

More squat in shape, the cupboard of Fig. 42 is full of character; we have indicated above the interesting use the joiner made of mouldings to decorate its surfaces. The pediment (except the turned vases) is old and curious, with its two great palms or ostrich feathers carved in the thickness of the walnut planking. Note the asymmetry of the drawers; only the one on the right shuts with lock and key, but a kind of inside wooden bolt, that can only be worked on pulling out this first drawer, allows the one on the left to be fastened. This economy of one lock displays a rather pleasing rusticity; it is far from uncommon. The ball feet of this pretty cupboard are relatively small, very slightly flattened, and disengaged; which is an almost certain proof that the date of its making is much earlier than that of the cupboards with highly developed feet, very flattened, shaped like rather ugly cushions,<sup>1</sup> which seem intended to spare the sharp and delicate corners of the base from a knock with a broom, a chair-leg, or perhaps a man's boot.

Among the cupboards in two parts with four doors, more advanced in style than those with sixteen small panels, of which we spoke at the beginning of this chapter, some continue to have the two parts equal in width, which gives them a heavy square-shouldered air that is, at the first

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 48, and especially Figs. 44 and 49.

glance, by no means agreeable. Such cupboards were made practically everywhere, in Normandy, in Auvergne, in the south-west, but chiefly in the east, in Burgundy, Bresse, Franche-Comté, and more especially in the county of Montbéliard. The Montbéliard cupboards, which the present-day jargon of the dealers calls *armoires protestantes*, "Protestant cupboards," doubtless because there are many Lutherans in this region, are very curious.<sup>1</sup> They are composed of two superimposed sections, separated by two drawers, and flanked or not flanked by spiral pillars; the panels are most frequently *à table saillante* and the sides equipped with four large iron drop handles, as though they were really two separate pieces of furniture, two coffers with doors set one on top of the other and made for frequent journeyings. The carving on these is heavy and thick, especially on the pediments, which are composed of big rinceaux in open-work, and more Teutonic than French in manner; in fact, the Germanic influence was for a long time much stronger in this country than the French influence, for the county of Montbéliard was a part of the Empire and under the Duchy of Wurtemberg before 1792. The cupboard we have chosen for reproduction<sup>1</sup> is of a somewhat uncommon elegance, thanks to its pretty cornice and the rinceaux of a certain fineness carved upon it.

The Gascon type in this category of cupboards

uniform in width is sometimes less squat in shape, because they are provided below with a large drawer that forms a *soubassement*.

But the greatest number of the Louis XIII cupboards in two parts have the upper part narrower than the lower, the difference being greatest in the oldest examples. Certain very wide pieces, for instance, the cupboard with such amusingly naive carvings reproduced in Fig. 36, have a middle part with three drawers, and a neutral piece, between the doors, of excessive size, which makes them far from convenient. The cupboard in question looks mean at the top, as though beheaded; it should have a pediment. There are slenderer ones whose doors hinge on narrow uprights, and which have only a small square-fronted *layette coulisse* between two drawers,<sup>1</sup> or else two drawers only; others have two pull-out shelves as well. And lastly, the most elaborate and complicated have four drawers, like the monumental piece shown in Fig. 44, so tall that it is impossible to reach the top shelves of the upper part without standing on a stool.

We have lost the habit of cupboards in two parts, and that is why to-day they are generally regarded, and used, as buffets; and indeed they serve very well in that guise. The narrow cupboard with only one door was also known, as we see by the one shown in Fig. 45. Gascon in origin, typical with its *soubassement* fitted with

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 43.

a drawer and its large and very austere diamond points. The one shown in the next figure, without a drawer and larger in its proportions, is more complicated in decoration but has less mouldings; the flat enframingent of the door, contrasted with the mouldings on the body of the piece, gives it a quite different character from that of the cupboards in Figs. 45, 47 and 48; it was certainly made in Brittany. The Burgundian cupboard of Fig. 47 is, so to say, chopped up to the last degree, and offers not a single plane surface, no rest for the eye; in that it is very much of its native land. The one that follows (Fig. 48) is from Bordeaux, and has a most elaborate façade, highly tormented in its composition; the narrowness of the door is noteworthy. It is made of handsome light-coloured walnut with what is a somewhat uncommon feature, some of its mouldings enamelled in black. The cornice is an imposing thing.

And lastly, the largest and most majestic are those with two doors shutting, either one upon the other with a false neutral portion,<sup>1</sup> or on a fixed upright.<sup>2</sup> We give illustrations of two from Gascony and one from Burgundy; and here again the style of the latter appears confused and overloaded when compared with the fine clear definiteness of the others, especially of the one in Fig. 51, whose main lines, as well as the composition of the panels, are beyond reproach.

1 Fig. 51. — 2

2 Fig. 50. x

The large drawers below are a veritable certificate of origin.

The subdivision of the doors of large cupboards into three panels by means of traverses—division into two panels also was to be known—was to become classic in subsequent periods. It was by no means a decorative fancy, but a necessity if those great doors were to be substantial, and especially to keep their shape.

If we examine attentively these two cupboards, with twist pillars, we will perceive the two ways in which these pillars were used. Sometimes a rectangular section was cut out of them all along their length, and they were glued on the arrises which fitted into the gap thus left in them<sup>1</sup>; sometimes they were left intact and fastened at top and bottom, but disengaged, standing in a place prepared for them by cutting away the upright for the purpose.<sup>2</sup> *come*

We have said that cupboards in two parts served from the very beginning, and still serve, as buffets, either intact or reduced to the condition of under-cupboards (*bas d'armoires*) by the disappearance of the upper part. Then, from the end of the seventeenth century, under-cupboards in the Louis XIII style were made by themselves, and lastly, at an undetermined period, they sometimes had placed upon them *vaisseliers* or dressers with two or three shelves,

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Fig. 51, also Figs. 37, 38, 40 and 44. This last method is much to be preferred.

surmounted by a moulded cornice.<sup>1</sup> Let us add, for the sake of completeness, that in the provinces, where the diamond point long remained in favour, we find *armoires d'encoignure*, later called *encoignures*, or corner cupboards, of triangular plan, dating from the eighteenth century.

Tables of the Louis XIII style that while simple are yet slightly ornamented, can hardly have been made before the second half of the seventeenth century, since the fashion up to that time was to have them hidden, during meals with tablecloths, at other times with tapestries that covered them down to the ground.<sup>2</sup> Those that really belong to the Louis XIII period—and there are practically none now surviving—have turned legs shaped like swollen pillars, all plain, and carried on a rectangular frame with stout cross-bars, on which the feet were set while one sat at table, because the chairs were very high. This frame was itself supported on four ball feet.

A little later tables were the proper and peculiar domain of the turners; here they displayed all the resources of their art. The legs were turned as plain pillars,<sup>3</sup> spirals,<sup>4</sup> *en chapelet*<sup>5</sup> (beaded), or baluster-shaped.<sup>6</sup> This last type can

1 Fig. 52.

2 We are not referring here, of course, to the show tables with tops of stone mosaic, or wood marquetry, or metal and tortoise-shell. There were no special dining-tables in existence any more than dining-rooms.

3 Figs. 56 and 57.

4 Figs. 53, 54, etc.

5 Fig. 62.

6 Figs. 58 to 61.

be by far the most elegant and graceful; we find some the outline of which is deliciously fine. The **H**-shaped stretcher is the most common; its cross-piece has in the middle either a simple ornament that forms an integral part of it,<sup>1</sup> or a vase, a knob or some other motive fastened upon it.<sup>2</sup> Some more complicated tables have, carried at the middle point of this cross-bar, a supplementary pillar-leg, and four long turned pieces (*candélabres*) fixed underneath the table properly so-called, and hanging down, like stalactites; this is a last memory of the arcadings that embellished the under-part of the fine Renaissance tables.

A gracefuller type, lighter of aspect and later in date, is the table with **X**-shaped stretcher,<sup>3</sup> which nearly always belongs to the period of Louis XIV. The curving branches of the **X** are cut out of a plank; their ends are not mortised into the *piliers*; they are carried by four flattened balls and support the legs in their turn. The intersection is adorned with a piece of turned work and sometimes rests upon a fifth foot in the shape of a ball.<sup>4</sup>

The most ornate tables of solid wood have the frieze carved with gadroons or arabesques; more frequently the quadrantal moulding of the top is incised with a running ornament of *demi-rosaces*; the front of the drawer, when it is of

1 Figs. 53 and 56.

2 Figs. 55, 58, 62.

3 Figs. 54 and 59.

4 Fig. 54.

a certain depth, may be decorated with raised panels, lozenge and triangle-shaped like those we have seen on cupboards.

The seventeenth century saw many varieties of tables, if not actually born, at least come into current use. As for their shape, they were almost all rectangular. At the same time, some were made round, oval, or octagonal. The round table, the shape of which, as everyone knows, has the advantage that it does away with all difficulties with regard to etiquette, is supposed to have become pretty common in Paris, in imitation of the one round which Mazarin used to assemble his guests. The oldest round table of carved and gilded wood that has come down to us,<sup>1</sup> is, they say, the last flotsam of Foucquet's furniture at Vaux-le-Vicomte.

To be able to diminish or increase the size of the table at pleasure, we saw that from the sixteenth century there had been *tables brisées*, or *tables ployantes*, and *tables qui se tirent*. We reproduce in Fig. 53 a small *table brisée* with two flaps, and in Fig. 57 the small hybrid piece, half bench and half low table—in short, a *basset brisé*—which an inventory of the time describes as follows: “a little walnut table which folds in three, iron-shod and set on a frame.” The gaming table of Fig. 62 is a very curious piece: folding in three, its surface doubles when it is opened out; it has a hole in the middle to hold a basin, meant to receive the stakes,

<sup>1</sup> In the Louvre.



which is one of those platters of repoussé latten made in Germany and Flanders, the central decoration of which is so often, as in this case, the wonderful bunch of the grapes of Canaan carried by the two Hebrews.

Other folding tables have not only the top, but also the under-frame "*qui se brise*"; for example, the very pretty marquetry table with six legs seen in Fig. 60; unfortunately the photograph does not show the elegant rinceaux of inlaid wood that cover the top and edge of the table itself. The next plate (Fig. 61) shows a table with "broken frame," the two large flaps of which, when lifted up, more than treble the surface. Four of its baluster legs have been sawed down the middle, and the halves come together when the table is shut.

The *table s'allongeant*, or *table qui se tire par les deux bouts* or *table tirante*—and other names as well—was the *table à rallonges*, or extending table of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the sixteenth century the most magnificent were of this kind; those that date from the seventeenth are simpler and have a pronounced southern character. Four great baluster legs, sometimes diverging, are joined together at the bottom by a rectangular frame of stout cross-bars; they carry a thick top, often parquetté like a floor; two supplementary leaves are concealed under the first one; when these are pulled out, an arrangement of slanting grooves slides them up to the level of the fixed top, at

each end of which they come into place; the length of the table is not quite doubled in this fashion. Cabinet-makers and furniture dealers of to-day call these leaves *rallonges à l'italienne*.

An important invention of the joiners of this period was the bureau. Is it a specialised table? Or is it a transformation of the cabinet? It is both, and in any case this affiliation is of small moment. The *bureau* was first of all a stuff, a kind of *bure*; then a table cover made of it, next a table kept covered with such a cloth, and lastly a table specially made to write at conveniently, with drawers for the *escritoire* and papers. Cabinets being high in favour, a combination of cabinet and bureau was devised. Sully tells us in his *Memoirs*, "He (Henry IV) desired me to have made for him a kind of cabinet or large bureau elegantly wrought and entirely fitted with drawers all shutting with lock and key, and lined with crimson satin." Some of these very luxurious cabinet-bureaus have been preserved. The Cluny Museum has one, known as "Maréchal Créqui's bureau." This is a cabinet of very simple lines, quadrangular, with numerous drawers of marquetry on a background of tortoise-shell, sitting back on a table support fitted with larger drawers; the difference in the depth of the two parts permits of a writing desk in front. Another type, more akin to a table, if one may say so, has no cabinet above, but two series of superimposed drawers on either side of a space left for the legs of whoever sits down to

write; it is the direct ancestor of the "bureau ministre." This was known as a *bureau façon de table*.

We have still less to say about Louis XIII beds than about the beds of the sixteenth century; in the seventeenth they were more than ever, from the sub-basement to the vase-shaped knobs that adorned the corners of the tester, hidden and buried under an incredible pile of stuffs. Neither the more modest ones under their red serge, nor the most sumptuous, covered with *velours nuancé* with gold background, three-coloured damask, and other "*grandes estoffes*" edged with a "*passemens luyssant de Tours*,"<sup>1</sup> or, in summer time, with Dutch linen cloth with stripes of "*reseuil*,"<sup>2</sup> none of them showed as much as a square inch of wood. Thus they had no claim to be preserved; there have been none of them, so to speak, in existence for the last two centuries. It would be easy to make exact copies of them; but who would be willing to sleep in those hermetically sealed boxes of stuffs?

There remain the various forms of seats. And here there arises a small but irritating problem. What, in the first half of the seventeenth century, was a *fauteuil* and what was a *chaise à bras*? In the sixteenth century there was no difficulty; the *faudesteuil*, as we have seen, folded like pincers; the *chaise à bras* was rigid, square,

1 Coloured silk lace.

2 Guipure or embroidery on filet.

very high; the *caquetoire* was smaller and lighter. Under Louis XIV every chair with arms and a back is a *fauteuil*; but under Louis XIII—? We find, in inventories and other contemporary documents, at one time *fauteuils* and at another *chaises à bras*. The most probable answer is that the *chaise à bras* had a high back, and the *fauteuil* a low back. And in fact we see, in an inventory of 1628, six “chaires a vertugadin” . . . four “chaires . . . à dossier, façon de *fauteuil*,” and three “chaires à bras et à dossier.” But in many other cases no sign of any difference can be discovered.

Another difficulty presents itself when we turn over the collections of plates, invaluable in the highest degree for our knowledge of habits, costume and furniture under Louis XIII, that Abraham Bosse etched with a needle somewhat too proper and bourgeois, but exceedingly elegant. In none of the interiors he delineates with a great deal of fancifulness as regards architecture, and an evident exactness as to furniture, do we find a single chair with a high back. In 1661 arm-chairs with low backs were in no wise as yet superannuated; it was in this kind of chair that Louis XIV and Marie-Thérèse sat at their marriage ceremony. It seems likely enough that in the days of Henri IV it was perceived that the tall vertical back of the *chaise à bras* was the enemy of the huge ruffs and the great stiff collars the ladies wore; arm-chairs with low backs were made, at first alongside of the high

backed chairs, but from about 1625 they held the field alone. After Louis XIII the back became higher once more and at the same time more sloping, without the *fauteuil* losing its name, and after a short eclipse the *chaise à bras* was seen reappearing under this usurped name of *fauteuil*. But it was by that time already a Louis XIV seat.

The Louis XIII arm-chair, properly so called,<sup>1</sup> is then a seat with arms and a low back, stiff and poor in line, as must be confessed, square at all points, and the back very slightly or not at all sloped backwards. The legs of arm-chairs and "vertugadin" chairs were sometimes simple pillars standing on a square frame carried on four balls,<sup>2</sup> sometimes they were turned *en chapelet*,<sup>3</sup> *en spirale*,<sup>4</sup> or *en balustre*.<sup>5</sup> The back legs may well not be turned, for the sake of economy.<sup>6</sup> The cross-pieces of the stretchers are put together in the form of an **H**; nearly always there is a supplementary cross-piece joining the front legs above; this both strengthens and decorates at the same time. It should be noted that the legs have often been slightly shortened.<sup>7</sup> The period with which we are now concerned is the one in which chairs became gradually lowered to the

1 Figs. 63 to 65, 68.

2 Fig. 67.

3 Figs. 63 and 64.

4 Figs. 65, 69 and 70.

5 Figs. 68, 71 and 72.

6 Figs. 64, 69, 71, 72.

7 Figs. 63, 70. The same may be seen in tables (*cf.* Fig. 62) as the height of these was closely related to that of the seats.

height to which they rose again in the nineteenth century, after having been a trifle lower in the eighteenth.

The back is regularly rectangular, much less in height than in width ; the arms of arm-chairs are horizontal, turned like the legs, and rest upon *consoles d'accotoirs*<sup>1</sup> which are a continuation of the front legs ; they end in a simple turned button or, when there is a little carving, in a lion's head or ram's head. A motive that is far from rare is a female bust serving as the uppermost part of the console<sup>2</sup> ; the end of the arm is mortised into the back of the head.

The small arm-chair, loftily perched upon splaying legs, which allows a child to sit at an ordinary table,<sup>3</sup> then made its appearance, as well as the one with short legs on which it could sit down without help on the ground level.

About chairs there is nothing to be said ; they differ from the arm-chairs solely by the absence of arms<sup>4</sup> ; but it has become a habit to assign the Louis XIII style to large chairs with high backs completely covered and with seats now low<sup>5</sup> (about 35 centimetres) and now of ordinary height<sup>6</sup> (45 centimetres). To be quite truthful, it is exceed-

1 We are here anticipating a little in using this expression, which was to enter the joiners' vocabulary when this part of the arm-chair commonly presented the shape of an architectural console.

2 Fig. 65.

3 Fig. 66.

4 Figs. 67, 69, 70.

5 Fig. 71. These low chairs are called *chauffeuses* ; the word is quite modern.

6 Fig. 72.

ingly hard to decide their exact period ; but it is very probable that this tall upholstered back with no space between it and the seat dates only from Louis XIV. The chair reproduced in Fig. 74 is a very pretty one, and very original. It is all of wood ; the raw simplicity of the frieze and the top of the legs, while all the rest is finely carved, shows that it was meant to have a flat cushion with long fringes or valances ; the back is merely an empty frame ; it has been filled up, in the museum where the chair has found its last refuge, with a plain sheet of cardboard covered with velvet. In short, we have here a very refined variant of the humble wooden chair of the Lorraine peasants ; the characteristic *accolade* shaping is found in the lower part of the back. This is an *escabelle à dos* ; it was a very real and distinct kind of seat.

The ordinary *escabelle* in Fig. 73 is a very agreeable model ; it is rather, from its height, a *basset*, that small piece with two ends, a seat on occasion, an occasional table at all times, the folding variety of which we have already seen. To come to an end of the kinds of seats without backs, there remains to be noticed the family of *tabourets* and *placets*, whose height varies between 20 and 50 centimetres, and among which even the lowest served to sit on as well as for a foot-rest.<sup>1</sup>

The rest-bed seems to have been invented about 1625 or 1630 ; we mention it here because

1 Figs. 77 and 78.

from its earliest days it commonly served as a seat. Mme. de Motteville, describing the arrest of the Prince de Conti, in 1650, writes: "The Prince de Conti did not say a word. He remained still seated on the small rest-bed that was in the gallery, and displayed neither fear nor vexation. . . ." And six years later, according to the great Mademoiselle, in the Château de Chilly, "the Queen of England sat upon a rest-bed, and her circle was larger than it had ever been, all the princesses and duchesses in Paris being in it." The rest-bed was made with either one or two *dossiers*, and with six or eight turned legs like the legs of arm-chairs. From it the *canapé* or sofa was to issue before long, meant mainly for sitting and, as a secondary use, for lying down; but it did not exist before the Louis XIV period. The *canapé* of Fig. 75 is interesting as evidence of the long survival of the Louis XIII style in middle-class furniture; the *manchettes* or arm cushions testify to the end of the reign of Louis XIV, perhaps even the Regency, as the date of its making.

The greatest change that took place with regard to seats in the seventeenth century was that on most of them the movable upholstery of square cushions, round cushions, and tapestry, was replaced by fixed upholstery nailed on to the frame-work. It was perhaps not so great an advance in comfort or ease as might be imagined, but it was a great advance in handiness in use.

The simplest form of *garniture* was made of a



thick ox hide, stretched on the frame of seat and back by means of big decorative nails with gilt brass heads. These seats, as we have said, were Spanish or Flemish in make, or indeed made in France in imitation of imported examples. Nothing can be more Spanish than this decoration of big nails; witness those that in the Peninsula adorn so many ancient church doors, and are sometimes real masterpieces of metal work. The hide was either plain,<sup>1</sup> or stamped with gilt tooling,<sup>2</sup> blind tooled, *escorchié*, *courtepointé*, as in the preceding period; the nails, of different sizes and shapes, lend themselves to very decorative combinations.<sup>3</sup>

Goat skin was not sufficiently thick or strong to be stretched by itself, without backing or support; but *courtepointé* leather was frequently morocco. The most sought after skins were bright red or yellow, and came from Asia Minor and Syria; they were grained in France, at Rouen in special. Red morocco was mounted with gilt nails, and yellow with silvered nails. It was not unusual to match a certain number of seats, arm-chairs, forms, tabourets, and later, a sofa, with a six-leaved screen, all in the same morocco, and this collection made up a "*meuble*."

1 Figs. 69 and 70.

2 Fig. 63. The decoration of this back is a classic: in the middle, armorial bearings with highly developed crest and lambrequins; around this a framing of rinceaux and in the corners four *fleurons*.

3 Figs. 63, 69 and 70.

Certain very magnificent seats had a gorgeous dress of the goffered leather, gilded and painted "in the Moorish style," that made such handsome wall coverings, especially in antechambers. This came from Spain, from Flanders, from Holland; it was made also in France.

But seats covered with morocco or gilded leather were most usually fitted in the same way as those done in stuffs. Upon an ox hide or on straps there was spread, not a regulation "*embourrure*" but a simple layer of horsehair, of no great thickness; on this there was stretched a stout canvas or sheep's leather,<sup>1</sup> and lastly the skin, the stuff, or the tapestry for the outer covering, which was nailed on either with *clous touchans*,<sup>2</sup> or with big nails spaced out on a galoon of gold or silver or silk; or again, small nails were grouped *en marguerites*,<sup>3</sup> daisy pattern, on this galoon.

All too often old seats have, in the nineteenth century, been fitted with the ugly modern garniture with springs; every amateur worthy of the name who becomes the owner of a chair or arm-chair thus disfigured will have it stripped of its springs and re-upholstered in the ancient manner; if it is a question of a rest-bed or a sofa, the movable mattress will be the only possible thing.

During a century, from 1570 to 1670, or

<sup>1</sup> The phrase was "*un fauteuil garni de cuir, et couvert de velours.*"

<sup>2</sup> Small nails touching one another.

<sup>3</sup> Figs. 67, 69.

thereabouts, a great proportion of all seats, like the beds, were covered completely, including their legs, with a nailed-on stuff that was usually velvet; the wood of which they were made was common, rudely put together, and all, it goes without saying, have been destroyed. Such were the arm-chairs, in blue velvet covered with fleurs-de-lis, of Louis XIV and Marie-Thérèse we mentioned above. The great advantage of these upholstery trappings was that, for a ceremony to take place at a distance, such as that royal marriage in 1661 at Saint-Jean-de-Luz, they were carried along all prepared, and any joiner could knock up the wooden arm-chairs on which they were nailed. Taken off after the ceremony, they served again when a new occasion arose.<sup>1</sup>

Stuffs for seats were, in principle, the same as for beds. There was a bed in each of the important rooms of a suite, and a few seats matched this bed, in particular the arm-chairs ranged on either side of the alcove. We find recorded, for instance, "the seats and arm-chairs of the bed in crimson damask." The Cluny Museum possesses, almost intact, one of these suites, called in the old days "*emmeublements*,"<sup>2</sup> which have become excessively rare. The hangings of the bed (said to have belonged to the Maréchal d'Effiat; but

<sup>1</sup> We find, in the Mazarin inventory, "Three garnitures de fauteuils, each composed of eleven pieces, covered with plain embroideries, two serving as back and valance and the others serving to cover all the wood of the arm-chair, etc."

<sup>2</sup> A complete *emmeublement* included also stools, folding stools, square cushions, table covers, all in the same stuff.

(X) This was the marriage of Louis XIV, just come to the Infanta Maria Theresia, daughter of Philip IV of Spain

we know how such ascriptions call for caution) are of crimson chased velvet and pink silk with appliqué embroideries, alternating in wide stripes; the arm-chairs are covered with the same two stuffs in compartments.

Seats were dressed also in stuffs of "plain" silks, that is to say, without pieces laid on or appliqué; plain and wrought velvets, damasks, satins, brocades, taffetas, *gros de Nables* and *de Tours*, and many others, and if they were of the simpler kinds, in moquette, Orléans or Aumale or Mouy serge, red, green or yellow. These stuffs were often embroidered, sometimes even *en plain*, so that they disappeared entirely under the stitchery of wool, silk, or gold; the Hungarian stitch, *à bastons rompus*, was in high favour. They were also *maniérées* with gold or silver cord—the modern word would be *soutachées*. Lastly, needlework tapestry, in coarse or fine stitch, or both combined, was patiently wrought in the various households, even the highest, even the King's, by women who, despite the progress of worldly life and manners, had long empty hours to fill in their homes.

The favourite motives for embroidery and needlework were large flowers and fruits done in natural colours. We know that the Jardin du Roi, the Jardin des Plantes of to-day, was expressly established under Henri IV, by the gardener Jean Robin and by Pierre Vallet, the king's embroiderer, to provide the embroiderers both male and female with new models inspired

by exotic plants. Gaston d'Orléans, the brother of Louis XIII, also had at Blois his garden of rare plants, which were drawn and engraved by Robert, his embroiderer and painter in ordinary.

To finish off these *garnitures* the compartments were outlined with galoons, the surfaces bedecked with lace, gold fringes and edgings hung around the seat and the lower part of the back, *frangeons* or *mollets*\* followed the other contours. Certain seats were even surrounded, in imitation of beds and tables, with a *jube*, or petticoat, composed of four valances of stuff that fell from the four sides of the frieze to the ground.

As several of these stuffs were extremely costly and very frail—white satins embroidered *au passé*, taffetas “dying-rose”-coloured, Venice brocatelles with flame-coloured background—and as the persons accustomed to make use of seats were excessively dirty<sup>1</sup>—however splendid they were to look at—armchairs and costly chairs were continually protected by loose covers. These were serge, or even in more lavish homes, such as Mazarin's, for instance, or Nicolas Foucquet's, or the Maréchal d'Humières', they

<sup>1</sup> There are the fullest proofs of the incredible dirtiness of the people of the seventeenth century, even up to the very summit of the social scale. Héroard, the doctor to the Dauphin, the future Louis XIII, writes in his *Notes* about the young prince, under the date October 3, 1606: “At a quarter to nine, his clothes taken off.” (This refers to the little Dauphin, then six years of age.) “His legs were washed in tepid water, in the Queen's basin: it was the first time.” A manual of polite conduct, published in 1640, recommends its reader to wash “the hands every day, and the face nearly as often.”

were made of silk stuffs such as velvet or taffeta of one plain colour, with gold galoon at the corners and fringes on the lower part. To take off the loose covers was *découvrir*; this was only done in well defined cases, and it was an important problem of etiquette to know for whom they were to be removed, and for whom they were not.

*me chairs* The reader may wonder perhaps that we do not mention here the seats whose backs were made of a narrow "caned" panel framed with very full pierced carvings, and whose seats also were caned, with the twist or console-shaped legs joined in front by a broad cross-piece covered with carving. In the old furniture trade, in many a sale catalogue and even in recent books on the French styles, they are called "Louis XIII." Now these chairs "*de bois de canne à jour*," as they were described, are neither French in origin or in spirit, but Flemish or Dutch, nor are they Louis XIII in period or in style. It was only at the very end of the seventeenth century that they were made in the Low Countries, then imported and finally imitated in France.

On the other hand, straw seats were common from the end of the sixteenth; but it appears that it was only towards 1660 that, thanks to the flat movable cushions or the silk loose covers with which they were provided, they found a place elsewhere than in convent cells or kitchens and offices, and that they were given a slightly

more refined structure. There are none in existence, so far as we know, which can claim date or style before the last years of the reign of Louis XIV. We are enabled to learn with complete exactness the fashion of such chairs in convents, from a picture by Philippe de Champaigne, the double portrait of Mother Catherine-Agnès Arnauld and Sister Catherine de Sainte-Suzanne; they are merely very ordinary kitchen chairs without the shadow of a style.

\* \* \* \* \*

How can we to-day make use of Louis XIII furniture? In Paris, in those small bright boxes in which, with rare exceptions, we are reduced to living, and which all, alas! pretend to some vague eighteenth century style, it is very difficult to find a way of using them, for it is mostly large and sombre.

At the most we might make a homogeneous *ensemble* with, for instance, a walnut or ebony cabinet, or an under-cupboard, a cupboard in two parts if not over large, a table or two with twist or baluster legs, a few arm-chairs covered with hide, or with plain velvet, perhaps with old pieces of needlework tapestry, but *not* with those scraps of low-warp tapestry, known as "*verdure de Flandres*," with which dealers have for some years had a regular mania for furbishing them. The proper place for these *verdures* is, as far as possible, on the walls. In the seventeenth century no one had any scruple in fixing pictures

and mirrors on the tapestries by means of nails driven through them<sup>1</sup>; not yet were they hung by cords from the cornice. Mirrors and pictures must have wide and very simple frames, made of dark walnut or ebony with wavy mouldings. For lighting there must be an old Dutch lustre with a big brass ball; on the floor one or several carpets, oriental, of course; they have never ceased to figure in French interiors from the fifteenth century to the nineteenth; whether ancient or modern, they do not "date," and accommodate themselves to the neighbourhood of every style. To make this severe ensemble a little brighter we may place here and there, still remaining scrupulously "within the note of the period," all the Eastern and Far-Eastern objects we please; already they were being collected in the days of Richelieu and Mazarin, and more than one shop of "Chinese wares" in the galleries of the Palace set out its quaint baubles among the booksellers' quartos and the Venetian guipures of the lace vendors. Add a dish or two of Manisès faïence with the ruddy coppery sheen; they were sought out by the name of *porcelaine dorée*; lastly a bottle, a *cornet*, or a plaque in delft; always under the name of *porcelaines*, the admirable pottery of Abraham de Kooge and Albrecht de Keiser and their fellows gleamed with all the lustre of their incomparable glaze in all the houses that had any claim to elegance in 1650.

1 Abraham Bosse's engravings prove this to the full.



But the real place for these old pieces is a huge provincial mansion—there they will be a marvel of fitness. They are accused of gloominess. Oh, of course, they have none of the gay smartness of the Louis XV *bonheurs du jour* and *bergères*. But the light smiles and twinkles more than one thinks upon their polished wood; everywhere it clings in dancing sparkles to the high points of the turned parts, and the facets of diamond-point mouldings kindle geometrical lights in the very darkest corners. The walnut of cupboards and tables sometimes remained light in colour, and many were fashioned out of cherry-wood that with the lapse of time has taken on a warmth of tone rivalling mahogany.

In the ancestral home of many an old Gascon family there is an imposing Louis XIII cupboard in two parts, serving as dining-room buffet for the last two centuries, while an under-cupboard with faceted decoration plays the part of service table. It would not be very difficult to complete a set by adding to these a massive table “pulling out by the ends”; this will come from another province, but that will be of no great consequence. Chairs or even armchairs with twist legs, very simple ones, will make good table seats; their rather pinched lines and low backs will not make serving difficult. It will not be easy to find a certain number of these seats all alike. But nothing in the world—and the dealers know this only too well!—is so readily copied as a Louis XIII table or chair; in the work of the

## 148 LOUIS XIII FURNITURE

lathe there is always something mechanical and impersonal that allows absolute exactness in reproduction, while a piece of carved work is almost quite beyond imitation. Here again, a Dutch lustre in the ceiling, and Flemish *verdures* on the walls. We must not imagine that in this way we shall have a faithful restoration of a dining-room of 1650, since at that moment there were no dining-rooms, and every meal was taken in one of those rooms-of-all-work, the main piece of furniture in which was a bed.

Neither were there any "drawing-rooms." A strictly Louis XIII drawing-room, therefore, cannot be. One single point of comfort would suffice to make it impossible; the seats of the period were far too unwieldy and uncomfortable. But isolated pieces of furniture belonging to our style can be mixed without clashing with Louis XIV pieces, since in strict reality they are not two different styles; and we can see quite reasonably in the great drawing-room or the living hall of a big mansion or a simple country house, a grandiose cupboard with diamond-point decoration and spiral pillars, and tables, with carafe-baluster legs; while in a smoking-room, serving as a cabinet for tobacco, liqueurs, the paraphernalia of bridge, even side by side with comfortable deep English arm-chairs in morocco leather, what could be better than a pretty little cupboard in two parts like those shown in our Figs. 37 and 38?



FIG. 1. COFFEE WITH FENESTRATIONS OR. "ORBE-VOIES," IN OAK



FIG. 2. COFFER WITH FENESTRATIONS AND PILLARS, IN OAK



FIG. 3. BUFFET WITH CANT CORNERS, IRON FITTINGS "A ORBE-VOIES."

201



FIG. 4. CHAIR WITH CARVED "SERVIETTE" OR "PARCHEMINS REPLIÉS" DECORATIONS (LINENFOLD)



FIG. 5. CHAIR WITH COFFER SEAT, "A CLAIRE-VOIES" AND "ORBE-VOIES,"  
IN OAK. FIFTEENTH CENTURY

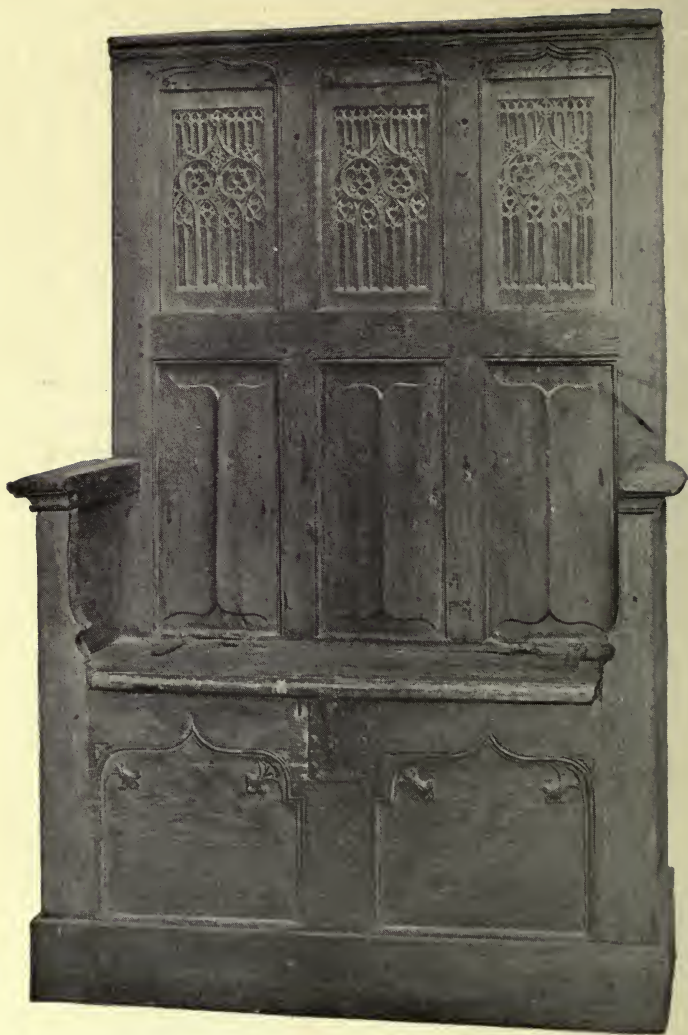


FIG. 8. VERY LARGE CHAIR WITH COFFER SEAT, WITH "ORBE-VOIES" AND "PARCHEMINS SIMPLÉS," IN OAK. FIFTEENTH CENTURY





FIG. 7. SMALL BENCH WITH OPENED END PIECES



FIG. 8. COFFER FROM LORRAINE WITH ENTRELACS, OAK. SIXTEENTH CENTURY.



FIG. 9. COFFER WITH SMALL PANELS, WALNUT INLAID WITH YELLOW WOOD.  
MIDDLE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

51

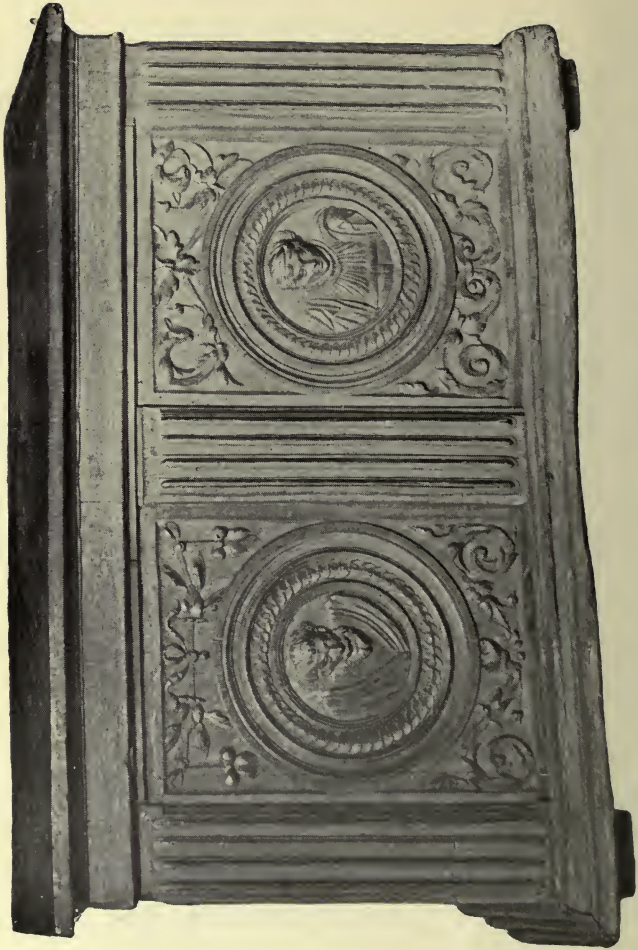


FIG. 10. COFFER WITH MEDALLION DECORATION. MIDDLE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY



FIG. 11. NORMAN COFFER WITH CARYATIDS, OAK. END OF THE STYLE.

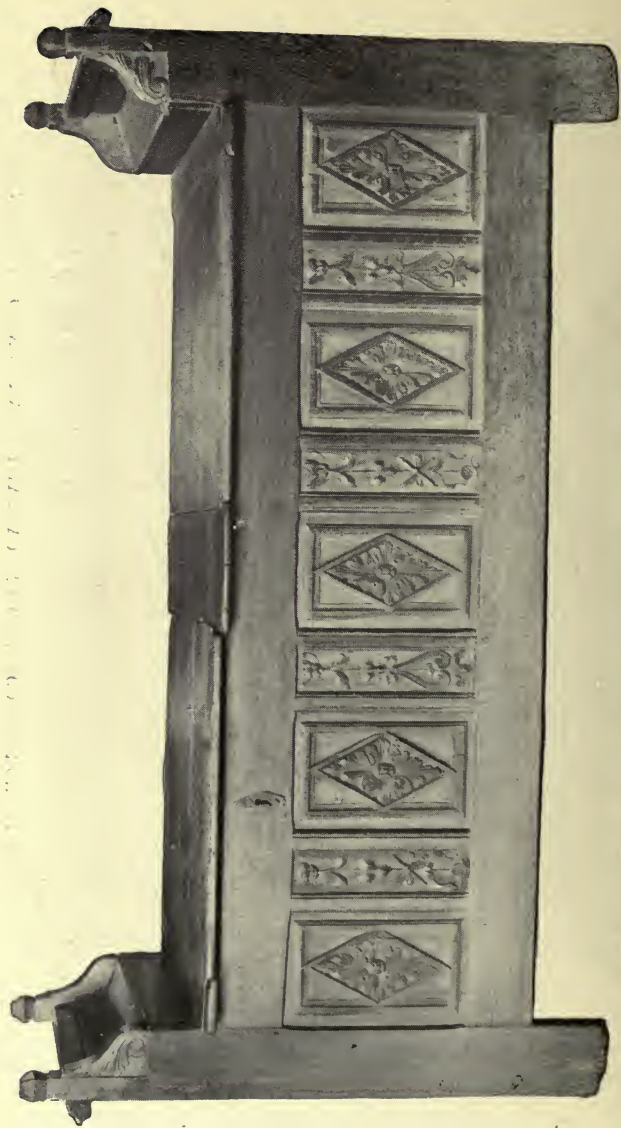


FIG. 12. " ARCHEBANC-COUCHETTE," IN OAK. MIDDLE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

516



FIG. 13. CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS, FROM BURGUNDY, WALNUT.  
END OF THE STYLE.

68  
*Two coffers, one on top of the other - see*



FIG. 14. SMALL CUPBOARD, OF WALNUT INLAID WITH MARBLE, IN THE STYLE OF THE ILE-DE-FRANCE. PERIOD OF HENRI III.

56,167

*Low for cubecouche - 56 167*





FIG. 15. CUPBOARD WITH LONG PILLARS, WALNUT.  
PERIOD OF HENRI III.



FIG. 16. BUFFET CARVED WITH GROTESQUES, OAK.  
PERIOD OF FRANCOIS I.

516, 52



FIG. 17. LARGE BUFFET WITH PILASTERS, WALNUT

*and 9 xvi cent 1555-6*



FIG. 18. EXPANDING TABLE, WALNUT



FIG. 19. SMALL TABLE WITH FIXED TRESTLE LEGS CARVED WITH GRIFFONS, IN WALNUT

74

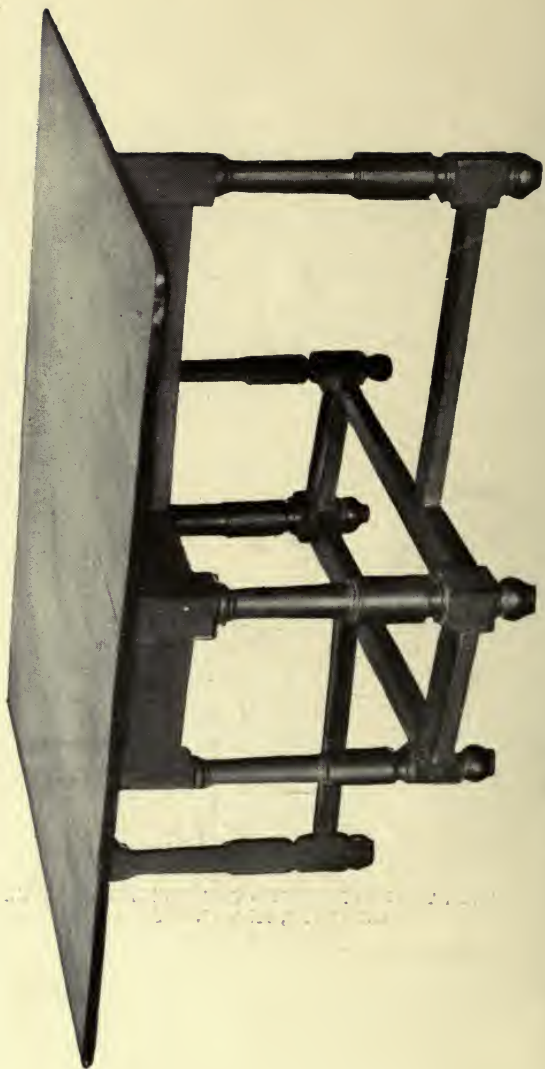


FIG. 20. TABLE WITH SIX LEGS WALNUT INLAID WITH FILLETS OF LIGHT COLOURED WOOD.  
END OF THE STYLE



FIG. 21. CHAIR WITH COFFER SEAT, IN WALNUT. SECOND HALF OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY



FIGS. 22 AND 23. "CAQUETOIRES" OR SMALL CHAIRS WITH ARMS, WITH MEDALLION DECORATIONS



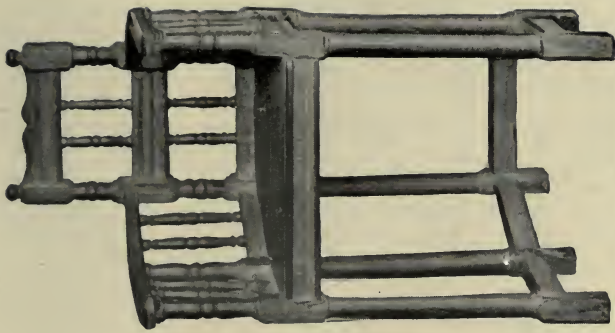


FIG. 25. "CAQUETOIRE" WITH VERY HIGH SEAT

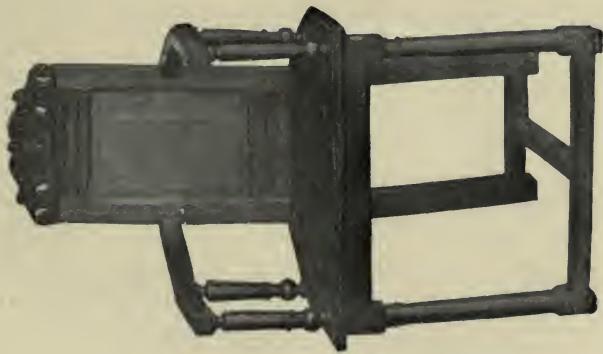


FIG. 24. "CAQUETOIRE" WITH BALUSTERS

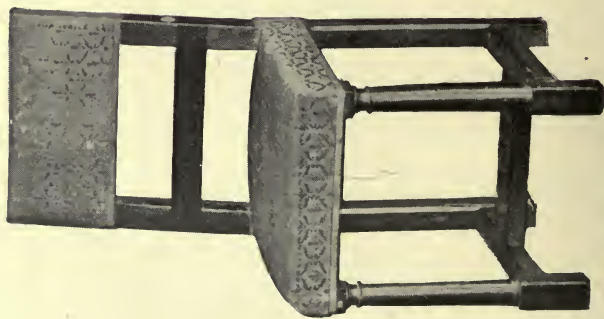


FIG. 26. "VERTUGADIN" CHAIR, IN CHASED VELVET.  
END OF THE STYLE

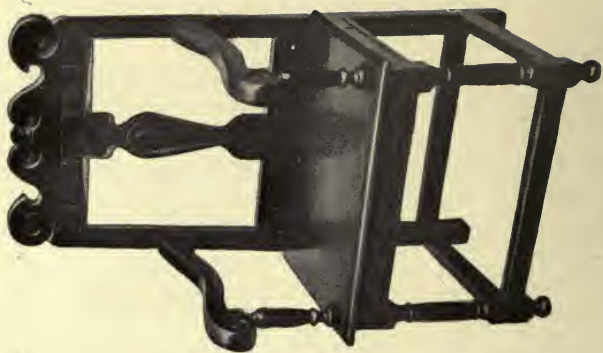


FIG. 27. "CAQUETOIRE" WITH SCROLL ARMS.  
END OF THE STYLE

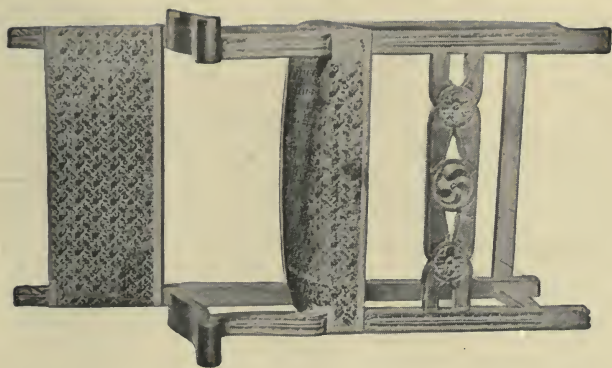


FIG. 29. "CAQUETOIRE GARNIE" WITH PLUME  
DECORATION

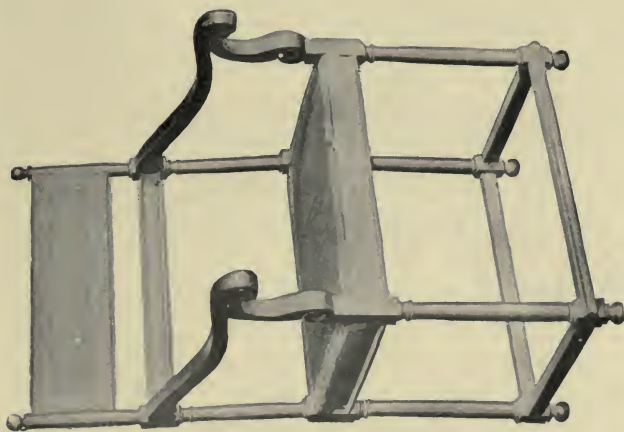


FIG. 28. "CAQUETOIRE GARNIE" WITH  
CONSOLES



FIG. 30. CHAIR WITH ARMS, IN THE SPANISH-FLEMISH STYLE,  
GILDED LEATHER. REIGN OF HENRI IV



FIG. 31. SMALL NORMAN COFFER ON ITS STAND, IN OAK.  
LOUIS XIII STYLE

119



FIG. 32. CUPBOARD WITH FOUR DOORS AND SMALL PANELS, ON ITS STAND. NORMANDY, BEGINNING OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY



FIG. 33. LARGE CUPBOARD WITH FOUR DOORS AND SMALL PANELS,  
IN WALNUT. BEGINNING OF THE STYLE



FIG. 34. SMALL CUPBOARD WITH TWO DOORS, OAK AND WALNUT.  
DATED 1659 (MODERN METALWORK)



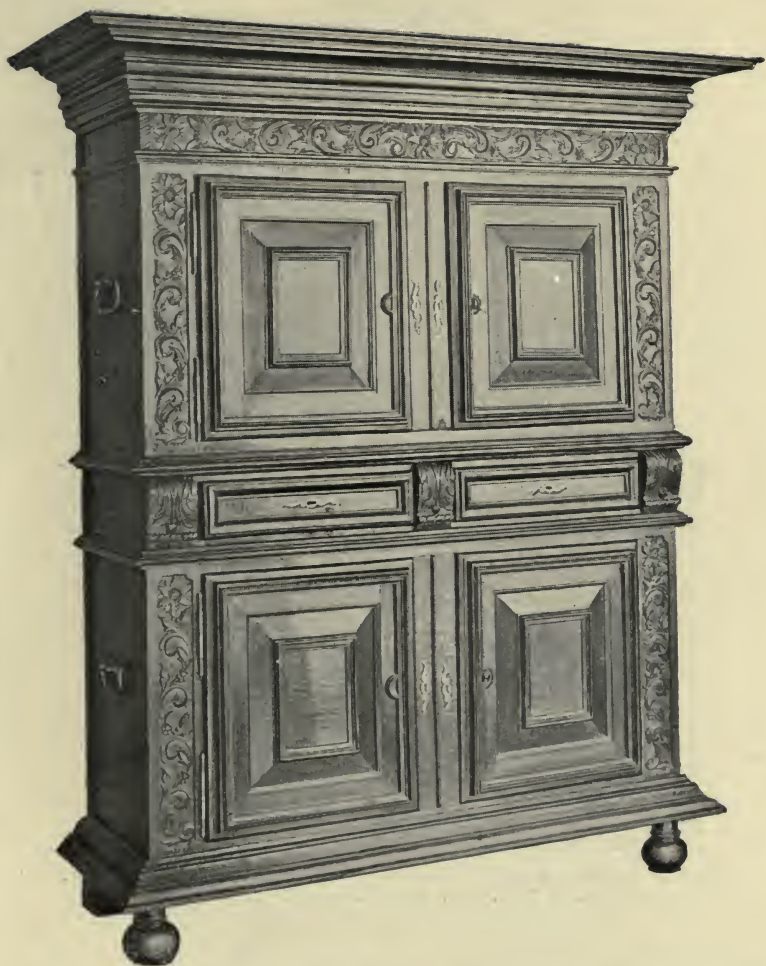


FIG. 35. CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS FROM THE COUNTY OF MONTBÉLIARD  
IN OAK



FIG. 36. LARGE CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS, WALNUT. BEGINNING  
OF THE STYLE, WITHOUT ITS PEDIMENT

125



FIG. 37. SMALL CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS, WITH TWO DRAWERS,  
IN WALNUT

122

C



FIG. 38. SMALL CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS WITH EAGLE FEET, IN WALNUT



FIG. 39. CABINET OR BUFFET WITH BALUSTERS AND PLUMES,  
IN WALNUT

*carafe balusters 120*



FIG 40. CABINET IN TWO PARTS WITH CORNICE AND "POINTES DE GATEAU" DECORATION, IN WALNUT



FIG. 41. GASCON CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS, ELABORATELY CARVED,  
WALNUT



FIG. 42. GASCON CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS WITH INTERRUPTED PEDIMENT

127





FIG. 43. GASCON CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS IN WALNUT  
(MODERN PEDIMENT)



FIG. 44. VERY LARGE GASCON CUPBOARD WITH CORNICE AND DISENGAGED PILLARS, IN WALNUT

*pointe de gateau*

116

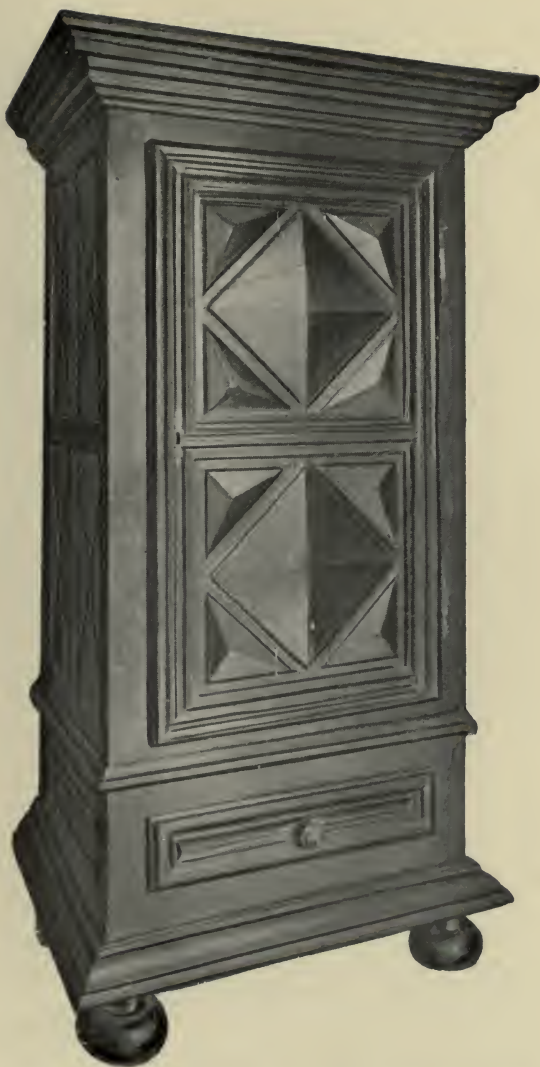


FIG. 45. GASCONY CUPBOARD WITH DIAMOND POINT  
DECORATION, WALNUT

115



FIG. 46. CUPBOARD WITH ONE DOOR WITH FLAT DIAMOND POINTS AND CIRCULAR MOTIVES, IN CHERRYWOOD

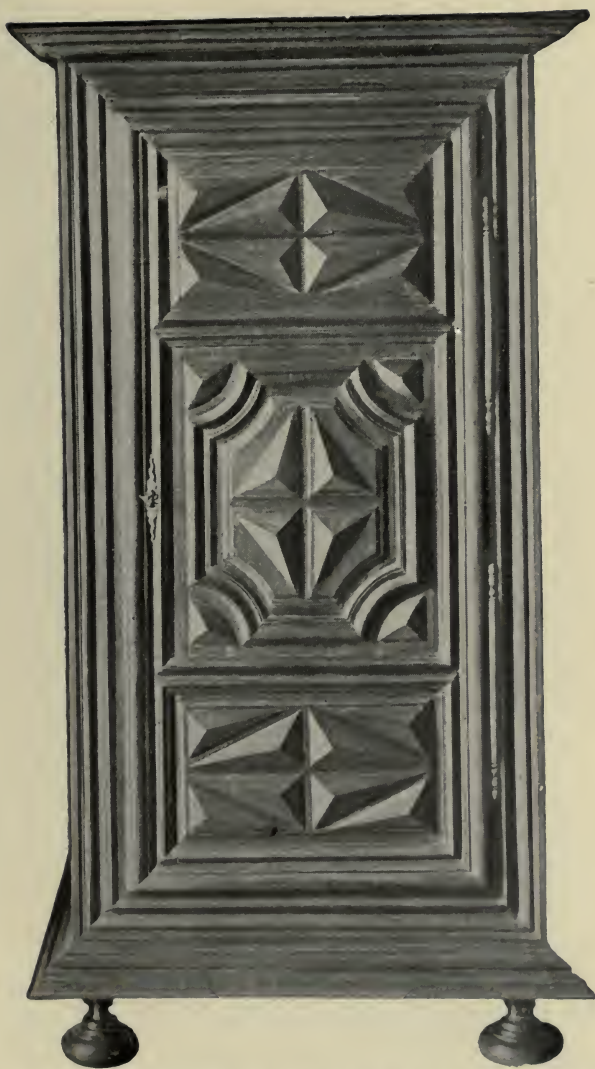


FIG. 47. SMALL CUPBOARD IN ONE PIECE, FROM BURGUNDY, WITH  
DIAMOND POINTS, IN OAK

126

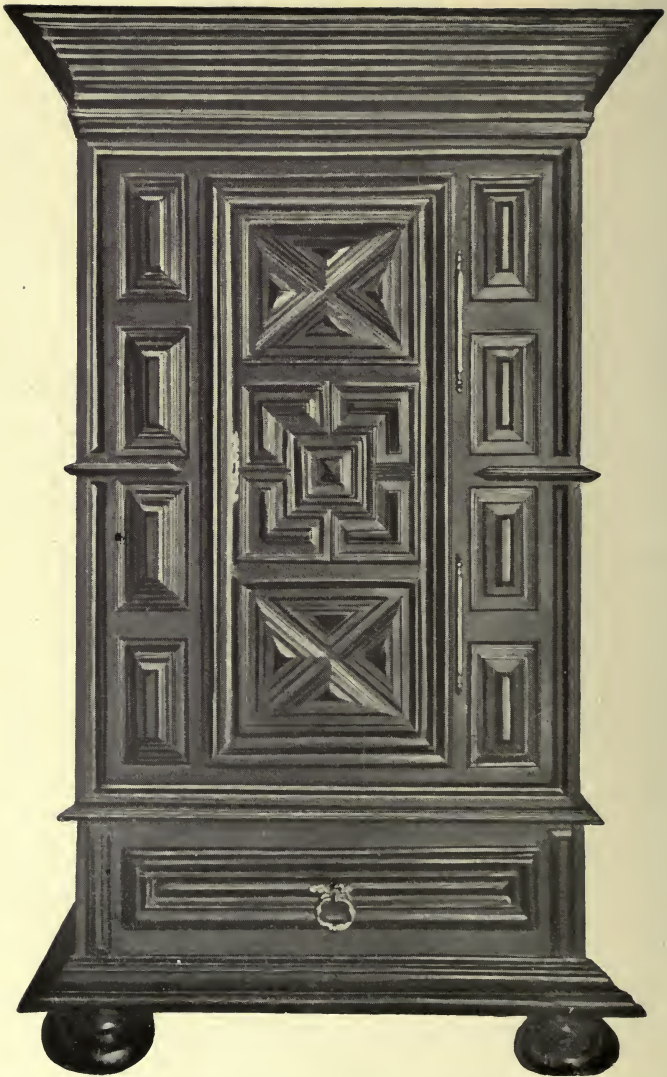


FIG. 48. GASCON CUPBOARD WITH LARGE CORNICE, IN WALNUT,  
PARTLY PAINTED BLACK



FIG. 40. LARGE BURGUNDIAN CUPBOARD WITH DIAMOND POINTS,  
IN WALNUT



FIG. 50. VERY LARGE GASCON CUPBOARD WITH DIAMOND POINTS AND  
TWIST ENGAGED PILLARS

115.526





FIG. 51. LARGE GASCON CUPBOARD WITH DETACHED PILLARS

115,126



FIG. 52. GASCON "BUFFET A VAISSELIER" (DRESSER BUFFET) WALNUT,



FIG. 53. TABLE WITH TWO FLAPS AND TWIST LEGS, IN WALNUT



FIG. 54. TABLE WITH MOULDING ON DRAWER AND TWIST LEGS, IN WALNUT



FIG. 55, BURGUNDIAN TABLE, IN WALNUT

111

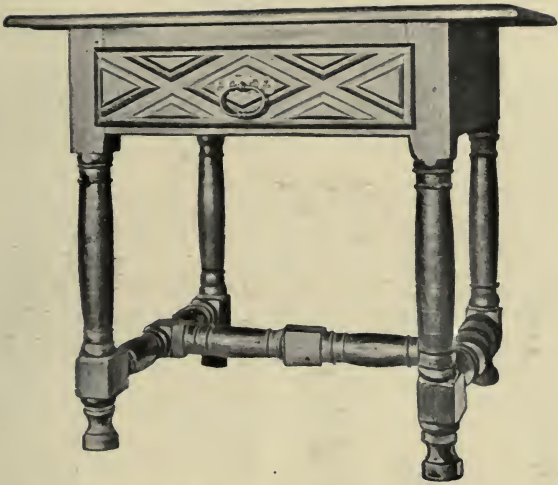


FIG. 56. SMALL TABLE WITH ORNATE DRAWER, IN WALNUT



FIG. 57. BASSET OR SMALL FOLDING TABLE-ESCABEAU, IN WALNUT



FIG. 58. CHERRYWOOD TABLE WITH TURNED BALUSTERS



FIG. 59. TURNED TABLE FROM PROVENCE WITH X-SHAPED STRETCHER,  
IN WALNUT

129 X stretcher nearly always belong to Louis XIV.

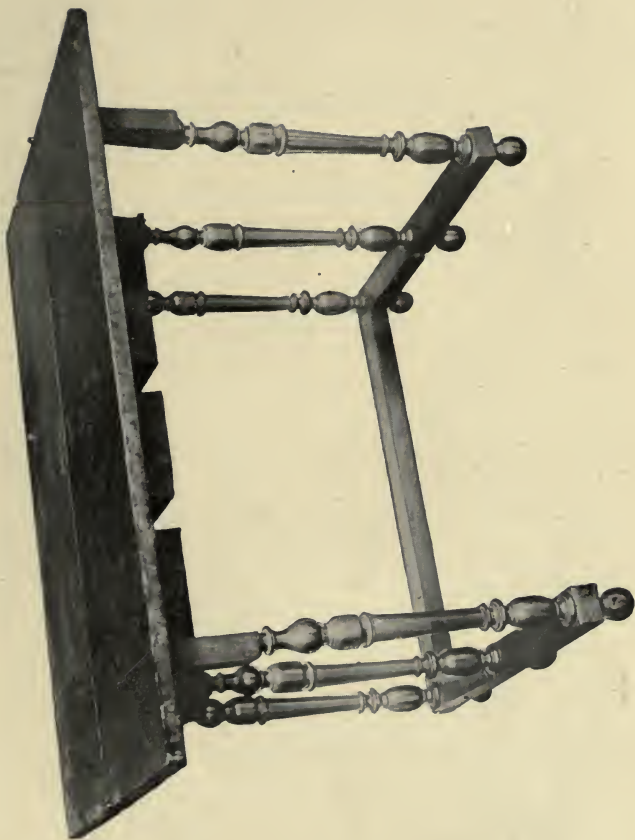


FIG. 60. FOLDING TABLE WITH FOLDING UNDER-FRAME, COLOURED WOOD MARQUETRY

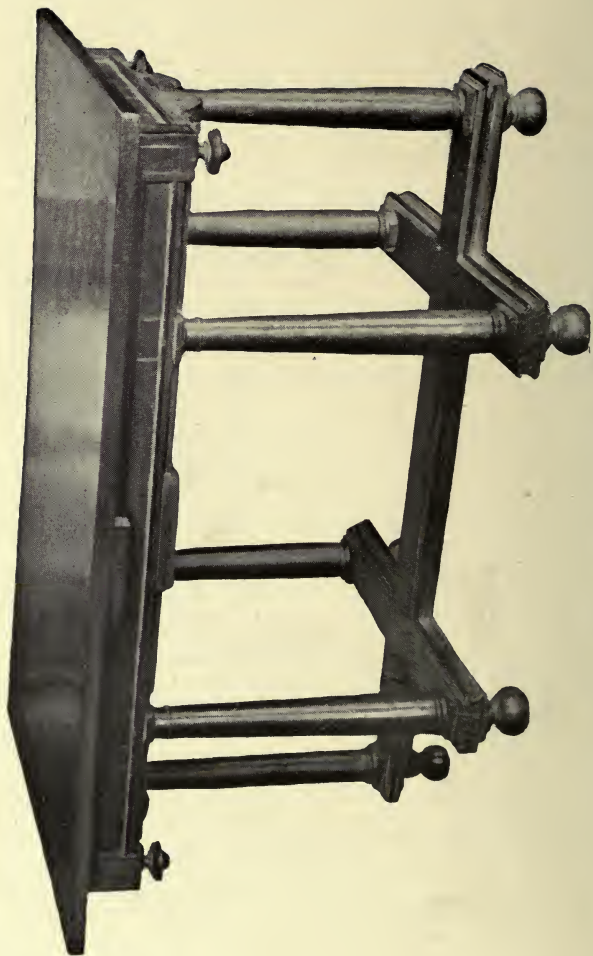


FIG. 61. LARGE TABLE WITH FOLDING UNDER-FRAME, IN OAK



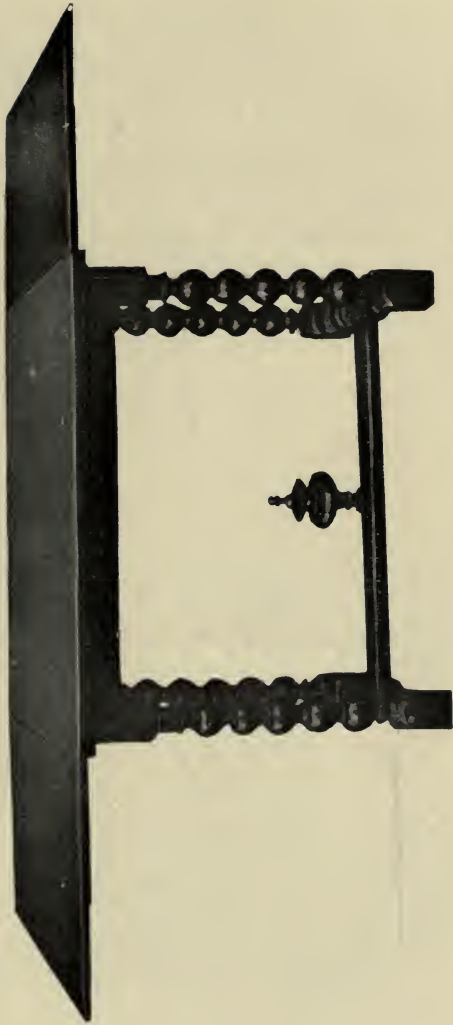


FIG. 62. LARGE FOLDING GAMING TABLE, IN WALNUT

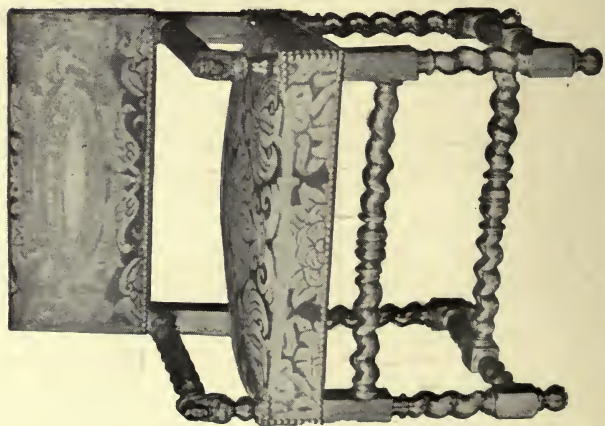


FIG. 63. ARM-CHAIR WITH CARVED BUSTS

135-

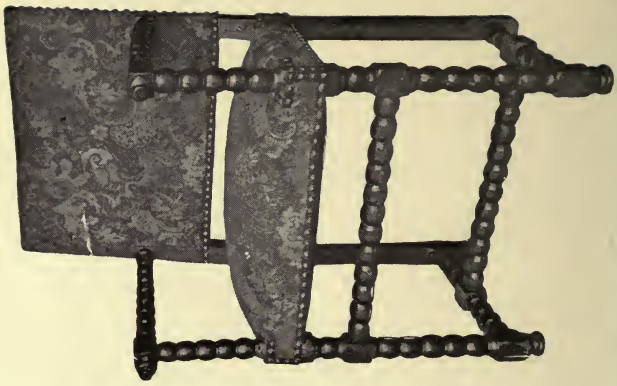


FIG. 64. ARM-CHAIR WITH BEAD TURNINGS  
MODERN COVER

135

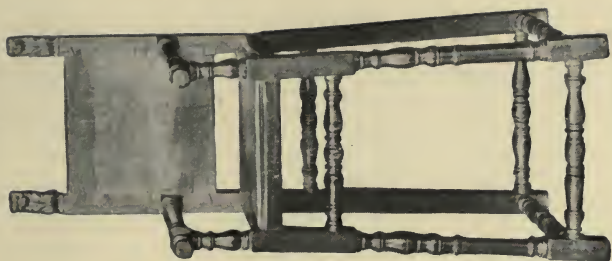


FIG. 66. CHILD'S ARM-CHAIR WITH  
BALUSTER TURNINGS

75

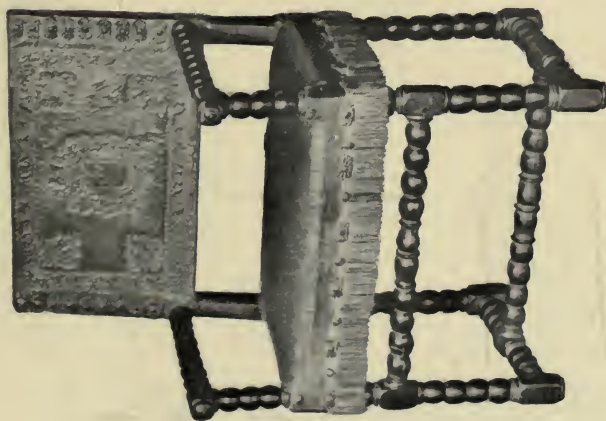


FIG. 65. ARM-CHAIR WITH BEAD TURNINGS, IN  
LEATHER, ORIGINALLY GILDED

105

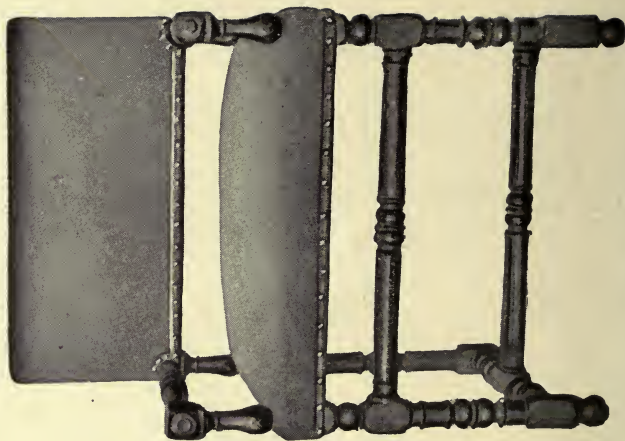


FIG. 68. ARM-CHAIR WITH BALUSTER  
TURNINGS

135

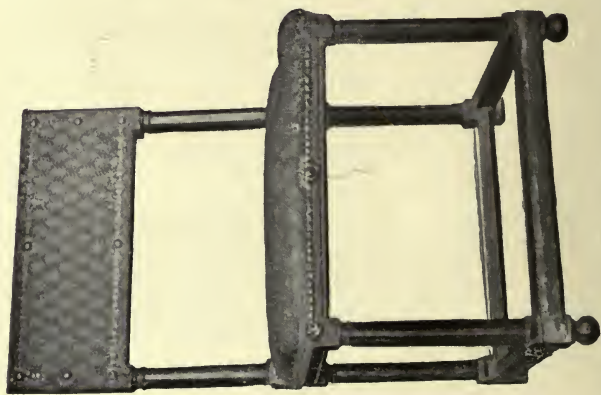


FIG. 67. "VERTUGADIN" CHAIR COVERED  
IN CHASED VELVET

140 125

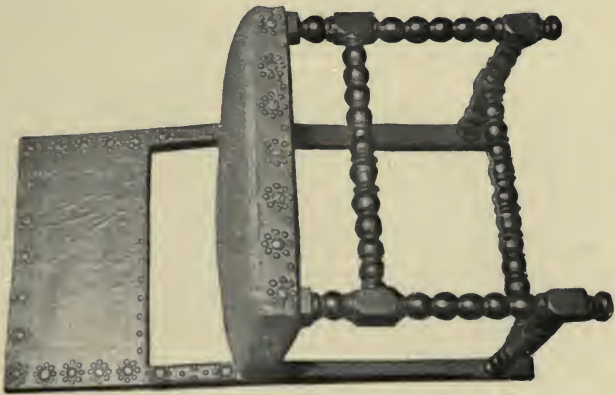


FIG. 69. "VERTUGADIN" CHAIR WITH BEAD  
TURNINGS, UPHOLSTERED IN LEATHER

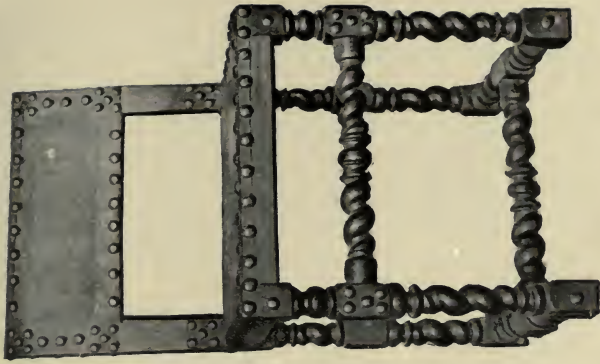


FIG. 70. "VERTUGADIN" CHAIR WITH TWIST LEGS  
STRETCHED WITH LEATHER



FIG. 71. LOW CHAIR WITH HIGH BACK, IN MODERN  
NEEDLEWORK TAPESTRY



FIG. 72. CHAIR WITH BALUSTER TURNINGS, IN  
MODERN NEEDLEWORK TAPESTRY

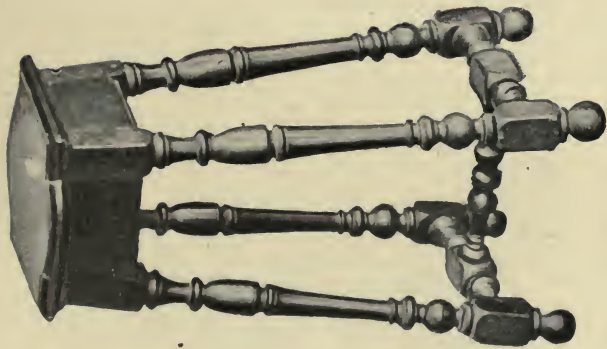


FIG. 73. BASSET STOOL WITH BALUSTER  
TURNINGS



FIG. 74. "VERTUGADIN" CHAIR WITH  
MOVABLE CUSHIONS

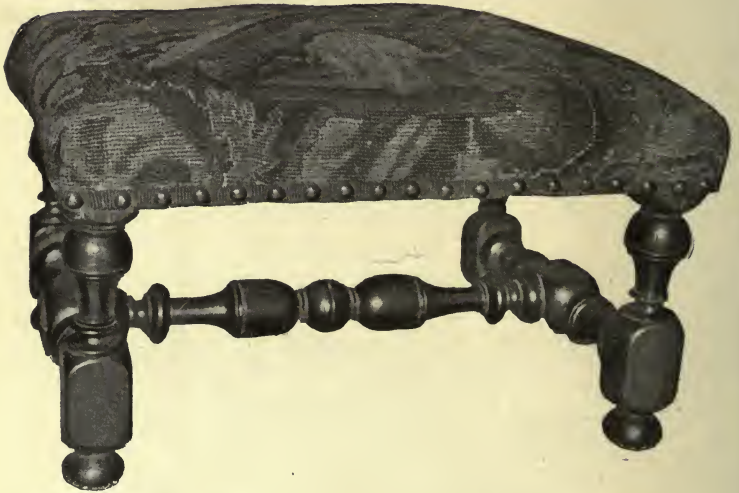


FIG. 75. SOFA, LOUIS XIV PERIOD, MODERN NEEDLEWORK TAPESTRY





FIG. 76. REST-BED WITH MODERN UPHOLSTERY



FIGS. 77 AND 78. FOOTSTOOLS, POINT TAPESTRY

# INDEX-GLOSSARY

- ACANTHUS LEAF, decorative motive, 48, 109
- d'Amboise, Cardinal, 41
- Androuet, Jacques, architect and designer of ornament, 61
- Arabesques, 51
- Archebanc, 24, 25
- Arm-chair, Louis XIII, 135
- Aubriot, Hugues, Provost of Paris, his decree quoted (1371), 14
- Azay-le-Rideau, 48
- BAHUT, 18
- Balloches, Perrin, painter, 13
- Balusters, 57
- Banc à colombes, 4, 25  
tournis, 25
- Bancelle, 25, 82, 83
- Bancs*, Renaissance, 36, 75
- Banderole*, decorative motive, 53
- Basset, 23, 82, 83, 137
- Beaujeu, Anne de, her marquetry table, 40
- Beds, early forms, 23  
Louis XIII, 133  
Mazarin's, 106  
Renaissance, 35, 39, 75  
shut (lits clos), 23
- les Blasons domestiques, poem by Gilles Corrozet, describing a 16th century house, 32-39
- Blois, château of, 46
- Blondel, architect, 109
- Bonaffé, writer on French furniture, 58
- Bosse, Abraham, engraver of Louis XIII period, 134
- Bouge, 17, 27
- Bourbon, Antoine, de, King of Navarre, 66
- Bourdichon, Jean, court painter to Louis XII, 13
- Branchi, Italian lapidary in the service of Louis XIV, 104
- Buffet, Burgundian, 70, 71  
Louis XIII, 127, 128  
Renaissance, 70  
varieties of, 20, 69
- Bureau, 132  
Maréchal Créquy's, in Cluny Museum, 132  
"façon de table," 132, 133
- CABINETS, Catherine de Medici's, 42  
ebony, 99, 100  
elaborateness of, 119, 120  
Flemish, 105, 106  
from Flanders, 43  
"German," 100  
largely imported, 42  
Mazarin's, 103, 104  
new in 1539, 39  
Renaissance, 72-73  
Roannez, duc de, 43  
vogue of, 42
- Caffieri, Filippo, Italian artist, 104
- Camocas,\* a fine silk, generally imported from the Far East, and highly prized in the Middle Ages, 27
- Canapé, 138
- Canaux,\* vertical flutings forming a frieze somewhat like a frieze of triglyphs, 49
- Candélabre*, a Renaissance motive, baluster-shaped and greatly elongated, 46
- Cane, for seats, 144
- Cantonnières,\* part of the hangings of a four-post bed, the strip falling down the outside of the post covering the opening between the curtains, 106

- Caquetoire, 79, 80, 81, 134  
 Carreaux, flat cushions, 85  
 Carving, Burgundian, 59, 60  
   in wood, 59-61  
   under Louis XIII, 91, 92,  
   99, 108  
 Cerceau, du. *See* Androuet  
 Certosina, Italian inlaying in  
   wood with little geometrical  
   designs, 15  
 Chair backs, 78, 79  
   à vertugadin, 79, 81, 82  
   arms, 78, 79  
   caned, 144  
   straw, 144, 145  
 Chaire or chaire, 26, 24  
   à bras, 77, 80, 84, 85, 133, 134  
   à femmes, 77  
   de salle, 77  
   later, 76  
   under François I, 49  
 Chambord, 48  
 de Champagne, Philippe,  
   painter, 90, 91, 145  
 Chute, decorative motive, 51  
 Claire-voie, 11 27  
 Cluny Museum, 10, 45, 132, 141  
 Coffe, à bahut, 18  
   decoration, 8, 9  
   in Cluny Museum, 10  
   in 17th century, 118-119  
   marriage (*corbeille*), 118  
   panelled sides, 7  
   pre-eminence of, 16, 17  
   slow to disappear, 42  
   solid walls, 6  
   the, 6  
   varieties of, 16, 17, 18  
 Consoles d'accotoirs, 136  
 Coquille, decorative motive, 52,  
   109  
 Corrozet, Gilles, author of poem  
   describing a house and its  
   equipment in 1539, 32  
 à Coulombes, bench, 4  
 Credence, 71  
 Cucci, Domenico, Italian artist,  
   104
- Cupboards, 19  
   Louis XIII, 121-128  
   perfection of, in 16th cen-  
   tury, 42  
   "Protestant," 124  
   Renaissance, 67  
   varieties of, 68, 69
- "DAMOYSELLES," 4  
 "Demoiselles à atourner," 4  
 Diamond point, moulding, 115  
   vogue in Gascony, 117  
   vogue in Guienne, 117  
 DRESSOIR. *See* buffet
- EAGLE, decorative motive, 63,  
   110  
 Eagle's foot, decorative motive,  
   110  
 Ebony, 15, 99  
 Ecriteaux, 52  
 Emmeublement, set of hangings  
   and covers for bed, chairs, etc.,  
   all to match, 141  
 Enrichissement, decoration, 52  
 Entrelacs, decorative motive, 52,  
   109  
 Escabeau, 26, 82, 83  
 Escabelle, 82, 83, 137  
   à dos, 137
- FAUDESTEUIL, 24  
 Fauteuil, 133-135  
 Flamboyant style, 46  
 Fontainebleau, 54  
 Forme, 26, 82, 83  
 François I, his bed, with mother  
   of pearl marquetry, 40  
   period of, 47-54  
 Furetière, his dictionary, 71, 80
- GABLE, \* a very pointed species  
   of pediment over doors and  
   windows in the Gothic style, 12  
 Gaillon, château de, 41, 53  
 Garniture for chairs, 83-85, 138-  
   143  
 Gellée, Claude, painter, 90

*Chairs 43, 24,*

- German cabinets, so-called, 100  
 Giacetti, Luigi, Italian lapidary  
 in the service of Louis XIV, 104  
 Golle, Pierre, Dutch cabinet-  
 maker, 105  
 Gothic masterpieces, 45  
 Goujon, Jean, sculptor, 55  
 Gouttières, part of bed hangings,  
 23  
 Grotesques, 46, 47, 51
- HENRI III, period of, 43, 47, 64  
 Henri IV, style, so called, 89  
*Heurtoirs de layettes*, drawer  
 handles, 56  
*Huche*, synonym for *coffre*<sup>1</sup>  
 Huchiers-menuisiers, guild of, 8,  
 14
- ILE-DE-FRANCE, furniture in,  
 58, 60  
 Intarsia, 40  
 Ironwork, 21, 44  
 Italian influence, 101, 102  
 Italian ornament, 45, 46
- KRAUS, HANS, marqueteur to  
 Henri III, 40
- LAPIDARIES, Italian, 104  
*Layette-coulisse*, 21  
 Leather for chairs, 139  
 goat-skin, 139  
*Lectrin*, 22, 23  
 Louis XIII, period of, 89-96, 107-  
 109  
 Louvre, artists lodged in, 97, 98  
 Lozenge, 51
- MACE or Massé, Jean, 101  
*Malle*, 17  
 Marquetry, 101  
 Mascaron, 51  
 Mazarin, a bed belonging to, 106  
 cabinets belonging to, 103,  
 104, 105-106  
 his collection, 102
- Médaille,\* decorative medallion  
 with a head carved in bas-  
 relief, 33, 36, 47, 53  
 de Medici, Catherine, Florentine  
 tables, 43  
 her cabinet, 42  
 Migliorini, Ferdinando and  
 Orazio, Italian lapidaries in  
 the service of Louis XIV, 104  
 Monpensier, Mme. de, her  
*Memoirs* quoted, 119  
 Motives, early, 11-14  
 for embroidery and needle-  
 work, 142, 143  
 gothic, 45-46  
 grotesques, 46  
 Italian, 46  
 Renaissance, 50-54  
 under Louis XIII, 109-110  
 Mollet,\* very short fringe, 143  
 Mouchettes, 12, 45  
 Mouldings, 112-117  
 in Burgundy, 117  
 Louis XIII, 113  
 Louis XIV, 113  
*pointe de diamant*, 115  
*pointes de gâteau*, 116  
 Renaissance, 113  
*tas de sable*, 116  
*Mufle de lion*, decorative motive,  
 63
- LE NAIN, brothers, painters, 91
- "ORBEVOIE," 11, 27  
 d'Orléans, Girard, painter and  
 decorator, 13  
*Oval*, decorative motive, 52, 109
- PANTALEONE, Giovanni Michele,  
 marqueteur to François I, 40  
 Parchemin replié or serviette,  
 "linenfold" decoration, 13  
 le Paultre, Jean, designer, 63, 109  
 Pente,\* a strip of stuff hanging  
 down around the tester of a  
 bed, 106  
 Pilaster, 50, 55

- Placet, 25, 82, 83  
*Plume* decorative motive, 63, 109  
*Pointes de gâteau*, moulding, 116  
 Polychromy in decoration, 12, 44  
   dying out, 39  
*Pomme*, turned motive, 112  
 Poussin, artist, 90  
 Provincial schools of joinery,  
 58-63  
 Putto,\* child's face, an Italian  
 decorative motive
- RENAISSANCE decoration, 50-54  
 Rest bed, 137, 138
- SAINT EUSTACHE, typical Re-  
 naissance church, 48  
 Saint-Germain, 54  
 Sambin, Hugues, huchier, 60, 61  
 Sauval, his *Antiquites de la ville  
 de Paris* quoted, 95, 96  
 Selle, 4, 26, 82, 83  
 Sendal, silk, a kind of thick  
 taffeta, highly esteemed in the  
 Middle Ages, 27  
 Serviette or parchemin replié,  
 13, 27  
 Soubassement,\* the valance  
 round a bed hanging down to  
 the floor, 106  
 Soufflets, 12, 45  
*Stipo*, Italian name for a cabinet,  
 104
- Straw, for chairs, 144, 145  
 Stylobates, bases of pillars, 56  
 le Sueur, painter, 91
- TABOURET, 82, 83  
 Tables, d'attente,\* rectangular  
 panel mount to hold an in-  
 scription, 36  
   extending, 131  
   folding, 130, 131  
   general use, 22  
   Louis XIII, 75, 104, 105, 128-  
   131  
   mosaic, 104  
   *pierres de Florence*, 104  
   Renaissance, 36, 40-42, 73-74,  
   transformation in 16th cen-  
   tury, 41  
*Tas de sable*, moulding, 116  
 Torus,\* round convex moulding,  
 73  
*Toupie*, turned motive, 112  
 Trévoux, his dictionary, 80  
 Tubeuf, the Hôtel, 95, 96  
 Turnery under Louis XIII, 110-  
 112  
   en balustre, 111  
   en chapelet, 110
- UNDER-CUPBOARDS, 127
- VEGETABLES, noble or ignoble,  
 as decorative motives, 48

1028

53

THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF ART.

NK  
2240  
F34  
v.I  
c.2

Ernesta p. 53 - 109. (Museum see 109)  
Pictures p. 83.

Look up doubtful, when first used

- Diamond Point 114
- Corner Cupboards from 18th cent. 129
- ✓ Tables - Louis XIII - 128 @ note
- Coffers 13th cent - 5
- 14 - 6 a
- " framing lab. v. 9
- " use history - 16
- " developed into pieces with doors & drawers 19
- " into buffet & 20 (drawers ± 1470 - 21)
- into bench seats 246

- \* { Dining-room - none in 1650 - 148
- \* { Differentiation of rooms not till 18 cent - 94
- Look up Montpensier's Memoirs - see p. 119
- \* Chairs - 133
- " fixed upholstery - the great change in seats in 17th cent - 138



W  
~~12~~  
6v

1868 5  
1181 1  
1377 95  
1574 0  
177 65

# Panelling in Coffers - like Polychrome  
in Architecture of two cents.  
later - p. 7

The "Rest" parts - the panels are  
as distinguished from the "work"  
parts - the framing. The Rest  
parts decorated the others not. p. 8

Polychromy - 12, 39

Seals - 24

# Chairs - from copper v. 9

House - Renaissance - large windows

x wooden floor 34

Furniture, in Ren., no longer painted 36

Decorations - 16th cent. behind tables  
and 17th cent. 16th.

# Tables - Ren 1550 - v 9 - 41

Other chairs extant from 15th and 16th 43

Furniture waxed & polished instead of  
polychrome - 36, 39 early part

Cabinets new in 17 cent. 39

Ironwork goes from 15th to 17th floor & copper 44

Renaissance panels 47

Cushions of chairs - v 9, 76, 77

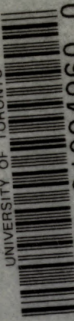
Chair stretchers, v 9 - 78

2. Lenciers ferre, level solution,

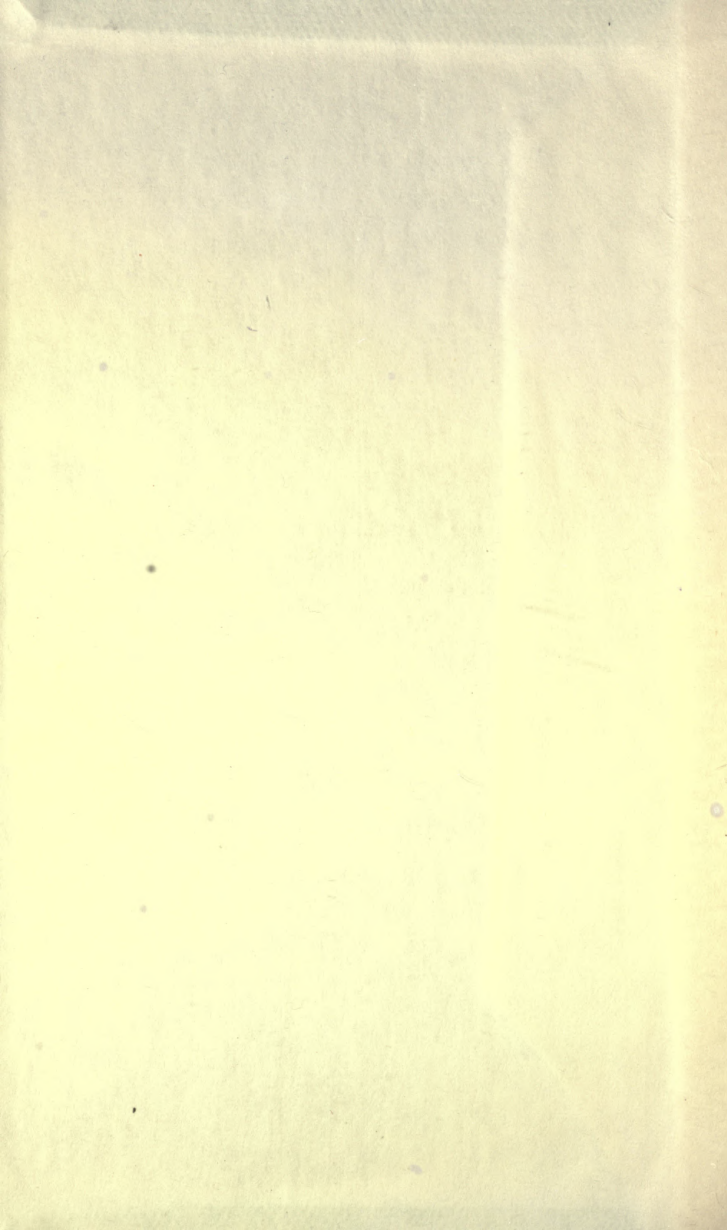
7



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 01094960 0













LITTLE ILLUSTRATED BOOKS ON  
OLD FRENCH FURNITURE

II. FRENCH FURNITURE  
UNDER LOUIS XIV

I

25

893

## FRENCH FURNITURE

- I. FRENCH FURNITURE IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND UNDER LOUIS XIII
- II. FRENCH FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XIV
- III. FRENCH FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XV
- IV. FRENCH FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XVI AND THE EMPIRE

## ENGLISH FURNITURE

*(Previously published)*

- I. ENGLISH FURNITURE UNDER THE TUDORS AND STUARTS
- II. ENGLISH FURNITURE OF THE QUEEN ANNE PERIOD
- III. ENGLISH FURNITURE OF THE CHIPPEN-DALE PERIOD
- IV. ENGLISH FURNITURE OF THE SHERATON PERIOD

Each volume profusely illustrated with full-page reproductions and coloured frontispieces

*Crown 8vo, Cloth, price 4s. 6d. net*

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN, LTD.





LARGE ARM-CHAIR COVERED IN WOOL VELVET  
(End of the Louis XIV style)

LITTLE ILLUSTRATED BOOKS ON  
FRENCH FURNITURE II

FRENCH FURNITURE  
UNDER LOUIS XIV

BY ROGER DE FÉLICE

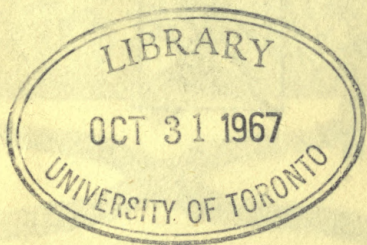
TRANSLATED BY  
F. M. ATKINSON



LONDON MCMXXII  
WILLIAM HEINEMANN, LTD.

*Printed in Great Britain*

NK  
2548  
F36



## INTRODUCTION: SOME SETS OF FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XIV

THE Louis XIV style is one that chance has endowed with a splendid name, *Louis Quatorze*. . . . Those sonorous, sumptuous syllables, as rich as the gold of the Gallery of Mirrors at Versailles, are they not in themselves completely expressive? If the Louis XV style was to express a whole society of voluptuous refinement, the Louis XIV style is verily the style of the King. It was to satisfy his taste, to express his mind, to titillate his pride and to proclaim his glory that Le Brun and Le Pautre devised their pompous decorations, that Perrault and Mansard marshalled their columns and raised their cupolas, that Le Nostre planted his alleys on lines meted out by stretched cords, that the Kellers founded bronze, that Domenico Cucci and Claude Ballin chased precious metals, that André-Charles Boulle cunningly wedded brass and tortoise shell with ebony in the Louvre, and at the Gobelins the lapidaries matched the stones of Florence, the cabinet-makers put together their ingenious cabinets, the silver-smiths made tables and pots for orange trees out of solid silver, the tapestry workers wove their enormous hangings stitch by stitch, while at

Tourlaville the glass workers made mirrors larger and clearer than those of Venice.

Whole volumes might be written on the Louis XV and Louis XVI styles without even a mention of the princes whose names they bear, but this would be quite impossible with the style we are about to discuss in this little book. Although he had not, whatever that sharp-tongued Saint Simon may say, "a mind rather below the average," Louis the Great was quite ordinary in intelligence and was furthermore extremely ignorant, two defects that he redeemed in the exercise of his vocation as king by dint of good will, application, and hard work; he was not, as we would say, much of an artist—and he clearly proved this on the day when, in order to remedy the distressed state of his finances, he decided with equal absurdity and magnanimity to melt down all his prodigious store of plate, whose bullion value was nothing in comparison with its artistic value, while he kept his diamonds—but he insisted on deciding everything, and always made some alteration in the designs submitted to him. He had of course his own personal taste, which Colbert consulted and which Le Brun, who shared it, contrived to impose upon the artists of every kind who worked under his absolute domination. What was specially dear to this *super-man*, who, as Mlle. de Scudéry says, "when playing billiards retained the demeanour befitting the master of the world," was majesty and grandeur allied



with sumptuousness; and also symmetry and regularity; qualities which, as we shall see, are the fundamental characteristics of the style to which he has given his name.

The best artists and craftsmen, then, worked to the orders of the King, who continually needed new furniture for his royal mansions of the Louvre, Saint-Germain, Fontainebleau, Marly; they worked for the princes of the blood, for the Ministers of State. This engrossed all, or nearly all, their output; they were taken away from their guilds and brigaded at the Gobelins or the Louvre, where they were subjected to a rigid discipline. The great nobles, the wealthy financiers, the high magistrates, imitated the Court according to their means, but were obliged to fall back upon second rank purveyors and on less precious materials. Their furniture is none the less in the same style as that made for the King, all blazing with magnificence.

If we come down one degree lower, and try to make acquaintance with the homes of the well-to-do bourgeoisie or gentlemen with good broad lands, as they are disclosed in the inventories made after their owners' death and in the reports on the affixing of seals on property, which inventories have been preserved in great numbers and in some cases published, and are the most authentic sources of information on this subject, do we always find furniture of the Louis XIV style? We come too often on tables or arm-

chairs à *piliers tors* or à *colonnes torses* to feel quite certain of it. In reality the joiners continued generally to make for what was called "*la noblesse distinguée*,"<sup>1</sup> people in military or civil employment, rich traders, propertied middle class folk," plain undisguised Louis XIII furniture, even down to the time when the supplier shapes of the Regency and the Louis XV period were imposed upon them. Better still, in more than one region, but especially in Guienne and in Gascony, they continued throughout the whole of the eighteenth century to make, alongside of the great Louis XV linen cupboards with S-shaped pediment, the cupboards with four doors with panels decorated with "diamond points," known as "cabinets" in those provinces.<sup>2</sup>

One or two of these inventories, which convey so rich an impression of vivid reality, will allow us to penetrate into the homes of this middle class of the seventeenth century.

Shall we first of all enter the house of Messire Jean de Layat, former Treasurer-General of the King's Household? This is in the rue de Cléry, close to the Porte Saint-Denis, which is still all white, for we are in the year 1686. M. de Layat is wealthy: a year ago he sold his office

<sup>1</sup> Intermediate between the *haute noblesse* and the country squires, who were often very poor.

<sup>2</sup> We must not, however, exaggerate: many cupboards whose simplicity shows that they were meant for middle class use have also, as we shall see in the second part of this volume, the two doors, the straight cornice, the plain panels, and other characteristics besides, that belong undoubtedly to the Louis XIV style and the same may be said of several types of seats.

for a high price, and he possesses somewhere around 400,000 livres, or about two million francs in present-day money. And yet, perhaps a trifle mean, or exceedingly prudent, he has only an establishment very far below his condition. His house is small, inconvenient, comprising very few rooms arranged in the old-fashioned way.

In the stables we have two horses "with long tails"; in the coach-house a *carrosse coupé* with six plate glass windows "in the Venetian style": a modest equipage. On the ground floor are M. de Layat's cabinet and the lower hall. In the cabinet the Treasurer-General used to receive callers on business, seated in an arm-chair covered with green cloth before his walnut bureau with five drawers. Upon the bureau was a writing desk of painted wood; for the visitors there were seven chairs with twisted legs covered in plain *moquette*; adorning the chimney-piece six alabaster figures, some porcelain cups and some large shells, as fashion demanded. Ranged along the foot of the wall stand the books: no great reader is M. de Layat, for there are just seventy-nine all told, five of them folios, and most of them pious works. No hangings. All this is very modest: M. de Layat would not like anyone seeing his furniture to imagine that he has made a big fortune in the King's service; and it would distress him exceedingly that we should know that this chest in the corner is a strong box in which there lie many a bag of louis, of pistoles, gold crowns and Spanish doubloons.

In the lower hall adjoining we see the first hint of the dining-room that will not come into general use for a score of years, for it is furnished with an oval table made of deal, on folding legs, with its green serge cover and six beechwood chairs with twisted uprights, covered with moquette and stuffed with flock.

Let us now go upstairs. As we cross the antechamber we see between walls hung with a German tapestry containing human figures, two tables covered with Turkey carpet, four chairs covered with tulip-patterned moquette, and we guess that M. and Mme. de Layat are fond of a game of three-handed ombre in the chimney corner with some old friend; for here is a triangular card-table covered with green serge standing on its twisted walnut pillars. Let us lift the imitation (*cafart* \*)<sup>1</sup> damask door curtain lined with green linen and pass into the "petite chambre." Here is where the owners of the house sleep, in "two little beds, very plain," so plain that the inventory does not describe them. On the wall there is a mirror in a black frame. The table, walnut with ebony filleting, is accompanied by two round tables for candlesticks or girandoles; two arm-chairs are covered with flowered velvet, four others are of carved walnut; a cabinet, which contains Mme. de Layat's jewels, her knick-knacks, her lace, and a few curiosities, is a rather elegant piece; it is "marquetry in pewter, ebony and tortoise-shell,

<sup>1</sup> The asterisk refers to the index at the end of the volume.

and composed of two *guichets*<sup>1</sup> and nine drawers."

A "passage serving as a vestibule" brings us to the state-room. Hung with Flemish *verdure* tapestry with small figures, it is furnished with five arm-chairs and five ordinary chairs; four paintings on canvas were not considered worthy of having the subjects or the artists mentioned.

This state-room is the salon, and also, when friends have been invited, the dining-room; but no one sleeps in it, except perhaps, on occasion, some distinguished guest. The bed is the first thing to draw our eyes: immense, beplumed, overladen with draperies, it is a *couche a bas piliers*, an "angel" bed; it has *bonnes graces*\* and *cantonnières*,\* and four large curtains of pink damask with big white flowers; the *pentes*\* of the tester, the great bed end and the curving end (*chantourné*),\* the three pieces of the valance (*soubassement*),\* the counterpane, are all white satin, embroidered here "with several different designs in gold and silk," and there "with silk twist." No fringes, a plain *molet*\* of imitation gold. The tester is crowned with four knobs covered with damask and satin, adorned with tufts of white ostrich feathers. If we pull back the counterpane we shall find a coverlet made of alternate squares of China satin and chintz. We need not be surprised to see in the house of these old people a bed with such delicate

<sup>1</sup> A very small cupboard with two doors, surrounded with drawers.

and tender colouring : it is the custom of the times.

A handsome oval table in the new fashion is made of red Languedoc marble, edged with black marble, and set on its base with six columns of carved wood, painted azure and relieved with gilding ; two gilded round tables match with it. The sofa of carved wood painted cedar colour is equipped with a mattress and two bolsters of striped brocade ; a valance with silk fringe falls to the very floor ; the same brocade covers the six arm-chairs “ of lacquered wood, azure ” that are ranged, three to the right, three to the left, on each side of the bed. A small chair contents itself with a modest dress of *moquette*.

The walls display three large tapestries from Auvergne<sup>1</sup> with figures. Near the bed there is a wooden crucifix on a background of black velvet with a gilded frame, and a mirror with its frame of plate glass with plaques, corners, capital and other ornaments of gilt brass, both hanging by gold cords. Besides these there are a portrait of the King, painted on canvas after M. Mignard ; a *Family of Darius* on canvas “ after the print by M. Le Brun ” ; and again, set on its console-table, a chiming clock “ made by a Paris workman,” with its case of marquetry on tortoise-shell, decorated with brass pilasters and vases. Lastly, the chimney-piece boasts a set of ornaments displayed on miniature consoles : two vases made of ostrich eggs mounted in silver,

1 Aubusson or Felletin.

two others made of cocoanuts on silver feet, three large shells of mother of pearl, and eighteen little cups of Chinese porcelain.

Now let us visit old M. Nicolas Boileau, one of the Forty of the Académie Française. He is the most home-keeping of men: born in the court of the Palais, at the foot of the Sainte Chapelle, he is now, at three score and ten, living, as he will die, in the shadow of the cathedral, "the Notre Dame cloisters." We are prone to imagine this crusty bachelor, who never was anyone's lover but the Muses', breathing the dust of his aged folios in profound disdain of all the refinements and elegancies of life. How far from the truth! The smartest men in society delight to frequent his company; in old days he used to have the Dukes de Vivonne and de Vitry to supper; even now he has for visitors the greatest swells at court, the Marquis de Termes or M. de Ponchartrain the younger, the secretary of state for naval affairs. Without being very rich, this bourgeois among bourgeois has ample means, and we know the scorn and contempt he flings at poets less well off than himself. In his presses he has plate to the value of five thousand livres and more; in his stable "two black coated mares, with tail, mane and ears undocked, of eight years or thereabouts," who draw him to his house at Auteuil in "a carosse coupé, with braces and springs, and three plate glass windows, lined within with slate coloured cloth, the outside with an edging of

aurora coloured silk fringe, with cushion and curtains." His house in reality is as well furnished and equipped as that of the very M. de Layat who not so long ago, as Treasurer of the King's household, regulated the quarterly payment of the pension the poet received from his Majesty.

The antechamber is very plain, though the walls are adorned with six high narrow lengths of tapestry in "verdure d'Auvergne," representing animals; but his own chamber is of an "exquisite niceness." This is hung with white and crimson damask, in wide alternate stripes, there is a portière of the same, while the window, as is customary, has only a curtain of white linen. A crystal chandelier hangs in the middle of the room, four girandoles on mirror plaques complete the lighting: a large handsome mirror in its "border" also of mirror glass, with a capital, and a little pier-glass with gilded frame, help to brighten the room. This Despréaux is a strange person, a real original character: he has an exceedingly handsome bed, and all to sleep in himself! Indeed there isn't another bed in his house, except the modest pallets of his servants. This bed is a four-poster, made of walnut, and its curtains, tester and head are silver moire and green damask embroidered with gold flowers, in stripes; the *cantonnières*, *bonnes graces*, *pentés* and the four knobs are crimson velvet edged with gold galoon; other large light curtains covering the first are of crimson taffeta; the



counterpane is silver moire with a wide border of green damask, embroidered with flowers in silk and gold. A very gay room is this, with all these silks of dazzling hues : in these days there is no shrinking from setting complementary colours side by side. Two armchairs, five ordinary chairs and a stool are of walnut wood and crimson velvet, a small sofa and two armchairs of gilded wood are covered in brocade embroidered with flowers in silver. Of the three tables one, and three *guéridons* as well, is of marquetry in coloured woods, the second is walnut parcel gilt, the last is a writing table of wild cherry. In the fireplace there are great fire dogs with brass knobs. Lastly, the chiming clock in its case of brass and tortoise-shell marquetry is a very handsome piece, it will figure by itself in the inventory, after its owner's death, at a sum equal to that set down for all the chairs together, as much as the plate glass mirror, which is assessed at half the value of the bed.

Opening out of his own chamber the "Lawgiver of Parnassus" has three rooms or cabinets. The one in which he works has walls of painted wainscoting. In front of his bureau, made of walnut veneer, equipped with numerous drawers, is the black morocco arm-chair in which the old poet sits, snugly wrapped about with an "Armenian robe of scarlet cloth, with gold button-holes, lined with skins." The other seats, an arm-chair and an ordinary chair of turned wood, and two carved chairs, are covered in

tapestry of "Turkish"\* stitch. An oak table is hidden by a cover of green cloth, and carries two little Chinese coffers or caskets made of wood. The books marshal their tawny gilded backs on eight shelves made of deal and edged with green cloth; in front of the fireplace is a screen filled with green damask, on the walls, on their brackets, two busts of bronzed plaster (doubtless Aristotle and Horace?), a chiming clock in its marquetry case, not so valuable as that in the bed-chamber, and another little clock, "an alarm with weights and cords." Here is a gentleman whose hours are well governed! The mantelpiece carries on its shelf and its little brackets the inevitable set of ornaments; forty-five pieces of Chinese porcelain, bottles, cups, saucers and other things, two lions on their delft feet, four "pieces of painted earthenware" and four little brass busts.

The second cabinet is less severe. It has two windows, and is hung with white and flame-coloured damask; it contains the greater part of the books, in three low "bookcase" cupboards with two doors adorned with a trellis of brass wire: one of these is a handsome piece, in marquetry of brass on ebony, the others are plainer, made of cedar and of walnut. These are pieces of furniture greatly in fashion, quite recently invented: for all his great age Despréaux can be no enemy to novelties. Like all his contemporaries, from bishops to kings, his eyes gladly find diversion in the fantastic works of the Far

East. Here is a cabinet of Chinese lacquer with little drawers, and porcelain everywhere : sixteen pieces on the chimney-piece mingled with ten pieces of "fayance d'Hollande."<sup>1</sup> A *braizier*<sup>2</sup> of well-polished copper stands on its iron base, and there is an oak table covered with a Turkey carpet and carrying a brass spy-glass, various coffers and writing desks. The seats are of many-coloured tapestry in Turkey stitch, and there is a mirror framed in gilt wood. The windows have double curtains, one of white linen, the other of cherry-coloured damask lined with taffeta. Here also there are fine warm colours everywhere.

Finally, in the last cabinet, with no fireplace, whose walls are covered with a commonplace Bergamo<sup>3</sup> tapestry with big stripes laden with flowers, a walnut cupboard in two parts with four doors, turned chairs covered with Bruges satin,\* a walnut table with a serge cover bordered with flame-coloured damask, a coffer of leather studded with nails ; a mirror with frame and top of walnut and with copper plaques ; and lastly, a wash-basin and salver of faience, both handsome and rare pieces, for they will be set down at thirty livres, a considerable sum at the moment we are considering. The cupboard in this cabinet will be valued merely at ten livres.

Let us add, throughout these five rooms, forty-

1 Of Delft.

2 Brasero.

3 Coarse, common tapestry, originally imported from Bergamo, but then made at Rouen.

two pictures on canvas and on wooden panels, of which we have, unluckily, no details, but which are mainly landscapes. Such was the simple, but snug and, on the whole, elegant furniture of a celebrated writer in 1710.

Now we shall betake ourselves, in the slow, picturesque way that Mme. de Sévigné will describe later, to the borders of Brittany and Maine, and by the help of some "time machine" carry ourselves fifty years backwards; and here we are at the Château de Vitré, the home of the Duc de la Tremoille. We shall not follow at every step the official charged with the duty of making an inventory of the furniture, for the mansion, which is one of the big seats of the province, contains more than eighty halls, chambers, cabinets and clothes-closets or wardrobes. Here the furnishing has some claim to pomp and splendour; in Paris it would perhaps bring a pitying smile to the faces of smart society, but at Vitré it is truly princely.

The important apartments are the "great chamber of Monseigneur," the "great chamber of Madame," and the "little chamber of Madame." The first two are of imposing dimensions, and Monseigneur's is hung with a high-warp tapestry with figures, the *Story of Jonah*, and embellished with two pictures of religious subjects. A large Turkey<sup>1</sup> carpet covers the middle of the paved floor; the bed is all in

<sup>1</sup> In the seventeenth century this name was given indiscriminately to all Oriental carpets.

crimson damask and taffeta ; the seats (two arm-chairs, two without arms, and six folding stools) and the screen display the same damask, a small day-bed is in blue damask. Two folding screens, each of six "doors," of red serge with gilt nails, struggle as best they can against the draughts ; two candlestick-carrying round tables are of wood, painted blue, with gilding. The two tables are oak, and very plain.

Madame's great chamber is much like Monseigneur's : tapestry hangings in nine sections, eight of which represent fountains and landscapes, and the ninth the labours of Hercules ; a Turkey carpet on the floor ; a great bed of crimson damask and velvet ; two chairs with arms, a small arm-chair,<sup>1</sup> four chairs without arms and six folding stools in the same velvet ; two bench seats, their wood painted red, and with loose covers of a serge of the same colour. Here there are three tables, one of which is ebony with four pillar legs ; two *guéridons* or candle-holders are painted the colour of ebony. A large ebony cabinet opens with two "windows" and two "layettes," as drawers are still called. The mirror is framed in ebony and hung on red silk cords. In the huge funnelled fireplace there are great fire-dogs with brass knobs. It is not, we must confess, a very feminine room : we are still

<sup>1</sup> What is the difference between a *chaise à bras* and a *fauteuil* ? About 1660 the *fauteuil* is a seat with arms and a low back, as in the time of Louis XIII, and doubtless dating from that time, while the *chaise à bras* has a high back. Presently all chairs with arms will be called arm-chairs.

very close to the somewhat sullen austerity of the Louis XIII style.

Madame's little chamber, the one she really lives in, is more engagingly attractive. Its hangings are a fresh brocatelle with a blue ground and fawn-coloured flowers "with white edges"; the draperies of the bed are white velvet with little blue checks, lined with white taffeta, and with gold and silver fringes; four chairs and six folding stools are of the same velvet, and there is a large chair with arms mounted on wheels for hours when Madame is ailing. The satin screen shows the same colours as the hangings, fawn-coloured flowers on a blue ground, two tall blue screens with six leaves allow an intimate corner to be arranged for reading, embroidery, or gossip with the ladies of Vitré, Mlle. du Plessis, that funny Mlle. de Kerbone and that comical Mlle. de Kerquoison, whom roguish Mme. de Sévigné<sup>1</sup> calls Kerborgne and Croque-Oison, or even at times the amiable Marquise herself.

The chamber is not very small, for it contains three tables besides, one of which is "folded in triangle shape," and a large coffer of red leather, decorated with gilt nails.

In the other rooms, the "*cabinet aux devises de Madame*," the cabinet of Monseigneur's portraits, the "cabinet of M. Le Blancq, Monseigneur's secretary," there are some pieces of furniture that deserve a glance; a mirror framed

<sup>1</sup> Her chateau des Rochers is a league and a half from Vitré; and she even has a house in Vitré itself, the "Tour de Vitré."

in ebony and seven silver plaques; a "semi-circular seat serving as a day-bed, covered in green *mocade*,"\* with its head-piece in the same *mocade*," which is assuredly nothing else than, sixty years before its time, the "gondola" chaise-longue of the following century; many painted pieces, a green table, a red cupboard, a green cupboard, a little dresser of painted wood with yellow mouldings, a straw chair, the wooden part of which is green. Lastly, in the "new chamber," the *emmeublement*\* of mourning: the bed of black velvet, damask and taffeta, which is brought into one or other of the great chambers when a death in the family calls for "draping" as a sign of grief.

Let us take another journey across space and time. We are now in 1701, in Languedoc, in the Chateau de Brisis, which belongs to the Vicomte d'Hérail de Brisis, who has just died. He was one of those small country squires that make up almost the whole mass of the French nobility and are the solid backbone of the King's armies. It often happens that they are poorer than many a farmer, and that they are driven to sell their last patch of land and become labourers or vine dressers in others' service—simple villeins. The Hérails de Brisis are far from such extremity; they represent pretty fairly the average provincial gentlefolk. And they are not mere bucolic gentry, for one room in the mansion is entitled "the chamber in which the gentlemen of the house pursue their studies."

Maitre Joseph Delacroix, doctor of law, lawyer and commissary deputed by the Seneschal of Nîmes, makes out the inventory of the deceased man's property. He finds in the kitchen cupboard—M. d'Hérail had no other dining-room—some small pieces of silver: a ewer with its basin, six forks, six spoons, two small salt cellars and two candlesticks. But the stable is not too well equipped: one black horse and an old one-eyed mule. Of the twelve rooms of the dwelling house the hall, the small hall, the chambers and cabinets, two only are equipped with hangings, one with old *bergame*, the other with *ligature*; <sup>1</sup> the seven beds are draped merely with serge, red or green or yellow, or sealing wax colour; the seats are comparatively numerous, as is always the case in these country homes: there are over a hundred, but not an arm-chair among them. More than half of these chairs are all wood with no other trimmings; eighteen are straw chairs, twenty-one are covered with moquette, and only six of them with "old needlework tapestry." There are eleven small tables, some walnut, the others deal, or painted black. Four of those great cupboards that have been made in the provinces for some two score years, and which in the South of France are known as wardrobes, hold clothes and linen; they are made of chestnut. Let us add two small cupboards of greater antiquity, an old dresser, an old cabinet and—

<sup>1</sup> A common stuff, generally in a pattern of small checks, woven of wool and linen thread.



the only items that belong to a simple luxury—two guéridons, a small cabinet with drawers, a small mirror and a few “little curios by way of ornaments.” That is all. Now Maitre Joseph Delacroix has forgotten nothing, seeing that having opened the door of a little room he went so far as to dictate to his clerk the following: “*Item.* Another chamber at the side—apples, fresh chestnuts and onions.”

And the plain country folk . . . what furniture did they have under Louis XIV? The answer is simple: they had, in a manner of speaking, none at all. Is this, as we are almost always told in books, through their extreme poverty and distress? The point deserves a little examination. We most frequently form our opinion of the peasants' condition in the seventeenth century from three kinds of documentary evidence, namely, from pictorial documents, which are practically confined to four or five pictures by the brothers Le Nain, as many by Sebastian Bourdon, and certain engravings of Callot; secondly, from certain literary texts, which are always the same, La Fontaine's *Death and the Woodman*, the celebrated phrase of La Bruyère about “certain wild animals, male and female, scattered about the countryside,” and a letter or two of Gui Patin; and lastly, from more precise documents in the shape of the administrative correspondence of the intendants with the Comptrollers-General, the *Memorandum of the King's Commissaries on the distress of the*

people, the *Detail de la France* by Bois-Guillebert, and Vauban's *Dîme royale*.

These last named sources of information have a quite different value from the first. The Le Nains are intensely and admirably sincere and honest, but the peasant of their depicting is the peasant of a province that had been terribly trampled over by the men of war for several generations, and their pictures are prior to 1648. In any case, the famous *Repas des paysans* in the Louvre<sup>1</sup> shows us two beggars who are assuredly very wretchedly poor, but the vine-dressers who are offering them the bread and wine of hospitality are very comfortably off: they have a well furnished bed, quite "bourgeois" in style and standard, a window with little leaded panes that is little less than a luxury article, and their son is playing the violin. Callot and Bourdon are the least veracious of artists, and Callot gives us no information except for the period of Louis XIII. La Fontaine does not pretend to put forward his woodman as a type of the peasant of France. La Bruyère's passage is admirable in its eloquence, and rivals in beauty Millet's *Man with the Hoe*, but must be taken cautiously just because it is so intent on its effect. The King's Commissaries, d'Aguesseau and d'Ormesson, bear valuable testimony to the horrible distress that reigned at the moment of their enquiry (1687) through Maine and the Orléans country, but a close reading will show

1 In the La Caze room.

that they are describing a state of poverty that has only been in existence for a very little while. As for the testimony of that supremely honest fellow de Vauban, in 1707, we have to acknowledge that it is most afflicting.

But there is in existence a whole category of documents still more unexceptionable—the inventories from which we have already drawn so largely. If we run through these we find quite a different face on the matter. From these we discover, not without some astonishment, from one end of the realm to the other, a very large number of peasant families living, if not in affluence, at least in a condition far removed from indigence; and this more markedly at the close of the reign, in spite of the disastrous wars, the passage of troops to and fro, the continual levies of men and of taxes, the times of dearth, the dreadful winter of 1709. This fact is especially striking if we do not lose sight of the extreme simplicity of manners prevailing at this period, except in the very highest classes of society. The peasant was to grow rich under Louis XV especially, but he had begun already in the middle of the preceding reign.

Labourers and vine dressers have a little pewter ware, and even a silver cup to relish their wine; they have linen, sometimes in great store; their women spend comparatively lavishly on their toilette. They very often have a “skirt of violet serge with a bodice of red-flowered satin, with its sleeves of red serge,” a “skirt of red cloth

with a bodice of brocade” or of damask. The wife of a labourer in Champagne has in her chest : “ first, a skirt of purple serge with bodice of orange damask, trimmed with guipure and silk lace ; second, a skirt of fustian with its bodice of green-flowered damask, with two ribbons for shoulder straps ; third, another petticoat of red London serge, with bodice of orange damask trimmed with guipure below and lace above.” We are very far removed here from the rags that draw tears of grief and pity from historians such as Michelet.

These contradictions can be reconciled. At this period, when the circulation of wealth is so sluggish, one province may very well be suffering from extreme scarcity while another is enjoying a certain prosperity ; and passing causes—a bitter winter, a drought, a cattle plague—may bring about a few years of famine ; but from year to year, good or bad, Jacques Bonhomme’s comfort goes on increasing little by little.

Certainly it is not by the possession of furniture somewhat pleasing to the eye, or even moderately convenient that this humble ease of circumstances is displayed. The peasant has a coffer or two, sometimes iron bound and with lock and key, sometimes of leather studded with nails ; a cupboard with two doors ; *marchepieds* or steps to his bed that serve as chests, in which he stows away his clothes ; benches or rude stools for the only seats ; no tables : a table is improvised at need by fixing a plank on two trestles, or on casks cut in two and turned over, or on stools.

A luxury gift he will make to his wife after a fine harvest, and if the tax collector has not been too greedy, is a small mirror framed in black wood, or a religious wood engraving all brightened up with fine colours. But for the most part he behaves like everybody else, clown or gentleman, like the King himself at Versailles; where furniture is concerned everything else is sacrificed to the bed. Here is what we find in a labourer's house in 1716, "a tall pillared bed, with eight pieces of green serge with silk fringes and *mollets*"; with a peasant of Nogent-sur-Marne in 1672, "a coverlet of red ratine trimmed with silk lace and bordered with silk," etc.

The very precise and detailed inventory of the goods of a village dame in the neighbourhood of Paris, a widow at Issy, in 1665, is interesting to analyse. At her death her furniture comprised an oaken kneading trough, an oak chest with lock and key; a bed with a "*custode*<sup>1</sup> and *bonnes graces*," four straw chairs; "a middle-sized mirror with black frame." The whole is valued at eighty-eight livres, fifty-five for the bed by itself. The household linen is worth twenty-one livres; the body linen and clothes ninety-eight livres; and household utensils come to fifty-five livres. We must not be astonished at these modest sums: let us not forget that Boileau's magnificent bed which we have described was only set down at eighty livres.

From this glance into the châteaux, houses

and cottages of olden days we can come to the conclusion that the man of the end of the seventeenth century, as a general rule, takes little thought for the beauty or convenience of the articles that surround his private life—the famous state bed being a matter of vanity—and that he assigns to his furniture a very inferior share in his budget of expenses even as he does in his pre-occupations, and that what he is above all susceptible to is the beauty of fabrics. We have, in short, met with few simple pieces of furniture that can be declared to be of the Louis XIV style. And as for peasant furniture, we have either seen none, or it was so coarsely and rudely made of ill-planed planks roughly knocked together that before long it served for firewood. Are we then to stop at this point, and refrain from writing this little book, which, in talking of Louis XIV furniture, sets before itself the aim, most modest and overweening at the same time, to be practical and to leave on one side the furniture of museums and of the mansions of multi-millionaires? No, indeed, for if we but search a little we still find pieces of furniture—except perhaps tables—that are simple and that really possess the characteristics of this style; and as Louis XIV pieces do not at this moment enjoy the amazing vogue which everything Louis XV and Louis XVI now has, it is often possible to acquire them more cheaply, though they are much more rare. And then we are to discuss the Regency style: now, the first

quarter of the eighteenth century is the period in which comfort is born, when dwellings, like manners, begin to be very like our own; when, in short, the manufacture of "bourgeois" furniture suddenly spreads and develops throughout the whole kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

I We must here express our sincere gratitude to the amateurs and the directors of museums who have been so kind as to permit us to reproduce the furniture in their possession or under their care: Mesdames Dumoulin, Dupuy, Egan, de Flandreysy, Moutet; Baron de la Chaise, Messieurs Boulley, Boymier, de Brugière de Belrieu, Cérésolle, Delafosse Desportes, Ducros, Fidelin, Guillonet Marquis d'Isoard, Abel and Edouard Jay, Julien, Larégnère, Loreilhe, Dr. Moog, Pascaud, Philippe, Prével, Tastemain, Zaphiropoulo; the Directors of the Musée des Arts Decoratifs and the Carnavalet Museum, in Paris, and the Directors of the Museums at Metz, Mulhouse, Nancy, Strasbourg, Vieux Honfleur and Vieux Rouen.

# INTRODUCTION

1874

The first part of the book is devoted to a general survey of the history of the subject. It begins with a brief account of the early attempts to explain the phenomena of life, and then proceeds to a more detailed consideration of the various theories which have been advanced from time to time. The second part of the book is devoted to a critical examination of the most important of these theories, and to an attempt to show how far they are supported by the facts of nature. The third part of the book is devoted to a consideration of the present state of the subject, and to an attempt to show how far we have advanced since the first attempts to explain the phenomena of life. The fourth part of the book is devoted to a consideration of the future prospects of the subject, and to an attempt to show how far we may expect to advance in the future.



## PRINCIPAL AUTHORITIES

- BAYARD, ÉMILE: "Le Style Louis IV." Paris (n.d.)  
"Les Styles Régence et Louis XV." Paris (n.d.)
- BOULENGER, JACQUES: "L'Ameublement français au grand siècle." London. 1913.
- CHAMPEAUX, ALFRED DE: "Le Meuble" (Bibliothèque de l'Enseignement des Beaux-Arts). (Vol. II.)
- GUIFFREY, JULES: "Artistes parisiens du XVII<sup>e</sup> et du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (donations, contrats, testaments, inventaires)." Paris 1915.
- HAVARD, HENRI: Les Boule, Paris, 1893. "Dictionnaire de l'Ameublement et de la Décoration." Paris (n.d.)
- DE MÉLY ET BISHOP: "Bibliographie générale des Inventaires imprimés." Paris, 1895.
- MOLINIER, ÉMILE: "Histoire générale des Arts appliqués à l'Industrie." Paris (n.d.) (Vol. II.)

# PRINCIPAL AUTHORITIES

- BAYARD, RICHARD: "Le Style Louis XV," Paris (n.d.)  
 "Les Styles Régences et Louis XV," Paris (n.d.)
- BOURNAZOU, JACQUES: "L'Aménagement français au Grand  
 Siècle," Librairie 1902.
- CHAMBRAY, ALBERT DE: "Le Siècle" (Bibliothèque de  
 l'Éducation des Jeunes-Anglais) (Vol. II)
- GUICHARD, JULES: "Articles parisiens de 1770 et de 1771,"  
 Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Médecine, Paris (1902)
- LEVAZOU, HENRI: "Les Journaux de 1770," Bibliothèque de  
 la Faculté de Médecine, Paris (n.d.)
- MAURY, ET HENRI: "Bibliographie générale des journaux  
 français," Paris 1902.
- MORIN, HENRI: "Histoire générale des Arts appliqués à  
 l'architecture," Paris (n.d.) (Vol. II)

# CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	v
PRINCIPAL AUTHORITIES	xxxii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	xxxv
PART I	
HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE TWO STYLES	i
PART II	
THE LOUIS XIV STYLE	31
I. CHARACTERISTICS AND TECHNIQUE OF THE STYLE	33
II. PANELLED FURNITURE, BEDS AND TABLES	64
III. SEATS	88
PART III	
THE REGENCY STYLE	113
INDEX	143

CONTENTS

1898

1898  
1897  
1896  
1895

INTRODUCTION  
PRINCIPAL AUTHORITIES  
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PART I

1 HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE TWO STYLES

PART II

21 THE FOUR XIV STYLE  
22 A CHARACTERISTICS AND TECHNIQUE OF  
23 THE STYLE  
24 OF PARALLEL FORMS AND TABLES  
25 IN SEATS

PART III

26 THE REGENCY STYLE  
27 INDEX

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIG.	PLATE
1. Cupboard Door, Oak } 2. Oak Door Leaf } 3. Small Cupboard in two parts, in Oak	1 2
4. Walnut Cupboard with one Door and a Drawer, from the South-west of France	3
5. Cupboard with one Door and neutral Panels at the sides, in Walnut, from the South-west	4
6. Norman Cupboard, Oak	5
7. Large Cupboard with elaborate Cornice, in Walnut, from the South-west	6
8. Cupboard from Saintonge, with Carved Panels, in Oak	7
9. Large Walnut Cupboard, with elaborate Mouldings, from the South-west	8
10. Very large Cupboard with arched Pediment, in Walnut, end of the style. From the South-west	9
11. Lorraine Cupboard in Oak, with Medallions, ornamented with Marquetry Stars	10
12. Oak Alsatian Buffet in two sections, with arched Pediment	11
13. Very large Dresser-sideboard-commode, from Lorraine, in Cherrywood	12
14. Walnut Under-cupboard	13
15. Coffe set on a Table with a Drawer, from Normandy } 16. Coffe in Pigskin studded with nails }	14
17. Marquetry Commode with Gilt Bronzes	15
18. Marquetry Commode in the style of the Low Countries	16
19. Commode veneered with Violet-wood	17
20. Bed with curved Dossier and Cantonnières	18
21. Table with Baluster Legs, natural Oak	19
22. Small Table with Console Legs, in Gilt Wood	20
23. Small Table with Turned Baluster Legs } 24. Table with Twisted Legs, from Normandy }	21
25. Small Rustic Table with Console or "Doe's Foot" Legs } 26. Small Table with Bracket-shaped Legs, in Cherrywood }	22
27. Large Bureau with eight Turned Baluster Legs and numerous Drawers	23
28. Simple Arm-chair with Turned Baluster Legs	24
29. Gilt Wood Arm-chair, covered with Green and Gold Brocade	25
30. Arm-chair of natural Walnut covered with Red Genoa Velvet	26
31. Arm-chair of Gilded and Painted Wood covered with White and Silver Brocade	27

# xxxvi LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIG.	PLATE
32. Arm-chair with Console-shaped Legs with beautiful Mouldings	28
33. Confessional-shaped Easy Chair, covered with Tapestry in Big and Small Stitch	29
34. Chair of "Bracket"-Shaped Type	}
35. Simple Arm-chair of Turned Wood	
36. Arm-chair of the "Bracket" Shape	30
37. Chair from the South-west, modern Leather	}
38. Chair from Auvergne with Baluster Legs	
39. Cane Chair with Legs en façade	}
40. Wooden Chair from Lorraine	
41. Arm-chair made of Wood. Normandy, with Flemish Influencee	
42. Door Leaf, Oak	}
43. Door Leaf, Oak	
44. Provençal Cupboard with Cabriole Feet, in Walnut	33
45. Norman Cupboard with Claw Feet, in Oak	34
46. Lorraine Cupboard with Cabriole Feet, in Oak	35
47. Alsatian Buffet in two Sections, with small Marquetry Panels	36
48. Alsatian Buffet in two Sections, in Oak	37
49. Large Sideboard-dresser-commode, from Lorraine, with Inlaid Work	38
50. Norman Dresser-sideboard in Oak	39
51. Small Dresser-sideboard, from Lorraine, made of Oak	40
52. Coffe, from Lorraine, made of Cherrywood	41
53. Coffe from the Hautes-Vosges, with the Hollow Carving picked out in Paint	}
54. Regency Commode veneered with Rosewood	
55. Simple Commode in Rosewood Veneer	42
56 and 57. Case Clocks from Lorraine, in Oak	43
58. Small Table with Doe's Foot Legs, Sunk Top and Incised Decoration	44
59. Small Table with Doe's Foot Legs	45
60. Bed with low Posts in Gilded Wood	46
61. Arm-chair with Curved Top to Back	}
62. Arm-chair with the Arms set back	
63. Arm-chair of "Bracket" type with Arms not set back	}
64. Arm-chair of the same type with Arms set back	
65. Arm-chair with Arm-Pads and visible Frieze of Wood	}
66. Arm-chair of "Bracket" type with Arm-Pads	
67 and 68. Chair and Arm-chair with Doe's Foot Legs and Stretchers	47
69 and 70. Arm-chairs with Arms very curved and without Stretchers	48
71. Tall Chair in natural Wood covered with Broché Silk	}
72. Chair in natural Wood covered with White and Silver Brocade	
	49
	50
	51
	52
	53
	54

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS xxxvii

FIG.	PLATE
73. Large "Confessional" Arm-chair	55
74. Bergère-arm-chair, Confessional shape, with the Wood showing	56
75. Large Sofa with eight Legs, natural Walnut	57
76. Cane Sofa with its Mattress Cushion, of Beechwood	58
77. Cane Chair with Legs en façade	} 59
78. Cane Arm-chair with Oblique-set Legs	
79. Cane Chair with exaggerated Doe's Foot Legs	
80. Straw Chair from Auvergne	} 60
81. Cane Chair with Stretchers	
82. Plain Bench made of Beech	61
83. Wall Bench, Walnut, covered with Crimson Damask	62
84. Stool (Tabouret or Placet) in natural Walnut, covered with Broché Silk	63
85. Screen, mounted in natural Walnut, with Panel of Silver-grey Damask	64

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

The history of the United States is a story of growth and change. From the first European settlers to the present day, the nation has evolved through various stages of development. The early years were marked by exploration and the establishment of colonies. The American Revolution led to the birth of a new nation, and the subsequent years saw the expansion of territory and the growth of industry. The Civil War was a pivotal moment in the nation's history, leading to the abolition of slavery and the strengthening of the federal government. The 20th century brought significant social and economic changes, including the rise of the industrial revolution and the emergence of the United States as a global superpower. Today, the United States continues to face new challenges and opportunities, and its history remains a source of inspiration and guidance for the future.



## PART ONE : THE HISTORY OF THE TWO STYLES

IN the decorative arts the period of Louis XIII had been one of the retreat of French taste before the influence of the Northern countries. Cabinets of ebony and of marquetry had been imported from the Low Countries and from Germany; sumptuous chairs of ornate leather for the most part came from Spain; in France itself every form of ornamentation had grown heavy in the Flemish fashion. Then came the reign of Mazarin, and with it a regular Italian invasion. In short, when Louis XIV took the power into his own hands, furniture was essentially cosmopolitan, and we might declare that his long reign was, in this respect, merely one continuous effort of the French spirit to eliminate the elements in these importations from abroad that were discordant with the traditional genius of the race, which loved measure, clarity, sober elegance, an effort also to assimilate what was not incompatible with itself. This work of elimination and assimilation was not fully accomplished until the days of the Regency. It was not in any case a phenomenon peculiar to the art of house furnishing, or even the applied arts in general; we can trace the same movement of evolution in sculpture, from

## 2 LOUIS XIV FURNITURE

Simon Guillain,<sup>1</sup> for example, to Coysevox in the latter years of his long career, or from Franqueville the *Italianizer* to Robert le Lorrain, whose Horses of the Sun, at the hôtel de Rohan, are a masterpiece, preposterous indeed, but so brilliantly French !

Signor Giulio Mazarini was a great lover of pictures, sculpture, and every kind of work of art. In the real palace that François Mansard had built on for him to the hôtel Tubeuf, and which the painters Grimaldi of Bologna and Romanelli of Rome had decorated for him, he brought together, by dint of the millions that cost him little or nothing, the richest collection that had as yet been seen in France, pictures, statues, furniture, fabrics, goldsmith's work, jewels, gems and medallions.<sup>2</sup> Nearly everything came from Italy : if his heart, as he pretended,

1 When he made the exquisite statue of the Duchess of Burgundy as Diana.

2 The inventory of this almost unbelievable accumulation of riches was drawn up in 1653 by a little clerk from Rheims, who looked after the cardinal's private affairs, and whose name was Jean Baptiste Colbert; its publication we owe to the Duc d'Aumale. The enumeration is still incomplete, as Mazarin had seven years longer to live. To the cardinal's passion for his works of art we have a very curious testimony from Loménie de Brienne. "One day," he writes in his *Memoires*, "I was walking in a gallery in the Mazarin palace, when I heard the cardinal approaching; I knew him by the sound of his slippers, which he was shuffling along like a man in a very weak condition just recovering from a serious illness. I hid behind a tapestry, and heard him say: 'I shall have to leave all this!' He halted at every step, for he was very feeble indeed; and turning his eyes to the object that was nearest his gaze, he would say from the depth of his heart, 'I have to leave all this!' and turning about, he went on, 'And that too! I shall never see these things again, where I am going!'"

was French in spite of his language, his taste had never become naturalized. The hangings and the breadths of stuffs were Genoa or Milanese velvet, or Florentine brocade. The tables were Florence stone; the cabinets were the *stipi* variously bedecked with lapis, amethyst, cornelian gilt bronze, silver, tortoise-shell and painted miniatures that were made by the craftsmen of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany; others, inlaid with ivory and mother of pearl on ebony, came from Naples; and those that were of iron *repoussé* and damascened came from the workrooms of the Milanese armourers.

Nevertheless, some pieces were of Parisian make, though the craftsmen who had carried them out were natives of the Low Countries or of Italy. Among them was Pierre Golle, whom the cardinal had brought from Holland. Here is one of his works: "a cabinet in ebony, outlined with pewter, with five niches between fourteen little marble columns with capitals in gilt bronze. In the middle niche a figure of Cardinal Mazarin under a pavilion, and in the other four Minerva, Painting, Sculpture and Astrology, on a gallery with balusters, under four vases and two figures representing Might and Justice; and the King's arms over the pediment. This cabinet" is upheld "by a base of twelve *thermes* bronzed and gilt with the signs of the Zodiac." Others were Domenico Cucci, the wood carver, and Filippo Caffieri, the founder of his line, both summoned from Rome; and also

## 4 LOUIS XIV FURNITURE

the mosaic workers in hard stones and lapidary artists, Ferdinando and Orazio Migliorini, Giovanni Gacetti and Branchi, all Tuscans.

Foucquet also was a great connoisseur in fine things, but with a taste refined in a different sense from that of the Italian Mazarin. We know that Louis XIV and Colbert, where building was concerned, were only his imitators, since it was he who had managed, in order to give his château and park of Vaux-le-Vicomte a harmony of beauty then unique in the whole world,<sup>1</sup> to bring together artists like the architect Le Vau, the gardeners Le Nostre and La Quintinie, the sculptor Puget, and lastly, the painter Le Brun, to whom he had already entrusted a kind of supervision of all works carried out for him, and the management of a tapestry factory at Maincy. Vaux, says Sainte-Beuve, is a "Versailles in anticipation."

Mazarin dies, and the young king takes the "helm of the State" with a firm hand; at once Foucquet's amazing career crumbles to dust: the adder has overcome the squirrel.<sup>2</sup> Fully possessed of the idea that noble buildings are as essential for the renown of a great monarch as the triumphs of Bellona and dazzling love affairs,

<sup>1</sup> We are not forgetting the royal château of Richelieu, now destroyed. But it appears certain that for unity and harmony of beauty, in spite of a certain piled-up heaviness that keeps Vaux from being an absolute masterpiece, taken together Foucquet's château and park surpassed Richelieu's.

<sup>2</sup> It will be remembered that Foucquet's emblem was a squirrel (*fouquet* in old French) and Colbert's an adder (Latin *coluber*).

and, besides, boldly encouraged in this path by Colbert, Louis XIV decides that art shall be one of the rays of his crown of glory, and takes into his own service *en bloc* all the artists that have worked for the first minister and for the Superintendent of Finance.<sup>1</sup>

And now begins the despotic sway of Le Brun that was to lie heavily for a quarter of a century upon all French art, for its good and for evil too. Colbert, who understood such things, had speedily discovered in him rare gifts as an organizer and a leader of men, and proposed him to the sovereign for a kind of State Secretary of Fine Arts. Now we see French art somewhat like a well regulated clock; the central spring moves a first wheel, which engages a second, and so on. . . . This hierarchy, too, is universally accepted and not merely imposed by force; Puget alone, in the depths of his native Provence, remains to some degree independent. Le Brun is made noble, he becomes sire de Thionville, then Chevalier of the Order of Saint Michel, First Painter to the King, Keeper of the Pictures and Drawings of the King's Cabinet, Life Chancellor and then Rector in perpetuity to the Academy of Painting, which gives him the government of "great art," and Director of the *Manufacture royale des*

<sup>1</sup> To lose no time he does not hesitate even to buy furniture at the sale of Foucquet's effects. That is how the Louvre comes to possess a round table of gilded wood, upborne by figures of children, the last jetsam of the early splendours of Vaux-le-Vicomte. It shows quite pronounced Italian characteristics.

## 6 LOUIS XIV FURNITURE

*Meubles de la couronne*, that is to say, the Gobelins factory, which brings under his rod all the so-called "minor" arts.

He might very well say, "L'Art, c'est moi."

It must be quite roundly declared that there was no one besides Le Brun who deserved such a pile of honours and powers. In spite of his defects, which are serious—his colour is poor and vulgar, his drawing round and commonplace—he had very uncommon artistic gifts, and above all, the happy combination of an imagination sufficiently vigorous to achieve conceptions of vast scope and a talent for detail sufficient to realise them in the most meticulous perfection. He is the last of those universal artists, of which the Renaissance had known a few, capable of conceiving that enormous allegorical poem with innumerable strophes in painting, in gilded stucco, in marbles and bronzes, which the Mirror Gallery at Versailles is in reality, without thinking it beneath him to design a window hasp; sufficiently clever as a sculptor for such men as Coysevox and Girardon to find it natural to follow his directions, and not disdaining to arrange scenes for the theatre. "The intervals of spare times which he had to himself<sup>1</sup> he employed in training himself in all the talents that are related to the art of design, and extend into the domains of architecture, goldsmith's work, cabinet-making, and, in general, everything

<sup>1</sup> Guillet de Saint-Georges in his *Mémoires inédits sur les membres de l'Académie de peinture*.

that deals with what appertains to fine buildings." It is no mark of a mediocre spirit to have had so wide a conception of art.

Three periods can be distinguished in the duration of the Louis XIV style, and in this whole time there is a uniformity in art that is too complete; on the other hand, it is so closely attached to the royal person that it was inevitable that there should be three periods of evolution in the arts in general, just as there were three periods in the life of the monarch.

Under Mazarin, as we have said, there is a persistence of Flemish influence, but a preponderance of Italian taste; nearly all the artistic craftsmen are foreigners. This state of affairs cannot come to an end suddenly; it continues during the early days of Louis XIV's personal rule, the more naturally seeing that the taste of this young prince, "in the flower of his age and the full strength of his passions," is not yet very refined. It goes on almost till 1675; these are the days of Mlle. de La Vallière and the goodly "reign" of Mme. de Montespan, the days of the *carrousels*, ballets, masquerades, of unceasing fetes; the days when the Louvre works have been abandoned and the first buildings begin to rise at Versailles. This early Versailles was much less pompous and ceremonious than is often imagined. There were already in the park such sylvan diversions as the labyrinth with groups of lead figures, painted in natural colours and representing Aesop's fables; hydraulic diversions

## 8 LOUIS XIV FURNITURE

like the grotto of Tethys and its untimely jets to besprinkle unwary visitors, to the great glee of the initiate; the "royal island" or "island of love," in the midst of a pond, where the game is to get to it by skiff without being drenched under the arching jets of water that surround it; we see a "ramasse" or "roulette," a kind of switchback on which La Vallière's lover royally delights to make his timid mistress shriek with affright. All this is imitated from the gardens of Germany and Italy.

The sun climbs to the zenith; after this gay morning comes a resplendent noon of fifteen years. But above all, the years between the Peace of Nimuegen and the English revolution (1678-1688) are the triumphal years, in which the monarch of the lilies sees his apotheosis in his own lifetime. When, sitting on his solid silver throne with sixteen million livres in diamonds on his black justaucorps and his hat, he receives prostrate and humbled ambassadors at the end of his dazzling mirror gallery; when his coach crosses the Place des Victoires and he beholds the statue raised in his honour by Maréchal de la Feuillade between its never extinguished lanterns, can he not believe himself a god upon the earth? His taste is finally formed, henceforth he understands the grandeur of simplicity, he loves the reasonable. Let us take an example; the parterres with complicated meandering runnels of water have been replaced on the Versailles terraces with noble sheets of real



mirror glass, whose great bare surface is so fine under the heaven they reflect. The trivial diversions of the park have been destroyed or abandoned. The Louis XIV art now reaches its perfect maturity, foreign elements are eliminated or transformed in so far as is possible when a Le Brun rules everything. "*Laissons*" Boileau has just said in his *Art Poétique* :—

". . . laissons à l'Italie  
De tous ces faux brillants l'éclatante folie."

The poison of decadent Italianism is still at work in painting, so much is certain, and to a considerable degree in architecture, although Hardouin-Mansart, First Architect to the King in 1676, is a good Frenchman; but sculpture is purged of it, if we except old Puget, and already the art of decoration is almost altogether national.

After 1690 comes decline and decay for the aging King. He has committed irreparable blunders, and punishment is beginning; the League of Augsburg, the Great Alliance of Vienna, the Great Alliance of the Hague, all Europe rises up against him. He has lost Colbert; after Colbert, Louvois, and after Louvois, Chamillart! He has lost Condé, Turenne and Luxembourg; his armies have now leaders like Tallard, la Feuillade, Villeroy. His couriers riding on the spur from the North or from the South now bring only tidings of disaster: defeat at Turin, reverse in Spain, rout at Ramillies, the loss of Lille . . . till Villars

saves France and honour. Within this realm attacked on every hand are famine and civil war. The treasury is empty. Death strikes and strikes again into the royal family: will a bastard have to be set on the throne of Saint-Louis? After radiant Montespan comes Maintenon, the prudish, cold-blooded Maintenon, the disillusioned, the eternally bored. While she plies her needle and yawns, tucked away in her famous niche, Louis sits in the opposite chimney-corner, with his gouty leg stretched out on a folding stool, and preserves a sullen silence. He suffers from his decayed teeth, his swollen foot; he has slept badly, for the bugs have harried him all night in his hundred-thousand-crown bed; vapours darken his brain, for in spite of Fagon he has once again eaten too many green peas. And he broods upon his violated frontiers. The Court is hanging about idly in attendance—gone are the days of fêtes lit by five thousand wax tapers . . . and it seeks distraction as it can. There is at the end of this reign an odd mixture of grossly flaunted cynicism and pretended religion. Princesses smoke pipes borrowed from the guardsmen on duty, and give themselves up to bouts of excessive drinking, whose consequences need to be shrouded up in darkness; but the shadow of M. Tartuffe haunts the porch of the new chapel.

Meanwhile French art pursues its destined path of glory. Its orbit for a moment has coincided with that of the Sun-King, but does not

go with him in his setting. The tyrant Le Brun dies in 1690; old Mignard, his mortal foe, takes his place only to die in his turn four years later. It is possible to breathe freely, to grow emancipated. The war between "Poussinistes" and "Rubénistes" finally ended in the victory of the partisans of colour, just as in the world of letters the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns ended in the victory of Perrault and Fontenelle. Rome still keeps her prestige, but is no longer in artists' eyes the holy city outside which is no salvation; here also breathes the Gallic spirit—Rigaud and Largillière have nothing ultramontane about them. That delicious *Susannah in the Bath* by Santerre, how purely French it is! François Desportes, his dogs and his game, are full of the richest and most living realism. We see a Tournières revive genre painting in the Dutch manner, a Gillot, painter of burlesque themes, farces, caprices and "grotesques," sets Harlequin, Mezzetin and Silvia gaily a-frisk. In 1699 Bon Boulogne hangs in the exhibition of the Académie de peinture a *Sacrifice of Iphigenia* as a matter of form, but also a *Jeune fille cherchant les puces à une autre!* These two girls seem to us to close the age of Poussin and Le Brun in a highly piquant fashion.

The King is no longer the artists' sole client. He hardly commissions anything now, for he is poor. Oh, yes: he is commissioning "paintings to cover the nude figures on the Gobelins

tapestries." The Gobelins factory is even closed for several years from 1694; the high-warp weavers enlist in the armies. The world of the arts is working for others now: for the Duc de Chartres and the Duc d'Orleans, who most certainly have different tastes from the king, and for private persons, financial magnates like La Live and Crozat, great lords like the Rohan-Soubises; for plain business folk, who are building themselves comfortable houses with small rooms, less formal and more convenient, while the old sovereign shivers with cold as he daily continues, heroically imperturbable, to play the tragi-comedy of the *lever* in his chamber no less icy-cold than magnificent. The times have brought a revolution: the Louis XIV art rapidly crumbled away in the concluding years of the century, and the art of the Regency began, considerably before the Regency itself arrived.

But let us come back to our furniture. The manufactory of the Gobelins was founded in 1662 and definitely organised in 1667 under the title of *Manufacture royale des Meubles de la couronne*. It was planned to produce many things besides tapestries; the establishment on the banks of the Bièvre was to be filled with "good painters, master high-warp weavers, goldsmiths, founders, engravers, lapidaries, cabinet-makers in ebony and other woods, dyers and other good craftsmen in every kind of art and craft." A vast programme indeed!

The painters, who numbered more than thirty at the same time, included Van der Meulen, and Houasse, and Monnoyer, Michel Corneille, Nocret, Bon Boulogne. Not only had they to make cartoons and models, but also to carry out the painted silks (most often on *gros de Tours*) which were among the styles of hangings most eagerly sought after, the sculptors, Coysevox, Tubi, Slodtz and others, made vases to adorn parks, trophies of gilded bronze and various internal ornaments for the palaces; Caffieri, Cucci, Lespagnandelle, all wood workers, carved in oak, walnut and lime the wooden parts of seats and tables, guéridons, pedestals, balustrades, doors, frames for pictures and for mirrors; the engravers, Leclere, Audran, Bérain, Le Pautre, produced their collections of designs for ornaments; the lapidaries, at first the Italians who had worked for Mazarin, and then their French pupils, put together pavements and facings of marble, and the tops of tables; the goldsmiths, Loir, Merlin, de Villers, hammered and chased not only gold nefs, plate, table utensils, but furniture of every kind: cabinets, consoles and guéridons, benches and stools, chandeliers, flower pots for orange trees, dogs for fireplaces. . . . This is the furniture, of Babylonian luxury, and let us venture to say, of very doubtful taste, that adorned the Mirror Gallery, the *Grands Appartements*, the Queen's *Appartement* and the King's Chamber. The cabinet-makers, Pierre Poitou, Foulon, Harmant,

made cabinets, under-cupboards, cabinets for medals, tables, bureaux, parquet flooring, and marquetry clock cases. Lastly, two hundred and fifty weavers, mostly Flemish at the outset, produced those admirable tapestry sets, the *Acts of the Apostles*, the *History of the King*, the *Battles of Alexander*, the *Royal Residences*, and a score of others after Raphael, Le Brun, Van der Meulen, Noel Coypel, etc.

These efforts of so many various artists were never scattered, but always co-ordinated for the achieving of a common task by the strong hands of Charles Le Brun. The King's First Painter received the title of Director of the Factory, as being "a person capable and intelligent in the art of painting, to make the designs for tapestry, sculpture and other works, to cause them to be correctly carried out, and to have the general direction and supervision over all the workers to be employed in these manufactures." To make sure of the supply of craftsmen there was organised, for sixty children under the king's protection, "the Director's seminary, to which there shall be appointed a master painter under him, who shall take order for their education and instruction, to be distributed afterwards by the director and by him placed in apprenticeship with the masters of each art and craft, according as he shall deem them fit and capable." Such were the admirable methods placed in Le Brun's hands by Colbert, and no less admirable was the use he made of them. There it was that the

Louis XIV style was elaborated, with an imposing unity. The assimilation, or if it can be said, the "Frenchifying" of the foreign workers of the early days came to pass with incredible rapidity, but this same phenomenon has taken place among us in every period: in the fifteenth century, when we borrowed the flamboyant style from England; in the sixteenth century, when from Italian elements we created our Renaissance style, which is so completely national; and in the eighteenth century, when so many German cabinet-makers, the Oebens, the Rieseners, the Roentgens, so speedily became French of the French!

What remains now out of the huge and marvellous output of the Gobelins factory between 1662 and 1690? Beyond the permanent decoration of Versailles—a great part of which was destroyed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—and tapestries, already very scarce, there is hardly anything; a few tables of stone mosaic, and a few frames of carved and gilded wood on the pictures in the Louvre that once belonged to the King's collection. It would be hard to imagine a more complete shipwreck. Happily, we have some excellent authorities to give us approximate information as to this varied output. There are prints representing views of the interior of Versailles, and better still, tapestries showing the *History of the King*, in particular one of the finest, which commemorates a visit paid by Louis XIV to the Gobelins. Le

Brun has even brought silver vases chased at the factory from his designs into his *Entry of Alexander into Babylon*.

On the other hand, the General Inventories of the Furniture belonging to the Crown may give us a fairly exact idea of what the factory turned out. The tables were nearly all mosaic pictures inlaid in black *parangon*,<sup>1</sup> set on their *piéd* or underpart of gilded wood with heavily emphasised carvings: these were decorative compositions of rosettes, *rinceaux*, festoons, etc., but also very frequently irregular scatterings of flowers, fruits, birds, caterpillars and butterflies in their natural colours, with rather childish attempts to trick the eye into believing them real, and even horrors such as can still be seen in the museums of Florence—a table decorated with a pack of cards flung down at random.

Cabinets, when the factory started, were all like those of Mazarin, complicated, elaborate, rich to excess, loud with many colours, each one seeming rather a mineralogical collection than a work of art. Here is an example of the result of the collaboration of lapidary and cabinet-maker: “a cabinet of ebony with two large handles of gilt brass at the sides, embellished in front with three porticoes between four columns of German jasper, their bases and capitals of agate, also German, the middle portico with four little columns of Oriental jasper, and the two on the

<sup>1</sup> Black basalt, which is nothing else than the touchstone of jewellers.



two sides of the same Oriental jasper, all with bases and capitals of gold, the front of the said cabinet covered with pictures of stone mosaic work representing landscapes, and enriched with several little ornaments of gold and enamel." Seven different materials, without counting the various minerals making up the "pictures." When cabinet-maker, goldsmith and lapidary pooled all the resources of their arts, the royal furniture was enriched with "a cabinet in the shape of a tomb, covered with a leaf of silver, made up of twenty drawers enriched with agate, jasper, lapis lazuli, cornelian, cameos and other precious stones; in the middle, in front, a door of one single agate, between two columns also of agate, with their bases and capitals of silver gilt. The said cabinet standing on four silver spheres." The table intended to carry this cabinet of goldsmithery was "lacquered after the fashion of porphyry." What a beauty it must have been!

These cabinets were fairly soon out of fashion; banished from the royal apartments, they were stranded in natural history collections. The Gobelins then made pieces that were much less Italian and much more austere, cabinets of cedar, partially gilt and with ornaments of gilt bronze; of Brazil wood with compartments outlined in ivory; and above all, pieces of every kind in marquetry of tortoise-shell, pewter and brass, with ornaments of chased and gilt bronze, after the manner of Boulle. The same good fortune fell to this prince of cabinet-makers as had been

the lot of the Clouets among the painters of the previous century, namely, that as he never signed his work, many pieces are unquestionably ascribed to him that were never made by him, but by cabinet-makers at the Gobelins or elsewhere who employed the same technique.

These magnificent pieces are, it is true, outside the modest scope of the present book; but as they have always been and still are looked upon as the supreme expression of the Louis XIV style, we cannot refrain from speaking of André-Charles Boulle.

Like so many others he was of foreign extraction, but the assimilation was already complete among the Bouilles for two generations back when he was born, in 1642, "in the galleries of the Louvre." His grandfather, a furniture-maker of Neufchatel, and a Calvinist, had been brought from Switzerland by Henri IV and given an abode in the great "waterside gallery" that joined the palace of the Louvre to the palace of the Tuileries. This privilege was to be continued to the family for five generations; André-Charles obtained it in 1672. Divided into little lodgings, the great gallery was peopled by artists of every kind, painters, sculptors, goldsmiths, enamellers, down to the "fourbisseurs," who hammered out pieces of armour there. These privileged people, who lived there with their families in the closest clannishness, and often married among themselves, had the title of purveyors to the king and escaped the very strict regulations of mastership

## BOULLE

in their crafts, not a very good thing for the technical quality of their work. They were directly amenable to the *Surintendance des Batiments*. That is how Boulle was always independent of Le Brun, which did not prevent him from feeling, like everyone else, the influence of that powerful personality. Boulle also was a complete artist all round: we find him described as "architect, painter and sculptor in mosaic, cabinet-maker, chaser and inlayer to the King," and again, in another document, as "designer of monograms and master in ordinary of the seals to the King."

Boulle, rather like Rembrandt, was incapable of combating his passion for collecting, and in spite of the large sums he earned (up to fifty thousand livres, we are told, for a cabinet), he lived always in embarrassment and plagued by law-suits. To crown his misfortunes, when he was nearly eighty years old he had the agony of seeing his admirable collections disappear in a fire, which at the same time devoured all the furniture both finished and in the making that was in his shop and his workrooms. There is preserved a petition he addressed to the king after this disaster, in which he sets down his losses at three hundred thousand livres. He had forty-eight drawings by Raphael, a priceless manuscript by Rubens containing his notes on his travels in Italy and remarks on painting, pictures by Corregio, Snyders, Le Sueur, Mignard and Le Brun; an important collection of engravings,

including a complete set of Albert Dürer; bronzes by Michel Angelo, three thousand rare medals; he was a connoisseur of the very highest taste.

But we must not make Boulle out to be the only cabinet-maker of his time. He did not invent the style that has been given his name; several collaborators helped him with his bronzes: Domenico Cucci, the great goldsmith Claude Ballin, the sculptors Van Opstal, Warin, Girardon, who supplied him with models in wax and in plaster. His arabesques and *rinceaux* are often clearly copied from Bérain. His special merit seems to have been that of a clever manipulator of elements he had not invented for himself. He was unrivalled for his skill in wedding reliefs in gilt bronze to marquetry backgrounds to achieve perfect harmony, and in giving his furniture, especially his cupboards, noble, austere, and dignified architectural shapes, which make magnificent decorative pieces of them, worthy to play a leading part in the grandiose conceptions of Charles le Brun. But they are merely decorations, and we must not try to find anything else in them. Their outside is the best part of them. Under their dazzling finery and within their masterly lines these pieces of furniture are as ill constructed as the façade plastered on to the Louvre by Charles Perrault. The ornamentation is not the accompaniment of the shape, but determines it. Here too often lies the fault of this Louis XIV art: magnificent exteriors masking

hollow sham. "Handsome head . . . but no brain inside," said La Fontaine's fox.

The Boulle pieces that are genuinely by André-Charles are as scarce as Clouets by Janet and Francois. His four sons, cabinet-makers like their father, imitated him to the best of their ability, and later still, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the cabinet-makers Georges Jacob and Philippe Montigny made excellent imitations with bronzes cast from his models. These imitations are hard to distinguish from the originals when they are not signed. We may add that this kind of marquetry is so far from solid that the real genuine Boulle pieces have had to be almost entirely remade.

In short, in founding the Gobelins and other factories and favouring the artists of the gallery of the Louvre, it was Louis XIV's intention to furnish his royal abodes with such magnificence that they should be worthy of "the greatest monarch of the universe." Colbert's aim, in advising him to take these measures, was to establish within the borders of the realm, or to bring to perfection, luxury industries so that the French, in the first place, would no longer be forced to buy their tapestries, fine furniture, rich stuffs, plate glass and the like from foreign countries; and that they might in time compete beyond their own frontiers with the workshops of Italy, the Low Countries, Spain and Germany. Both the King and Colbert achieved their end, for towards the middle of the reign France no

longer in any way paid tribute to foreigners where the arts pertaining to furnishing were concerned. It was the very utmost if a few caned seats were brought in from Holland.

Within a few years space—from 1674 to 1686—the Château de Clagny is built, decorated, and furnished for Madame de Montespan; the Versailles of Le Vau is enlarged, under the supervision of Jules Hardouin-Mansart, by the Mirror Gallery, the two wings of the Ministers, the huge North and South wings. This colossal palace is speedily decorated and furnished; at the same time the modest “porcelain” Trianon<sup>1</sup> is knocked down, and its place taken by the great Trianon of pink marble, and this also is decorated and furnished immediately. Marly is begun in 1679, finished, decorated and furnished in 1686; the King’s impatience brooks no delay. The craftsmen are equal to everything. And we say nothing of Saint Cloud, built, decorated and furnished for Monsieur, nor of the other royal houses whose furnishings are completely renewed.

This example is followed everywhere, once the first impetus is given. Châteaux and town houses, old and new, are filled with beds, arm-chairs, cupboards and tables in the new fashion; when the King has finished furnishing and decreased his commissions the royal factories will be idle, but innumerable joiners, cabinet-makers

<sup>1</sup> In reality faced with blue and white faience “in the fashion of the wares of China.”

and tapestry weavers will go on turning out for private persons furniture in the same style, and will presently invent new kinds to satisfy new wants, devising fresh shapes to suit their taste, in harmony with the new architecture.

Just at the moment when the King's influence over the furnishing arts begins to be eclipsed a rapid and profound change takes place in manners. It cannot be said that social life loses its importance, the contrary is true, indeed; but alongside of it home life, which had been wholly sacrificed to it, takes on an increasing importance. People want their ease and comforts, to suffer less from cold, to be able to seclude themselves from their train of domestics and from troublesome outsiders, to be able to go conveniently from one part of the house to another, to find at meal times their table prepared in a room devoted to the purpose. It appears that all at once a host of new wants are discovered which nobody had ever thought of before. People have a town flat, a château or simple country villa no longer merely to display to their friends a sumptuousness conferring prestige, but also in order to live pleasantly in them. Anyone about to build no longer demands from his architect above everything a suite of large pompous halls, whose long vista with all doors open may give visitors the illusion of a gallery in a palace, and off which the cabinets and little rooms in which the household will live their ordinary life are to be dumped as best they can. He now wants instead rooms fit

## 24 LOUIS XIV FURNITURE

to live in, adapted each to its own use, well warmed, well equipped with outlets and conveniences, in a word, rooms that shall be on an ordinary human scale instead of seeming to be made for a race of giants. The French people will still wait a long time before they recapture from the English their own good old word *comfort*, but in default of the name they are beginning to have the substance. This same range of wants will bring wainscoting to the walls, wooden floors for underfoot, smaller fireplaces, surmounted with mirrors, more perfection in joinery and wrought ironwork, and also an equivalent transformation in furniture.

This progressive transformation is the mark of the passing from the Louis XIV style to the Louis XV style. The Regency style in all strictness has no more real existence than the Directoire style, but it is convenient to have a name for furniture that still retains certain characteristics of the Louis XIV period, and already shows some that belong to the Louis XV period. But it must be clearly realised that the duration of this time of transition does not coincide with that of the government of Philippe d'Orléans. His regency lasted for eight years (1715 to 1723); but it may be said that if, on the one hand, the Louis XV style is already in existence in 1723, on the other hand the Regency style—if there *is* a Regency style—did not wait for the death of the aged Louis XIV to be completely established. Louis the Great lived too



long, and survived many men and many things, his style as well as his greatness itself.

Let us, to be precise, set up a parallel of a few dates. In 1711 Gillot succeeds Bérain as designer of scenery and costumes to the Opera; in 1712 one of his pupils, a young Fleming of twenty-eight, who spends his days in the younger Crozat's picture gallery intoxicating himself with the colour of Rubens and Veronese, and who paints scenes of soldier life or scenes from the *Comédie Italienne*, this young man is "received" into the Royal Academy of Painting. His name is Antoine Watteau. Out of the thirty-seven years of life doled out to him he is to spend thirty-one in the reign of Louis XIV. And it is in 1710 that Robert de Cotte finishes the Chapel of Versailles; in 1710 Germain Boffrand begins the decoration of the hôtel Soubise, the finest and most typical ornamental work of the Regency style, and one of the most admirable in the whole range of French art.

On the death of Louis XIV the court scatters in haste, and the boy king is removed from Versailles. The Regent is intelligent, humane, generous, as brave as a sword blade, but wholly possessed by idleness and debauchery. Every kind of hypocrisy flings away its mask, and with such vicious men as the Duke Philippe d'Orléans and his former tutor Abbe Dubois governing the realm, everyone indulges himself to his heart's content. To the devil with majesty, gravity and virtue, those played out old hags! Pleasure

is god, and the bacchanalian orgy of the Regency is soon in full swing. To be truthful, of course it is not everybody that in the race for pleasure shows the same animal grossness of a Parabère, a Duchesse de Berry or her father the Regent. There are refined and elegant voluptuaries and poets like Watteau, who transfigures pleasure by bathing it in a delicate mist of beauty and dream; but there was at the moment, by way of reaction, an hour of drunken orgy that few escaped.<sup>1</sup> That century of the suavity and elegance of living had its wild youth between fifteen and twenty-five. It had this wild youth in the domain of art as well as in that of manners, and this was the vogue of the *rocaille* style, which is, so to say, merely an eccentric part of the Regency style. We discuss it elsewhere;<sup>2</sup> suffice it here to observe that the two artists who most of all exemplify "Rocaille" in its most violent form were of foreign blood: Gilles-Marie Oppenord, from the Netherlands, and Juste-Aurèle Meissonier, a native of Turin.

Along with Boffrand, the most remarkable architect of the period is Robert de Cotte, the brother-in-law, disciple and continuator of Jules Hardouin-Mansart, the creator of the admirable episcopal palace of Strasbourg. He is a charming artist, of an elegance wholly French, Attic, and measured, who preserves just the right

<sup>1</sup> It is unnecessary to say that we are speaking here only of that infinitesimal part of the nation that made up the aristocracy of birth and wealth.

<sup>2</sup> In *French Furniture under Louis XV.*

amount of the nobleness of the Louis XIV manner. Starting with 1699, he was "*intendant* and general supervisor of buildings, gardens, arts and manufactories to the King." Unfortunately the factories, especially the Gobelins, were then fallen on evil days. Robert de Cotte has left exquisite models for furniture in his collection of designs,<sup>1</sup> but no actual piece has come down to us.

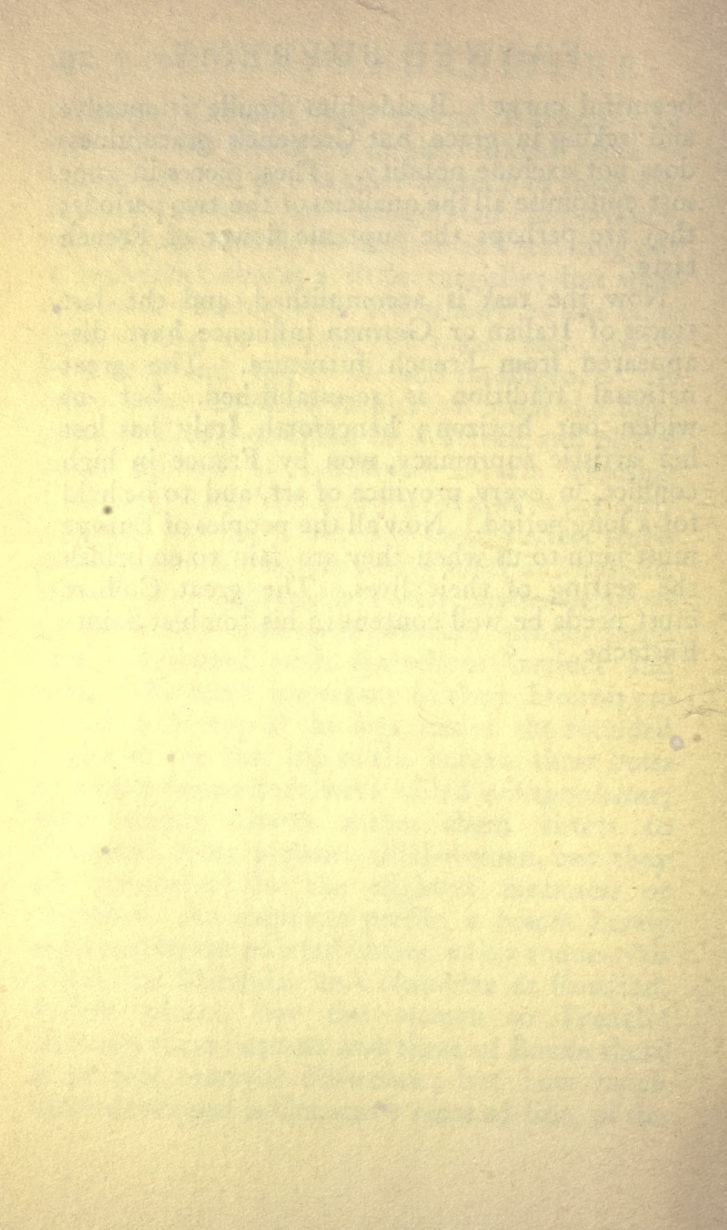
The cabinet-maker *par excellence* of this period was Charles Cressent. He sums up the furniture of the Regency just as Boulle did that of Louis XIV. He was a Frenchman of unmixed descent, born at Amiens in 1685, the son of a sculptor who remained in the provinces and the grandson of a master joiner of Picardy. He himself was both sculptor and cabinet-maker, as capable of making the wax models for his bronzes as of designing his furniture as a whole, of planning their construction and veneering them with costly woods. Cressent brought a new element of colour into cabinet-making; the moment had come when the *Compagnie des Indes* was beginning to import oversea woods of warm hues; the funereal ebony was abandoned, but we had not yet reached the light gaiety of rosewood and the rich dark ruddy glow of mahogany. Cressent's favourite combination is still austere; it consists of amaranth wood in "fern-leaf" veneer and enframed with violet-wood. On this background the ormolu bronze shows up superbly, with more suaveness than on the ebony of the Boulles.

1 They have never been engraved.

Charles Cressent had several manners. In certain of his pieces he displays himself more as a sculptor than as a cabinet-maker; in these the bronzes assume an exaggerated importance, covering almost half the surface and standing out in high relief, almost a little turgidly; but what admirable chasing, rich and sinewy at the same time, broad or concise at need, and always free, easy and full of life and intelligence. At other times he drew inspiration from the light grace of Bérain or Gillot or Watteau, and placed on a ground of satinwood certain amusing "monkey-pieces" in framings of always perfectly balanced curves. But his most perfect works were certain flat bureaux, very sober and austere, with lines of impeccable purity, masses balanced to perfection, and their bronzes proportioned and distributed with marvellous instinct and tact. The most important of these bronzes are found at the top of the legs, under the rounded angles of the flat top of the bureau, those busts of female figures that were called *espagnolettes*; their dainty charm makes them sisters to Watteau's most piquant child-women, but they are untouched by the slightest meanness or triviality. An exquisite profile, a bosom barely repressed by the pointed bodice, a tiny toque—'tis Silvia, 'tis Miranda, 'tis Columbine or Rosalind. Italian names, but the women so French! Between these bureaux and those of Boulle there is no real essential difference; but how much more developed is Cressent's sense of line, of the

beautiful curve! Beside him Boulle is massive and lacking in grace, but Cressent's gracefulness does not exclude nobility. These pieces in some sort epitomise all the qualities of the two periods; they are perhaps the supreme flower of French taste.

Now the task is accomplished, and the last traces of Italian or German influence have disappeared from French furniture. The great national tradition is re-established. Let us widen our horizon; henceforth Italy has lost her artistic supremacy, won by France in high conflict, in every province of art, and to be held for a long period. Now all the peoples of Europe must turn to us when they are fain to embellish the setting of their lives. The great Colbert must needs be well content in his tomb at Saint-Eustache.



SECOND PART

THE LOUIS XIV STYLE

SECOND PART  
THE FOUR XIV STYER



## PART TWO

### THE LOUIS XIV STYLE

#### CHAPTER ONE: CHARACTERISTICS AND TECHNIQUE OF THE STYLE

ONE must needs regret when one has to speak of the Louis XIV style that our language lacks the richness of Italian, which can add to the simple meaning of a word the notion of greatness by merely clapping the termination *one* on to it. Is it not more expressive, in talking of Versailles, to say, *uno grandissimo palazzone* than "an enormous palace"? And is not *seggiolone* marvellously adapted to signify a huge and imposing arm-chair of gilded wood in this style? The most usual and most striking characteristic of this style is, in fact, greatness, and first of all in the root meaning of the word, for in this period, so much in love with greatness in everything, when men seemed to seek to increase even their stature, like the actors of antiquity, above by means of the big peruke with curls arranged in stages, and below by means of their high red heels, a table was much bigger

than it needed to be, with overgrown legs joined by over-massive cross-pieces; an arm-chair was too tall on its legs, nearly big enough for two, and its back of excessive height, unless we take it that that vast rectangle's only function was to act as background to those huge perukes invented by the Sieur Binet and called after him *binettes*, or else for those lofty erections of lace and ribbon, known as *fontanges*, that crowned the heads of ladies.

But this furniture has another greatness of a less material kind, what Louis XIV had in his mind's eye when he used to say, "That has something great . . . that touches greatness" . . . the highest praise he could bestow: the grandeur that comes from ample, spacious lines, not always simple, but nearly always architectural, from masses solidly placed, from plain surfaces on which a rich flat decoration could unfold itself without break or impediment. This greatness is power, it is nobility. With no play on words, this Louis XIV style is a style as noble as that of our great classical writers. Unfortunately, the phrase "noble style" brings with it also an unfavourable turn, as when, for instance, we speak of Despréaux' *Ode sur la prise de Namur*. All Louis XIV art, Le Brun art, is of this kind of nobility; there was never found the man of genius who could have brought it to the pitch of perfection reached by Racine's poetry and Bossuet's prose. In architecture, in painting, in the decorative arts, the style of the period always

has something rhetorical and hollow. It is too much a question of *façade*; does this derive from its Italian origins? There is a very striking resemblance, in their respective scales, between an Italian church façade cased with marbles, whose lines and divisions have no relation to the architecture upon which it is fastened, and the façade of a Boulle cupboard, a rich casing of many-coloured and incongruous materials hiding a framework of deal—and pretty badly put together at that—whose exact structure escapes us. On the other hand, in a Gothic façade, the ornamentation is infallibly incorporated with the structure and serves to make it manifest; in a French dresser of the fifteenth century the framework provides both the basis and the first elements of the decoration. Claude Perrault's façade of the Louvre, or that by Salomon de Brosse at Saint-Gervais, and that of the Boulle cupboard are, properly speaking, deceptions, lies; the front of Notre-Dame and a dresser of the time of Charles VIII are sincerity itself. Let us add that less ambitious cupboards, such as the ones reproduced here, pieces in the tradition of pure joinery, also show this splendid sincerity with their bold mouldings that so clearly display their actual architecture.

Louis XIV furniture of the costliest type seems ashamed of even the very scanty usefulness it possesses; it does all it can to hide it. In the same way Claude Perrault's Louvre would blush to display roofs or chimneys or gutters. As much

as possible they give themselves the air of blocks, of monolithic pedestals—it is more “noble.” So too the same Perrault declared, “it is a great beauty in a building to appear as though made of a single stone, the joinings being invisible.” There you have it, the detestable doctrine of lying.

The Louis XIV style is sumptuous. It is fain to strike and to impose itself rather than to please, less to charm than to astonish. Sometimes it has a heavy and fatiguing stateliness. But we must not carry this criticism too far; it could relax and smile too. The “Porcelain Trianon” was anything but stately, with its blue and white vases bristling along the lines of its roof, and its “various birds done in natural colours.” The grandson of Henri IV was too fond of women not to oblige his academic artists to make all proper concessions to feminine taste. At Versailles may be read a page of one of Mansart’s reports, in the margin of which the master has written as follows: “It seems to me that something ought to be altered, that the subjects are too serious, and that there must be something of youth mingled with what is to be done. You are to bring me sketches when you come, or at any rate ideas. There must be something of childhood diffused everywhere.” And in fact, in the decorations of Versailles children shed their gaiety everywhere, from the *Salle de l’Oeil-de-Bœuf*, where they are gambolling like kids all along the cornice, to the

garden of the Grand Trianon, where they prance so merrily in the water, passing through the Southern parterre, where grave Sphinxes allow themselves to be unceremoniously bestridden by them, and by the ponds of the Seasons, where they are sporting with the gods.

But there must have been a pleasant contrast with the Olympian pomp of the *Grands Appartements* in the Chinese objects that were everywhere to be seen in them. Without the actual inventories it would be impossible to believe to what extent the contemporaries of the Great King delighted in everything that came out of China. We have seen that Boileau shared in this universal craze. In every royal house there were *emmeublements*—a bed complete, arm-chairs, folding stools, hassocks, and wall hangings—in white satin or white taffeta, “embroidered and covered on both sides with flowers, figures, animals, and other things from China, in various colours.” The Kings’s own chamber was “emmeublée”<sup>1</sup> in this fashion at the moment when the four friends, Racine, Boileau, Chapelle and La Fontaine, in 1668, paid a visit to Versailles, which La Fontaine has so delightfully described for us. “Among other beauties, they paused a long time to look at the bed, the tapestry and the chairs with which the King’s chamber and cabinet have been furnished: it is a Chinese stuff, full of figures embodying the whole religion of that country. For want of a

1 It was a summer set of furniture.

Brahmin<sup>1</sup> our four friends understood it not at all." And this "dressing gown of white satin, embellished with Chinese embroidery, lined with green taffeta," is neither more nor less than Louis XIV's own dressing gown. "Chinese stuff, a gold ground sprinkled with large leaves and plants, from which spring branches of flowers with birds and butterflies . . . blue Chinese gauze, sprinkled with flowers in gold and silk . . . Chinese gauze amaranth or dried rose colour . . . Chinese stuff of flame colour . . . Chinese stuff, silk, of violet ground sprinkled and filled with flowers painted in divers colours . . ." all the dream stuffs that China wove, embroidered, and painted in the days of the first Ts'ings, shimmer in every page of the old inventories of the Crown furniture.

The Mercuries and Apollos that filled the ceilings above the great gold and marble salons saw beneath them things still more suprising. Here, a "black carpet with Chinese lettering edged with a band of yellow, with little flowers in embroidery"; there a lacquer cabinet on which geese are flying and rabbits browsing—animals far from noble; another on which they perceive "a kind of monster with all four legs in the air";<sup>2</sup> and lastly, everywhere on the most majestic tables of mosaic work, on the *scabellons* \*

1 A Brahmin as a Chinese priest! La Fontaine does not go into the matter so closely; besides, Persia, China, India, Japan were all one for the Westerns of this age.

2 The dragon of Fô, doubtless.

of Boulle, and the gilded consoles of Cucci, *pagodes* everywhere. That was the name given to those little figures of every kind of material, imported from China or from India, which were chosen for their oddity, and over which everybody went crazy: Pou-Tai, obese and laughing on his sack of rice; Sakya-Muni meditating on his lotus-blossom; Lao-Tse with enormous forehead sitting on his buffalo; "an old man huddled up on a stork," or "a beggar leaning against a gallows." But what must have made Alcides drop his club out of his hands with astonishment, was to see one day a Chinese cabinet make its appearance, "to which his Majesty has had ten silver plaques fastened representing the labours of Hercules." This singular combination gives us quite new side-lights on the taste of the monarch.

What was there not to be found in that Versailles, which we are wrong in thinking of as all solemn state, and consequently in all the elegant interiors that prided themselves in resembling Versailles? "One hundred and seventy-one bouquets of various kinds of flowers . . . made with one single roll of silk cords . . . 515 little grotesque figures made, like the flowers, of rolled twist . . . 28 other larger figures of pasteboard and dressed in Indian robes of gold and silver and silk brocade" . . . table-tops entirely made of shells and cement . . . spinning wheels with their *travoils*<sup>1</sup> in the apartments of

1 Winders for the thread.

princesses, for in these days princesses span and poetesses sang of their distaffs:—

*Quenouille, mon souci, je vous promets et jure  
De vous aimer toujours, et ne jamais changer  
Votre honneur domestique en un bien étranger.*

In the alcoves, just as in the rooms of girls to-day, might be seen little whatnots on which there were ranged knick-knacks of the most heterogeneous kind: a knife-grinder with his cart, made of silver filigree; a stag of blown glass; a coral tree; a doll's house. There might be seen, put up on the chimney-pieces, paper hand screens, upon which were engraved the far from edifying "Delights of the French soldier"; innumerable bouquets of artificial flowers in porcelain vases, "three thousand and thirty-one bouquets of flowers of various colours made of pleated silk gauze": round tables made of glass; and even *boules de jardin*, "phials of glass tinned inside, mounted on feet, placed on the mantelshelf to reflect in miniature the objects contained in the room"!

But there was one ornament for walls and mantelpieces, even in the state-rooms, that had an unheard of vogue. This was porcelain, either Chinese porcelain or its imitation in "Dutch porcelain," that is to say, Delft faïence. One must see certain prints by Daniel Marot or Le Pautre to realise to what heights this craze could be carried. Here is a chimney-piece carrying at each end of its shelf a large vase in shape of a horn and a bottle; in the middle, on a whatnot



with four diminishing shelves, rises a pyramid of twenty-two pieces of porcelain. This way of decorating chimney-pieces had become so habitual that d'Aviler in his *Traité d'Architecture* wrote: "The height of a chimney-shelf should be six feet, so as to prevent the vases that may be arranged on it from being knocked over." And we know from childhood, since we read it in *Riquet à la Houppé*, how the stupidity of a princess of those days showed itself. "She either made no answer to what she was asked, or said something stupid. And she was so clumsy to boot, that she could not have ranged four bits of china on a chimney-shelf without breaking one of them, nor drunk a glass of water without spilling half of it over her clothes." In rooms decorated after the Chinese style it went further still. Cups alternately with saucers standing on edge, on tiny brackets or shelves, enframed panels lacquered in the Chinese fashion; others were ranged over the lintels of the doors; all the lines of a chimney-piece were laid out with them; one such chimney-piece was adorned with more than two hundred and twenty bits of china. Did not the Duc d'Aumont, if Saint-Simon may be believed, even take it into his head one day to have a cornice run all round his stable, which he covered with rare pieces of porcelain?

It is perhaps worth while to lay stress on this counterpart to the majestic decorative art inspired by Le Brun, for we are too much accustomed to judge from the dead and empty halls of unused

and ravaged palaces, or from pieces of furniture displayed in isolation in museums and collections. Now that we have a comprehensive idea of our style, and of the atmosphere, so to say, in which it was shaped, we shall endeavour to analyse more precisely its distinguishing characteristics, considering more especially furniture of the less elaborate kinds.<sup>1</sup>

The Louis XIV style, perhaps chiefly because it had an eye on economy, abused the straight line in furniture. The style that came after did not avoid straight lines, it even emphasises them by a multiplication of parallels, with a slightly tiresome insistence, for example, in cupboards with large horizontal cornices.<sup>2</sup> In any case they are not detracted from and broken by a host of artifices, as they will be in the Louis XV style, where this later style consents to retain them. These straight lines sometimes give a certain impression of dryness,<sup>3</sup> but on the whole this is much less frequent than in the Louis XIII or the Empire style.

Curved lines were also very much employed, even before the style began to incline to the Regency lines. The Louis XIV curve is simple, firm and concise, with short radius; it never shows that species of loosened languor, so to say,

1 A great number of Louis XIV motives continued to be used in the Regency period, and we shall accordingly borrow in this chapter examples from the furniture of the succeeding period.

2 See the cupboards in Figs. 4 and 7, and especially in Fig. 9.

3 See the stretchers of the table in Fig. 23, and also the stretcher of the arm-chair in Fig. 35.

which gives so much charm to the long curves of the Louis XV style. The table in Fig. 22 is wholly typical in this respect. Except in its rectangular top it does not present a single straight line. We must needs recognise that in this example the line is confused, too much broken up into short curves, and that this gives an effect of heaviness. The most successful pieces of this period offer a very harmonious combination of straight lines and curves, from which there results a sturdy firmness that does not prevent elegance.<sup>1</sup>

Right angles are not often evaded or softened?<sup>2</sup> Like the regular courses in a wall of well squared cut stone, they express ideas of security, solidity, preciseness, of abstract reason also; here we may perceive the sign of the "geometrical spirit" of which Pascal spoke. Boileau had a mind full of right angles, Descartes also, and Corneille, and the great Arnould, and Poussin too. Look at Poussin's portrait of himself in the Louvre; was it by mere chance that the background is cut up by several right angles?

These perpendiculars form the boundaries of panels, which others still subdivide into smaller panels; and this is another characteristic feature of an epoch that loves clearly defined limits,

1 Good examples of this harmony may be seen in the wood panels in Figs. 1 and 2, the cupboard in Fig. 6, the arm-chair of Fig. 32, the commode in Fig. 19, and above all the magnificent cupboard of Fig. 10 and the very handsome table of Fig. 21.

2 See the numerous right angles in the cupboards of Figs. 4, 5, 6, the arm-chair of Fig. 32, etc., etc.

## 44 LOUIS XIV FURNITURE

equal subdivisions, tragedies whose five acts never overlap one another, alexandrines without carry-over, strongly divided at each hemistich and moving two by two "like oxen," discourses in three clearly marked and defined heads, all equally developed and separated by unmistakable transitions. This subdivision into panels, "compartments" as they were called, is often a complete decoration in itself.

The panel in its early shape is a simple rectangle with a plain surface; the "diamond point" decoration of the Louis XIII style is done away with.<sup>1</sup> An early enrichment consists in hollowing out the four angles;<sup>2</sup> often the hollowed space is decorated with a motive carved in relief, a little rosette or the like.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes the panel is only hollowed at the top corners.<sup>4</sup>

Next comes the panel with semicircular top, the diameter of the curve of the semicircle being less than the side of the rectangle to which it is applied,<sup>5</sup> which gives a semicircle, the diameter of which is produced both ways in two straight lines. The four right angles of the panel remain. This is, especially in joiners' work, one of the fundamental and most characteristic shapes of the style, and is found everywhere. The architects of the period, whose nomenclature was full of a genial simplicity, called this a "panel rounded

1 Lower part of cupboard, Fig. 4; buffet in Fig. 12, etc.

2 Door panels of cupboard, Fig. 7.

3 Cupboards, Figs. 3 and 6.

4 Buffet, Fig. 47.

5 Cupboards, Figs. 4, 6, 7, etc.

at the top." The whole façade of a piece of furniture may be of this shape; we then have a semicircular pediment.<sup>1</sup> The panel may be rounded at top and bottom.<sup>2</sup> Let us suppose a square panel arched in this fashion on each side; this gives a very happy motive,<sup>3</sup> known as a "square rounded on its faces," which is no other than a Gothic framing, very common in the thirteenth century: of this kind are the famous quadrilobate medallions that figure on the sub-basement of the doorway of Amiens cathedral. It is agreeable enough to see the men of the seventeenth century thus unconsciously re-discovering the

. . . *ade goust des ornemens gothiques*  
*Ces monstres odieux des siècles ignorans,*  
*Que de la barbarie ont produit les torrens,*

as Molière says in detestable verses. This medallion, when simplified by the suppression of the corner angles,<sup>4</sup> gives the quatrefoil, which is pure Gothic also.

The combination of the semicircle with the hollowed angles gives another very common and highly typical motive,<sup>5</sup> which for convenience we may call the *cintre a ressaut*. This line is also found in the pediments of cupboards and sideboards,<sup>6</sup> at the top of the backs of certain leather

1 Buffet, Fig. 12; clocks, Figs. 56 and 57.

2 See the narrow sunk panels flanking the doors of the cupboard in Fig. 5.

3 Cupboard, Fig. 11.

4 Cupboard, Fig. 5.

5 Cupboards, Fig. 8, and under-cupboard, Fig. 14.

6 Sideboard, Fig. 48.

chairs, and in the stretchers of the tables and seats.<sup>1</sup> Elongated in elevation,<sup>2</sup> or on the contrary flattened out,<sup>3</sup> modified by the greater importance given now to the arch,<sup>4</sup> now to the hollowed angles,<sup>5</sup> repeated at the two ends of a panel,<sup>6</sup> duplicated back to back,<sup>7</sup> repeated four times,<sup>8</sup> or combined with a simple semicircle<sup>9</sup> to form a medallion, this motive lends itself to a host of different uses. We shall see presently how it evolved in the Regency period. There is another shape fairly frequent in panels: it has a hollow or re-entrant semicircle at the bottom corresponding and parallel to the semicircle at the top.<sup>10</sup>

Besides the rectangular panel the circular or oval panel<sup>11</sup> was also often employed, forming a medallion. Let us note, in short, that as the Louis XIV style was addicted to parallel lines, the shape of a panel or compartment was often determined by that of the next door panel, which it complies with when the other is the more important.<sup>12</sup>

The division of a surface into panels may have

1 Arm-chair, Fig. 32, and chair, Fig. 38.

2 Cupboard, Fig. 6, the panels at the top of the doors.

3 Cupboard, Fig. 5.

4 Cupboard, Fig. 8, the top part.

5 Same cupboard, the lower part.

6 Cupboard, Fig. 9.

7 Cupboards, Fig. 5.

8 Cupboard, Fig. 5.

9 Cupboard, Fig. 46.

10 Under-cupboard, Fig. 14.

11 See the woodwork in Fig. 1 and the buffet, Fig. 47.

12 Cupboards, Figs. 4 and 5 (curious small compartments of ogee shape), and Figs. 9 and 10.

no other intention than to achieve ornamentation, as in elaborate wainscoting, but it is different in the case of the doors of cupboards. Here it is essential, the traverses serving to give the solidity and firmness that the uprights would not suffice to ensure, unless the joiner made them of an excessive thickness.

Panels are edged definitely with mouldings that serve to define their shape. Louis XIV moulding is emphatic, strongly expressed, in high relief; it produces strong effects of shadow, throwing into vivid contrast the blackness of its hollows and the lights of its projections; it is often very complicated and occasionally heavy, but it is never flabby. Originating in the heavy mouldings of Louis XIII, it moves always in the direction of suppleness and refinement. There are arm-chairs of this period which have mouldings, especially on the arms, as handsome as the most perfect of the middle ages or the Louis XV period.

Its elements are wholly classic, of course: fillets and quadrantals, doucines and scotias; though it continually employs the *bec de corbin* or crow's bill motive, which comes from Gothic art, for framing.

In the proper æsthetic scheme of furniture, the part played by mouldings is to mark the different elements of its construction by bringing out their function in the piece as a whole. For example, horizontal mouldings emphasise the division of cupboards into sections, whether they

are in two parts<sup>1</sup> or have a drawer.<sup>2</sup> But at the period we are now dealing with, pre-occupations as to the enframing, which is always so striking, and as to symmetry, often carry the day over this wholesome logic. A whole cupboard façade may be framed round like a picture,<sup>3</sup> while the division between the drawer section and that of the cupboard proper will not be indicated; a very high moulding will run all round the cupboard, carried along, in the lower part, across and over uprights and traverses to correspond symmetrically with the cornice.<sup>4</sup>

This subdivision into panels, and this use of mouldings may well suffice, by the play of the light upon the various planes and the mouldings, to create an intensely decorative result. Two handsome cupboards, reproduced here, prove this.<sup>5</sup>

But most frequently carving is brought into the ornamenting of massive pieces, and bronzes are placed on marquetry or veneered furniture. We must glance rapidly at the favourite motives of these two methods under Louis XIV.

The simplest motives of all, made up of lines only, are the elementary curves, which may be named the C-shaped curve (known in the seventeenth century as *anse de panier*, "basket-handle"), and the S-shaped curve, which all the

1 Fig. 3.

2 Figs. 4, 5, 7, 9, etc.

3 Fig. II.

4 Figs. 3, 4, 5, 9, etc

5 Fig. 9 and especially 10.



styles employed more or less. These end in two little crooks, and are frequently lightened with a little acanthus motive. The two wooden panels of Figs. 1 and 2 show them to us employed and combined in many ways: the C curves facing and crossed forming the elements of a rosette;<sup>1</sup> two S shapes touching at one of their curves, enframing a sprig of foliage;<sup>2</sup> four C shapes back to back, forming a motive in the form of a cross,<sup>3</sup> etc. When two S-shaped curves are crossed about one-third from their lower end, and their tips touch below, or even melt into one continuous line, we have the *boucle*.<sup>4</sup> A *boucle*, or several, one below the other, diminishing and ending in a floret or a *campane*,\* form the *natte* or *tresse*, one of the most usual shapes of *chute*.\* Among motives for backgrounds, the favourites are lozenges with florets<sup>5</sup> or with dots,<sup>6</sup> and *nattes*.<sup>7</sup>

Motives taken from the human figure were, of course, only used in decorating very costly and luxurious pieces. Allegory, and mythological allegory in especial, as is well known, is one of the most inveterate habits of mind among the men of the seventeenth century: whether poets or no, historical painters or artists in other styles, they can no longer express themselves, hardly

1 Fig. 1, the central rosette.

2 Fig. 2, enframing of the *fleur-de-lis*.

3 Fig. 2, the small centre panel.

4 Drawer and legs of table, Fig. 58.

5 Frieze of table in Fig. 21.

6 Frieze of tables in Figs 22 and 59; chairs, Figs. 71 and 72.

7 Fig. 6.

even think, without mythology breaking in; and for everybody, as for Boileau,

*Chaque vertu devient une divinité,  
Minerve est la prudence, et Venus la beauté . . .  
Un orage terrible aux yeux des matelots,  
C'est Neptune en courroux qui gourmande les flots.*

A great deal of furniture, especially that made for the King, is accordingly allegorical. Here we may see Louis XIV in the guise of Hercules or Apollo, and Maria Theresa as Diana, on two cabinets, of which one is the Temple of Glory and the other the Temple of Virtue; at Versailles there is a Cabinet of Peace, and a Cabinet of War, etc., etc.

But what is much more common is the use of masks and *mascarons*. The difference between them is that a mask is a head in half relief, seen full face, but a noble and beautiful head, while a *mascaron* is a "grotesque," a "head made according to whimsy," in which elements of vegetable life are mingled with the human features, and most frequently it is the face of a satyr. The beard of this satyr is often long, plaited, and forms a *chute*. Thus, in the ornamentation of the small gilt table, reproduced in Fig. 22, the female head that adorns the middle of the frieze is a mask;<sup>1</sup> the satyrs' heads on the legs are mascarons. A mask or mascaron is often crowned and in a fashion aureoled with a palm-leaf ornament raying out (to which the *fontange* has a strong resemblance), whose lobes

<sup>1</sup> So also the fine bronzes on the sides of the commode, Fig. 17.

are decorated in various ways. This same palm leaf may also form a collarette below the mask.

The animal kingdom is largely put under contribution, "noble animals," of course: there are lion's heads,<sup>1</sup> lion's spoils—from the Nemean lion, lion's paws, lion's claws;<sup>2</sup> ram's heads, ram's horns more or less conventionalised,<sup>3</sup> cloven stag's hoofs.<sup>4</sup> Then we have the fantastic animals of mythology, dolphins, sphinxes, sea-horses, griffins, etc. The escutcheons on the keyholes of simple cupboards and buffets, made of iron, shaped and modelled with the file and then roughly engraved, often allow us to recognise the old motive of the winged dragon, though very degenerate,<sup>5</sup> and in other cases the dolphin.<sup>6</sup> And the scallop shell is almost ubiquitous.<sup>7</sup> It is Saint James's shell, the pilgrim's shell, but we meet it in a hundred modifications; between this and the palmette there exists every imaginable intermediate shape. It is convex, showing its outer and not its inner side, but the edges are turned over outwards.

In the vegetable kingdom the acanthus is almost the only subject sufficiently classical to be employed, but what variety of resources does it

1 Ornament (known as a *rinseau*) on the base of the commode, Fig. 54.

2 Feet of cupboard, Fig. 45.

3 The ram's horn motive, much conventionalised and modified, can be recognised on each side of the mask on the table, Fig. 22.

4 Legs of table, Fig. 22, etc.

5 Cupboard, Fig. 9, etc.

6 Base of cupboard, Fig. 14.

7 Base of cupboard, Fig. 14; chair, Fig. 39.

not offer to the artist in ornament! It bends itself to everything, takes every shape: rinceaux, stems, florets, rosettes, croziers, *boucles*. The palmette has now only very distant links with a palm leaf; it is made with ribbons, or cut out of leather rather than anything else, and anyhow it is often called a *queue de paon*,<sup>1</sup> "peacock's tail." We find also a water lily leaf, especially in friezes of gilt bronze, twigs of oak or laurel or olive, lilies and sunflowers,<sup>2</sup> which owe their inclusion to their symbolism. Garlands, known in the seventeenth century as "festoons,"<sup>3</sup> were made up of fruits, and roses, and narcissi, and flowers of no clear species. If in the decorations made with marquetry of coloured woods we find a little more variety and realism, tulips, tuberoses, anemones, it is because here we are dealing with an imitation of Dutch models.<sup>4</sup> But where we find every kind of beast—birds, lizards, butterflies, caterpillars, insects—and many different flowers represented "in natural colours," is on tables of stone mosaic, precisely because in this case the realism is a regular "tour de force," and so claimed as a beauty.

There remain the ornaments inspired by things made by man. The greatest number are again borrowed from architecture. Since the middle

1 Fig. 17, exterior angles of drawers.

2 Fig. 1, small sunflower in the middle of the rosette.

3 Boileau is speaking of garlands when he says, "*ce ne sont que festons, ce ne sont qu'astragales.*" As for the astragales he merely threw them in for luck, for the sake of the rhyme.

4 Commode, Fig. 18.

ages, furniture has never ceased to imitate a house or a church. This is true in a less degree under Louis XIV than under Louis XIII, less under the Bourbons than under the Valois, but still the imitation is there; it was in the Louis XV period that it came to a stop for a time. At the outset of the reign, there was still many a cabinet crowned with balusters and trophies like the Palace of Versailles, that carried engaged pillars on its façade, or pilasters with Corinthian capitals, and niches for statuary. Cupboards were topped with great projecting cornices, like the Strozzi Palace or the Farnese Palace;<sup>1</sup> but there was a clear and increasing tendency to abandon these practices. The pillar vanished, and no hint of it is left save the flutings that adorn the rounded arrises of the early commodes.<sup>2</sup> The baluster, on the other hand, of round or square section, was in high favour for legs of tables and seats.<sup>3</sup> The console was employed almost everywhere, both as a support<sup>4</sup> and as a mere ornament.<sup>5</sup> It was often extravagantly wrenched out of shape, as for example by the unhappy complication of making the two scrolls in which it terminates, or the curves that recall

1 Observe the *ressaults* and *decrochements* of the cornices, so beloved of baroque architecture, in the top of the cupboard in Fig. 10 and the buffet in Fig. 11.

2 Figs. 17 and 19.

3 Table, Fig. 21; bureau, Fig. 27; arm-chair, Fig. 31; chair, Fig. 33 etc.

4 Arms of arm-chairs, Figs. 72 and 73; legs of arm-chairs, Figs. 32, 61, 62.

5 Stretcher of table, Fig. 22, and of the arm-chair, Fig. 31.

the scrolls, move in the same instead of in opposite directions.<sup>1</sup> Two of these unnatural consoles placed end to end originated the bracket-shaped *acolade* found in table legs and in the cross pieces between the legs of simplified seats.<sup>2</sup> Modillions and denticules appear under certain cornices. The Doric triglyphs, so common on Louis XVI furniture, were used by Boulle and his rivals; they were known roundly as "*cuisses et canaux.*"

Among other objects that furnished ornamental motives ancient weapons must be mentioned: the glaive, bow and quiver, naval buckler, the Bœotian helmet; mythological attributes: tridents, caducei, thunderbolts, scythes, all the equipment of the gods; trophies of musical instruments, fishing, hunting, and agricultural implements: but all these are much less employed than in the eighteenth century. Lastly, the knot of ribbon,<sup>3</sup> and very commonly the motive known to us as a *lambrequin*, an imitation of a strip of stuff cut with deep hanging scallops. This was called a *campane* in the seventeenth century, and a single one of these scallops, shaped like the panels *arrondis par le bout* described above, and often adorned with fringe, was called a *bout de campane*. Boulle's *gaines d'applique*\* were often decorated with large *bouts de campane* in colours.

1 Legs of chair, Fig. 39, etc.

2 Table, Fig. 26; seats, Figs. 34, 36, etc.

3 Table, Fig. 21.

Over the composition, the use, and the handling of these various motives there presides the sacrosanct spirit of symmetry ever and always. For those minds and those eyes that have the passion for regularity, symmetry with reference to a vertical axis is not enough—they demand it with reference to a horizontal axis as well. We have pointed out those mouldings on cupboard bases which correspond exactly to the mouldings of the cornice. Note also those examples of wood panelling, whose top is identical with the bottom (Figs. 1 and 2), that little cupboard (Fig. 3), which might very comfortably be placed upside down; and again those table legs shaped like a bracket on end (Fig. 26), that chair back (Fig. 39), whose lower traverse has the same curve as the upper one. The Empire period, however, will be even more infatuated with these exact counterpoises.

As for colour in furniture, it seems clear that under Louis XIV people's eyes, like their other senses, were less fine, less sensitive to shocks than in the days of Louis XV, or, more especially, in the days of Louis XVI. We have already seen that the magnificent hangings that people loved to surround themselves with were often of bright colours, and very glaring colours, set against each other in bands or compartments, and no discordancy was shrunk from. Herewith are a few examples.

When the Abbé d'Effiat died, in 1698, he had in his flat in the Arsenal a bed whose *tour*

or draperies (curtains, *bonnes graces*, scalloped hangings round the top, and valances) were of violet velvet, and the inside furnishings (foot, head and counterpane) of yellow satin. In the same room the seats were covered, some in violet velvet, the others in white and gold brocade, with one finally in crimson velvet. The colour called *aurore* was high in favour; according to Furetière, it was "a certain dazzling golden yellow." Here is what it was matched with. This same Abbé d'Effiat had a room, the chairs in which were covered with Lyons brocatelle, "aurora-coloured with red flowers." In the Tuileries there was a hanging of aurora and green damask. In the Château du Val the bench seats in the King's cabinet were aurora Venetian brocatelle flowered in green.

■ Mme. de Maintenon had a weakness for a combination of red and green. Her chamber at Versailles had a hanging of damask with crimson and green stripes; her bed displayed green and gold without and crimson within; a five-fold screen had three green and two red leaves. The seats were striped red and green, their wooden parts green picked out in gold. Lastly, here is the description of her famous "niche" from the Inventory of the Crown Furniture: "An oak niche, five feet ten inches long by two feet ten inches deep and eight feet and a half high, furnished inside with four widths of red damask and three widths of gold and green damask, joined with a narrow gold galoon on the seams,



and outside with three widths of gold and green damask and two widths and a stripe of red damask similarly joined with a small gold galoon." Inside it there was a rest-bed, with a crimson coverlet lined with green.

Tables, the wooden portions of seats, and guéridons were all to match; painted red and green and gold, or blue and gold; lacquered "in the Chinese fashion," or, which was the same thing, "in the manner of porcelain," *i.e.*, lacquered white with blue decoration: we may figure to ourselves furniture something like the early manner of Rouen earthenware.

But, towards the close of the reign the taste for pure soft colour appears to prevail little by little, at the same time as wood panelling begins in many homes to take the place of the hangings of bright-hued stuffs. Speaking of the colour proper for painting wainscoating, the architect d'Aviler wrote in 1691, "the most beautiful colour is white, because it increases the light and rejoices the eyes."

\* \* \* \* \*

The technique of furniture making was enriched with no important novelties in the second half of the seventeenth century, but practices that had been still rare about 1650 became quite usual. Such were the gilding of wood, veneering, marquetry, the upholstering of seats, to say nothing of royal and princely caprices like furniture of solid silver.

Our master joiners, worthy successors to the good *huchiers* of bygone days, had for a long time had nothing to learn when they were given a new problem to solve—the making of very large cupboards. So well did they acquit themselves, that these monumental pieces are to-day carrying on their loyal service in provincial houses, without having interrupted them for a moment during more than two centuries. What furniture of the present day can look forward to such a destiny? The joiners then continued to create for their customers of moderate means these excellent and handsome pieces of pure carpentry work. But in the circles where people plumed themselves on refinement and elegance, there was a tendency to prefer a more brilliant surface decoration in furniture, the effect of colouring taking the place of the effect got by working in relief.

Furniture of gilded wood, or rather gilded in part, was not unknown to our ancestors, even in the fourteenth century, but it was very uncommon down to the seventeenth century. Italy, of course, that motherland of every kind of magnificence, was the first to think of full-gilding the bed, seats, tables, frames, candelabra, everything in short in a state chamber that was made of wood, and this taste did not fail to find its way into France. It would certainly have been a dream wish of Louis XIV to have furniture of solid gold; failing which he had silver, and, later on, gilded wood. The director of

gilding at the Gobelins was an important personage, le Sieur de la Baronnière. Gilding was then carried out *à la detrempe*, and was a complicated affair. First of all, the wood was treated in the same way as that in which panels had been got ready for painting pictures in the days before canvas. To begin with, it was coated with size, and then with one thin layer after another of *blanc*, whiting melted down with skin glue, then a coat of yellow, then one of the *assiette*, into whose composition there entered not less than six or seven glutinous materials cunningly compounded; and then last of all leaf gold was laid on, and nothing remained to do but to burnish it. Furniture was silvered also: the throne of Louis XIV, after the great melting down of his plate, was silvered wood; and, so too in many cases were the caryatides or *termes* that upheld the tables on which fine cabinets were placed. This gilding of carved pieces is so familiar to us that an effort is needed to understand just to what degree it is an æsthetic heresy.

It is a heresy characteristic of a period that preferred richness, whether real or seeming, of material to the far higher kind of beauty that the work of the tool gave to materials that were already beautiful indeed, but with no intrinsic money value, materials like oak and walnut. Hence came veneering and marquetry side by side with gilding. The Louis XIII period had known an intermediate stage between solid furniture of joiners' work and veneered furniture.

This was seen in ebony cabinets, in which the precious wood was glued on to the common wood, but in sheets of sufficient thickness to allow of their being carved in *bas-relief* and lightly moulded. Veneering made its appearance at the same time. Its technique has never changed, except that mechanical processes of cutting up wood makes it possible to-day to obtain sheets of much greater thinness. But by itself veneering does not give enough richness; and recourse was had to marquetry.

Wood marquetry<sup>1</sup> was not carried out in the same way as it is to-day. The panel to be decorated was first of all covered completely with the wood intended for the background, and next, the artist cut out with penknife or burin the place for the decorative motive, the various parts of which were shaped with a fret-saw and then glued in their proper places. Without being very extensive, the range of colours at the disposal of the *ébéniste*—the word came into current use precisely when that austere wood ebony went out of fashion—already was of a certain richness. Almond and box gave him yellows, holly a pure white; certain pearwoods red; walnut all the browns ranging to black; Saint Lucia wood a pinkish grey. And he could colour his wood in graded browns by “shading” it with fire.

Finding these colours dull, the *ouvriers en*

<sup>1</sup> Boulle made use of it at the same time as marquetry with shell and metals. In the Louvre there is a cupboard by him, decorated with fine bouquets of flowers in vases, made of marquetry in wood on a ground of tortoise-shell.

*bois de rapport* devised the plan, an atrocious one from the point of view of technique, and open to discussion as regards beauty, of calling in other materials, such as brass and pewter, which had already been used (like bone, ivory and mother of pearl) for inlaying, and especially as fillets to outline compartments; tortoise-shell, and lastly transparent and colourless horn, painted in vivid colours on the back. These, with gilded bronze in the shape of appliques, were the resources of the "palette," if we may risk the phrase, of André-Charles-Boullé. He used also fine stones, though very sparingly.

His method of working was as follows. The structure and frame of his furniture is quite coarsely made, and generally of deal. On this wood he glued a sheet of paper rubbed over with red or black, and over this paper the various pieces of his marquetry, obtained in the following way: if he intended to make a panel in which a motive of *rinceaux* in brass should show on a ground of tortoise-shell, he glued lightly together a sheet of copper, a sheet of tortoise-shell, and the sheet of paper on which he had made out his design; he then sawed out the whole together, unfastened them, and in this way had his ground in duplicate, both of shell and brass, and his ornament in duplicate also, brass and tortoise-shell. He then glued the tortoise-shell ground and the brass ornament on his wooden foundation, and last of all the bronze appliques were affixed. He then had the brass ground and the shell orna-

ments left unused, and with these he made a new piece, identical in design with the first one, but with the reverse combination of materials. This second piece, less valuable than the first, was called the counterpart, *de contre-partie*; the first was said to be *de première partie*. Usualle a piece was not completely either one or the other, but elements of both kinds were combined in the work.

Unhappily there is no solidity in it. Metals do not take kindly to glue, and all these heterogeneous materials behave in different ways in heat and damp. These pieces therefore demand continual restorations, and are not even to be used: they are simply for museums.

To add the last touches to their sumptuousness, and give them at the same time that allegorical significance which was so appreciated in his day, Boulle added to these pieces appliques of gilt bronze, often admirable at every point for their casting, their chasing and their gilding alike. Some distinction must be made in these bronzes. If we examine them carefully, we see that some of them are ornaments pure and simple, while others serve to strengthen the piece, to protect it from being knocked about, and to resist the strain and play of the wood. For example, the sort of square pieces at the angles of doors have their use; they serve to reinforce the juncture of the upright and the traverse, metal frames take the place of the useful projections made by the mouldings used

by the joiner cabinet-makers. Other bronzes play the part of braces. Once admitting the principle of these superadded ornaments, it was a wholesome and logical notion to make them contribute to the solidity of the piece ; we shall see this acted on, and much better, by the cabinet-makers of the Regency style. But at bottom it was a throwing back of several centuries to the methods of the unskilled hutchers of the thirteenth century, who did not know how to put their coffers together strongly and solidly, and so clamped their boards in position by means of iron braces.

We have seen how the taste for bright colours led to the painting of many pieces of furniture ; and the admiration lavished on the lacquers of the Far East, and the desire to copy them or simply to imitate them, ended in the discovery of the process of lacquering. Foucquet and Mazarin already had furniture "of the Chinese fashion," but a native of Liége, called Dagly, invented a kind of lacquer of great brilliancy and solidity, a discovery that opened the doors of the Gobelins to him, and this was known as the "verniss des Gobelins." At the close of the reign the staff of the factory included a "Directeur des ouvrages de la Chine," and great efforts were made to imitate black and gold lacquer ware, which was to be achieved a little later, in exquisite perfection, by the celebrated Martin.

## CHAPTER II: PANELLED FURNITURE, BEDS AND TABLES

THE group of panelled furniture was augmented during the period of the Louis XIV style by very important items, the great cupboard in one piece, the sideboard cupboard, the dresser-sideboard, the under-cupboard, the bookcase, and the commode. On the other hand, the coffer was packed off into garrets by the city folk, and was only made now for country people; and the cabinet, which taken all in all and in its origin, was merely a costly coffer elaborated and mounted on a wall table, disappeared for good.

These births and deaths, so to speak, arise from a great change in manners. Down to the middle of the seventeenth century, our forefathers' way of living kept traces of the half nomad existence of the middle ages, those times when, for instance, a man of rank, the lord of three separate châteaux, had only one set of furniture for all three, and took everything he possessed with him when he went from one to the other. His possessions were so few, and it would have been so unwise to leave anything behind that could be pillaged! Pieces of furniture therefore that were meant as receptacles (what we call panelled furniture), were small and



sufficiently portable to be loaded on to a pack-horse. Hence the persistence of the coffer, so inconvenient in itself; hence the quite small cupboard of the sixteenth century, made in two parts, one on top of the other, which merely became larger, without change of structure, in the Louis XIII period, and hence too the handles to be seen on the sides of so many coffers and even of some cupboards.

But under Louis XIV affairs were more stationary and settled; people moved less readily from place to place, even though it was easier to do so, and they had infinitely more things to lock away, clothes, linen, etc., than the preceding generations. And so large furniture makes its appearance, and in particular the large cupboard with one or two doors. There had always been but few in Paris, and no trouble had been taken to make handsome things of them,<sup>1</sup> because the habit of receiving visitors in the bedchamber was given up earlier in Paris than in the provinces, because in Paris people had *garde-robés*,<sup>2</sup> and because women there did not take so much pride and invest a large proportion of their dowries in imposing piles of blankets and napkins. But among the ladies of provincial châteaux and business circles, and farmers' wives when they became well off, the great cupboard, as great and as handsome as possible, was the

<sup>1</sup> And in consequence the few that did exist were not preserved.

<sup>2</sup> At Paris, a *garde-robe* was a small room adjoining the bed-chamber; in the South it was a great cupboard.

essential piece of furniture, a thing they were proud to have and to display. Many of these Louis XIV cupboards, more imposing than attractive, are superb in their lines and proportions, impeccable in their architecture, and without rivals in decorative value in a huge room, the hall of a château, or a great country mansion.

Those of the pure Louis XIV style—which does not necessarily mean that they were made before 1715—can be recognised by their cornice, which is nearly always horizontal, projects very far, and shows a complicated style of moulding; by their rectangular doors, subdivided into flat panels of shapes already described, and lastly by their feet, which are sometimes flattened balls<sup>1</sup> or burly volutes<sup>2</sup> or lions paws,<sup>3</sup> when they have a reversed cornice at the base going round three sides; sometimes they are merely a prolonging of the uprights, cut off short.<sup>4</sup> They display no carving, or but very little. The models dating from the end of the style, and “approaching the Regency manner,” as the dealers say, allow a few curves in their structure as a whole: these are the most agreeable to the eye, such as the fine model of Fig. 10, in which those inflected lines, which are yet very restrained, come in so happily to soften the silhouette.

Cupboards from the different provinces had

1 Figs. 4, 5, 7, etc.

2 Figs. 10 and 15.

3 Fig. 45.

4 Figs. 6 and 8.

not yet, in the period to which our attention is directed, any very marked differences. What then distinguished the furniture of one region from that of another was the fact that the new style had already or had not as yet arrived, rather than any different shades in the style itself. Let us note, however, that the cupboards made in the South-west<sup>1</sup> are distinguished by their abundant mouldings; those of Lorraine<sup>2</sup> by the somewhat frequent use of very simple marquetry or inlay in coloured woods, and the quadrilobate medallion; and Normandy cupboards<sup>3</sup> by their elegant proportions, their delicate carving and their classic cornices with denticles.

The small cupboard in two parts and with two *volets* or doors, and the larger one with four doors, were still made, but less and less often, and they almost always display the characteristics of the Louis XIII style. Nevertheless we reproduce, in Fig. 3, a graceful little Norman example with two doors, a *bonnetière* or bonnet cupboard if you like, which clearly has the marks of the Louis XIV manner.

Furniture became specialised at the same time as the rooms in flats. Here is the *bas d'armoire*,<sup>4</sup> or under-cupboard, with or without a drawer in the upper part, the name of which recalls its resemblance to the lower section of the cupboards

1 Figs. 4, 7, and 9.

2 Fig. 11. Note the same or an analogous motive on cupboards or sideboards from Lorraine, Figs. 46, 49 and 57.

3 Fig. 6.

4 Fig. 14.

made in two parts. Those we meet with to-day are very often in reality the lower halves of old cupboards whose top sections have been destroyed. They were used in antechambers, and in certain districts (at Paris in particular and in the South, where they were presently to give birth to the *buffet-crédence* of the Arles region) as a sideboard in the dining-room or the kitchen, which for many people were the same thing. The *bas d'armoire*, sometimes called a *demi-buffet*, a half-sideboard, was about four feet in height, and varied greatly in width ; there were some that had three doors.

Books had heretofore been kept in ordinary cupboards or shelves, or simply piled along the wall. At the end of the seventeenth century the numbers of books in the houses even of people of no great culture were greatly increased, and the need of devoting a special piece of furniture to them was strongly felt : so the bookcase was born, at first known as a "bookcase cupboard." Already we have made the acquaintance of Boileau's three bookcases. As people in those days were not so cramped for space in their homes as we are, and as their books were not so overwhelming in numbers, it was not necessary to run them up to a great height—a method that is far from convenient, and is full of danger for the books, as it multiplies the risks of falling. The book cupboard therefore was an under-cupboard, a little taller than usual ; its doors were fitted with a trellis made of iron wire, behind which there was a curtain of pleated

taffeta. A little later they were glazed as well, and Boulle made some of this kind, in marquetry. We may note here that the bookcases standing breast high, made by Boulle or his imitators, that to-day adorn the Gallery of Apollo in the Louvre, were originally cabinets that were dismantled from their supports when in the nineteenth century they were employed in the decoration of the château of Saint-Cloud. This massacre, like so many more, must be written down against Louis-Philippe.

The sideboard in two sections<sup>1</sup> is, in a larger shape, the old cupboard with four doors, with or without drawers between the two sections. It has all the characteristics of the cupboard. The upper doors are *always* of wood. We seize the opportunity to repeat this; for it is sheer vandalism to mutilate these fine old pieces by tearing out their wooden panels to replace them with glazing. The *buffet-vaisselier*, or dresser-sideboard, which was the *palier* of Normandy and the *ménager* of Champagne, with all its varieties, was certainly not invented before the Regency. And yet we show one,<sup>2</sup> of a very graceful and individual type, which was made in Lorraine, and may be said to be in the Louis XIV style by reason of its ball-shaped feet. It is a curious combination of the sideboard, the dresser, and the commode. The folk of Lorraine have always loved these huge pieces of manifold utility.

The coffer of the Louis XIV period are very

1 Fig. 12.

2 Fig. 13.

simple, and very far fallen from their sixteenth century splendours; they are generally mounted on a set of legs with a drawer.<sup>1</sup> The most interesting were covered in leather, pigskin, or cowhide, sometimes red morocco, with a cunning decoration of gilt nails. This decorative studding often showed very remarkable composition, as may be seen on the coffer in Fig. 16, with its royal crown and fleurs de lis. The keyhole escutcheon is a large plate of repoussé and open-worked brass.

Let us salute, for the last time before its total disappearance, the cabinet, which was beginning to go out of fashion about 1690, after having been for three-quarters of a century pre-eminently the piece of furniture of supreme elegance, and especially affected by ladies, the article upon which wild sums of money and treasures of ingenuity were expended, which had gratified so much vanity when opened so as to allow its interior refinement to be admired. We have told of the mineralogical lavishness of certain among them which must have been, and which were, excessively ugly: we can judge of this from a specimen displayed in the Cluny Museum. There were many much less ambitious examples that were charming; for example, those which the arquebuse makers inlaid with the most delicate arabesques in bone or ivory on ebony and violet wood. Those which were quite simple continued to be made in the Louis XIII style, with pilasters and other architectural motives.

Of all the novelties the commode was the one called to the most brilliant career. Some authorities will have it that it originated in the coffer, others in the under-cupboard, still others in the table. A grave problem, of the same kind as the puzzle whether the sofa is a rest-bed transformed, or a bench carried to perfection. What is quite certain is that it was invented round about the year 1700; that some persons of the time called it a *bureau-commode*; that Madame, the Regent's mother, in a letter dated 1718, still thought it needed definition: "A commode is a large table with drawers." Would it then be a table to which drawers had been added? But here is Sobry, almost at the same moment, writing in his *Architecture*: "Coffers or arks are commonly called *commodes*. Some have a lid, others have drawers." However it may be, they deserved their name so well that they were presently everywhere to be seen.

Boule made some famous ones, known as *commodes en tombeau*, because their main shape with two drawers is in the form of the sarcophagi that were placed on the tombs of that period. These are, it must be confessed, very pretentious and irrational compositions. Others with three drawers, massive, of excessively chubby contours and with angles displaying the *piéd de biche* or "doe's foot" outline, will only have to gain a little simplicity and more disciplined and slender outlines to become the beautiful "Regency commode." Finally, there is a last family of

those superb and costly commodes in brass and tortoise-shell marquetry that came out of the workshops of the Boulles; these have four drawers, are rectangular, with a straight façade and vertical uprights. The contrast of the austere simplicity of the lines with the amazingly sumptuous decoration of the surfaces is extremely effective; but how icy chill it all is!

On the other hand, certain commodes of this time, more moderate in richness, have a really grandiose beauty, like the one we see in Fig. 17, whose beautiful broadly chased bronzes are so happily placed, and so well enframed by the sober marquetry, and upon which the flutings on the angles, fitted with brass and starting from an acanthus stem, set such noble architectural lines. The piece shown in the next plate, Fig. 18, supremely simple in its construction, owes all its interest to its slightly enlivened façade and its superb marquetry of coloured wood made up of bouquets and *rinceaux* of flowers: a florid, branchy decoration that was certainly inspired by some Netherlandish model. The ground is ebony, the flowers of white and red pearwood, holly and satinwood.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

Beds of the Louis XIV period are extremely rare, and this is very natural. Their monumental size—some were 2 mètres 25 centimètres long, 2 mètres 20 centimètres wide, and 3 mètres 50 centimètres high—was the cause of their destruction as soon as the fashion for bedroom



of moderate dimensions arrived. Furthermore, the wooden bed, inasmuch as it was completely covered up in stuffs, had no artistic value that might save it; and lastly, they were almost all four-posters, "à hauts piliers,"<sup>1</sup> and this shape was already beginning to appear "Gothic" in the eighteenth century.

These edifices were be-curtained with a costly luxuriousness of stuffs of which we can now have no idea, embroideries, fringes, cords, gold tassels, and plumes of feathers. In the homes of people of quality or of wealthy business people the state bed had often cost more than all the rest of the furniture; by the bed the fortune might be known; with the carriage it was the most convincing of all the signs of wealth. The hangings, *tenture*, or *parement*, or *tour de lit*, were almost always fashioned with wide vertical stripes, strongly defined, in which plain velvet, Genoa velvet with large flowers, brocade with palm branch pattern, and damask of three colours alternated with one another, or with embroidered stuffs "so interwoven with gold that it was difficult to distinguish the ground," fine stitch tapestry "divided up into pictures by a line of silver embroidery," and other works of infinite patience. The equipment was extremely complicated, for every kind of bulwark against cold was multiplied. A bed in those days was a small hermetically sealed chamber within the large one,

<sup>1</sup> It was also known as "*a quenouilles*," in modern phrase *à colonnes*.

into which there could penetrate neither the draughts that made even the King's bedchamber in Versailles almost uninhabitable in winter, nor the indiscreet eyes of people obliged to pass at all hours through those rooms that had no side entrances, nor the continual clatter and noise of those days in which no one had the slightest idea of privacy.

The four pillars, covered in sheaths known as *quenouilles*, supported a tester called the *fond*, always elaborately decorated, and surrounded by four curtain rods, from which there hung the *dossier* against the wall, and curtains to the number of three, four, six, and even eight. The rods were hidden on the outside by the three *pentes de dehors*, and on the inside by the four *pentes de dedans*,<sup>1</sup> which were bands of stuff hanging down, with straight or scalloped edges. On each side of the head, and on each side of the foot there were narrow supplementary curtains, the *bonnes grâces*, falling straight down alongside the pillars, on the outside of the large curtains which they hide when the latter are pulled open; the *bonnes grâces* were very often made of a stuff whose colour made a strong contrast against that of the curtains. Narrower still, the *cantonnières* at the angles complete the sealing process by covering the chink that might be found at that point. The bed itself, properly

<sup>1</sup> The bed in Fig. 20 has six curtains, two *bonnes grâces cantonnières*, a *fond*, seven *pentes*, a great *dossier*, a *dossier chantourne* (see further on), and a counterpane.

speaking (*châlit* or bedstead, *paillasse*, *sommier*, mattress, feather-beds, blankets and quilt), was hidden by the *soubassement*, the valance, which runs round it on three sides, and by the counterpane, always very richly ornate, which covered it over.

To recapitulate: four *quenouilles*, a *fond*, seven *pentés*, a *dossier*, eight curtains, four *bonnes grâces*, four *cantonnières*, a *soubassement* in three sections, a counterpane . . . the equipment of a really complete bed was made up of thirty-three component parts!

We must be careful not to forget the magnificent plumes, except for their colour exactly like those on our modern hearses, surmounting the bed posts. These four *bouquets de plumes* were made up of a round hundred ostrich feathers disposed around aigrettes of heron feathers; they were white, green and white, green, yellow and white, whatever the colour of the bed might be. Sometimes they were replaced by knobs covered with stuff, as in the time of Louis XIII, or by vases from which stood up either metal bunches of flowers or little crystal branching candelabra.

It may properly be repeated that beds of such splendour were never made for daily use, but were the ornament of the state chamber, which was the reception room in which all the luxury of the house was concentrated, the room in which the owners gave dinners and receptions. The fashion of the "ruelle," launched by the incomparable Arthénice in the hey-day of the *brécieuses*,

took a long time to disappear, and more than one lady round about 1670, without in the least being a belated *précieuse*, was still in the habit of receiving her women friends half reclining—fully dressed, not *en déshabille*—on her bed, or even in it. Furetière, even while declaring that the habit was a thing of the past, wrote just before 1688 that the alcove was the part of the room “in which the bed and chairs for company were usually placed.” And these fittings, made of stuffs that were often very delicate, and which represented a fortune, were protected by a whole paraphernalia of loose covers and *coiffes*—they were uncovered only on important occasions.

Such was the Louis XIV bed, a perfect symbol of that period so taken with pomposity and marvels. Even when we run through the inventories of middle class business people, we are stupefied at the coquettish richness of their beds. It is all striped crimson velvet and silver moire, black velvet alternating with flame-coloured damask, curtains of gold and silver embroidery lined with cloth of silver, *bonnes grâces* of English embroidery, scalloped *pentes* of gold and silk, *soubassements* of yellow taffeta, counterpanes of Chinese satin with gold embroidery, or Indian damasks. What kind of bed must M. Jourdain have had, he who, like his father, was a connoisseur in stuffs!

We have seen that Boileau's bed in his Paris house was nowise lacking in elegance, nor even in a certain stately splendour. His friend, Molière,

was far richer than he was, and the sumptuousness of his bed bordered on extravagance. It is true, that as the son of the King's *tapissier*, and himself holding the reversion of that office, he owed it to himself not to be bedded like any casual pauper, and it is further true that play actors are not always folk of the quietest taste. And thus it was that his state best bed was "a couch with eagle feet in green bronze, with gilt and painted headpiece, carved and gilt; a dome with azure ground, carved and gilt; four knobs in shape of vases, also of gilded wood; the dome aforesaid. . . ." But it is better to summarise this dreadful prose of some tipstaff and *sergent à verge* of the Châtelet. That majestic dome, azure and gold without, was decked inside with aurora and green taffeta; from it there fell down an *entour de lit* of one single piece, aurora and green, in the shape of a *pavillon* or tent, with three widths of flax-grey (*gris de lin*) taffeta embroidered in gold, to which were added, for no clear reason, yet four more curtains of flowered brocade with violet ground. The counterpane, *gris de lin* and gold, embroidered with ciphers, was lined with red *toile boucassinée* (a starched cotton material). And we spare the reader the tale of fringes, *mollets*, embellishments, cords, tassels of fine gold, of imitation gold, green silk, aurora and *gris de lin*.

The simplest beds, those belonging to people of modest estate, were hung with woollen stuffs, such as Aumale serge, green or red or "dried-

rose-leaf" colour; or of *damas cafart*, a mixture of wool and silk or cotton and silk, of Bruges satin with linen warp, and other "petty stuffs" that were sold in the rue Saint-Denis, close by the gate of Paris, from which they were known as *étouffes de la Porte*.

Dome beds, such as Molière's, were called *à l'impériale*; tomb-beds, of an ugly shape that diminished still further the "cube of air" at the disposal of the sleepers, had much lower posts at the foot than at the head, which gave a sloped tester. The *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* gives an ingenious explanation of this shape: "They were invented to be placed in garrets, because the roof prevented their being given the same height at the foot as at the head." And they are always, in reality, beds of a very modest kind.

All beds were not four-posters. The duchess-bed had a hanging tester, as long and as wide as the couch, two curtains and two *bonnes grâces*; the angel-bed tester was shorter, and the side curtains were caught back by loops of knotted ribbons, the *galants*. The bed standing at present in the chamber of Louis XIV at Versailles was reconstructed under Louis Philippe with no great accuracy: it is a duchess-bed, while the Sun-King's bed was invariably a four-poster.

At the close of the reign beds had a double *dossier*, both head and foot. The *grand dossier* was a breadth of stuff fastened to the tester and hanging flat against the wall at the head of the

bed; in front of this was a *dossier* of shaped wood, standing up from the frame of the bedstead, and with a loose cover of embroidered stuff; its complicated outline procured it the name of curved dossier (*dossier chantourné*) or *chantourné de lit*.<sup>1</sup> It could also be of naked wood, carved and gilt. Lastly, about the same time came the fashion for *disordered beds*, whose hangings were ruffled and cunningly disarranged with much assistance from cords and gold tassels, like those emphatic draperies beloved of the portrait painters Rigaud and Largillière, which the Maréchal de Grammont neatly called "hyperboles in velvet."

The rest-bed, father of the *chaise longue* and the sofa, which at the outset was practically undistinguishable from it, had made its appearance in the days of Mazarin. It became quite usual under Louis XIV, and Molière had five in his house, one of which matched his great bed of state. Its average size was 2 mètres long by 80 centimètres wide. Set as a fixture by a wall, it often had at the head a high dossier of carved gilt wood and a tester like a duchess-bed, or an angel-bed; it was sometimes fitted with permanent upholstery nailed on to the wood, sometimes a mattress or two mattresses on top of the other. Other rest-beds, more easy to handle, had two dossiers that occasionally were movable ones.

\* \* \* \* \*

## 80 LOUIS XIV FURNITURE

In the days of Mazarin tables ceased to be hidden under covers falling down to the floor, and so they began to display a wholly new magnificence after the Italian fashion. No longer was there a set of furniture to be found, however modest, without a few tables with elaborate legs, stretchers, and friezes, laden with carvings that were most frequently gilded, and for their tops a marquetry-piece of wood and pewter or tortoise-shell and brass, or a slab of costly marble, granite, porphyry, or Oriental alabaster, or else a marquetry of many-coloured stone mosaic, framed in black marble or touch. These last kind were called "Florence tables." Mazarin brought them over from Italy, but Colbert suborned in Tuscany specialist craftsmen to come to the Gobelins and train French pupils. This sumptuous method of decoration, though prone to become a trifle loud, as may be seen at Versailles and in the Apollo Gallery, was made up of elaborate rinceaux, emblems, or flowers and birds in "natural" colours; the stone tesserae, which were laid with astounding accuracy and precision, were lapis lazuli, cornelian, jasper, chalcedony, and even mother of pearl.

These tables were enormously heavy, and besides, they became an integral part of the decoration of a room. They were left accordingly permanently in place against the wall; only three of their faces were seen, and the fourth was left without ornament. Since the legs were often shaped like the architectural consoles in fashion,



as we have pointed out, at this period they were called "console tables," or more simply still, "consoles"; and by an extension of idea, the name *consoles de milieu* was given to tables highly ornamented on all four faces, but made to stand out in the middle of a room. Finally, when *consoles de milieu* had become very common, the others were called *consoles d'applique*.

When not console-shaped, or double consoles (two consoles back to back) the legs of Louis XIV tables were *en gaine* or *en balustre*<sup>1</sup> (pedestal or baluster-shaped). Among the fifteen or so types of balusters used by architects, the cabinet-makers of course chose for their table legs those whose thickest part is above, urn-balusters and vase-balusters with square section, or the *composite renversé* with circular section and gad-rooms. They did not fail also to lengthen them according to their caprice or to make them as complicated as they pleased. The flat baluster, *en façade*,\* was also very much used, as well as the pedestal shape.

Besides these legs, which have a vertical axis, there was to be found, more and more frequently as the reign drew towards its end, the *piéd de biche* or "doe's foot" with highly accentuated curve. At first it was made up of two long-drawn S-shaped curves, in continuation of one another back to back and each ending in two little volutes, the lower standing on a cloven

stag's hoof, the upper often ornamented with a *mascaron* in hollow profile.<sup>1</sup> The two curves were next coalesced into one.

The frieze carries, on the façade if it is a *console d'applique* or wall table, on every side or the long sides if a simple table, an "apron" (tablier) of ornaments cut out and carved in open-work, the centre-piece of which was usually a mask or *mascaron*; the background of the frieze is lozenged.<sup>2</sup> The cross pieces of the stretcher, which is seldom missing,<sup>3</sup> were made of S curves or consoles<sup>4</sup> arranged in different combinations: their line was too often lost under an excess of ornamental carving.

Tables not so rich, but still very highly ornate, were made in natural or painted woods, and their tops also made of wood; as for quite simple tables of the Louis XIV style there are practically none in existence: during the whole of the century tables continued to be made whose turned legs, whether twisted or not,<sup>5</sup> cause them to be assigned to the Louis XIII period. "What is called a 'table column' (*colonne de table*)," says Richelet in his *Dictionnaire* (1680), "is any piece of wood turned or twisted that serves to hold up the top part of a table." Nevertheless, here we have two, one<sup>6</sup> of quite countrified make,

1 Fig. 22.

2 Figs. 21 and 22.

3 See, nevertheless, Fig. 21.

4 Fig. 22.

5 Figs. 23 and 24; the stretchers are clearly Louis XIV.

6 Fig. 25.

the other<sup>1</sup> more bourgeois in character, which can quite properly be called Louis XIV by reason of their supports, doe's feet *en façade* or upright bracket legs. The elegance and logic of this latter shape of leg are, to speak candidly, both extremely open to discussion.

As it was not far from the time when the table was ordinarily a flat tray set on trestles, it was not yet fixed in people's minds that it formed an inseparable whole, and accordingly we often find in the inventories items such as "a table of carved walnut, on its foot of the same wood," which does not mean a table in two parts; and this explains oddities such as those tables whose top and frieze are walnut, while the legs and stretcher are of gilded wood.

We saw how in the preceding period the genus table began to be subdivided into species. This evolution continued under the great King, and it was in his day that little writing tables (*en écritoire*) appeared, covered with black morocco, green panne or crimson velvet, with a drawer that held the inkstand and the brass pounce-box. Society was becoming more and more epistolary in its habits.

We know how high the passion for gaming ran in this epoch, especially at Court, where the struggle against boredom was a desperate one. And so for *hoca*—"that abominable hoca," Madame de Sévigné called it—for reversi, for basset, for brelan, for ombre, there were needed

quantities of tables, each specially planned for its particular game, pentagonal, square, triangular, according to the number of the players; they were covered in green velvet and sometimes fitted with purses, one in the middle and one for each player, and accompanied at each corner by a little guéridon on which a single or branching candlestick was placed. Guéridons to match also went with console tables and cabinets: these were not little round tables of the same height as the others, but tall candle bearers, often monumental in size, made of a support of gilded wood and a branching candelabrum of crystal or metal.

There is one novelty that already round 1680 announces the taste that will distinguish the eighteenth century for small, delicate, easily moved articles of furniture. This is the *cabaret*, "called in Chinese *bandège* (?)," the most frequently used variety of which was the *cabaret à café*. This was the name given to a light table with two trays in "*vernis de Chine*," Chinese lacquer, used to carry and to pass round china, and coffee cups in particular.

Toilet-tables and night-tables appeared towards the close of the reign; there were fourteen of the former and twelve of the latter in the Château de Rambouillet when it was acquired by the Crown and furnished in 1706 for the Comte de Toulouse, the legitimate son of Madame de Montespan. A *toilette* was originally a square piece of linen, in which were gathered together for putting away in the night coffer (*coffre de nuit*) the various

articles used in cleansing and beautifying the face the hair and the hands; when the moment had come for them the *toilette* was laid out on any table, its contents arranged in goodly array, and thereupon began the service of beauty. The modest square of linen did not fail to transmute itself into a little mat of crimson velvet with gold lace trimming, Isabella-coloured moire lined with aurora taffeta and embellished with a little gold or silver lace; and men's *toilettes* were no less gay than the ladies'. Had not that genial gardener, André le Nostre, one of white satin, embroidered in silver and gold and silk? And then the *toilette* gave its name to the articles laid out on it, as to the operation for which they were used, and to the tables specially made to carry them, tables whose boxes or drawers replaced the night coffer. Ideas of cleanliness making some modest progress, there was a *dessous de toilette* permanently in position on the table in question, and made of costly materials, this was covered by a *dessus de toilette* in muslin with flounces or furbelows, which was easily changed. But it was only under Louis XV that the *toilette* became the pretty piece of furniture with compartments so well known to us.

From the writing-table was born the bureau, from the first third of the seventeenth century. Already under Louis XIV it might be of various different forms. The flat bureau was a large writing-table, covered with leather, fitted with three drawers, and often accompanied by a little

subsidiary article, the *gradin*, made up of shelves or drawers, sometimes equipped with a door shutting with lock and key, which stood on one end of the table; a little later there were also *gradins*, called rather *serre-papiers*, or paper-holders, larger in size, furnished with feet and standing on the ground beside the table. Other Louis XIV bureaux with multiple drawers were more or less like our ugly *bureaux ministres*: but they are less heavy, carried as they are on eight fairly tall legs joined four and four by cross-shaped stretchers. Their decoration was exceedingly painstaking and exquisite: veneering of walnut outlined in pewter, inlay of brass on ebony, on tortoise-shell, etc.; André Charles Boulle has left us a great number of these. The top was either flat or *à brisure*;<sup>1</sup> the angles of the sections to right and left were reinforced by those characteristic projecting buttresses whose curves give them the appearance of violins cut in two. One of the most perfect that ever came out of the Boulle workshops is in the Petit Palais, in the Dutuit collection.

The most monumental of all are the *scribannes*. These imposing pieces, Flemish or Dutch in their origin, have a desk or flap, a niche for the legs of the person writing, drawers to the right and left down to the ground; the upper part is a cupboard with two doors, surmounted by a pediment with a platform for delft. The bureau shown in Fig. 27 is not quite so huge and important

<sup>1</sup> With desk slope.

as this, despite its score of drawers and its *guichet*; its style in any case has nothing Flemish about it.

Ladies' bureaux, as is fitting, are smaller in size. Madame de Maintenon had two in her chamber, "of marquetry of pewter on a ground of walnut wood, with four drawers and a *guichet* in front with sloping flap and three drawers, standing on eight pedestal pillars of the same work with silvered wood capitals and bases." Their dimensions were two feet nine inches by one foot nine inches (89 by 57 centimètres). Bureaux of this kind are what are called in the modern dealers' jargon, "donkey backed" (*à dos d'âne*); the eighteenth century said *bureaux à bente*, "slanting bureaux."

## CHAPTER III : SEATS

HERE begins a chapter of very great importance when we are dealing with furniture under Louis XIV! If anyone cared to extract from Saint-Simon's Memoirs everything pertaining to the hierarchy of Seats, the jealousies, quarrels, intrigues, secret conspiracies, usurpations, wrongs, vengeance, triumphs and humiliations that could spring out of the question of the right to the arm-chair or to the backed chair, to the high stool or the ordinary stool, he might fill more than one volume. Dangeau and Luynes are in every page busy over this thorny and engrossing question of the backed chair. Are folding stools and plain tabouret-stools equal in honour? A serious business; Saint-Simon decides learnedly that "there is no difference whatever between these two seats with neither arms nor back." If the duchesses are visiting in the apartments of a princess of the blood, they sit in arm-chairs; but let the King come in and they must needs hasten to leave the arm-chairs, as having no longer any right to them in His Majesty's presence, and curtsy made, they must sit upon stools, quitted by ladies who are not duchesses, to whom in turn etiquette now only allows a hassock. This etiquette with regard to chairs is in any case, as may well be believed, no more elaborate at Versailles than at Madrid or in London; on the



contrary, the Court of France is the only one where the height of the chair back is of no consequence; in every other European Court "the difference in the height of the chair-back marks the difference between persons." This is the order of precedence: at the bottom, the hassocks: those of noble ladies are adorned with gold gimp; those for ladies of the law and the bourgeoisie have a mere silk edging. Next come folding stools and joint stools; then the chairs with backs, and, last and highest, the arm-chair.

Nothing is more significant than a Louis XIV arm-chair, except a Louis XIV bed: all the characteristics of the style, more than that even, the very character of the period itself is summed up in it. It is an ample, stately seat, of imposing size and strength; its lofty rectangular back seems made to be the worthy frame for a majestic and virile head in a peruke, and for shoulders widened by the floods of ribbons of the "*petite oie*," or for a woman's head crowned with the Apollo rays of the high head-dress known as the *fontange*; its great size, the massive volutes of its arms, its legs joined heavily with heavy cross pieces, all give it an air of immobility and weight. We can see it remaining fixed in one place with a willing air, decorative, and useless, ranged with its peers along the wall of an alcove; to have it moved it seems as though one must call up a pair of lackeys, and two great clumsy fellows with gold lace on every seam must bring it forward with due solemnity. To see it evokes the idea of choice

conversation, full of ceremony and well regulated, stiff attitudes, and snuff taken with delicately studied gestures. What a difference compared to a gondola-shaped *bergère* of the following reign, all grace and comfort, all made up of fugitive elusive curves that slip away without bringing the eye to a halt!

Impossible not to speak first of all of the king of arm-chairs . . . we mean the throne of Louis XIV. Let us salute it as we go by, even as anyone would have been obliged to do if in the Grands Appartements at Versailles he crossed the Apollo Salon, also known as the "Chamber of the dais." It stood upon a platform with several steps, surmounted by a dais all gold embroidery of overwhelming richness; before the great melting down of plate in 1689-90 it was all solid silver, draped with crimson velvet; for feet it had four figures of children carrying baskets of flowers upon their heads; on the summit of the back, which was eight feet high, about 2 mètres 60 centimètres, a laurel-crowned Apollo held his lyre. To go with this there was a hanging of eight great widths of embroidered stuff with eighteen pilasters, all dull silver and bright gold, with a trifle of chenille, and flanking it to right and left—our imagination fails before the task of picturing such magnificences—there stood two caryatides in full relief, fifteen feet high, nearly 5 mètres, entirely made of full gold embroidery! Is it permissible to think that this was not perhaps very beautiful? After 1690 the royal

throne was a much more modest affair. The General Inventory of Crown Furniture is satisfied with the following description: "A large wooden arm-chair, carved with several ornaments and silvered, to be used as a throne for the King when he gives audiences to ambassadors; the said arm-chair done in velvet embellished with gold and silver embroidery."

But what precisely are we to call a Louis XIV arm-chair? It must be confessed that the assigning of a piece of furniture or a chair to this style or that is often very arbitrary, but every classification, whether with regard to antique objects, plants or molluscs, calls for simplification, the elimination of many exceptions, sports and hybrids, and insists that only what remains after these processes shall be reckoned. Thus, for the sake of greater convenience, among the seventeenth century arm-chairs it will be permissible to assign to the Louis XIII style all those whose backs are still low, square, or of greater width than height; and to the Louis XIV style those in which the back is higher than its width. But there is no very clearly marked distinction between the Louis XIV arm-chair and the Regency arm-chair, as there is a very numerous series of "transition" models. We shall speak of the latter at the end of this volume; in the present chapter we shall deal only with purely Louis XIV seats, *i.e.*, those with high rectangular back, legs *en façade*, and, in the case of arm-chairs with arms not set back (the ends of the

arms carried on consoles that are vertical continuations of the legs).

Upholstered arm-chairs have their backs completely covered with no wood showing; the top of this back is a straight line, the lower part is sometimes separated from the seat by a gap<sup>1</sup> and sometimes not.<sup>2</sup>

The legs continue in many cases, as in the time of Louis XIII, to be turned,<sup>3</sup> even in costly chairs; for example, on Molière's death there were twenty-two arm-chairs in his house, among which were "twelve of twisted walnut with lion heads and six with sphinx faces; two of walnut with twisted pillars." The latter two, more sumptuous, and matching the bed of state, were of carved and gilded wood. The legs, either moulded or carved, are sometimes baluster-shaped,<sup>4</sup> sometimes pedestal-shaped, very often console-shape;<sup>5</sup> they end in flattened balls, sometimes carved,<sup>6</sup> or in lion feet; or else the lower scroll tip of the console rests directly on the ground, with a little cube of plain wood interposed to take hard wear and knocks,<sup>7</sup> or, again, the consoles have one base squared and moulded, from which the stretcher cross-pieces start, and under this a second base of the same kind, as in the excellent model shown in Fig. 32, so unhappily covered in one of those hideous needle-

1 Figs. 28, 30, etc.

2 Figs. 32, 36, etc.

3 Figs. 28, 29, 35.

4 Figs. 31 and 38.

5 Figs. 32 and 33.

6 Figs. 29 and 30.

7 Fig. 33.

work tapestries made by our grandmothers under the Second Empire.

The stretcher is a *sine qua non*. Arm-chairs and backed chairs were so big and so heavy that their legs would have been dislocated or speedily broken if they had not been solidly joined together at the foot. At the beginning of the period, and when arm-chairs had turned legs, the cross bars were shaped like an H,<sup>1</sup> and the place where they were morticed into the legs was left square for greater strength; this part often had a four-leaved rosette carved into it.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes there is an additional traverse joining the two front legs near the top; this gives greater firmness to the frame of the chair, but is above all decorative. If it was ornamented in the middle with a carved motive,<sup>3</sup> upholsterers gave it the name of a *blason*. Console legs might also have an H-shaped stretcher; each of the cross bars is, in that case, made of two consoles set end to end which, slightly simplified, give the *accolade*<sup>4</sup> or bracket motive frequently employed. The X-shaped stretcher is more elegant, freer, less square in shape; it can be of immense importance decoratively, as in the case of tables. There are two principal types; either four consoles are joined head to head to make a large central motive,<sup>5</sup> sometimes a very clumsy one, or else perhaps the moulded cross-pieces form, to the

1 Figs. 28, 30, etc.

2 Fig. 30.

3 Fig. 29.

4 Figs. 34 and 36.

5 Fig. 31.

right and the left, two of the motives we have called *cintres à ressaut*, and met with so frequently on the panels of cupboards. These come together tangentially at the deepest part of the curve, and are completed by a central boss at the point where they meet.<sup>1</sup>

The frieze of the Louis XIV arm-chair is nearly always hidden by the upholstery, but sometimes the wood is left visible and decorated with a carved *campane* or scalloped motive.

The arms or *accotoirs* are usually of bare wood, nevertheless the stuffed *manchette*, which was to become general in the Regency period, made its appearance at the end of the eighteenth century. They are supported by straight uprights, sometimes turned balusters;<sup>2</sup> or, preferably, they are moulded and curved to console shape: hence the name *consoles d'accotoirs*<sup>3</sup> given by upholsterers to these supports. The volute that invariably terminates the arm is part of it and not of the console, though certain arm-chairs,<sup>4</sup> thanks to a trick of the moulding, suggest the opposite effect. The appearance of these great wooden arms is not happy when they are too horizontal, and when their volute is not sufficiently developed;<sup>5</sup> but they can be magnificent if they start high, have a free sweeping curve, and at the extremities expand into a wide volute generously carved out of a solid piece, and if their

1 Fig. 32.

2 Figs. 29 and 35.

3 Figs. 30, 31 and 32.

4 Fig. 28.

5 Fig. 29.

moulding has been carefully designed and is in harmony with that of the console.<sup>1</sup> It is by no means uncommon to find examples that are admirably successful, and it is a genuine sensuous delight to run the hand over those ample mouldings, carried out with a firm and caressing tool, in walnut that has been polished by the wear of two hundred years. Not the least beautiful arm-chairs are those that have no other adornment than this refined moulding.

Simpler arm-chairs, made for the use of the modest middle classes, copy those we have just been describing in their general lines, but they are without carving or mouldings, and have all their “limbs” simply rounded. Very strong and solid, they have survived in considerable numbers two centuries of wear and of changing fashions, and are found nearly everywhere. In certain provincial parts they were called “crow’s beak” chairs, or simply “crow chairs” (*chaises à bec de corbin* or *à corbin*) on account of the hooked shape of the end of their arms, an approximate copy of the volute.<sup>2</sup> These arm-chairs are by many dealers quite incorrectly called “Louis XIII arm-chairs”; they are pure Louis XIV and were often made in the middle of the eighteenth century. We shall see elsewhere that many of them display the characteristics of the Regency period.

The *bergère* seems only to have received its name in the early years of the personal reign of

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Fig. 36.

Louis XV, but it had long been in existence. The arm-chair of Fig. 33 is witness to this. Very embracing, very fully upholstered, more comfortable indeed than elegant, with its ears, its solid sides (*joues pleines*), and its movable cushion, this lumpish seat is like a badly reduced sketch of a "confessional" bergère. Under Louis XIV this was called a "confessional." The earliest examples had been actually made so that priests might listen in comfort to the sins of the faithful; the ears in that case were not stuffed; they were pierced with a kind of Judas hole or *jalousie*.

In reality the seat in question is only a very simple example of the *fauteuil de commodité*, which existed under other names ever since the sixteenth century for the convenience of old men, invalids, and languid ladies. Here is Furetière's definition: "We give the name of *chaise de commodité* to a well-stuffed chair, with a desk for reading and writing, and a ratchet to raise or lower the back at will, in which one can sleep or recline." Let us continue his description: two jointed arms, fixed in the desk, carried candles; large pockets allowed the invalid to have small articles within his reach; some had screens, and others, *à l'impériale*, had a dome and curtains.

Let us observe, to make an end of upholstered arm-chairs, the re-appearance of the low-backed arm-chair towards the end of the century in the shape of the *fauteuil à cœffer* (arm-chair for hair-



dressing). The Duchesse de Bourgogne had one of this kind, covered in red damask "with velvet let in"; and we may note that the ancient *caquetoire* or "gossip" is always in favour. This was a little chair on low legs, easy to move about for gossiping, and highly appreciated by the ladies. A contemporary dictionary defined it as "a very low chair, with very high back and no arms, in which one can chatter at one's ease by the chimney-corner." But there were also *caquetoires* with arms, and *demi-caquetoires*, which were arm-chairs a little lower in the seat than usual.

There is but little to say of the backed chairs without arms, which came after the *chaises à vertugadin* or "farthingale chairs" of the early part of the century. Less common than the arm-chairs, they differed only in being without arms, their dimensions were much the same, the same back, the same legs, the same stretchers.<sup>1</sup>

One important invention of the upholsterers under Louis XIV was the sofa, which is, to say the truth, merely a rejuvenation of the bench, which had had so long and honourable a career in the middle ages. What Vadius was it who suggested to the master-upholsterer who "launched" the earliest sofas that goodly name *canapé*, so nobly drawn from the Greek—and mutilated in the process? Properly speaking, a *canapé*, or rather *conopée*, should be a bed with a mosquito netting. It may therefore be pre-

<sup>1</sup> Figs 34, 37 and 38.

sumed that the first *canapé* was a rest-bed, a piece of furniture meant for lying on and not sitting; and in fact, to speak by the book, a certain Monconys wrote in 1663 in his *Voyages*: "two *canapés*, these are forms with a back at each end." Now a form is a bench; and a bench with a back at each end is a rest-bed. An inventory of the time describes "a *canapé*, the wooden frame fitted with a mattress, and a wool mattress, with a feather bolster on top." In another we read, "a rest-bed *en canapé*, made up of two mattresses, two bolsters, two loose cushions and bed cover, to which are attached three valances." Some little time later, towards 1680, the word *sopha* made its appearance in the language, and seems to signify the same thing as the word *canapé*; it is useless to try to establish any distinction whatever between them. Originally then, it was a rest-bed with two *dossiers*, and presently there were three; and even before the earliest dawn of the Regency style we see veritable *canapés* in the modern sense of the word, that is to say, in short, very large arm-chairs for several persons, with a back and two arms. Furetière, in 1690, gives this definition: "a kind of backed chair, very wide, in which two persons can sit very comfortably. . . . The word is new to the language, and some say *sopha*." Henceforward the *canapé* or *sopha*, with arm-chairs to match, composes the classic suite of seats that has grown indissolubly wedded to the idea of a drawing-room. Thus, that

dainty person, Nicolas Boileau Déspreaux, had in his chamber "a small sofa and two arm-chairs of gilded wood, fitted in leather, and covered with a silk stuff with silver flowers." Leather covered sofas were to be seen in nearly every billiard room. It is quite as superfluous for us to dwell upon the sofas as on the chairs of the period; their construction, like their decoration, is the same as that of the arm-chairs; many of them have, with their eight legs, the air of three arm-chairs joined in one. They were furnished with a movable mattress more frequently than with a nailed-on upholstered seat; but many of them have had their upholstery altered in the course of the centuries.

The *banquette*, which continues also to be called a "form," as in the fourteenth century, is a "bench of no great consequence placed in ante-chambers, porches, etc.;" it is also a seat easy to move about, and useful as enabling a large number of persons to sit down in a small space. It was therefore constantly used<sup>1</sup> for fêtes, balls, concerts, and the like. The Versailles apartments were sometimes filled with them, and some were very costly and luxurious, gilded, stuffed with hair, and covered with the most valuable materials.

The *bancelle* might have a back and arms; most probably a very low back. *Bancelles*—far from handy to move, these particular ones!—figured among the prodigious solid silver furniture set the King kept at Versailles. One of them,

<sup>1</sup> Bench seats could already be hired for this service.

standing on eight pillar legs, weighed no less than 1,025 marcs 5 ounces, or 251 kilogrammes—a quarter of a ton of precious metal.

The *placet* or *tabouret* was a square-topped stool (occasionally round or oval), mounted on four legs, sometimes on X-shaped legs, stuffed (which distinguished it from the all-wooden *escabeau*), and, it might be, covered with tapestry or the finest stuffs, just as its frame might be of the costliest workmanship. At Versailles and Marly and Fontainebleau there were admirable examples, and no wonder, when they were so passionately sought after by Duchesses. And we have seen four tabourets at the Doucet sale in 1912, covered simply in plain velvet, fetch the wild figure of 28,500 francs.

We shall doubtless have exhausted the catalogue of seats when we have said a few words about folding stools, *pliants* or *ployants*. These too could be of rare magnificence—there were some at Versailles made of solid silver—and they were frequently more complicated than might be readily imagined. Some had a rigid frame, webbed and stuffed with hair like a fixed seat, others had arms and a back. One variety of folding chair was the *perroquet* or parrot, “a kind of chair with a back,” says Furetière, “that folds, and which is generally used at the table.” At a time when there were no dining-rooms, it was natural that for their meals people should have chairs easy to bring to table and to put away afterwards. Saint-Simon informs us that *berroquets* were

also used to increase the number of possible places in a carriage.

We must not forget the *carreaux*, or more or less flat cushions, stuffed with horsehair or with down, which very often served as seats, when strict etiquette allowed you neither arm-chair nor chair nor folding-stool, or simply when all of them were lacking. A *carreau* planted on the floor was taken without ceremony for a seat "in the Spanish fashion"; or else several were piled on top of one another, a tottering edifice whose instability in those days, when rather coarse jesting was in fashion in every circle, lent itself to facetiousness of the most questionable taste. The Duchesse de Valentinois, as the amiable Madame de Villedieu tells us, had a "rocaille room adjoining her summer apartments, which was without a doubt the most delightful place in the world. It had no other furniture but piles of *carreaux* in gold cloth." Could we not almost imagine she was describing a little ultra-modern drawing-room in the twentieth century?

How were these various seats covered? With the same stuff or embroideries as the beds, if they formed part of the furniture set of a chamber such as we have described. In that case the seats were looked on as accessories to the bed; very often too a seat or a group of seats had its own private attire, without any relation, either in colour or material, to the other furniture. As they were constantly protected by means of loose covers of serge, or, in elegant interiors, of taffeta,

morocco, even velvet or damask, and seeing that they were only "uncovered"—the regulation phrase—on rare occasions, people did not hesitate to dress them in the most delicate stuffs, of the most easily fading hues: gold brocade, white Chinese satin, yellow damask, flesh-coloured moire, aurora Genoa velvet with silver ground—we should have to enumerate afresh the whole catalogue of splendid stuffs on which the subjects of the Sun-King doted.

Sometimes one material only is used for a seat, sometimes two different silks are set side by side in stripes, or in compartments, in the same way as for the hangings of beds and walls; in this case the seams are covered with braiding of gold or silver or silk outlining the compartments; the same braid hides the little nails that fasten the stuff to the wooden frame, and is itself fastened down with large gilt or silvered decorative nails. The dress of the seat is often finished off with a long fringe of silk or wool running round the frieze and the lower edge of the back, when it is separated from the seat,<sup>1</sup> and by a *frangeon* or *molet*, an edging fringe the threads of which are too short to hang down. A further fringe in gold or silver might be placed above this. It is easy to recognise chairs that were meant to have a fringe, for just above the legs there is a plain strip of wood, almost left in the rough, so to say, underneath which the carving or mouldings begin; this part was to have been hidden by

the fringe, which explains why it was not decorated.

It is obvious that all the different kinds of embroidery, gold or velvet, silken flowers or satin, pictures in "satin stitch" with figures, picked out in gold and silver, *tailleur* embroidery (now known as appliqué), etc., heightened still more the beauty of the stately kind of seats. Others were covered with tapestry worked in wool and in silk on canvas in coarse or fine stitch; the subjects of these tapestries were large flowers (Fig. 31), *rinceaux* or grotesques. Women and girls, noble and middle-class alike, devoted to these labours a considerable part of their days, and Madame de Maintenon set the example to her "dear girls" of Saint-Cyr. We know that she worked at her tapestry while at the King's Council; and one of her contemporaries took this delicious "snapshot" of her one day, when he saw her setting out for a drive. "The lady was barely installed in her carriage, before the coachman had whipped up his horses, when she clapped her spectacles on her nose and pulled out the work she had in her bag." A *point de Hongrie*, or herring-bone stitch, was also in high favour, sometimes used by itself to cover the seats, sometimes applied in strips on a ground of plain colour. We remember how, in *l'Avare*, when Harpagon is unwittingly negotiating a usurious loan to his own son, he insists on making him take a thousand crowns in "*hardes, nippes et bijoux*," among which, along with the

famous stuffed crocodile, there is "a four-foot bed with stripes of herring-bone needlework very neatly applied on an olive-coloured material, with six chairs and the counterpane to match; the whole in excellent condition and lined with a little shot red and blue taffeta." *Point de Chine* is something similar to *point de Hongrie*, but done with rounded horizontal undulations instead of sharp-angled chevrons, and the *point de Turque* is in vertical undulations. Boileau had in his cabinet an arm-chair and four chairs covered with tapestry in this "Turkey stitch."

It was at the end of the reign of Louis XIV that the first seats appeared covered with high warp or low warp tapestry, specially made for the purpose at Aubusson and Felletin, or at Beauvais.

Stuffs flocked with wool were also employed for this: they did not hesitate to cut up the finest Oriental carpets for the purpose; and la Savonnerie did its share in a much better way, by making pieces to measure and to order from the designs of Audran or Belin de Fontenay.

Seats meant for constant use were covered with commoner stuffs, such as *moquette* or *tripe*. *Moquette* or *moquade*, imported from England under the name of English carpeting, but which was also made in France, was in those days a hairy-surfaced stuff, knotted by hand; in short, a simplified kind of Savonnerie weave. *Moquette pied-court*, with shorter nap and smaller design—when there was any—than those meant for carpets underfoot, was used especially for covering



seats, though it was also employed sometimes for ordinary hangings. For example, in the Château de Rambouillet there were, in 1706, a great number of arm-chairs, chairs and stools done in moquette, striped red, white and green, or red, blue and aurora; and the arm-chairs of the Académie Française (which, by the way, numbered thirty-six and not forty, as vacancies were very shrewdly counted upon), were modestly arrayed in moquette, at any rate after 1678, the date when the *service des Bâtimens* renovated them at a cost of ten livres ten sols apiece. The first Utrecht velvets, manufactured in Holland by Huguenot refugees, were called "Utrecht moquettes," although they were genuine goats' hair velvet, simply because they were used in the same way as moquette. *Tripe* was a velvet of wool on a hemp ground, also very lasting, in plain colours, and made in Flanders.

Lastly, there were common materials, known by the general name of *étoffes de la Porte*, because they were sold by the Paris gate,<sup>1</sup> were used to cover the seats in small rooms used as clothes closets, offices, servant's rooms, and the rooms of the lower middle classes. They included the various serges of Aumale, of Mony, etc.; the *damas cafart*, or false damask, which in wool and cotton simulated silk damask, as the "Bruges satin" copied the beautiful real satins as well as it could, and so on.

<sup>1</sup> Or Châtelet gate, at the end of the rue Saint Denis, whence these cheap stuffs were also called "*étoffes de la rue Saint-Denis.*"

Leather, while less in favour than in the preceding reigns, is still met with fairly often. We must not confuse seats *garnis de cuir* with those covered in leather. The former had their frame, both seat and back, stretched with thick leather instead of webbing; on this leather were laid or fastened square cushions filled with hair, "to keep them always well puffed out," and covered with silks. This is how we see them set down in inventories and in the reports of the affixing of seals: "a sofa done (*garni*) in leather, covered with crimson damask." Red, black or lemon morocco, or black calf, were used to cover seats intended to take their place in the most sumptuous chambers, as neighbours to arm-chairs in Venice brocatelle or Genoa velvet; or else they were covered in those gilded and gauffered leathers which made such magnificent wall coverings; they were covered lastly with bull's hide *martelé*, or decorated with little stamped ornamentations, or again *écorché*, incised and engraved; they were covered with leather *courtepointé*,<sup>1</sup> to make which a felt was placed between two skins of leather, and the whole stitched or quilted after elaborate designs.

The origin of caned seats is obscure. Among dealers in antiques—and the mistake has found its way into more than one book—the name of Louis XIII arm-chairs or chairs is given to caned seats with high backs, whose florid superabundant carving, and, in particular, the highly developed

<sup>1</sup> This word is a corruption of *contrepoinié*.

*blason*, declare their unmistakably Flemish or Dutch origin.<sup>1</sup> They belong in reality to the Louis XIV period, and were not even imported into France until towards the end of the century, for there seems to be no mention of them in any authorities previous to 1690. Even the name for this new fashion of fitting seats was long in becoming fixed. In the *Livre commode*, of 1691, we read: "Turners who sell chairs *garnies de jonc et de paille* are chiefly to be found in the New Market." This certainly means chairs done with rattan; do we not still call a rattan cane a *canne de jonc*? Fifteen years later the inventory of the Chateau de Rambouillet records: "*a canapé de cannes (sic)*"—a "sofa of canes"; and in two inventories dated in the same year, 1722, we read in the one: "a lacquered chair of wild cherry wood and openwork *bois de canne*," and in the other: "six chairs *à jonc* in red wood." The foregoing quotations tell us all that is necessary; they were chairs "of little consequence," of beechwood or wild cherry lacquered or dyed red; they were made, not by the company of upholsterers but by that of the "master-turners and straw chair menders," which does not prevent their being made of good honest joinery, put together with tenons and mortices well and duly pinned, nor from being often very well carved and without any turning.<sup>2</sup> Caned arm-chairs and chairs were

1 It was the Dutch who introduced rattan into Europe.

2 Fig. 39.

usually fitted with cushions covered with stuff and tied on to the chair with cords.

We have just seen that the turners made straw chairs. It seems as though these were hardly ever, in the first half of the century, seen out of kitchens or monastery cells. The admirable picture that Philippe de Champaigne painted in 1662 as a thank-offering, when his daughter was miraculously cured of a malignant fever in the convent of Port-Royal des Champs, shows us the young nun sitting in a rude straw arm-chair; another chair of the same kind is beside her. These chairs are of truly conventual simplicity; when they came among the laity they were called *chaises à la capucine*, but this did not prevent them from making their way into the richest interiors and in the end conquering a place at the Court. The surintendant Foucquet at Vaux, the maréchal d'Humières in his château, the Director General of Finance, Fleuriau d'Armenonville at Rambouillet, did not scorn these humble seats, which were in any case very comfortable when duly fitted with their horsehair and down cushions. Their wooden parts were very simply turned, and painted black, green, and red. There were some at Versailles: "six straw arm-chairs" are quoted in an inventory of the Crown furniture, "in Chinese lacquer, with cushions of red damask and their flounce of the same damask, with fringe and *molet* of gold and silver." Under the Regency Saint-Simon will write: "The princes

and princesses had established themselves, towards the latter end of the late King, on little chairs with straw fittings, and without arms, in order to avoid offering arm-chairs, except when there was no way of dispensing with them . . . so that these little straw chairs, introduced under the pretext of their convenience for gaming or working, had in their lodgings become everybody's seats without discrimination." Toilet chairs, or *chaises à peigner*, were made of straw.

At the lowest point of the scale were the humble chairs all in wood, those of which Diderot will write in his Encyclopedia: "wooden chairs, such as were formerly used in middle-class houses, and are now, so to say, relegated to the garden." Here is one<sup>1</sup> of a Norman type, which is not lacking in richness, and discloses an obvious Dutch or Flemish influence; and here is the stout rustic chair<sup>2</sup> found everywhere in the Lorraine country. This model continued to be made by the turners of Lorraine and the Barrois country till well into the nineteenth century, but it could not have changed much for two and a half centuries.

1 Fig. 41.

2 Fig. 40.



THIRD PART  
THE REGENCY STYLE

THIRD PART  
THE REGENCY STYLE



## PART THREE: THE REGENCY STYLE

THE so-called Regency style is hard to define, for it is a movement and not a stable condition of French decorative art; it can be told but not described. Where can it be seized? At what point of time? Under Louis XIV there was, so to say, a period of standing still, let us say from 1670 to 1690, if definite dates are desired, during which a style, shaped in the previous decade and now matured, had remained consistently itself. There were to be again, from about 1720 to 1760, and later from 1770 to 1790, two similar periods of stability—the years of the hey-day of the Louis XV and the Louis XVI styles respectively. But from 1690 to 1720 we were in full career between two halting points, and changes were incessant. It was so towards the end of Louis XIV, and much more so when he had disappeared. A regency is in its essence a period of the provisional, a moment of waiting and transition, everything is unstable. This was especially true of the regency of Philippe d'Orléans, who "adored everything novel" but settled on nothing, "incapable" as he was "of continuity or sequence in anything to such an extent that he could not even understand that such things were possible." It is impossible to draw a picture of what was

then the French style, unless one could manage, like the so-called Futurists, to represent successive states on the same canvas: the utmost we could achieve would be to produce a series of snapshots. There is not a single line, not a motive in decoration that can be called specifically "Regency" in style. Some are Louis XIV elements slightly modified or used in a new way; others are already Louis XV, and what constitutes the Regency style is merely their finding themselves side by side (and in any case almost always with complete harmony), on the same piece of furniture, the same wainscoting, the same goldsmiths' work.

Away from Versailles, and in a different atmosphere, the Louis XIV style became modified, just like a plant transported to another climate. This air was already to be found, many years before 1715, in Paris, at the Palais Royal, where the family of Orléans lived, at the Temple, which was the home of the Vendômes, in coteries like that of the Marquise de Lambert, among powerful financiers who were amateurs and patrons of the arts, at Sceaux, where the little Duchesse de Maine sought to find distraction, and in many other free surroundings in which, aloof from and unknown to Louis XIV, a new spirit was developing which was to be the spirit of the eighteenth century. In that century everybody lived only for pleasure, the pleasure of the senses, sometimes of the most refined sort, sometimes pursued in drunken swinish orgies, even by the grandsons and granddaughters of kings, or the

choicest pleasure of the intellect and the social amenities. An easy, gay life was eagerly sought after, and everything in the nature of constraint was loathed; things heretofore regarded as sacrosanct were subject to impertinent criticism; everybody delighted to be epicurean. Montesquieu knew this life in his youth, but soon broke away from it; Voltaire knew it, and remained for ever after as one intoxicated by the delicate delights he had tasted. "Nothing," he was to write later, "nothing is to be compared to the pleasant life there in the bosom of the arts, and of a tranquil, delicate voluptuousness; people from foreign countries and kings even preferred this idleness, so agreeably occupied and so enchanting, to their mother country and to their throne. . . . The heart softened and dissolved as aromatics melt gently on a slow fire and breathe out their souls in delicious odours." The pleasure of private conversation, intimate, unconstrained, yet carefully chosen, was felt at this moment with a rapture that is most strikingly shown in contemporary letters and memoirs. This is how, after many years, a frequent guest spoke of the dinners of Madame de Caylus, the delightful friend of Madame de Lambert: "She instilled into all her guests a joy so gentle and so keen, a feeling of such noble and elegant pleasure, that people of every age and every disposition appeared to be all amiable and happy alike." That is the perfume of the budding eighteenth century.

In this keener, yet at the same time balmier

and warmer air, the severe Louis XIV style became softened, if we may use the phrase, and unbent. Its stiff lines were here and there discreetly inflected and broidered with a dainty vegetation: trailing plants entwined about them, and little flowery sprays shot off from them, and impudent monkeys clambered on to porticos to hang their swings from them.

It is easy to see that the craftsmen in stone, wood and metal no longer model themselves on the King's taste; they have to please a very miscellaneous clientèle, business folk grown wealthy, the contractors and the dancers whom they entertain, the *grand seigneurs* who are kind enough to come and enliven their mansions, all this set offer sacrifice to a new divinity, the fashion. Now the fashion is no longer for the stately and the heroic, but for the amiable and the gallant, and above everything for all that is convenient and agreeable. Two adjectives are more and more becoming stock phrases for anything pleasing, *agréable* and *joli*. The *grand* has become exceedingly stiff and pedantic. A monumental Louis XIV arm-chair may be *beau*, but nobody could call it *joli*. In a drawing-room there is nothing *agréable* about walls cased in marbles, coldly cut out in ovals, rectangles, and plat-bands. What people like from this moment is white wainscoting with fine gilded reliefs; they will have "mythologies" carved on it, and painted over the doors, but it will be<sup>1</sup> *Venus and*

1 At the Hotel de Soubise, in the princess's state chamber.

*Adonis, Semele and Jupiter, Bacchus and Ariadne, Diana and Endymion, and the Graces presiding over the education of Love.* Round the most beautiful salon of the period<sup>1</sup> there will run a series of the romantic scenes of the *Loves of Psyche*.

These mythological themes were still to remain in favour for a long time as decorations for fine houses, and we know how much they were employed by the Coypels, La Moyné, and Natoire before the days of Boucher and his school—what other or what better pretext could there be for naked figures? But they were no longer completely sufficient. Something newer, something more amusing, more piquant, was sought for, and it was sought for in Asia and in the *Théâtre de la Foire*. Bedrooms and drawing-rooms remained the domain of rosy goddesses, but in the new style of small rooms, “conversation cabinets,” “coffee cabinets,” waiting for the appearance of “boudoirs,” which was not to be long delayed, a whole little comic world suddenly took possession of the walls, just like the entrance of masqueraders in a fancy dress ball.

We have shown how even Versailles in all its heroic glory had opened its doors to quantities of Chinese fabrics and articles. But these were only movable things, that would have vanished in a turn of the hand if the fashion had changed;

<sup>1</sup> The oval drawing-room in the same hôtel. The paintings were only finished by Natoire in 1739; but the whole decoration was conceived by Boffrand more than twenty years earlier.

never till now had China been embodied in permanent decorations. This final seal of approbation began to be conferred from the end of the seventeenth century, for Monsieur had a Chinese room at Saint Cloud in 1690, and it was ratified and established in the early years of the next century, in which the sons of Heaven were to be seen finding their place even in tragedy, since Voltaire ventured on the *Orphelin de Chine*, the "Chinese Orphan"! The very "cabinet du Roi," in the Château de la Muette, was a Chinese cabinet, known as "de la Chine," for strangely enough the adjective *chinois* was not to come into current use until the end of the eighteenth century. We have a series of engravings of this cabinet, which was by no means unworthy of being ascribed, as for a long time it was, to the great Watteau.

The Far East was beginning to be a little better known, thanks to the narratives of certain eminent travellers, Tavernier, who had been to Turkey, Persia, and the Indies; Chardin, who had visited India and Persia; thanks also to those embassies that were so successful from the point of view of interest; that from Siam, in 1686,<sup>1</sup> and later, the Persian embassy, by which, if Saint-Simon is to be believed, the old King allowed himself to be hoaxed like a simple M. Jourdain. And so in the same way as *chinoiseries*, *turqueries* and *persaneries*, began to be all the

<sup>1</sup> It is true that the Prime Minister of the King of Siam was called the *Grand Vizier*!

fashion in literature and in the theatre. Galland translated the *Thousand and One Nights*, Dufresny points out the way to Montesquieu, with his *Amusements sérieux et comiques d'un Siamois*. As for the decorators, they painted, in the midst of panels of fantastic architecture and impossible flowers, Turks of every kind, sultans and odalisques, muphtis with monstrous turbans, dervishes with long robes; but none of them was much more authentically Turkish than the *Bourgeois gentilhomme* when he was made Mamamouchi. They painted Hindoos, but Hindoos that came out of the *Indes Galantes*, Persians no more Persian than Usbeck and Rica, and above everything and at every point they painted Chinese. And these Chinese brought with them the appropriate accessories, dragons, parasols, peacock feathers, towers with turned up roofs, humpy bridges, strange rocks, old rotted stumps of willow-trees, with the light showing through holes: motives that before long entered into every kind of decoration, Chinese or not, and mingled with the classic Louis XIV motives. The Chinese parasol cut in two, which frequently occurs in Watteau's decorative panels, probably was the origin of the "bat's wing" motive.

At the same time as all these outlandish doll figures, the new way of decoration scattered broadcast almost over everything, from hand-screens to wainscoting, and from snuff-boxes to great tall many-leaved screens, that gay, exquisite fairy-like humanity, the *dramatis personæ* that

Watteau created with his poetic genius out of the elements he found in the *Comédie italienne*. The Italian players, who were then at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, were brutally expelled in 1697 for having dared to announce a piece called *La Fausse prude*: could such a title belong to anything but a personal satire against Madame de Maintenon? But Paris loved its Italians, Arlequin and Scaramouche, Colombine and Silvia, Mezzetin, the endless serenader, and Gilles, ever livid, pale, and abashed. The actors of the booths at the fairs took up the French pieces of the Italian mummings, and when he became Regent, one of the first things Philippe d'Orléans did was to recall them. Gillot painted and engraved them from life, Watteau transfigured them and gave them immortality, conferring on them French nationality at the same time. Last of all, we may remind ourselves of the simian tribe and their frolics, already introduced by Bérain into his grotesques. All these are the far from grave or stately themes with which the new decoration was to be inspired.

We must go into a few details as to the softening and mellowing of the Louis XIV style. Symmetry continued to be respected, until *Rocaille* came in and wantonly turned everything topsy turvy, but it was only symmetry horizontally considered; vertically there were, for example, hardly any regular wainscoting panels or doors to be seen.<sup>1</sup> Rectangular mouldings

<sup>1</sup> Figs. 42 and 43.



were still employed as framings for these panels, but they are less important, finer, and less strong in relief; and inside this frame everything was emancipated and softened, the right angles are masked by being hollowed out, or with a shell, or a floret motive; the stiffness of the mouldings is broken up by a ribbon,<sup>1</sup> or by an acanthus motive twining in a spiral about a bundle of reeds, or by a line of beading;<sup>2</sup> or light motives starting out of the frame are embossed on the plain surface of the panel.<sup>3</sup> If a panel is arched at the top, the arch is divided into two C-shaped motives ending in a crook,<sup>4</sup> often separated by a floret, a *palmette*, or a shell.<sup>5</sup> The "*cintre à ressauts*" loses its ressauts and becomes the continuous "hat"-shaped or S-shaped curve, said to have been invented by Cressent as far as its use on a pediment is concerned.<sup>6</sup> At other points this line becomes modified in various ways.<sup>7</sup> The bottom of panels, very frequently in wainscoting, occasionally in articles of furniture,<sup>8</sup> was bounded by a line composed of two S-curves set end to end.<sup>9</sup> A little later there was adopted, for the top of panels of furniture with two doors, the un-

1 Fig. 43.

2 Fig. 43.

3 Fig. 43.

4 Fig. 10.

5 Fig. 42 (inner framing of the top panel), and Fig. 50.

6 Fig. 47.

7 Fig. 45 (the bottom panel), and Fig. 49.

8 Fig. 10.

9 This same line is found on the uppermost edge of the head and foot of the bed in Fig. 60.

symmetrical shape<sup>1</sup> that was to be one of the most unvarying characteristics of the Louis XV style, and retained even right into the nineteenth century by country joiners in all the provinces. At the same time, the top of cupboard or sideboard doors sometimes assumed an incurved shape.<sup>2</sup>

The C-shaped motive, the simple "basket-handle" (*anse de panier*) of former days, was modified and became the *haricot* motive beloved of the Louis XV style. We have already seen it making its appearance on panelling that was still "very Louis XIV": for instance, in the central rosette of the panel in Fig. 1. The outer edge of the *haricot* or bean became denticulated, pinked, pleated, or goffered; it is like that of certain shells, the murex or the limpet.<sup>3</sup> This denticulation sometimes tapers out and curves in such a way that it becomes impossible to tell whether it is a wing, a flame, or a spaniel's tail. A lozenge pattern with a tiny flower or dots was always a favourite as a ground decoration;<sup>4</sup> it obeys the law of general softening; the lines defining the lozenges are often flattened curves, and the lozenges diminish towards one side.

We have already had occasion to call attention to the motives taken from living creatures that

1 Fig. 48: top of the doors of the upper part.

2 Fig. 47.

3 Pediment of sideboard, Fig. 48, top of doors of sideboard Fig. 50.

4 Table in Fig. 59, chairs in Figs. 71 and 72.

made their appearance at this moment, the *espagnolettes* of the Watteau style, found at the head of the legs of tables, the top corners of screens, in certain elaborate motives of keyhole escutcheons;<sup>1</sup> the monkeys which are ever readily employed to finish off the upright sides of frames;<sup>2</sup> the dragons which, by reason of their unreality and their arbitrary shape, constitute a priceless resource for hard pressed decorators: they are to be found especially in the somewhat lax compositions of the Rocaille style. The great Cressent, however, has made use of them. The shell motive is no less frequent than in the Louis XIV style, but it is elaborated, pierced, and modified in many ways.<sup>3</sup>

The acanthus leaf continues to render excellent service; it is often lengthened and more indented, less broad than previously; it attains the highest pitch of suppleness. A "feuille d'eau" (water leaf), as though folded double and seen in profile, with vaguely waved edge, and ribs strongly marked or replaced by grooves, serves as accompaniment to the edge of the friezes of tables or simple chairs.<sup>4</sup> Light flowerets scatter themselves almost everywhere, flowers of no definite species, with four or five petals; and convolvuli go clambering over the mouldings. The most

1 Fig. 54.

2 Fig. 85.

3 See, for instance, the three large shells pierced with holes in the original and charming sofa shown in Fig. 75.

4 The same sofa of Fig. 75, on each side of the tops of the legs; arm-chair, Fig. 74.

current, the "stock" motive of the period, is the upright shell, from whose base start two long acanthus sprays.<sup>1</sup>

The taste for attributes goes on increasing. They become less heroic and more familiar: gardening tools, implements of pastoral life, of the chase and fishing, of music and other arts; there are, of course, the arms and symbols of Love—torches, wreaths of roses, bows, arrows and quivers.

As for technique, we must report the almost complete abandonment for a time of ebony, which was to recover a certain amount of favour under Louis XVI. The old master, André Charles Boulle, went on, however, building his sumptuous marquetry pieces, and his sons after him, for certain amateurs of austere tastes prided themselves on having a few specimens in their *cabinet* or collection;<sup>2</sup> Boulle pieces were the only articles of a past style that were sought after throughout the whole of the eighteenth century. That period, indeed, was wholly innocent of "antiquomania," to the greater benefit of art and artists; it was far too creative to contract this disease. But the fashion was frankly for veneering and marquetry in exotic woods, with appliques of gilt bronze; and particularly for amaranth wood, which is a winy red kind of

<sup>1</sup> Table, Fig. 59. Arm-chairs, Figs. 70, 73, 77, etc.

<sup>2</sup> This is a third meaning attached to the word "cabinet": a collection of curiosities and works of art. People spoke of the *cabinet Crozat*, the *cabinet la Live* rather than the *galérie*,

mahogany, and for violet wood, of a violet brown with well defined lighter veining.

The bronzes of the Regency style, for example those of Cressent's most successful models, have one very great merit, the same as those of the Louis XV period, when the cabinet-maker did not let himself be drawn away into an exaggerated display of richness; a merit of which the Louis XVI bronzes fall short, and which was only half attained by those on Boulle pieces. This merit consists in the fact that they serve some definite purpose; they are not mere ornaments; each one has its reason for existing, and for being just where it is. Let us examine one of those admirable flat bureaux by Cressent, for example, the masterpiece now in the Louvre after long service at the Ministère de la Guerre. For bronzes it has a *quart de rond*\* reinforced at the corners, running round the top, of great efficacy to protect an exposed edge from knocks; enframing mouldings on the front of the drawers, which strengthen the joints of a part that has much work to do; handles (*mains*\*) which are indispensable to pull out the drawers conveniently; keyhole escutcheons to prevent the keys from damaging the wood; large bronzes fixed to the inner side of the permanent frame of the drawers on each side; they soften an arris that might endanger the legs of the person seated at the bureau; at the top of each leg there is an *espagnolette*, forming a *chute* or drop, and protecting the most projecting part of the legs; a

fine fillet running the whole length of the arrises of the legs, to keep the veneer from being ripped off just where it runs most danger, since the films of thin wood meet there at an angle; and lastly, *chaussons* or *sabots*, casings covering the extremities of the legs, and fulfilling this same purpose of protection.

More carving is to be seen on modest furniture: the copious moulding of the Louis XIII and Louis XIV styles, so well calculated to accentuate the great straight lines, is hardly attractive now, and no longer seems sufficient decoration for a cupboard or a buffet to which a certain finish has been given.

\* \* \* \* \*

It remains for us to review briefly, with comments on our illustrations, the different items of furniture, such as were made for simple business people, perhaps already for well-to-do country folk, in what we have allowed to pass as the "Regency period"; but we have no hesitation in repeating once again that any classifications into the Louis XIV style, the Regency style, the Louis XV style, are purely arbitrary and in no way correspond with an exact chronology. We are fully persuaded, for example, that nearly all, if not all, of the panelled furniture reproduced in this volume, which may legitimately be labelled "Regency" for its hybrid style, was made after 1723 by provincial joiners who never followed at the heels of fashion.

Cupboards still continued to show the majesty and the calm lines of the Louis XIV style; their vertical arrises were rounded off;<sup>1</sup> the cornice was straight, less important, sometimes already *en chapeau*; vertical symmetry had disappeared, and the bottom frequently displayed lines that were frankly Louis XV: the lower traverse in front was heavily festooned in a complicated design, and the feet are "doe's feet" (*pied de biche*).<sup>2</sup> This is an error in taste; by true rules—and the rule here is simply logic—the upper parts of a monument, for these are veritable monuments, should be lighter, airier, so to say, than the base, and may be less simple; here it is the contrary, and these curved and elegant feet are somewhat slender to support such a mass, or at any rate they convey that impression to the eye. This goes some way to spoil the superb cupboard from Provence, seen in Fig. 44, the doors of which are carried out to perfection, with their fine carvings setting off so well the handsome outline of the plain panels. The Lorraine cupboard of Fig. 46, fairly rustic in character, has something harsh and angular about it, which is, if one may say so, racy of the soil.

Let us note that the whole façade of certain large furniture was carved, doubtless in imitation of the façades of commodes. This is a strange refinement in the case of modest pieces,<sup>3</sup> for it

1 Figs. 44 and 46.

2 Figs. 44 and 46.

3 Fig. 47.

greatly increases the difficulty of the work and the quantity of material needed; but in the eighteenth century both craftsmanship and materials were cheap! Dresser-sideboards made their appearance in the provinces, for the bright colours and great decorative value of earthenware, which was then being manufactured in abundance, speedily inspired the desire to display it when not in actual use. The handsomest are to be found in the east of France: tall, wide—often much wider than their height—elaborate, very convenient, they combine in one highly architectural simple piece the cupboard, the commode, and the set of shelves.<sup>1</sup> In the western provinces they are narrower, simpler, with a rather shabby upper part,<sup>2</sup> but always very useful to give a country dining-room the gaiety we delight in, and also, be it said, to satisfy our mania for display. Have we not, indeed, demonstrated that where porcelain is concerned this mania was at least as great two centuries ago as it is to-day?

The coffer ends its once glorious career obscurely in the depths of the country districts. Even the country people themselves began to discard it more and more, and the latest examples are nearly always without decoration.<sup>3</sup> And yet there are still a few interesting ones to be found in Brittany and the Vosges, which are strongly marked with the characteristics of the period.

1 Fig. 49.

2 Fig. 50.

3 Figs. 52 and 53.



The commode was given a new shape, which in a slightly improved version was to continue until the coming of the Louis XVI style; this was the shape known as "the Regency."<sup>1</sup> Let us note, by the way, that it was at this period that names began to be given to the various varieties of furniture: a proof that these varieties were becoming numerous, and also that furniture had entered the realms of fashion. Thus, there appear for a moment certain sub-species, commodes *à la Chartres*, *à la Bagnolet*, *à la Charolais*, and others besides. The Regency commode is massive and bulging, its lines are heavy, its rotundities are excessive; the Louis XV period will correct this and bring it to perfection. Under the marble top, a first stage of one or two drawers has a concave façade, the middle stage is strongly convex, the lower part is curved back, which gives the whole a "doe's foot" ( *pied de biche* ) outline, but with an exaggerated projection of its convex curve, which is also placed too low down. The sides show the same swelling line: to be completely truthful, it is ugly. The design is not so contorted in plane as in profile; the façade is slightly rounded. The bronzes are rich and appropriately abundant. These commodes all have the air of having been made for the profiteers of the rue Quincampoix. How much more elegant are those which were satisfied with a plain vertical front, slightly curved, and

perpendicular sides! <sup>1</sup> The one here reproduced has bronzes that are frankly "rocaille," but the handles, which now are fixed and no longer hanging, still have a certain symmetry. It is to be observed that commodes of this period show their division into stages very clearly marked (often by a heavy horizontal groove lined with brass), a thing that is too often lacking in the periods that follow.

Clocks may well figure here, with panelled furniture, for at the end of the seventeenth century they became real pieces of furniture. The invention of the pendulum by Huyghens, about the middle of the century, had brought about an enormous increase in the numbers of clocks by making them infinitely more accurate. Small table clocks had disappeared, because people began to carry watches, and *religieuses*, or clocks meant to be fixed against the wall, had taken their place. These had a short pendulum and a spring, in which case they were set on a bracket or a pedestal against the wall, or had weights, in which case they were carried on a little shelf pierced with holes to let the cords run through. When the long pedulum became common, it needed protection as well as the weights, and so the box containing the works and the pedestal that carried it were united: the tall clock was born and very soon became common; it was, and still is, when it has not been sold to some antique dealer and replaced by the horrible

American or German alarm clock, the modest luxury of the homes of our peasants. Among all the objects that surround it the clock is the only one endowed with movement, and, in a sort, with life; and a deep instinct impelled the first makers of these tall cased clocks to make that life as manifest as possible. Hence the window that allows us to see the solemn swinging to-and-fro of the great pendulum with its disc of shining brass. The cases of Louis XIV and Regency clocks generally have vertical sides, but are sometimes given a more elegant and expressive shape, outlining the figure traced in space by the movement of the pendulum. The case most frequently terminates above in an arched pediment, sometimes flanked by two little vases or spike ornaments in brass.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of the reign of Louis XIV tables became lighter and simpler, in obedience to the general tendency to make everything that has no imperative reason for being big and heavy smaller and easy to handle. Florentine stonework is out of fashion, and for costly drawing-room tables people prefer a top of one single slab of fine marble, portor, Aleppo breccia, Antin marble. Wall consoles retain their elaborate structure; they must have extremely rich ornamentation, because they are placed at the foot of a pier glass, and under the panel of a reflecting mirror they must needs play the part of a *cul-de-lampe*, or tail piece answering to the

<sup>1</sup> Figs. 56 and 57.

painted or carved ornamentation above the mirror. But tables to stand out in the room, even when they are of great size, no longer have stretchers.

No more "twisted legs"; turnery is despised. No more pedestal legs; the straight line is beginning to be a bore. Console legs become simpler and similar to *pieds de biche*, which themselves assume more slender, more elegant lines. Until the Louis XVI style did away with this elegant shape, it was indiscriminately known as console leg or doe's foot leg. These table legs, and the same applies to the legs of chairs, are set obliquely and not *en façade*; to speak more accurately—the reader will kindly excuse these pedantic phrases—their median plane is oblique with reference to that of the façade, instead of being at right angles to it. Let us for the sake of simplicity call them "oblique legs." Their lines join up with those of the frieze by an unbroken moulding. The *piéd de biche*, instead of ending with the shape of a cloven hoof, begins to be terminated by a little volute, a last memory of the console, standing on a cube, and with an acanthus leaf springing up from it. The *chute*, or drop at the top of the leg, is a *palmette* or a shell, from which starts a leaf, an acanthus floret, or a plaited motive. The contour of the frieze is more or less shaped with S-curves alternating with C-curves. The two little tables reproduced here<sup>1</sup> are, in sum, completely Louis XV in their

<sup>1</sup> Figs. 58 and 59.

lines, and still Louis XIV by their carved decoration.

The state bed still continued its existence, like the love of costly stuffs, but it is a kind of sumptuousness that is drawing near its end. Henceforth there are a salon or two—the great drawing-room and the *salon de compagnie*, which is smaller and more intimate—or even more, for the reception of guests, and a dining-room, so that no one is impelled by vanity to spend enormous sums on a bed. As rooms are now smaller, less open to the winds and better heated, it is no longer essential that the bed should be hermetically enclosed. And so, little by little, it ceased to be a four-poster, first in Paris and later at Versailles, where the sovereigns had bed-chambers that were truly arctic. It was not until 1743 that Marie Leczinska had a “duchess”-shaped summer bed—we know this from the Duc de Luynes, who would never have left such a change unrecorded in his diary—and in winter she continued to sleep in a four-poster. The bed in the King’s chamber remained a four-poster until the Revolution. The general adoption of the duchess-bed and the angel-bed brings about the reappearance of beds with the wood showing, which sometimes have head and foot boards of the same height;<sup>1</sup> but as a rule the angel-bed has the foot-board lower than the head. These beds with the wood showing are

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 60. The sunk lozenge on the cartouche above the dossier is the *macle*, the chief emblem in the arms of the Rohans,

in any case very rare, and other kinds have not been preserved. Altogether, hardly any beds of the Regency period have come down to us.

It is quite different with regard to chairs, which are still very numerous. We are given the impression that Louis XIV chairs and arm-chairs suddenly, almost over-night, were regarded as old rubbish and replaced, so to speak, in a lump, more quickly than other furniture, because they were less costly and were more directly connected with the desire for comfort then becoming general. It was with them as with the tables, they became smaller, lighter, easier to move about, and, above all, more comfortable. The study of arm-chairs gives us the most complete scale of intermediate shades between the pure Louis XIV style and that of Louis XV. At one end is the great arm-chair, immovable or nearly so, rectilinear, geometrical, curling up its volutes with all the emphatic rhetoric of a Fléchier rolling out his periods, and seeming to say to you: "Go your ways, you that are neither Duke nor Peer!" and at the other end of the scale the little Louis XV *cabriolet* chair, wholly inviting, all in supple elusive lines, the back snugly embracing your shoulders, its wood everywhere visible, made to be moved with one hand without interrupting the conversation; between these two is every imaginable hybrid shape.

Here is one,<sup>1</sup> which with everything else in the style has a back slightly lower and with a

tendency to be "hat"-shaped; here one<sup>1</sup> with the volutes of the arms atrophied, and another with none at all; here are the *manchettes* (pads)<sup>3</sup> to soften the hardness of the arms; and here<sup>4</sup> is a great change, on which we may pause for a moment, the first arms set back on the seat. In 1717 there arrived, from England, it is said, the fashion of panniers. "These panniers are a frame of whalebone, or sometimes of wicker, covered with linen and put by women under their skirts, and by men in their coat-skirts, to keep them stiff and standing out. The machine is considerably developed at each side of the wearer, but very little at front and back, so that a lady with her slender waist and huge panniers looks like a washerwoman's paddle." The poor women bundled up with this were never able to find room in an arm-chair; so they were perforce reduced to chairs, as their great-great-grandmothers had been by their farthingales. A gallant upholsterer of an ingenious turn devised the remedy: he set back the consoles of the arms, and the panniers could spread themselves at their own sweet will on the front of the chairs. This other arm-chair<sup>5</sup> displays an ornamented band fitted on to its frieze (hence the disappearance of fringes), and the sides of the seat curve inwards. This one is still further advanced in evolution,

1 Fig. 62.

2 Fig. 69.

3 Fig. 65.

4 Fig. 62.

5 Fig. 65.

with its obliquely set doe's foot legs, and the frieze itself covered with carving; these others<sup>1</sup> have boldly discarded stretchers, and yet the first one has not yet arrived at set-back arms, and neither of them has arm pads. If chairs are now able to dispense with stretchers, it is because they are less heavy and glide easily over wooden floors and carpets, while heretofore their feet were continually catching on the rough squares of stone pavements. Lastly, here is a chair<sup>2</sup> with its back showing the wood, and all curved at the top, and corners almost turned up Chinese fashion. The characteristic of the Louis XIV style that persists longest was the rectilinear sides of the back; we may say that when an arm-chair or a chair has a fiddle back, *i.e.*, with uprights bending in towards the centre line, it is no longer Regency but frankly Louis XV.

Besides the great "confessional" chair with ears and solid sides,<sup>3</sup> which still continues to exist, there gradually takes shape the *bergère* type. Here is one (Fig. 74) which is interesting in that it clearly shows the new taste for clearly defined outlines in visible wood. Sofas (*canapés* or *sophas*), which were rare in the preceding period, become common; from their original prototype, the rest-bed with two ends, definitely emerges the sofa, which is a very wide arm-chair, or rather, something like an amalgamation of

1 Figs. 69 and 70.

2 Fig. 72.

3 Fig. 73.



three arm-chairs, which are still easily to be traced in it at this period.<sup>1</sup>

Cane chairs were in high favour, as is proved by the surprising numbers that still survive. In summer these light, cool chairs were left bare, or were simply fitted with a flat "carreau," or squab cushion. What shows that they were all meant to have this is the little cube-shaped piece of wood left uncarved at the lower end of the arm consoles; the cushion was notched at the front corners, and kept in place by ribbons tied so as to hide this rough place. When winter came a complete upholstery set was slipped over the chair like a loose cover, or else a second cushion was tied on to the back with ribbons. In spite of their humble materials, for they are made of beechwood, painted or plain, they sometimes show very delicate carving,<sup>2</sup> especially on the backs. The cane sofa, of which a photograph is given,<sup>3</sup> is of an uncommon type. It has an unusually elegant basket motive repeated three times on the back. The two chairs in Figs. 79 and 81 indicate the limits within which the curve of the *pied de biche* might vary. The happy choice of this curve, the proportions of the various parts, the skilful harmonising of the carved motives to the masses they decorate, make excellent examples of joiners' work of the legs of the quite simple bench shown in Fig. 83.

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

1 Figs 75 and 76.

2 Fig. 78.

3 Fig. 76.

Taken all in all, Regency furniture is much more capable of pleasing us, and is much better adapted to our modern homes than that of the Louis XIV style. The reason is that towards 1720 the great transformation had been very nearly completed, the change that was to make our forefathers' way of living very different from that of the preceding generation, and on the whole so similar to our own.

Louis XIV furniture was made to satisfy the very pronounced taste for show of people who were nevertheless still crude, and had no notion or need of the comfort that has become so essential in our eyes. Everything else was sacrificed to a magnificent and sumptuous exterior. While it is not at all a chimerical project, given taste, patience and the proper financial means, to re-establish a country house or a small château built under Louis XV or Louis XVI in its original condition, and live in it very pleasantly both summer and winter, who could ever dream of reconstituting accurately an interior of the days of Louis XIV? It would be uninhabitable.

How then can we find a use for furniture of this style? It is almost an impossible task as far as flats in Paris are concerned: it is too huge in dimensions and its aspect far too lacking in intimacy. But for certain purposes, in a large country house, it would be without a rival. Above all, we should take advantage of its high decorative value, the happy way it "peoples" big spaces, and how its lines harmonise with those of large

and simple architecture. Nothing could be more at home in the porch of an unpretentious château than one of those immense cupboards of dark walnut with rich mouldings, whose fine lights alternate with the deepest of shadows; or than a marble-topped table, solidly fixed upon its four baluster legs, with their cross-pieces by way of stretcher, and a number of arm-chairs with tall rectangular backs, all drawn up by the wall like lifeguardsmen on parade. But for heaven's sake let no one have them covered with bits of old Flanders verdure, which were never made for such a fate!

A large salon furnished in the Louis XIV manner—without the state-bed, of course!—would be a pretty difficult thing to achieve, though very interesting, since it would have to be completely in keeping. These articles of furniture are of a nature that will not accommodate itself to all surroundings. They agree very well with the Louis XIII style, for the Louis XIV style is, after all, only the Louis XIII enriched and refined, or with the Regency style, since it is derived from the Louis XIV by imperceptible degrees. But they clash with the furniture of the eighteenth century: the two styles differ in the mere scale of size, in their range of colours, and in their lines. The only things that could keep house tolerably peacefully with them would be very large pieces of the Louis XVI style, under-cupboards or great “wall-pieces,” certain massive tables or consoles, simply

because the master lines in both are straight, and the few curves they admit are similar in each style; and both alike borrow the elements of their ornamentation from antiquity.

Here is an imaginary sketch of such a great country house drawing-room. On the walls, failing tapestries, which would of course be the ideal thing, and if they are not already panelled or wainscoted, there should be a quite simple plain hanging; for the silk stuffs of the seventeenth century were much too sumptuous to make it possible for modern imitations to take their place;<sup>1</sup> and a decoration of wide bands of two glaring colours would be hard for modern eyes to accept. On the floor as many Eastern carpets as you please. For the big pieces of furniture there should be one or two cupboards, but preferably Louis XIII pieces in two parts, with a pediment; in upholsterers' parlance, they "are more drawing-room" than the Louis XIV cupboards; then two under-cupboards or two commodes, forming a pair as nearly as possible—we must never forget that symmetry is a cardinal law of the style. Tables dating from the end of the seventeenth century, with pedestal or console legs, are not easily come by; but they might be replaced by those tables with twisted legs, which may be Louis XIII style if you like, but which were almost all made under Louis XIV, or even by rectangular tables of any kind, provided

<sup>1</sup> Unless we could get hold of crimson damask that was not too *cafard*, as our fathers used to say.

they are hidden under those valanced covers that hang down to the floor and obligingly conceal everything—even to a husband, to whom it is wished to reveal the attacks to which his wife is exposed, as in *Tartuffe*. A sofa will be practically indispensable, so let us have one of the Louis XIV side of the Regency style rather than the Louis XV end. As for the other seats, the bulk of them will be made up of large Louis XIV arm-chairs. After all, we have no perukes to humour, and if you lean frankly up against their backs you won't be at all badly seated. But you will, out of mere necessity, have to supplement them with some handier chairs. You will find these in turned Louis XIII chairs, or in those excellent caned arm-chairs and ordinary chairs of the Regency, which can easily be obtained, and which you can equip with cushions made of bits of old stuff. Lastly, there will be stools, benches with pedestal legs, and why not *carreaux* (floor-squabs) on their *porte-carreaux*, since the young women and girls of to-day affect to sit on the ground, just as Madame's maids of honour used to do, imagining that it is the last word in modernity?

As for the lighting, there must be a crystal chandelier; branched sconces with mirror plaque make a very charming mural decoration, but they are rare; and in default of those great tall torch candleholders of gilded wood, which are not precisely common objects at sales or in dealers' shops, you will place girandoles on

guéridons with twisted legs. If you wish to hang your pictures in the true seventeenth century way, you must hang them flat against the wall, by two silk or gold-thread cords, dropping vertically from the cornice and relieved with one or two big tassels of passementerie, through which they will be passed. These cords might also start from two ringed staples, fixed in the wall about two feet above the top of the frame, and disguised under two big tassels. Lastly, all the little decorative odds and ends can quite correctly, as we have seen, be Chinese, Hindoo, or Persian, at your pleasure. It would be amusing—without going quite so far as the tinned glass *boule de jardin*—to reconstruct a chimney set of china ornaments, laid out on shelves or tiny gilded consoles; but before undertaking this you must think over the trouble of taking care of it all. . . .

We will pause at this example and leave to our readers the pleasure of making other combinations<sup>1</sup> with those handsome, excellent pieces of furniture of two centuries ago—a little inconvenient perhaps, but such speaking witnesses to a period when France became, as in many another thing, the foremost nation of Europe in the art of beautifying the homes of human beings.

<sup>1</sup> For instance, a Regency dining-room, with a big dresser-sideboard from Lorraine, an under-cupboard as a serving table, and for seats, cane chairs of painted wood or those high-backed chairs covered with *moquette*, in stripes of three colours, which are to be seen in Chardin's pictures.



FIG. 1. CUPBOARD DOOR, OAK

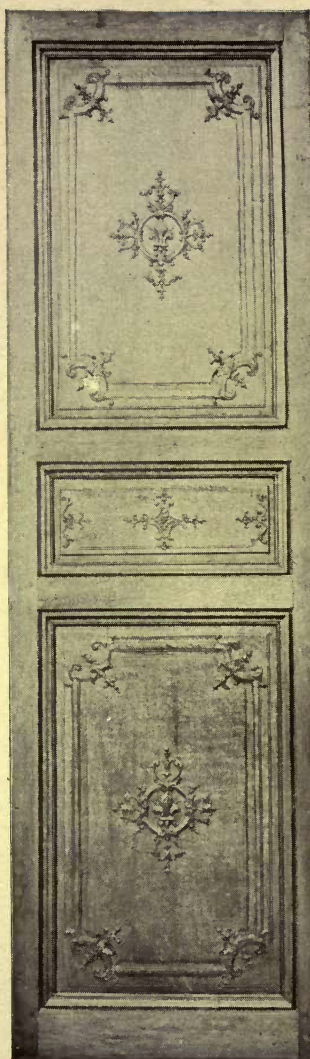


FIG. 2, OAK DOOR LEAF



FIG. 3. SMALL CUPBOARD IN TWO PARTS, IN OAK





FIG. 4. WALNUT CUPBOARD WITH ONE DOOR AND A DRAWER,  
FROM THE SOUTH-WEST OF FRANCE

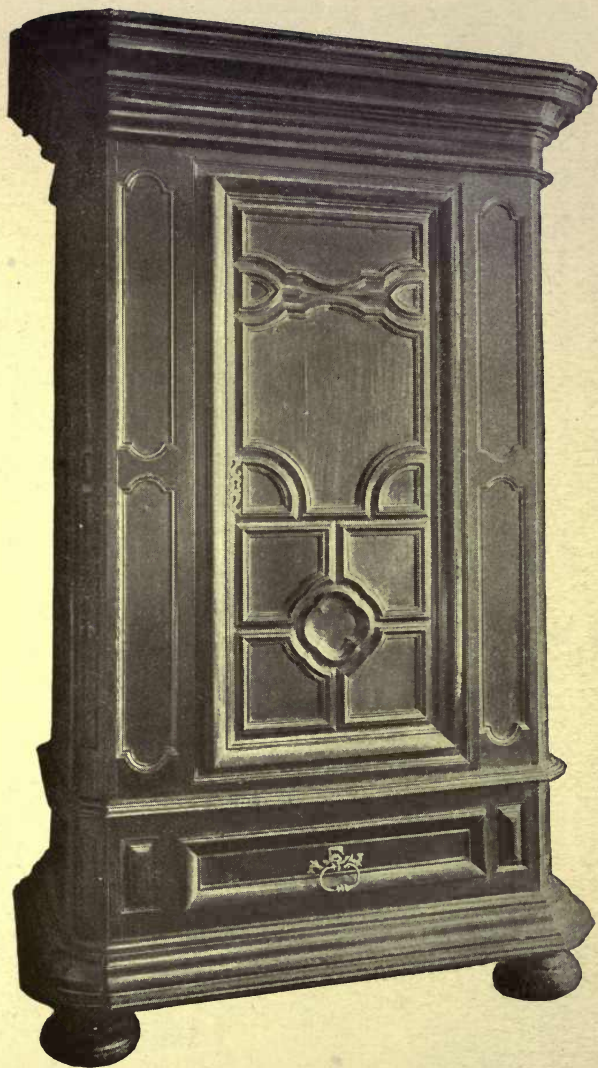


FIG. 5. CUPBOARD WITH ONE DOOR AND NEUTRAL PANELS AT THE SIDES, IN WALNUT, FROM THE SOUTH-WEST

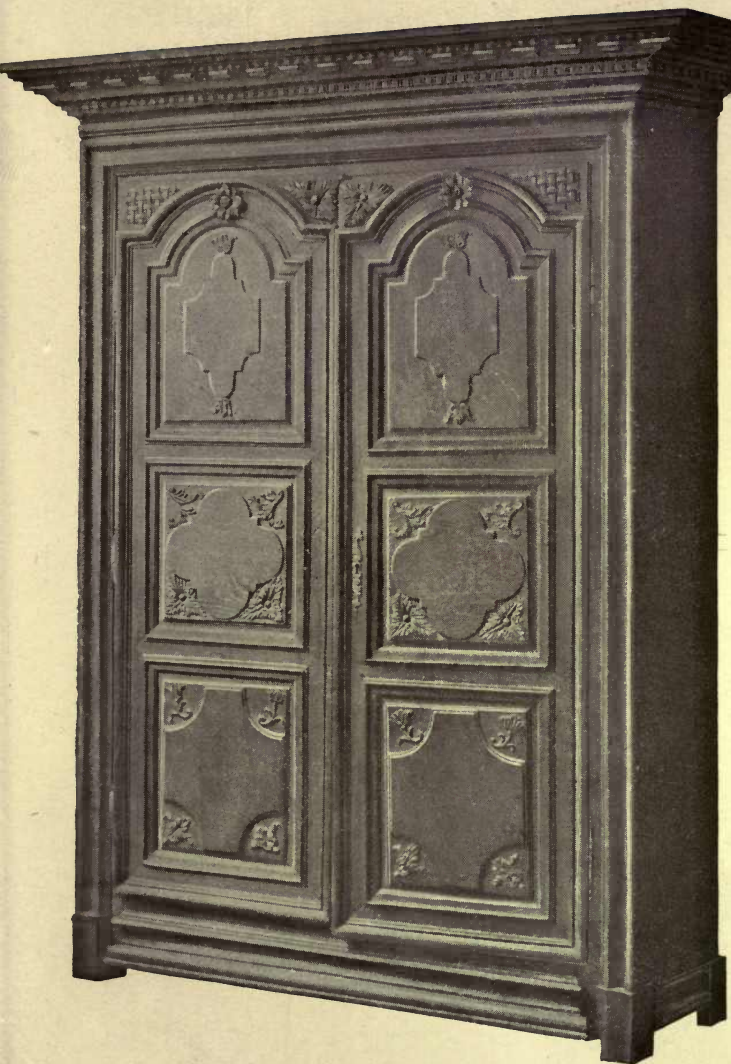


FIG. 6. NORMAN CUPBOARD, OAK



FIG. 7. LARGE CUPBOARD WITH ELABORATE CORNICE, IN WALNUT, FROM THE SOUTH-WEST

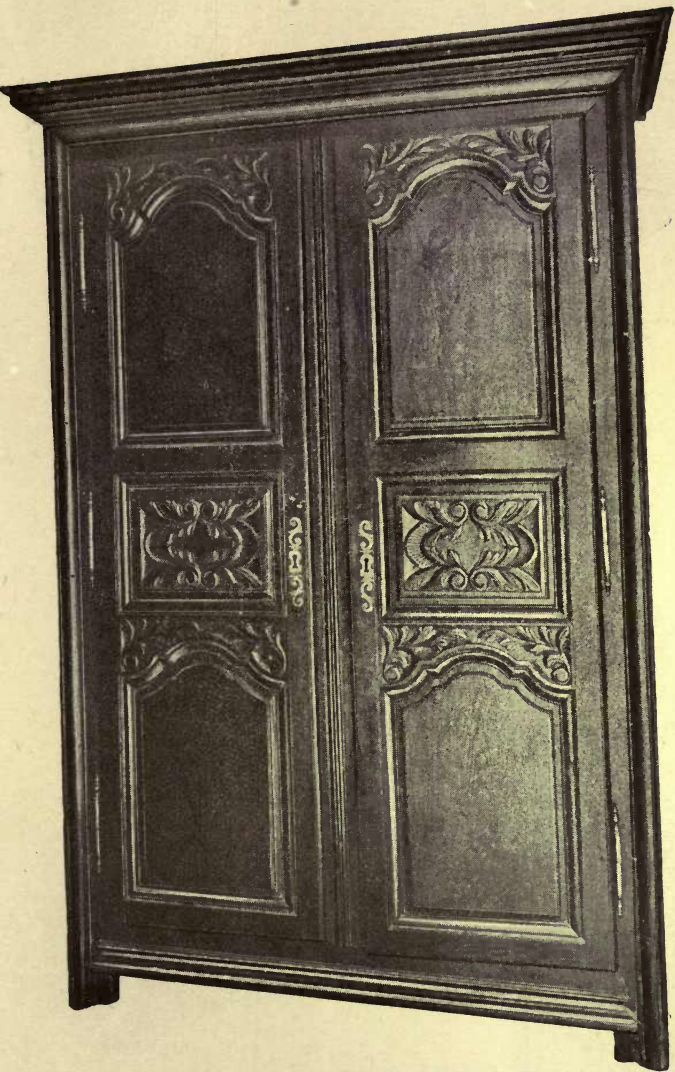


FIG. 8. CUPBOARD FROM SAINTONGE, WITH CARVED PANELS, IN OAK



FIG. 9. LARGE WALNUT CUPBOARD, WITH ELABORATE  
MOULDINGS, FROM THE SOUTH-WEST



FIG. 10. VERY LARGE CUPBOARD WITH ARCHED PEDIMENT, IN WALNUT  
END OF THE STYLE. FROM THE SOUTH-WEST.

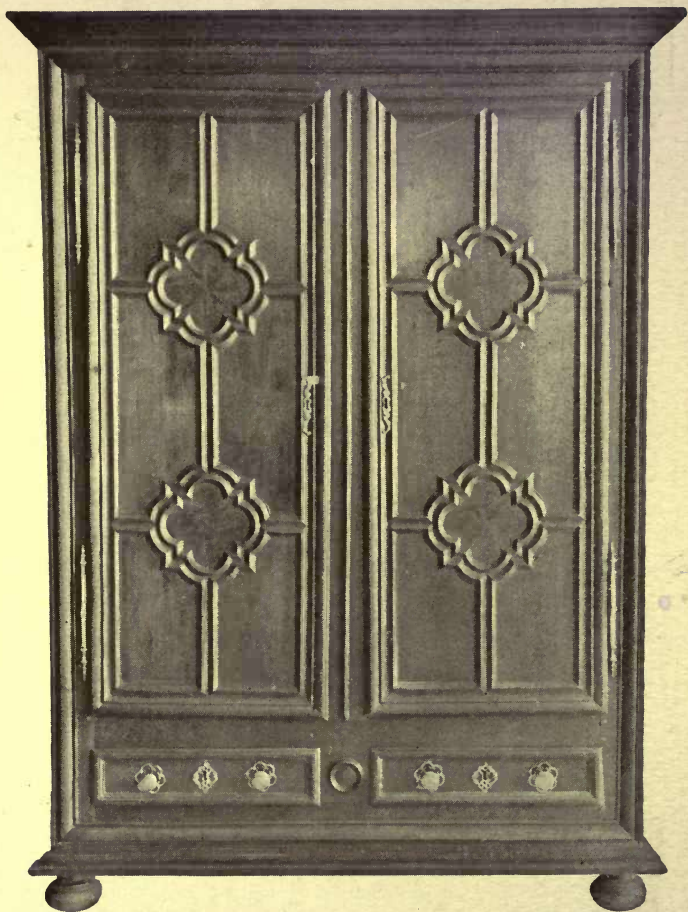


FIG. 11. LORRAINE CUPBOARD IN OAK, WITH MEDALLIONS,  
ORNAMENTED WITH MARQUETRY STARS





FIG. 12. OAK ALSATIAN BUFFET IN TWO SECTIONS, WITH  
ARCHED PEDIMENT



FIG. 13. VERY LARGE DRESSER-SIDEBOARD-COMMODE, FROM LORRAINE, IN CHERRYWOOD

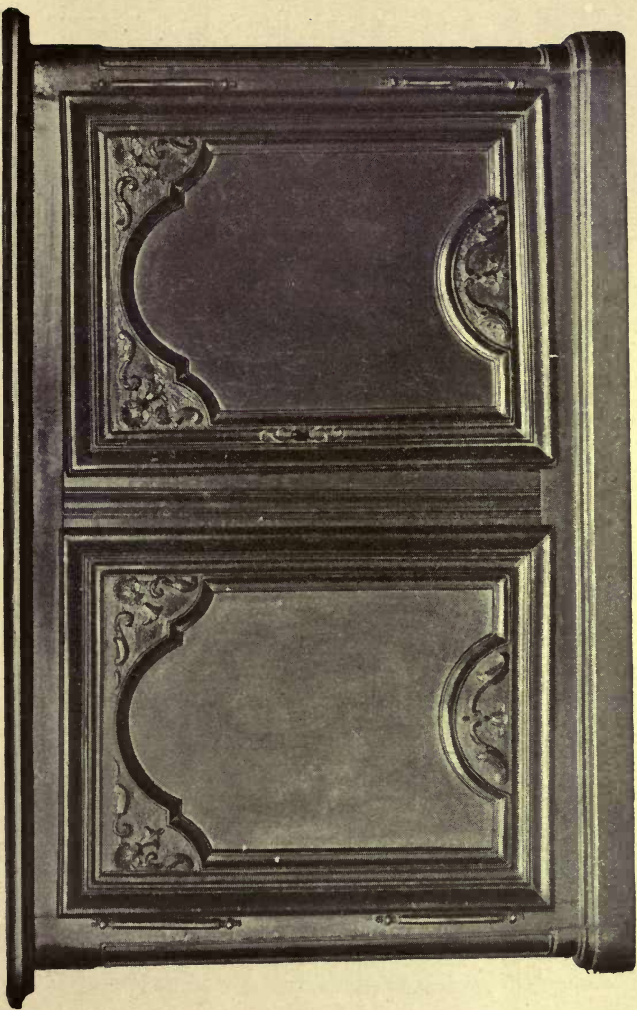


FIG. 14. WALNUT UNDER CUPBOARD



FIG. 15. COFFER SET ON A TABLE WITH A DRAWER,  
FROM NORMANDY



FIG. 16. COFFER IN PIGSKIN, STUDED WITH NAILS



FIG. 17. MARQUETRY COMMODE, WITH GILT BRONZES

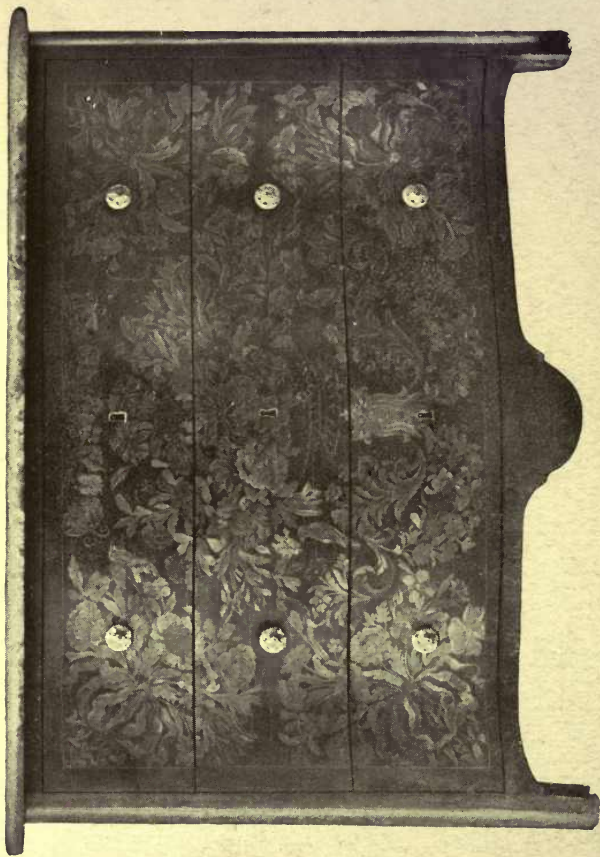


FIG. 18. MARQUETRY COMMUNE IN THE STYLE OF THE LOW COUNTRIES



FIG. 19. COMMUNE VENEERED WITH VIOLET-WOOD

Illustrated Catalogue of the Exhibition of 1876, Vol. 1, p. 100



FIG. 20. BED WITH CURVED DOSSIER AND CANTONNIÈRES



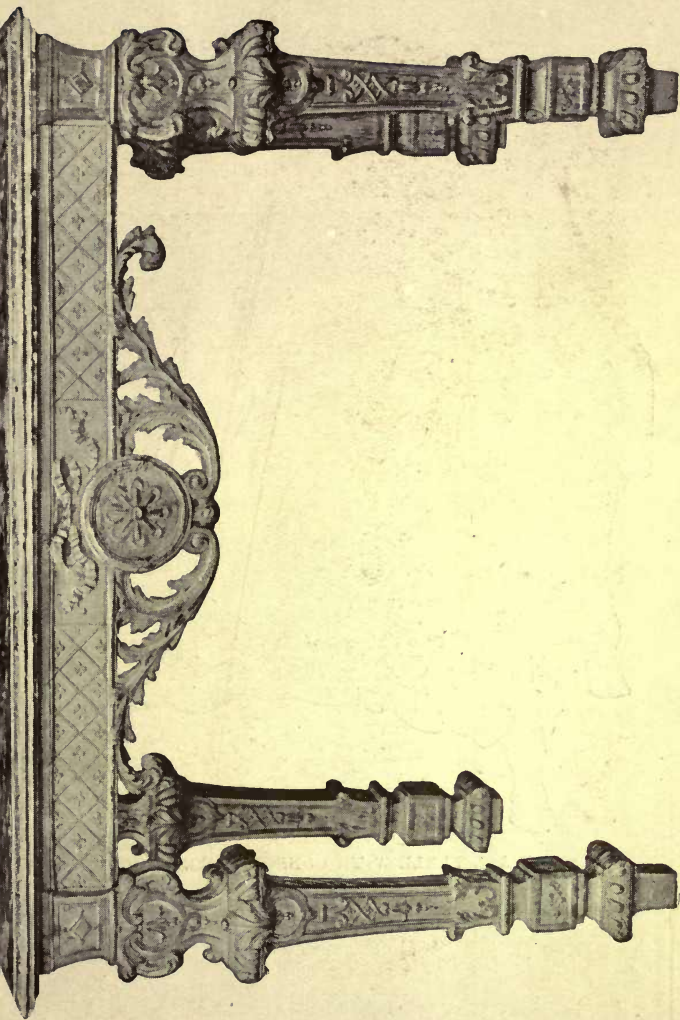


FIG. 21. TABLE WITH BALUSTER LEGS, NATURAL OAK



FIG. 22. SMALL TABLE WITH CONSOLE LEGS, IN GILT WOOD



FIG. 23. SMALL TABLE WITH TURNED BALUSTER LEGS

*Melrose  
L.V.*

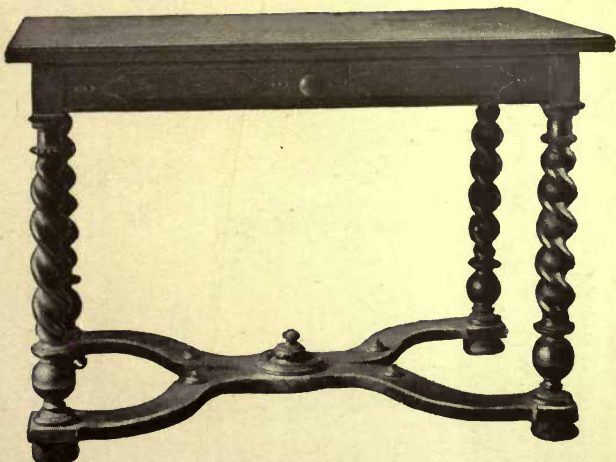


FIG. 24. TABLE WITH TWISTED LEGS, FROM NORMANDY

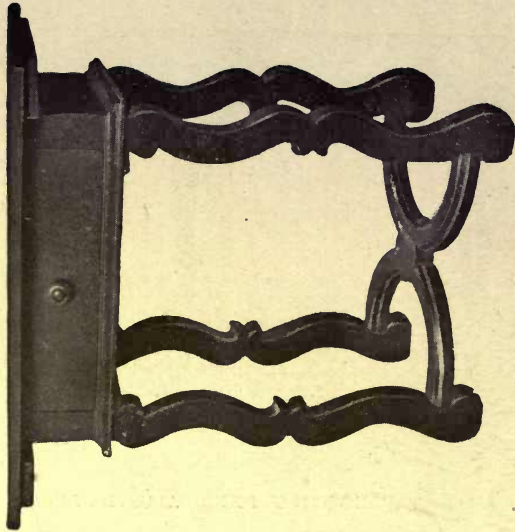


FIG. 26. SMALL TABLE WITH BRACKET-SHAPED LEGS,  
IN CHERRYWOOD

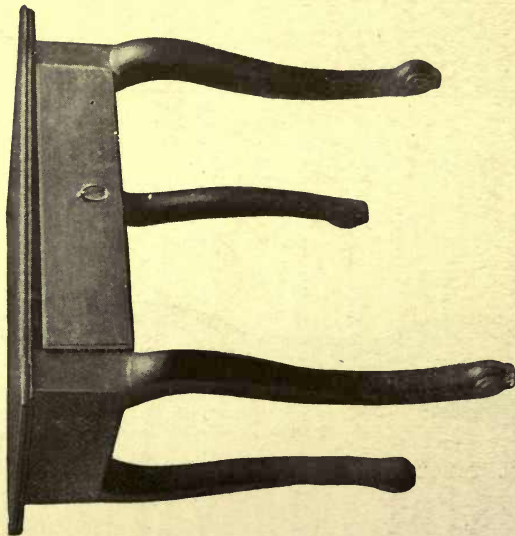


FIG. 25. SMALL RUSTIC TABLE WITH CONSOLE OR  
"DOES' FOOT" LEGS



FIG. 27. LARGE BUREAU WITH EIGHT TURNED BALUSTER LEGS  
AND NUMEROUS DRAWERS



FIG. 28. SIMPLE ARM-CHAIR WITH TURNED BALUSTER LEGS

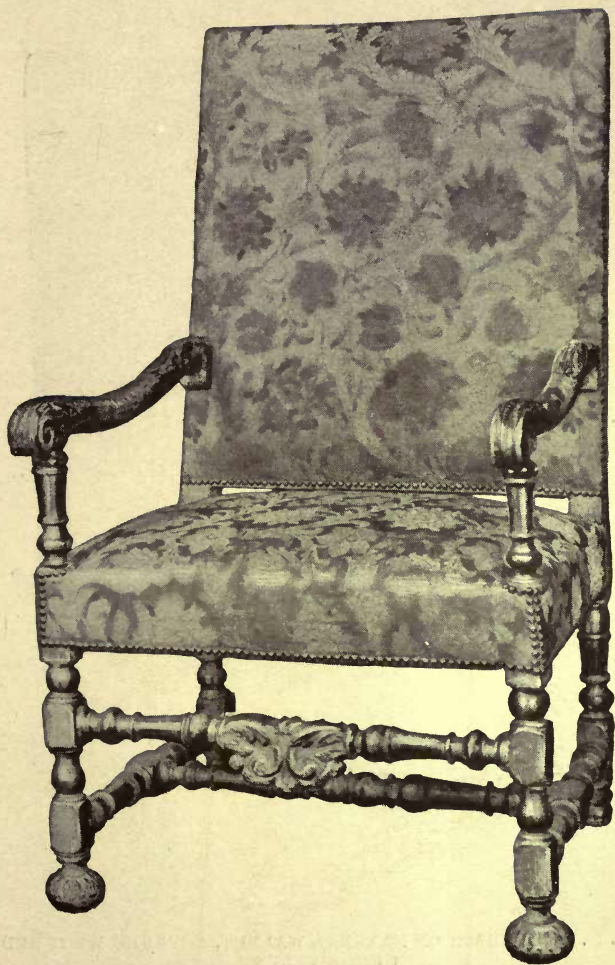


FIG. 29. GILT WOOD ARM-CHAIR, COVERED WITH GREEN AND GOLD BROCADE



FIG. 30. ARM-CHAIR OF NATURAL WALNUT, COVERED WITH RED GENOA VELVET



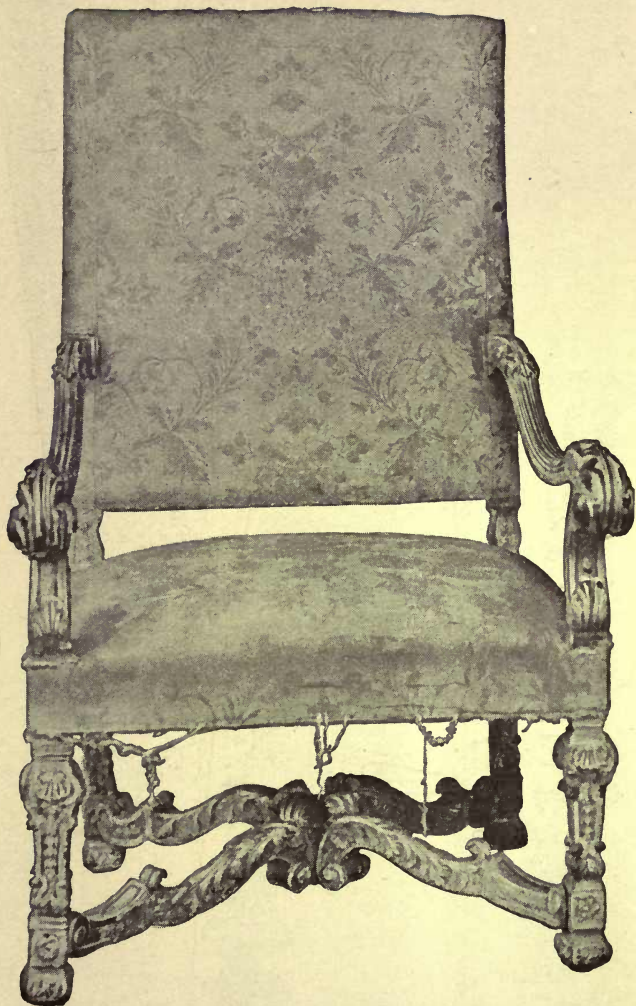


FIG. 31. ARM-CHAIR OF GILDED AND PAINTED WOOD, COVERED WITH WHITE AND SILVER BROCADE



FIG. 32. ARM-CHAIR WITH CONSOLE-SHAPED LEGS, WITH BEAUTIFUL MOULDINGS



FIG 33. CONFESSIONAL-SHAPED EASY CHAIR, COVERED WITH TAPESTRY IN BIG AND SMALL STITCH



FIG. 34. CHAIR OF "BRACKET".  
SHAPED TYPE

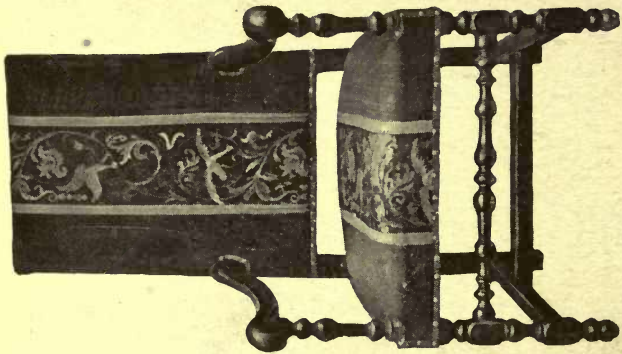


FIG. 35. SIMPLE ARM-CHAIR OF  
TURNED WOOD



FIG. 36. ARM-CHAIR OF THE  
BRACKET TYPE

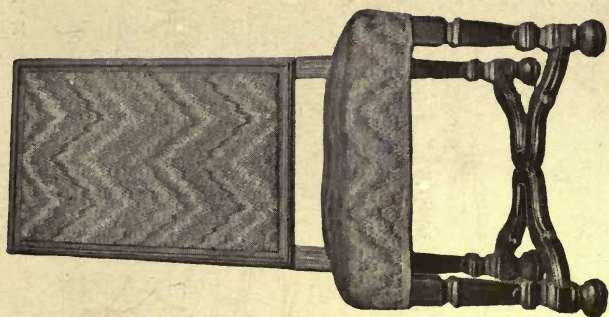


FIG. 38. CHAIR FROM AUVERGNE WITH  
BALUSTER LEGS

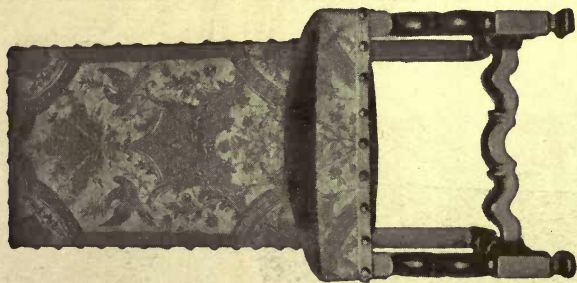


FIG. 37. CHAIR FROM THE SOUTH-WEST,  
MODERN LEATHER



FIG. 44. PROVENÇAL CUPBOARD, WITH CABRIOLET FEET, IN WALNUT

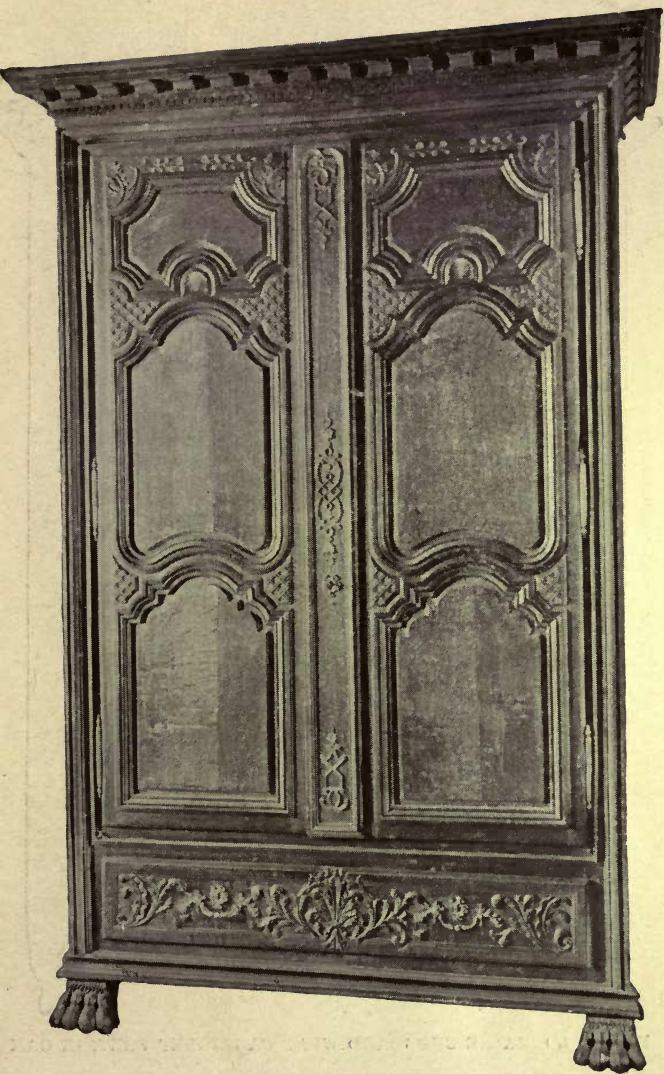


FIG. 45. NORMAN CUPBOARD WITH CLAW FEET, IN OAK

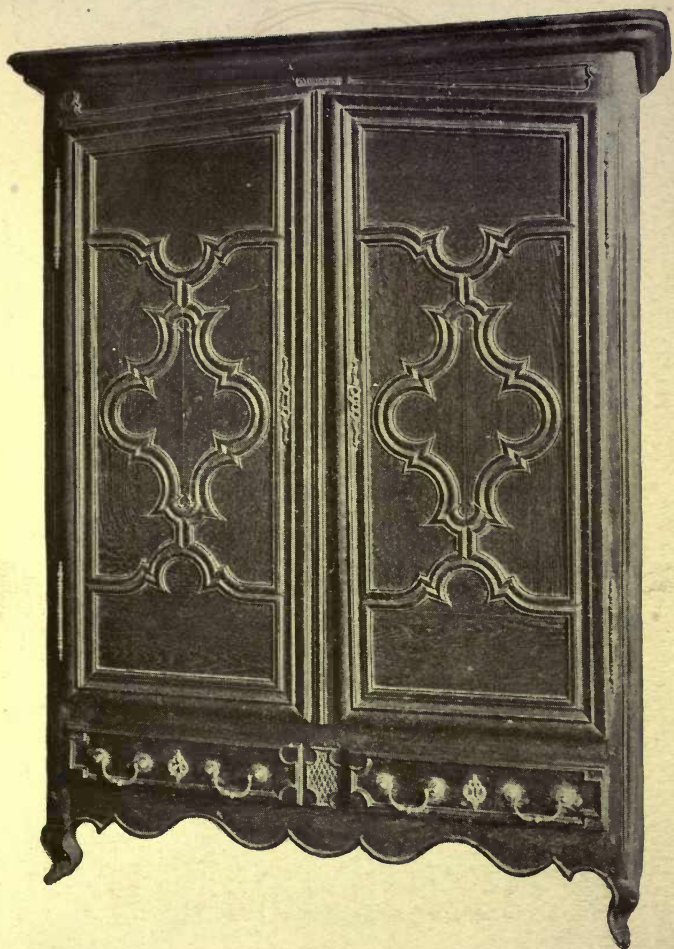


FIG. 46. LORRAINE CUPBOARD WITH CABRIOLET FEET, IN OAK





FIG. 47. ALSATIAN BUFFET IN TWO SECTIONS, WITH SMALL MARQUETRY PANELS



FIG. 48. ALSATIAN BUFFET IN TWO SECTIONS, IN OAK



FIG. 49. LARGE SIDEBOARD-DRESSER-COMMODE, FROM LORRAINE,  
WITH INLAID WORK



FIG. 50. NORMAN DRESSER-SIDEBOARD IN OAK



FIG. 51. SMALL DRESSER-SIDEBOARD, FROM LORRAINE, MADE OF OAK



FIG. 52. COFFER, FROM LORRAINE, MADE OF CHERRYWOOD



FIG. 53. COFFER FROM THE HAUTES-VOSGES, WITH THE HOLLOW CARVING PICKED OUT IN PAINT

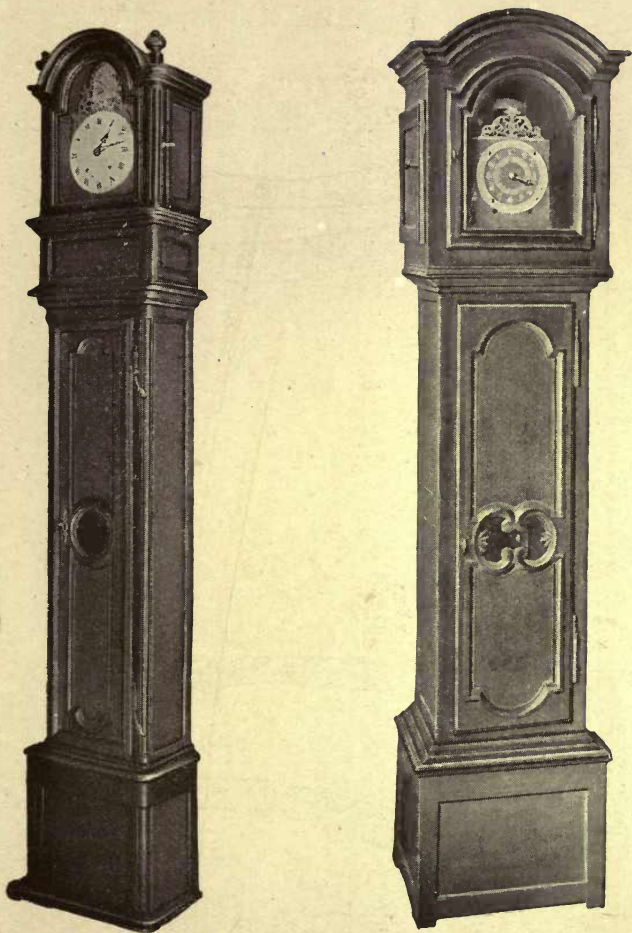


FIG. 54. REGENCY COMMODE VENERED WITH ROSEWOOD



FIG. 55. SIMPLE COMMODOE IN ROSEWOOD VENEER





FIGS. 56 AND 57. CASE CLOCKS FROM LORRAINE, IN OAK



FIG. 58. SMALL TABLE WITH DOE'S FOOT LEGS, SUNK TOP AND INCISED DECORATION



FIG. 59. SMALL TABLE WITH DOE'S FOOT LEGS

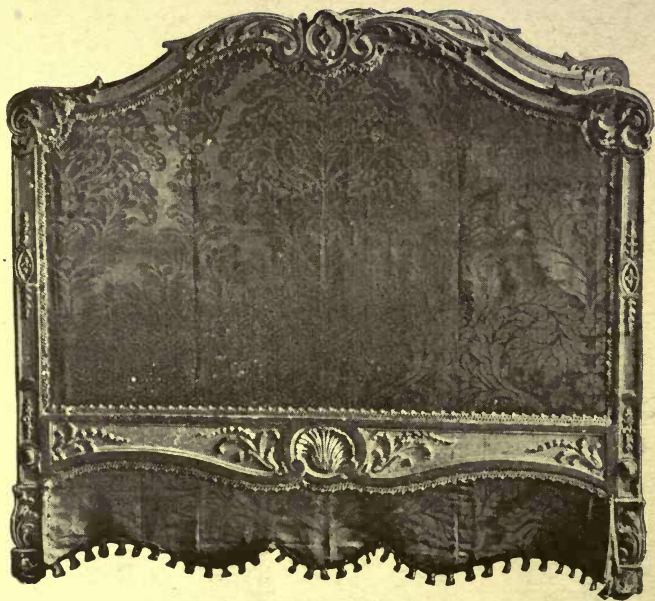


FIG. 60. BED WITH LOW POSTS IN GILDED WOOD

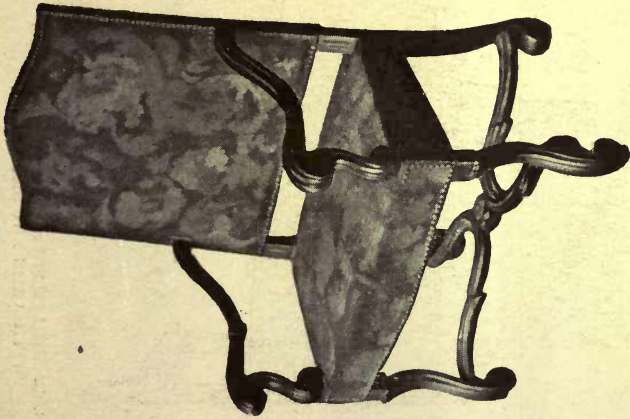


FIG. 61. ARM-CHAIR WITH CURVED TOP TO BACK

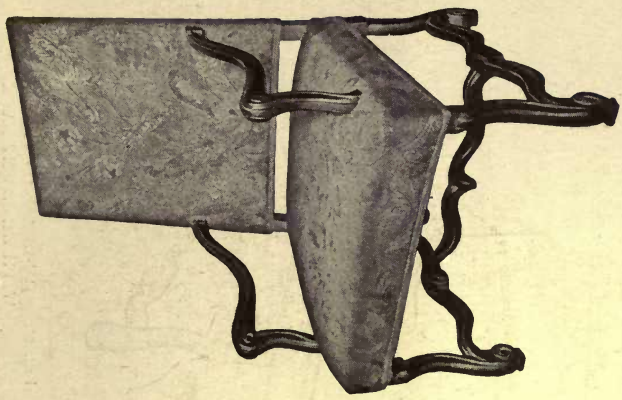


FIG. 62. ARM-CHAIR WITH THE ARMS SET BACK

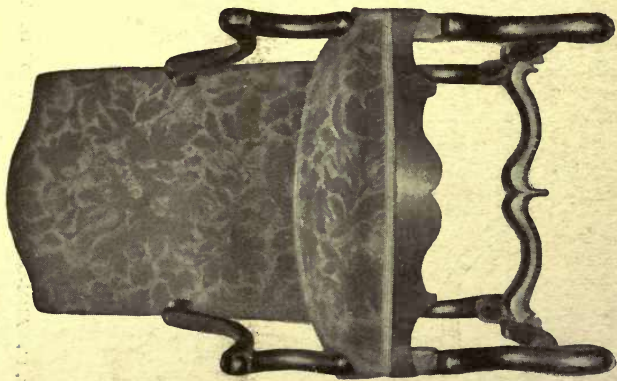


FIG. 63. ARM-CHAIR OF "BRACKET" TYPE  
WITH ARMS NOT SET BACK



FIG. 64. ARM-CHAIR OF THE SAME TYPE  
WITH ARMS SET BACK



FIG. 65. ARM-CHAIR WITH ARM-PADS AND VISIBLE FRIEZE OF WOOD

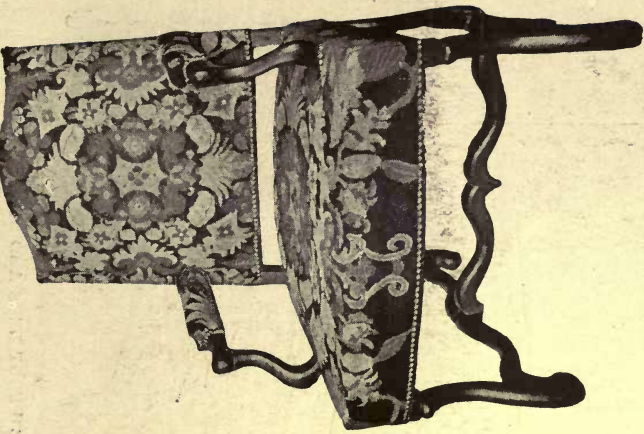
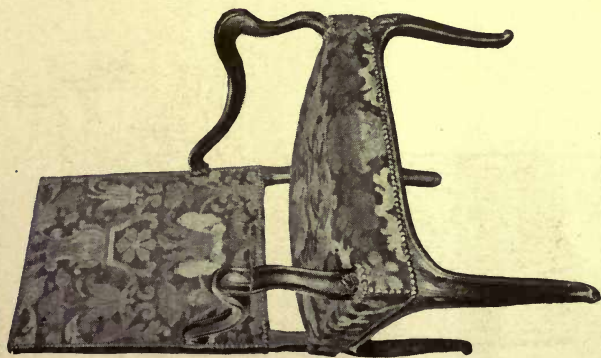


FIG. 66. ARM-CHAIR OF "BRACKET" TYPE WITH ARM-PADS



FIGS. 67 AND 68. CHAIR AND ARM-CHAIR WITH DOES FOOT LEGS AND STRETCHERS





FIGS. 69 AND 70. ARM-CHAIRS, WITH ARMS VERY CURVED AND WITHOUT STRETCHERS

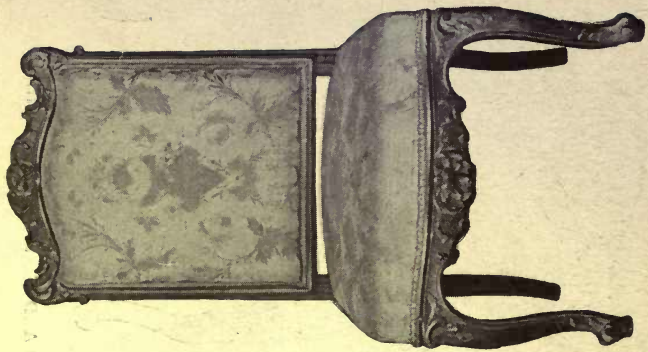


FIG. 72. CHAIR IN NATURAL WOOD COVERED WITH WHITE AND SILVER BROCADE

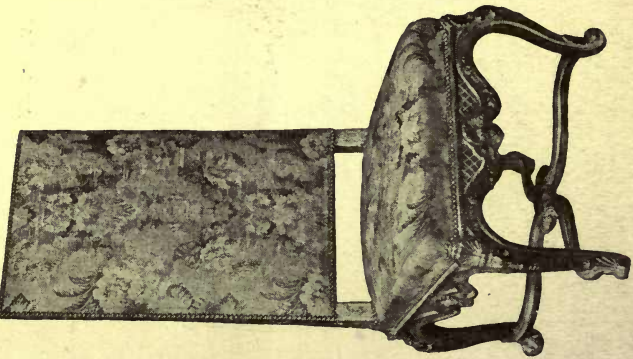


FIG. 71. TALL CHAIR IN NATURAL WOOD COVERED WITH BROCHÉ SILK



FIG. 73. LARGE "CONFESSIONAL" ARM-CHAIR



FIG. 74. BERGÈRE-ARM-CHAIR, CONFESSIONAL SHAPE, WITH THE WOOD SHOWING

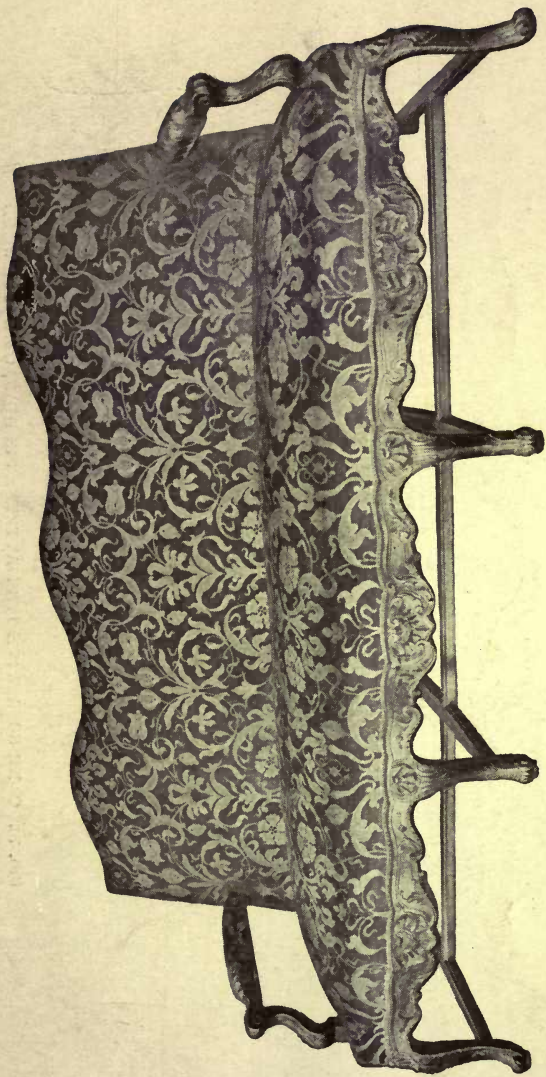


FIG. 75. LARGE SOFA WITH EIGHT LEGS, NATURAL WALNUT

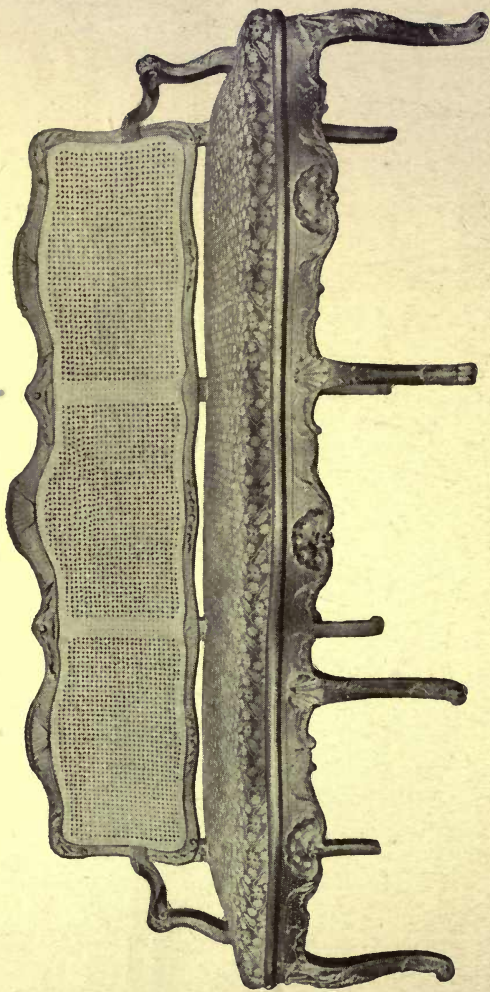


FIG. 76. CANE SOFA WITH ITS MATTRESS CUSHION, OF BEECHWOOD

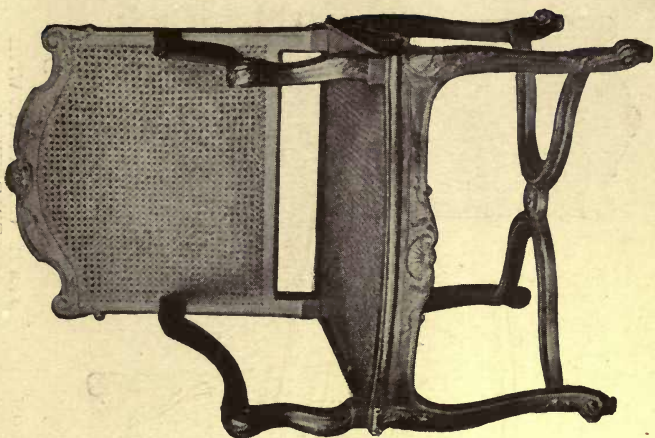


FIG. 78. CANE ARM-CHAIR WITH OBLIQUE-SET  
LEGS

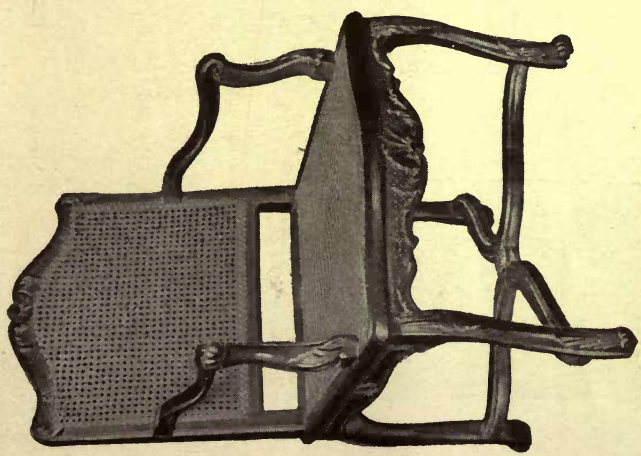


FIG. 77. CANE CHAIR WITH LEGS  
*EN FACADE*

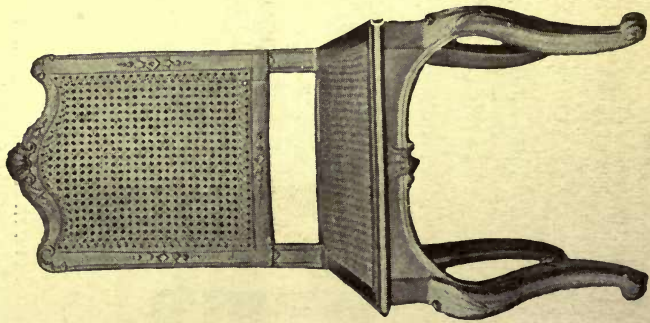


FIG. 79. CANE CHAIR WITH EX-  
AGGERATED DOE'S FOOT LEGS

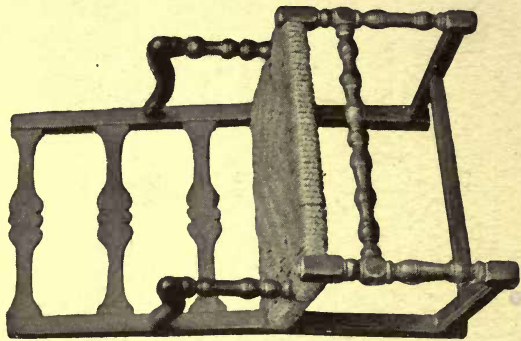


FIG. 80. STRAW CHAIR FROM  
AUVERGNE

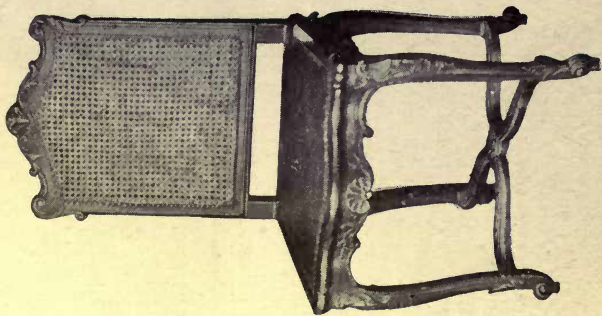


FIG. 81. CANE CHAIR WITH  
STRETCHERS



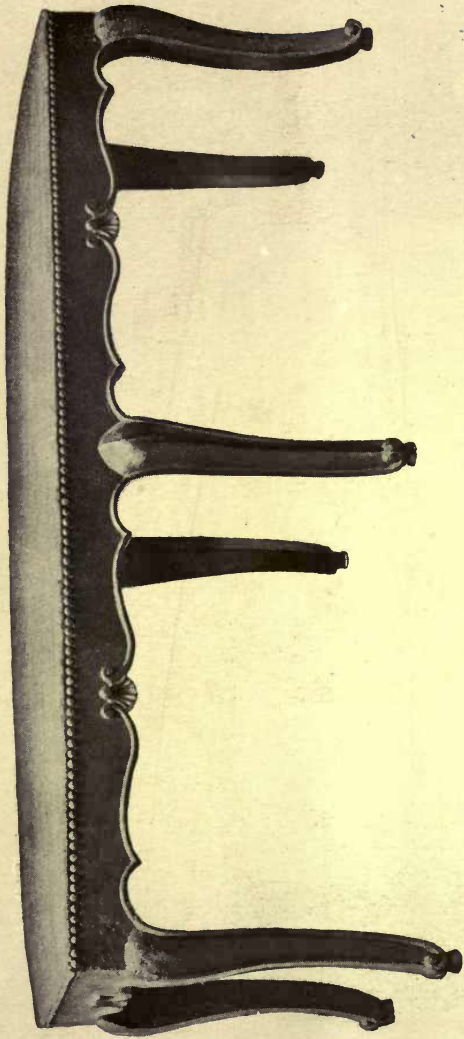


FIG. 82. PLAIN BENCH MADE OF BEECH

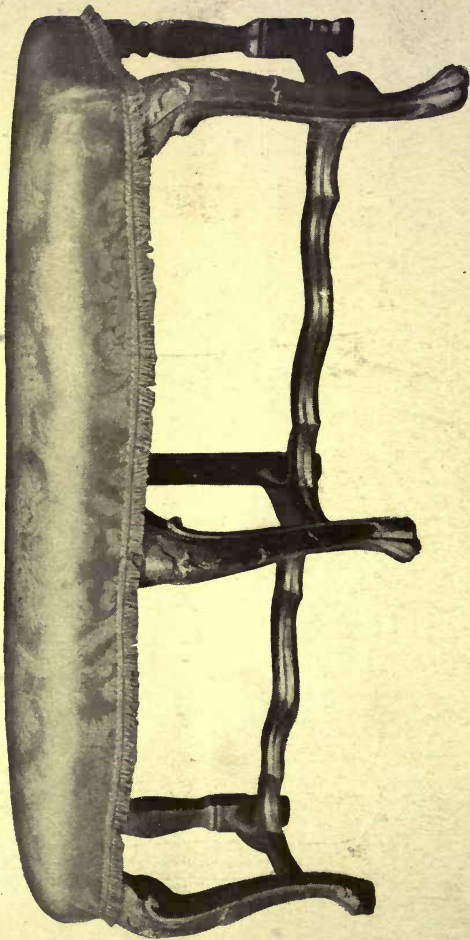


FIG. 88. WALL BENCH, WALNUT, COVERED WITH CRIMSON DAMASK

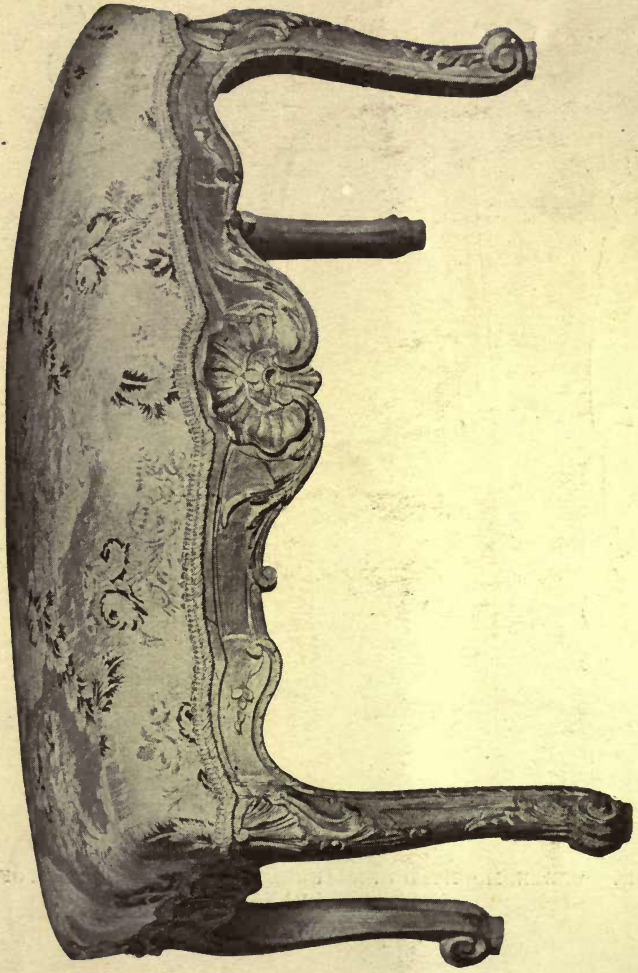


FIG. 84. STOOL (TABOURET OR PLACET), IN NATURAL WALNUT, COVERED WITH BROCHÉ SILK



FIG. 85. SCREEN, MOUNTED IN NATURAL WALNUT, WITH PANEL OF SILVER-GREY DAMASK

# INDEX - GLOSSARY

- ACADÉMIE FRANCAIS chairs,  
thirty-six, not forty, 105  
covered in moquette, 105
- Acanthus, the leaf as ornament,  
51, 52, 121, 123
- "Accotoirs," arms of chairs, 94
- Aleppo breccia, 131
- Allegorical subjects, very  
common, 49
- Amaranth wood, 124, 125
- Angel bed, 133
- "Anse de panier" basket handle  
curve, 48, 122
- Antin marble, 131
- Arlequin, 120
- Arm-chairs, 89-97  
simple, 95
- d'Armenonville, Fleuriau de, 108
- Attributes, 54, 124
- Aubusson tapestries, 104
- Audran, engraver, 13, 104
- d'Aviler, *Traité d'Architecture*,  
quoted, 41
- BALLIN, Claude, goldsmith, 20
- "Bancelle," 99  
of solid silver, 99
- "Banquette," 99
- Beauvais tapestry, 104
- Beds, 72-79  
"à haute piliers," 73  
"à l'impériale," 78  
"à quenouilles," 73, note  
Boileau's, 76  
"disordered," 79  
duchess, 78, 133  
Molière's, 76, 77  
Regency style, 133, *sqq.*  
rest, 79
- Bérain, engraver, 13, 120
- "Bergère," 95, 96
- "Binettes," 34
- Boffrand, Germain, decorates  
the hôtel Soubise, 25
- Boileau, his bed, 76  
his sofa, 99
- Bon Boulogne, the painter, 11, 13
- "Bonnes grâces," part of bed  
hangings, 74
- Bookcase, the, 68  
Boileau's, 68
- "Boucle," 49
- "Boule de jardin," 40, 142
- Boulle, André Charles, 18  
a great collector, 19, 20  
his collaborators, 20  
his four sons, 21  
his technique, 61, 62  
in the transition period, 124
- Branchi, 4
- Bronzes, Cressent's, 28  
in the Regency period, 125
- "Bruges satin" imitation satin.
- Buffet, 69  
"buffet-credence," 68  
"buffet-vaisselier" dresser-  
sideboard, 69  
"ménager" dresser-side-  
board in Champagne, 69  
"palier" Normandy dresser-  
sideboard, 69
- Bureau, the, 85-87  
"bureau-ministre," 86  
flat-topped, 85  
ladies' bureaux, 87  
"scribannes," 86
- CABARET, small table for serving  
coffee, etc., 84
- Cabinets, 70  
Boulle cabinets, supreme  
expression of the Louis  
XIV style, 18  
elaborate, 16, 17

- Cabinets, more austere, 17, 18  
 Caffieri, Filippo, 3, 13  
 "Campane," a passementerie motive shaped like a small bell, or the scalloped hanging round the tester of a bed.  
 "Canapé," definitions, 98  
 derivation, 97  
 Cane chairs, 106, 107  
 imported from Holland or Flanders, 107  
 Regency styles, 137  
 their elegance, 137  
 Cane sofas, 137  
 "Cantonnières," part of the hangings of a bed which served to close from outside the angle formed by the two curtains along the bed-post.  
 "Caquetoire," gossip chair, 97  
 "Carreaux," 101  
 Caylus, Madame de, 115  
 Chairs, Louis XIV style, 89-97  
 "confessional" shape, 96, 136  
 "crow's beak," 95  
 "garnis de cuir," 106  
 handier in form, 134  
 Regency style, 134-137  
 "Chaise de commodité," 96  
 "Chaises à peigner," 109  
 Champaigne, Philippe de, painter, 108  
 Chardin, eastern traveller, 118  
 "Chaussons," casings covering the extremities of legs of tables, etc., 126. *See* "Sabots"  
 Chinese objects, craze for, 37, 38, 39, 117  
 decorations, 118, 119  
 porcelain, 40, 41  
 Chute, the ornament at the top of the legs or uprights of a piece of furniture, 50, 132  
 de Clagny, château built for Mme. de Montespan, 22  
 Clock cases, 131  
 Clocks, 130  
 Coffers, 69, 70, 128  
 Colbert, 4, 21  
 Colombine, 120  
 Colour in furniture, very bright, 55-57  
 Commode, 71-72  
 "à la Bagnolet," 129  
 "à la Charolais," 129  
 "à la Chartrès," 129  
 "en tombeau," 71  
 Regency shape, 129  
 "Console d'accotoirs," upright support of chair arm, 94  
 Corneille, Michel, painter, 13  
 de Cotte, Robert, architect of the Bishop's Palace at Strasbourg, 26  
 Covering materials for chairs, etc., 101-106  
 Coypel, 117  
 Coysevox, the sculptor, 13  
 Cressent, Charles, cabinet-maker, 27-29, 121, 123, 125  
 a bureau by, 125  
 Cucci, Domenico, 3, 13  
 Cupboards, large, 65  
 "bonnetière," 67  
 from various provinces distinguished, 67  
 "garde-robés," 65, *note*  
 Louis XIV style, 66  
 Regency, 127  
 Cushions, 106, 108  
 "DAMAS cafart," imitation damask of wool and cotton, 105  
 De Brienne, Loménie, 2  
 D'Effiat, the Abbé, his bed, 55, 56  
 Demi-buffet, half-sideboard, 68  
 Desportes, François, the painter, 11  
 Diderot, *quoted*, 109  
 "Dossier," head or foot of bed, etc., 78, 79  
 Dresser sideboards, 128  
 Duchess bed, 78, 133  
 Dufresny, 119  
 EBONY, 124  
 "En façade," 132

"Escabeau," 100  
 "Espagnolettes," ornaments of carved wood or of gilt-chased bronze, representing a female bust, 28, 123  
 "Etoffes de la Porte," common, cheap materials, 105

## FAÇADES, 35

carved, 127

Felletin tapestry, 104

"Feuille d'eau," 123

"Fontanges," 34

Fontenay, Belin de, painter, 104

Fouquet, 4, 108

Foulon, the cabinet-maker, 13

Furetière, *quoted*, 98, 100

Furniture, technique of, 57-63

GACETTI, Giovanni, 4

"Gaine d'applique," a tall pedestal placed against a wall, and carrying a bust, a clock, a branched candlestick, etc., 54

"Galants," the, fastenings for bed curtains, 78

Galland, translator of "The Thousand and One Nights," 119

Garlands, 52

Genoa velvet, 73, 106

Gilding, "à la detrempe," 59

Gilles, 120

Gillot, the painter, succeeds Bérain, 25, 120

Girandoles, 141

Girardon, sculptor, 20

Gobelins, the factory established to design and make tapestries, furniture, etc., etc., for Louis XIV, 12-21

Golle, Pierre, cabinet-maker, 3  
 description of a cabinet by, 3

"Gradin," 86

Guillain, Simon, sculptor, 2

HARDOUIN-MANSART, first architect to the King, 9

Harmant, the cabinet-maker, 13

"Haricot," 122

Harpagon, in *L'Avare*, *quoted*, 103, 104

Houasse, painter, 13

d'Humières, 108

Huyghens, inventor of the pendulum, 130

ITALIAN players, 120

JACOB, GEORGES, cabinet-maker, 21

LA FONTAINE, 37, 38

La Moyne, 117

La Savonnerie tapestry, 104

La Vallière, Mlle. de, 7

Lambert, Marquise de, 114

Largillière, the painter, 11

Le Brun, Director of the Arts to Louis XIV, 5

Director of the Gobelins, 14  
 his merits, 6

Le Lorrain, Robert, 2

Le Pautre, engraver, 13

Leather, for chairs and sofas, 106

Leclerc, engraver, 13

Leczinska, Marie, her bed, 133

Lespagnandelle, woodworker, 13

Lighting, Louis XIV, 141, 142

Loir, the goldsmith, 13

Loose covers for cane chairs, 137

Louis XIII, 1

Louis XIV, French spirit under, 1  
 his bedchamber described by La Fontaine, 37, 38

Louis XIV style, three periods in, 7-10

abuse of straight lines, 42  
 changing customs and manners, 23

craze for things Chinese 37-39

curves in, 42

favourite motives, 48-54

furniture in modern rooms 138-139

modified 116

Louis XIV style, a "noble" style, 34

ostentatious, 138  
right angles in, 43  
rise of, 14, 15  
technique, 57-63

Luynes, Duc de, 133

MAINE, Duchesse de, 114

"Mains," drawer handles,

Maintenon, Mme. de, 10

goes for a drive, 103

her bureau, 87

her niche, 10, 56

"Manchettes," arm-pads, 94, 135

Mansard, 2

Marly, 22

Marot, Daniel, engraver.

Marquetry in wood, 60

other materials, 61

the Boulle method, 61, 62

"Mascarons," grotesque mas  
as ornaments, 50

Mazarin, I, 2, 4, 7

Meissonier, Juste-Aurèle, 26

"Ménager," dresser-sideboard in  
Champagne, 69

Merlin, the goldsmith, 13

Mezzetin, 120

Migliorini, Orazio, 4

Ferdinando, 4

Mignard, the painter, 11

Molière's arm-chairs, 92

his bed, 76, 77

Monconys, *quoted*,

Monnoyer, 13

Montespan, Mme. de, 7

Montesquieu, 115

Montigny, Philippe, cabinet-  
maker, 21

"Moquade," 104

"Moquette," 104

"pied-court," 104, 105

Mouldings, 47, 48, 121, 122

Mythological motives, very  
common, 50, 51

NATOIRE, painter, 117

Nocret, painter, 13

OPPENORD, Gilles-Marie, 26  
d'Orléans, Philippe, Regent  
after Louis XIV's death, 24,  
113, 120

"PALIER," Normandy dresser-  
sideboard, 69

Panels, 44-47

"Panniers," an English fashion,  
135

Parangon, "touch," black basalt,  
16

Pictures, to hang in the 17th  
century fashion, 142

"Pied de biche," "doe's foot,"  
cabriolet leg, 81, 127, 129, 132

"Placet," 100

"Pliant" or "ployant," 100

"Point de Chine" tapestry stitch,  
104

"Point de Hongrie," herring-  
bone tapestry stitch, 103

"Point de Turquie," Turkish  
stitch, 104

Poitou, Pierre, cabinet-maker, 13

"QUART de rond," or carderon,  
a brass moulding running  
round the edge of the top of a  
table-bureau, 125

"Quenouilles," sheaths for bed-  
posts, 74

"RAMASSE." See "Roulette"  
Rambouillet, château de, 107, 108  
Regency style, a transition be-  
tween Louis XIV and Louis  
XV, 24, 113, *sqq.*

"Religieuses," wall clocks, 130

Rest bed, 79

Rigaud, the painter, 11

Rocaille, 27, 120

"Roulette," a kind of switch-  
back; also "Ramasse," 8

"Ruelle," the, 75, 76

"SABOTS." See "Chaussons"  
Saint-Simon, *quoted*, 100, 108, 109  
Salon, a Louis XIV, 139-142



Santerre, the painter, 11  
 Scaramouche, 120  
 Sceaux, 114  
 Sconces, 142  
 "Scribanne," large bureau of  
 Dutch or Flemish origin, 86  
 Seats, etiquette of, 88, 89  
 "Serre-papiers," 86  
 Shell as motive in ornament,  
 123, 124  
 Silvia, 120  
 Slotz, sculptor, 13  
 Sofas, 97, 99, 136  
 Sopha, 98  
 "Soubassement," valance of bed,  
 75  
 Soubise, hôtel de, decorations,  
 116, 117  
 Straw chairs, 108  
 Stretchers, 93  
 Symmetry, passion for, 55

**TABLES, 80-84**  
 "Consoles," 81  
 Florence tables, 80  
 gaming tables, 83, 84  
 legs "en gaine" or "en  
 balustre," 81  
 night tables, 84  
 Regency tables, 131, 132  
 toilet tables, 84  
 writing tables, 83  
 "Tabouret," 100  
 Tapestries for covering, 103  
 Tavernier, French traveller in  
 the East, 118

Technique under the Regency,  
 124  
 "Théâtre de la Foire," 117  
 Toilet chairs, 109  
 "Toilette," the, 84, 85  
 Trianon, the "porcelain," 22  
 "Tripe" velvet of wool on  
 hemp, 105  
 Trophies, 53  
 Tubi, sculptor, 13

**UNDER cupboards, 68**  
 Utrecht velvet, made in Holland,  
 called Utrecht moquette, 105

**VAN der Meulen, 13**  
 Van Opstal, sculptor, 20  
 Vaux-le-Vicomte, château and  
 park, 4, 108  
 Velvet, Genoa, 73, 106  
 Utrecht, 105  
 Veneering, 60  
 "Vernis des Gobelins," a kind  
 of lacquer, 63  
 Versailles, the early, and its  
 "diversions," 7  
 de Villers, the goldsmith, 13  
 Violet wood, 125  
 Voltaire, *quoted*, 114  
 "Chinese Orphan," a play  
 by, 118

**WARIN, sculptor, 20**  
 Watteau, Antoine, 25, 120  
 Wooden chairs, 109

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
WOODS AND SONS, LTD., LONDON, N. I.









NK  
2548  
F36

Félice, Roger de  
French furniture under  
Louis XIV

French Architecture

books due







IN MEMORIAM



ROBERT HOLMES

R C A  
FOR MANY YEARS A TEACHER  
IN THIS COLLEGE  
THIS BOOK IS ONE OF A NUMBER  
FROM THE LIBRARY OF MR HOLMES  
PRESENTED TO THE ONTARIO  
COLLEGE OF ART BY HIS RELATIVES  
JUNE 1930

Handwritten text, possibly a signature or name, appearing as a faint scribble.









LITTLE ILLUSTRATED BOOKS ON  
OLD FRENCH FURNITURE  
III. FRENCH FURNITURE  
UNDER LOUIS XV

## FRENCH FURNITURE

- I. FRENCH FURNITURE IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND UNDER LOUIS XIII
- II. FRENCH FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XIV
- III. FRENCH FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XV
- IV. FRENCH FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XVI AND THE EMPIRE

## ENGLISH FURNITURE

*(Previously published)*

- I. ENGLISH FURNITURE UNDER THE TUDORS AND STUARTS
- II. ENGLISH FURNITURE OF THE QUEEN ANNE PERIOD
- III. ENGLISH FURNITURE OF THE CHIPPENDALE PERIOD
- IV. ENGLISH FURNITURE OF THE SHERATON PERIOD

Each volume profusely illustrated with full-page reproductions and coloured frontispieces

*Crown 8vo, Cloth, price 4s. 6d. net*

LONDON : WILLIAM HEINEMANN







SECRETARY WITH ADJUSTABLE INLAID FRONT  
PERIOD LOUIS XV.  
(KEY-PLATES IN STYLE OF LOUIS XVI)

LITTLE ILLUSTRATED BOOKS ON  
OLD FRENCH FURNITURE III

FRENCH FURNITURE  
UNDER LOUIS XV

BY ROGER DE FÉLICE

TRANSLATED BY  
FLORENCE SIMMONDS



LONDON MCMXX  
WILLIAM HEINEMANN

The numerals in the following pages refer to the footnotes, and the asterisks to the index-glossary at the end of the book

1030

53

PRINTED AT THE COMPLETE PRESS  
WEST NORWOOD LONDON S.E.

## INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>2</sup> As we shall have occasion to mention Lazare Duvaux very

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## PRINCIPAL AUTHORITIES

- BAYARD, EMILE : " Les styles Régence et Louis XV." Paris (n.d.).
- BIMONT : " Principe de l'Art du Tapissier." Paris, 1770.
- CHAMPEAUX, ALFRED DE : " Le Meuble " (Bibliothèque de l'Enseignement des Beaux-Arts.) Paris (n.d.).
- CLOUZOT, HENRI : " L'Ameublement français sous Louis XV." (Bibliothèque de l'Art décoratif.) Paris (n.d.).
- COURAJOD, LOUIS : " Livre-journal de Lazare Duvaux." Paris, 1873.
- DIDEROT : " Encyclopédie." Paris, 1751-1772.
- HAVARD, HENRI : " Dictionnaire de l'Ameublement et de la Décoration." Paris (n.d.).
- MOLINIER, EMILE : " Histoire générale des Arts appliqués à l'industrie." Paris, 1896 (vol. iii).
- ROUBO, A. G., jun. : " L'Art du menuisier." Paris, 1772





# CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	v
PRINCIPAL AUTHORITIES	xv
I. HISTORICAL SKETCH	i
II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STYLE	21
III. TECHNIQUE	44
IV. PANELLED FURNITURE	63
V. THE TABLE AND ITS DEVELOPMENTS	80
VI. SEATS AND MISCELLANEOUS PIECES OF FURNITURE	92
VII. A SET OF LOUIS XV FURNITURE	110
INDEX-GLOSSARY	127



# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIG.	PLATE
<i>Secretary with adjustable inlaid front (period Louis XV)</i>	
	<i>Frontispiece</i>
1, 2. <i>Oak Chambrantle and Corner Panel</i>	1
3. <i>Small Door Panels of Limewood</i>	2
4. <i>Norman Oak Cupboard</i>	3
5. <i>Walnut Cupboard made in the South-west</i>	4
6. <i>Walnut Cupboard with Mouldings made in the South-west</i>	5
7. <i>Provençal Walnut Cupboard</i>	6
8. <i>Saintonge Cupboard of Walnut and Elm (end of the style)</i>	7
9. <i>Provençal Under-cupboard used as Sideboard, Walnut</i>	} 8
10. <i>Saintonage Under-cupboard used as Sideboard (end of style)</i>	
11. <i>Breton Walnut Sideboard in Two Parts</i>	9
12. <i>Provençal Walnut Kneading-trough (end of style)</i>	} 10
13. <i>Arlesian Walnut Credence-sideboard</i>	
14. <i>Dresser made in Champagne (end of style)</i>	11
15. <i>Provençal Walnut Dresser for Pewter</i>	12
16. <i>Provençal Oak Flour-box</i>	} 13
17. <i>Provençal Walnut Bread-cupboard</i>	
18. <i>Provençal Oak Salt-box</i>	
19. <i>Rosewood Secretary-cupboard</i>	14
20. <i>Rocaille Commode of Coromandel Lacquer</i>	15
21. <i>Rocaille Commode, veneered with Palisander</i>	} 16
22. <i>Pyrenean Walnut Commode</i>	
23. <i>Small Commode, Rosewood and Palisander</i>	} 17
24. <i>Commode, Rosewood and Palisander</i>	
25. <i>Console, Commode, Walnut</i>	} 18
26. <i>Console Commode, Mahogany</i>	
27. <i>Gascon Commode, Cherrywood</i>	} 19
28. <i>Commode, made in La Gironde, Walnut</i>	
29. <i>Bordeaux Commode-secretary, Mahogany</i>	} 20
30. <i>Anjou Commode-secretary, Walnut</i>	
31. <i>Large Bordeaux Secretary, Mahogany</i>	21
32. <i>Table with Sunk Top, Mahogany</i>	} 22
33. <i>Table painted Black, with Stucco Top</i>	
34. <i>Carved Table with Rim, Walnut (beginning of the style)</i>	} 23
35. <i>Breton Table, Cherrywood</i>	

# XX LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIG.	PLATE
36. <i>Large Carved Mahogany Table</i>	24
37. <i>Small Carved Table, Cherrywood (beginning of the style)</i>	25
38. <i>Rocaille Console Table, Oak</i>	} 26
39. <i>Rocaille Console Table, Gilded Wood</i>	
40. <i>Small Console Table, Cul-de-lampe Form, Gilded Wood</i>	27
41. <i>Toilet Table, Palisander and Rosewood</i>	} 28
42. <i>Walnut Table with Chamfered Corners</i>	
43. <i>Small Walnut Table for the Game of Tri</i>	
44. <i>Bureau Table, Palisander</i>	29
45. <i>Small Bureau with Screen, Ash "Figure"</i>	30
46. <i>Small Bureau with Fall Front, Cherrywood</i>	} 31
47. <i>Small Bureau with Fall Front, Palisander and Rosewood</i>	
48. <i>Chiffonnière, Cherrywood</i>	} 32
49. <i>Chiffonnière Writing-table, Cherrywood</i>	
50. <i>Small Walnut Table with Shelf</i>	} 33
51. <i>Oak Night-table</i>	
52. <i>Large Arm-chair of Painted Wood with Aubusson Tapestry</i>	34
53. <i>Walnut Arm-chair with High Back</i>	} 35
54. <i>Arm-chair with Flower and Acanthus Ornament</i>	
55. <i>"Cabriolet" Chair, Walnut and Aubusson Tapestry</i>	} 36
56. <i>Walnut Arm-chair (beginning of the style)</i>	
57. <i>Walnut Arm-chair with Low Back</i>	} 37
58. <i>Small "Cabriolet" Chair, Walnut</i>	
59. <i>Walnut Chair, covered with Broché Silk</i>	} 38
60. <i>Walnut Chair, covered with Brocade</i>	
61. <i>Chair of Gilded Wood</i>	} 39
62. <i>Arm-chair of Gilded Wood</i>	
63. <i>"Cabriolet" Arm-chair with Mouldings</i>	} 40
64. <i>Arm-chair (end of style)</i>	
65. <i>Walnut Chair with Simple Mouldings</i>	} 41
66. <i>Walnut Chair (end of style)</i>	
67. <i>Large Arm-chair of Gilded Wood (end of style)</i>	42
68. <i>Revolving Writing Chair</i>	43
69. <i>Bergère with Carved Back, Gilded Wood</i>	44
70. <i>"Gondola" Bergère, Walnut</i>	} 45
71. <i>Bergère with Simple Mouldings, Walnut</i>	
72. <i>"Gondola" Bergère, Walnut</i>	46
73. <i>"Gondola" Bergère, Walnut</i>	} 47
74. <i>"Gondola" Bergère, Walnut</i>	
75. <i>"Confessional" Bergère, Walnut</i>	48

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

xxi

FIG.	PLATE
76. <i>Beechwood Chair with Caned Seat and Back</i>	} 49
77. <i>Chair of Painted Wood with Caned Back and Seat</i>	
78. <i>Beechwood Chair with Caned Back and Seat</i>	} 50
79. <i>Beechwood Chair with Caned Back and Seat</i>	
80. <i>Toilet Chair with Padded Arm-rests, Walnut</i>	} 51
81. <i>Toilet Chair without Padded Arm-rests, Beechwood</i>	
82. <i>Walnut Chair with Straw Seat</i>	} 52
83. <i>Straw Chair with Cushions</i>	
84. <i>Cherrywood Chair with Straw Seat</i>	} 53
85. <i>Walnut Arm-chair with Straw Seat</i>	
86. <i>Walnut Chair with Straw Seat</i>	
87. <i>Chaise Longue of Beechwood and Cane, with Side-pieces and Adjustable Foot</i>	54
88. <i>Sofa of Gilded Wood</i>	55
89. <i>Walnut-wood Sofa</i>	56
90. <i>Walnut-wood Sofa</i>	57
91. <i>Walnut-wood Sofa</i>	58
92. <i>Provençal Bed, with Head and Foot, Beechwood</i>	59
93. <i>Provençal Bed, with Head and Foot Cherrywood</i>	60
94. <i>Screen with Shelves, Lacquer and India Paper</i>	} 61
95. <i>Walnut Screen with Modern Tapestry</i>	
96. <i>Clock of Palisander Wood</i>	} 62
97. <i>Clock of Oak and Pine</i>	
98. <i>Mirror Frame of Gilded Wood</i>	} 63
99. <i>Mirror Frame of Gilded Wood</i>	
100. <i>Mirror Frame of Gilded Wood</i>	
101. <i>Mirror Frame of Gilded Wood</i>	64



## CHAPTER I : HISTORICAL SKETCH

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

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

## 2 LOUIS XV FURNITURE

of chronology, the new century had begun long before.

In 1715 Marivaux was twenty-seven years old, Montesquieu twenty-six, Voltaire twenty-one; Lesage's *Turcaret* was produced in 1709, and the first two volumes of his *Gil Blas* appeared the same year; for over twenty years Frenchmen had been reading Bayle's *Dictionary*, in which the universal character of French thought in the eighteenth century is fully manifested: it may be defined as a spirit of critical inquiry, contemptuous of tradition, and a hearty scorn of all things reputed intangible. In 1715 Fontenelle was only half-way through his centenarian life, but he had long been at work, propagating his great new idea of the indefinite progress of humanity, while a new tone had been given to style—the very tone of Voltaire—by the sparkling irony of that most Gallic of Scots, Anthony Hamilton. "We had," said Diderot many years later, "contemporaries as far back as the reign of Louis XIV."

Let us turn to the artists. "The Tyrant," Le Brun, had long been dead; his art, which was Louis XIV art *par excellence*, had not survived him. Decorators, sculptors, and painters had lost the habit of working almost exclusively for the old King, who, ruined by his disastrous wars, and obliged to send all his magnificent plate to the Mint, had been unable to give them commissions towards the end. The world of finance, of the newly enriched commercial class, and of the



luxurious ladies of the Opera had become the chief patrons of the artist ; its tastes were very different. In painting, for instance, it preferred the Flemish Style to the Italian ; this was the revenge of the “Netherlandish monkeys” so disdainfully banished from Versailles by Louis XIV ; and vanquished Drawing beat a retreat before triumphant Colour. One great figure towers high above all his contemporaries ; one that was to dominate French art until the time of David, the sad, the smiling, the exquisite figure of Antoine Watteau, who had but six years longer to live. Le Brun, Watteau. . . what a long stage had been travelled between the two !

The same progress had been made in the furniture arts ; the elaboration of the Louis XV Style began, not even during the brief Regency of Philippe d’Orléans (1715-23), but in the middle of Louis XIV’s reign.

The mark by which we may almost infallibly recognize at a glance a piece of Louis XV furniture—a table or arm-chair, for instance—is the curving character of all the lines, and notably those legs with double inflections, like an elongated S, called *pieds de biche* (doe’s feet), because originally they terminated in the cleft foot of a ruminant, and from a distance their line suggests that of a stag’s hind leg. These “doe’s feet,” which made their first appearance in the sixteenth century, became quite usual in the last half of the seventeenth, and we find them supporting pieces of furniture of the purest Louis XIV Style. As to arm-chairs,

#### 4 LOUIS XV FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

## 6 LOUIS XV FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 8 LOUIS XV FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 16 LOUIS XV FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

## 20 LOUIS XV FURNITURE

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

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

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

## CHAPTER II: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STYLE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Formerly, in a Louis XIV apartment, chairs

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

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

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



pierced top was invented in which to plant Dutch bulbs.

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

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

<sup>1</sup> See the legs of the cupboards, Figs. 6, 8, etc.

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

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

<sup>1</sup> As, for instance, in the uprights of the arched bay, Fig. 1, which are made of ribs connected by acanthus-leaves, or in the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Console, Fig. 39, and chair, Fig. 65, have not escaped this fault

<sup>2</sup> Base of sideboard, Fig. 10; of commode, Fig. 28; sides of commodes, Figs. 25 and 26, etc.

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

<sup>4</sup> Woodwork panels, Figs. 1 and 2; cupboard doors, Figs. 4, 5, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Upper angle of door-frame, Fig. 1; inner angles of mirror-frame, Fig. 100.

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Cupboards, Figs. 5 and 7; sideboard, Fig. 11; commodes, Figs. 25 and 26, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Secretary, Fig. 19; commode, Fig. 24 etc.

<sup>3</sup> Commodes, Figs. 20, 21, and 23; bureau, Fig. 44, etc.

<sup>4</sup> The narrow arched panel of Fig. 2 was made for this purpose.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Commodes, Figs. 21, 23, 24 ; bureau, Fig. 44, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Arm-chairs, Figs. 52 to 58, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Arm-chair, Fig. 64 ; chair, Fig. 65 ; *bergères*, Figs. 70, 75. See also the cupboards, Figs. 6, 7.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Examples: The pediment of cupboard, Fig. 4, an example of extreme confusion; the traverse of consoles, Figs. 38 and 39; the *rinseau* \* of commode, Fig. 20, which is quite formless and disfigures this fine piece of furniture.

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

We must add that asymmetry is by no means an invariable rule in this style. Many bronzes even are perfectly symmetrical.<sup>2</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Arm-chair, Fig. 67, which is decorated with a continuous series of interacements, is a piece of transition furniture, already showing several characteristics of the Louis XVI Style.

<sup>2</sup> Preserved intact on the left panel of Fig. 3; the frieze of table, Fig. 34; and screen, Fig. 94.

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

## 38 LOUIS XV FURNITURE

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

<sup>1</sup> Tables, Figs. 34 and 37.

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

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

<sup>4</sup> Arm-chairs, Figs. 53, 54, etc.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>2</sup> Kneading-trough, Fig. 12; woodwork, Figs. 2 and 3; clock, Fig. 97.

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Kneading-trough, Fig. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Secretary, Fig. 19

<sup>3</sup> Woodwork, Fig. 2.

there was often an absurd amalgam of Turkey and China :

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

## CHAPTER III : TECHNIQUE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 46 LOUIS XV FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Commode, Fig. 26; table, Fig. 36.

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

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

<sup>1</sup> A magnificent cupboard in the Louvre proves this.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Secretary, Fig. 19 ; commodes, Figs. 21, 23, 24 ; bureaux, Figs. 44 and 47 ; dressing-table, Fig. 41 ; clock, Fig. 96.



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

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

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

<sup>2</sup> Secretary, Fig. 19; commode, Fig. 23

<sup>3</sup> Bureau, Fig. 47.

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Secretary, Fig. 19.

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Arm-chair, Fig. 52; chair, Fig. 77, etc.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

as the supreme expression of magnificence.

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> The commode, Fig. 20, has only one ornamental escutcheon,



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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Commodes, Figs. 20, 21, 23.

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

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

marble." Indeed, these imitations are often surprisingly excellent, and tables "of the marble kind" had their passing vogue.<sup>1</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

## CHAPTER IV : PANELLED FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

## 68 LOUIS XV FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Angles, as we have said, were shunned in the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Not, however, in the example reproduced in Fig. 13.

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

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



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

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

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

## 76 LOUIS XV FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

## 78 LOUIS XV FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> This feature is lacking in the commode-secretary, Fig. 30, which accounts for the lack of firmness in its lines.

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

## CHAPTER V : THE TABLE AND ITS DEVELOPMENTS

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

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

<sup>1</sup> In the last example it is quite degenerate. We shall find it again in the time of Louis XVI.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

## 84 LOUIS XV FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Even so, there was only one at Versailles, the Queen's!

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

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

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

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



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

## CHAPTER VI : SEATS AND VARIOUS ARTICLES OF FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> *L'Art du Menuisier*, Paris, 1769-74.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

We may now pass on to cane chairs. These

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> This chair, which is more carefully made than the others, was decorated with carvings long after it was made.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

The screens "made in the manner of secre-

<sup>1</sup> At the top of the uprights of the screen, Fig. 95, the square sockets into which the branches fitted are visible.

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

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

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

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

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

## CHAPTER VII : A SET OF LOUIS XV FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> This was a console table.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Angola, *An Indian Story* (1546).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and gilding reddened by time. What an enchanting pastime it will be to furnish such a house in the ancient fashion! Above all, the most interesting thing to do, as far as possible, would be to look about for local furniture that has the unaffected good taste of the district.

In such a house the large old cupboards would be welcome everywhere, and we could begin by installing one in the hall, where also we might have a brass or china fountain, one of those enormous decorative stoves of white Lorraine china, designed by Cuvilliès, one or two console-tables, benches, and cane arm-chairs.

In the drawing-room there would probably be painted woodwork; if not, it would be well to hang it with a summery material, cretonne or chintz. Chintzes, known as Indian linen, had long been in favour at the period, in spite of the regulations forbidding their importation, which followed one another ineffectually until 1760, when Oberkampf founded his famous factory at Jouy to imitate them in France. The date suffices to show that nearly all these stuffs were of the Louis XVI and not the Louis XV period, but a great many of the designs are not of any very definite style. Old ones are still to be found not infrequently in the provinces, but they are worn and faded, and in small pieces; as the originals are very carefully reproduced nowadays, it is much better to buy new ones. As to furniture, a good deal will be needed in those immense country drawing-rooms in which the whole family



assembles, and a great variety of pieces might be brought together here; cupboards, under-cupboards, commodes, all kinds of tables; seats covered with chintz like the walls; arm-chairs, chairs, sofas, and lounges, either of cane or straw, etc.

The dining-room is more likely to have retained its painted woodwork than the drawing-room, and it may even have preserved its big corner-cupboards. If not, we shall be well advised to look out for those corner fittings, which are so convenient, so furnishing, and so completely in the spirit of the period. If there is no woodwork, the walls will be painted in distemper or simply whitewashed. A big dresser with four shelves would be the most appropriate sideboard; on this we should set our pottery, pewter, a whole gamut of vivid colours, and on the top we should perch pitchers of glazed earthenware or brass jars; the walls, too, might be decorated with old china, but of the common kind; this is always pleasing to the eye by its colour and contours. The chairs would be of cane or straw, without any cushions; tables, consoles, or low cupboards would be placed along the walls at intervals to facilitate the service.

The bedrooms would be furnished very much as in town, but in a more rustic fashion, and they would nearly always be large enough for the most capacious wardrobes or cupboards. Here, again, chintz or cretonne would be the most sensible choice for hangings. Old four-post peasant beds

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

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

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

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

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

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



FIGS. 1, 2. OAK CHAMBRANLE AND CORNER PANEL.

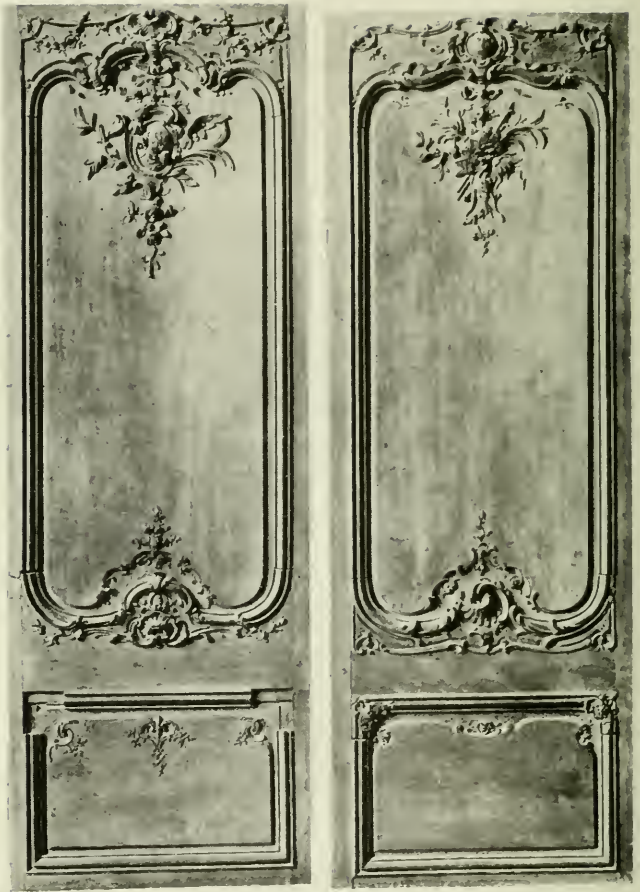


FIG. 3. SMALL, DOOR-PANELS OF LIMWOOD

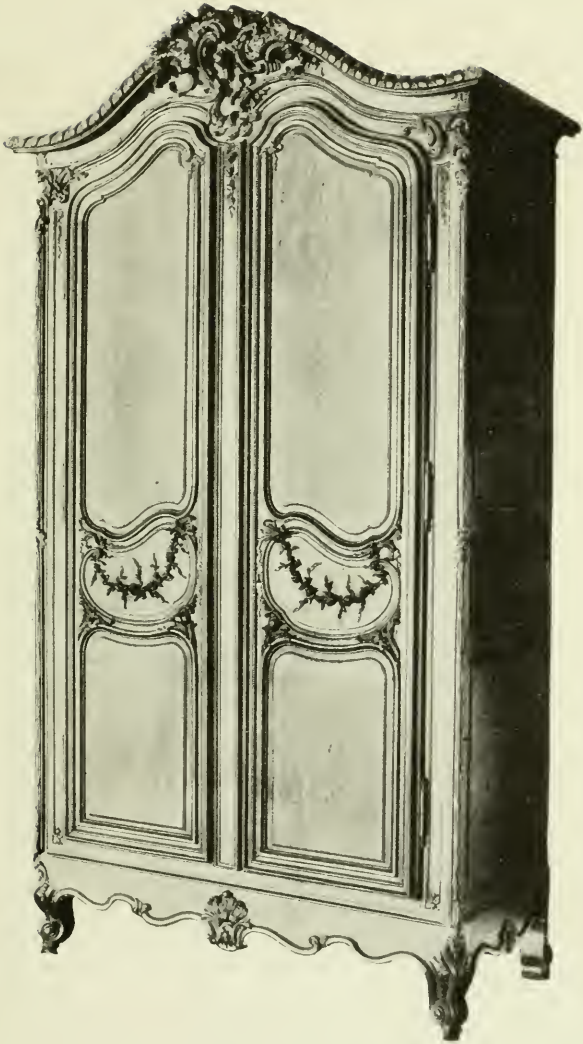


FIG. 4. NORMAN OAK CUPBOARD

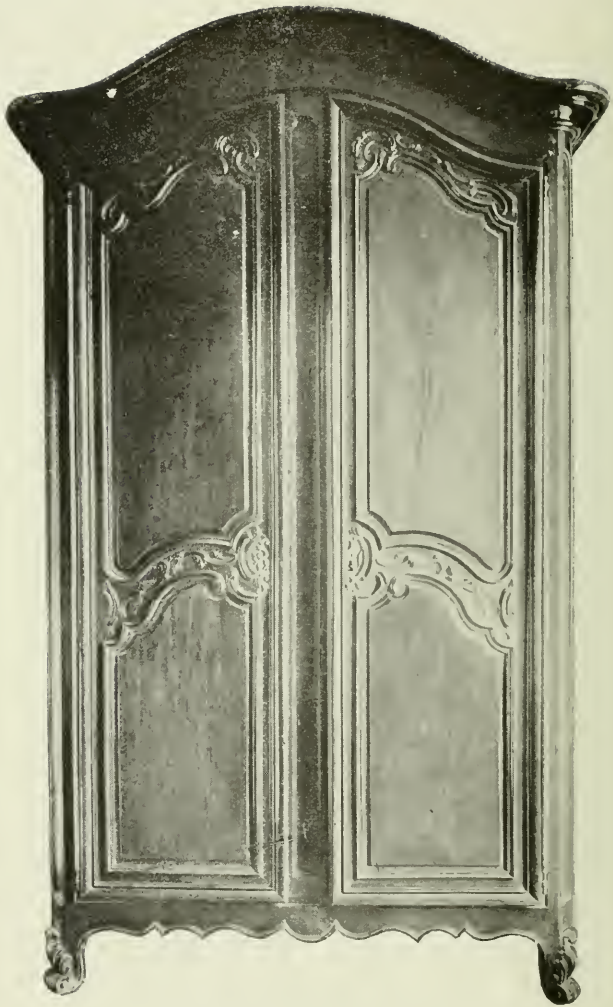


FIG. 5. WALNUT CUPBOARD MADE IN THE SOUTH-WEST



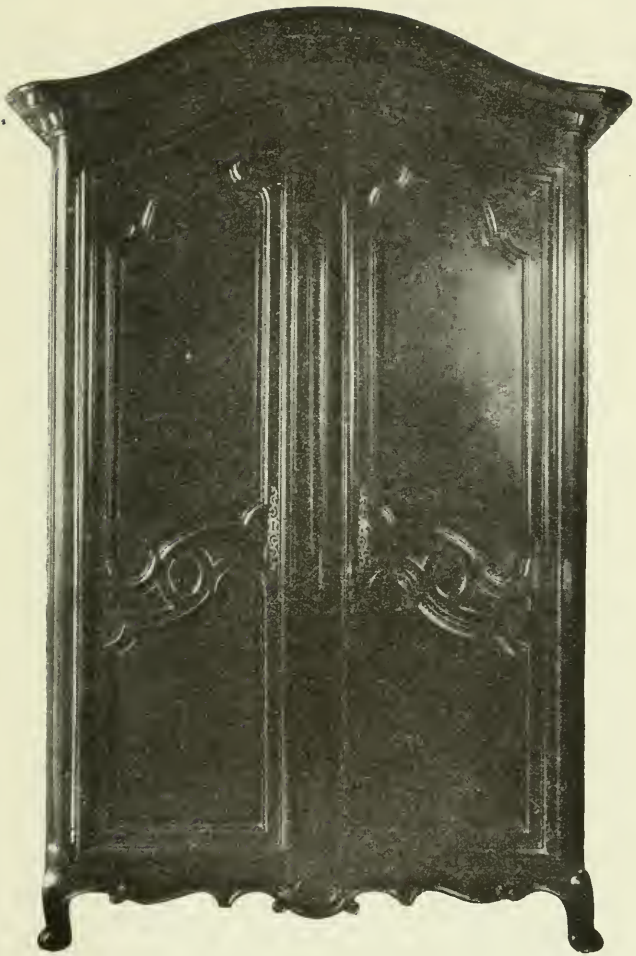


FIG. 6. WALNUT CUPBOARD WITH MOULDINGS MADE IN THE SOUTH-WEST  
*Pt. 5*

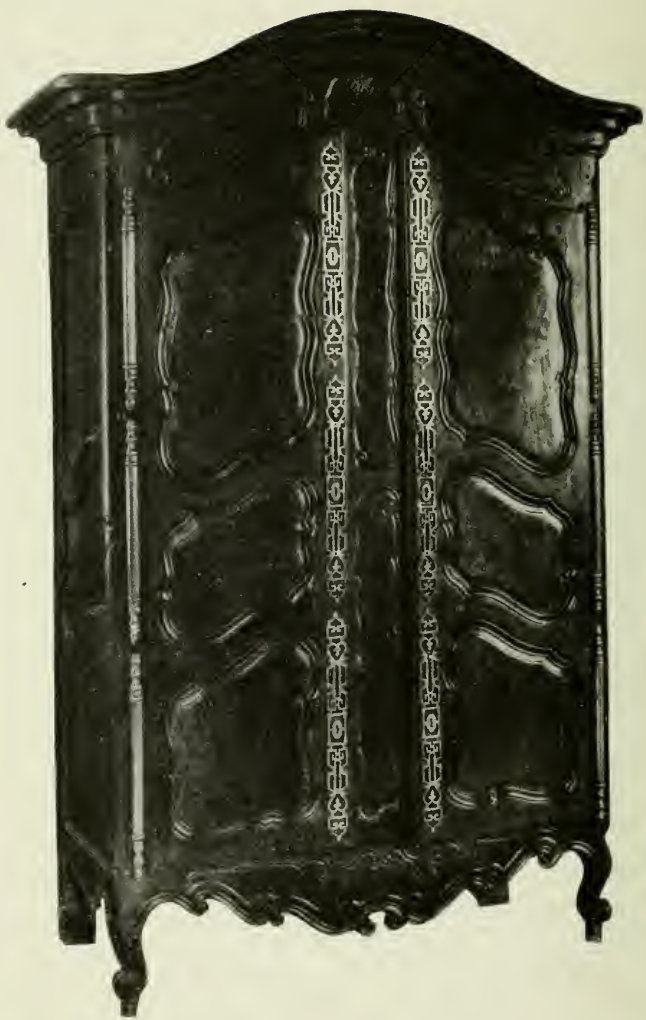


FIG. 7. PROVENÇAL WALNUT CUPBOARD

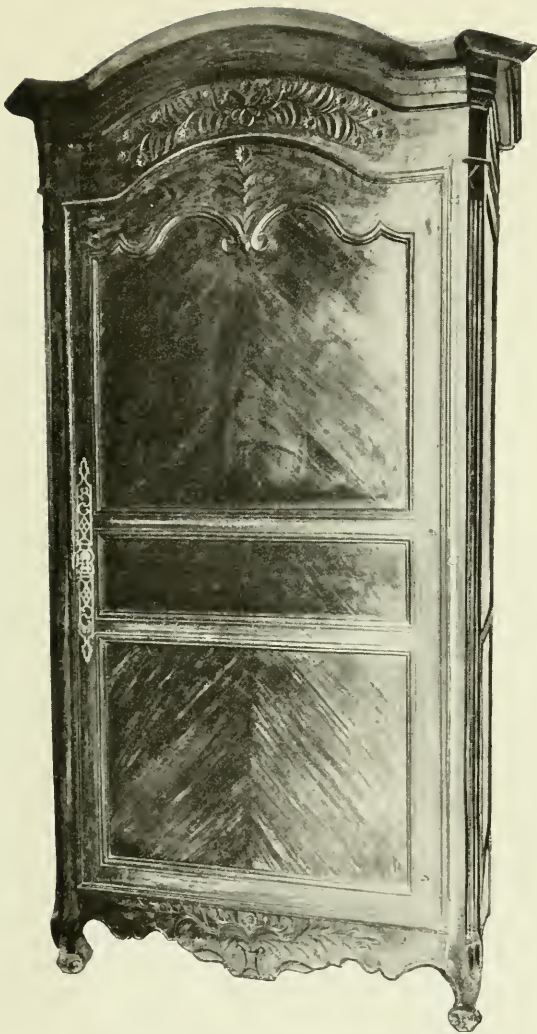


FIG. 8. SAINTONGE CUPBOARD OF WALNUT AND ELM  
(END OF STYLE)

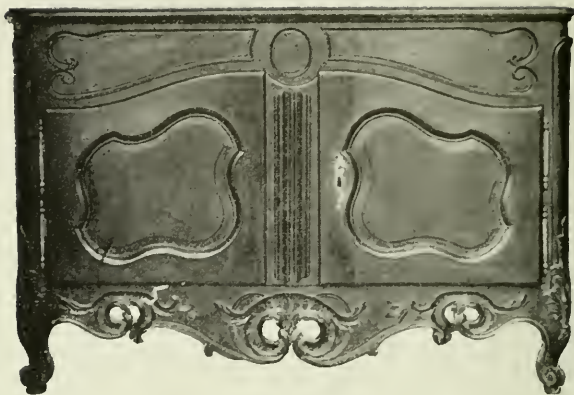


FIG. 9. PROVENÇAL UNDER-CUPBOARD USED AS SIDEBOARD, WALNUT

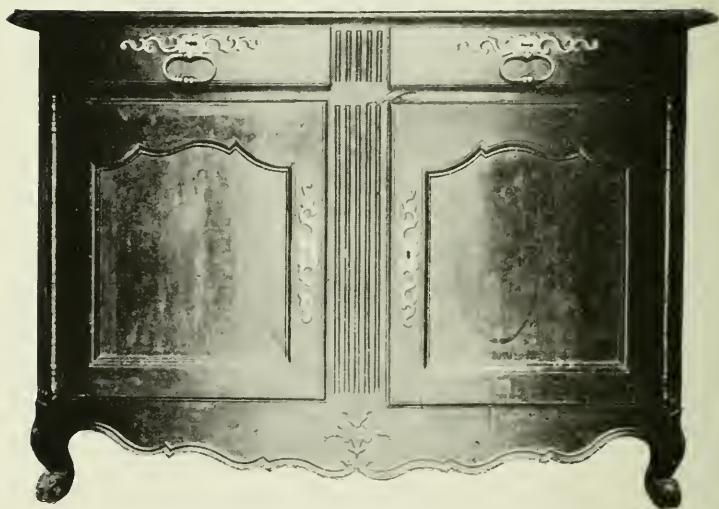


FIG. 10. SAINTONGE UNDER-CUPBOARD USED AS SIDEBOARD  
(END OF STYLE)



FIG. 11. BRETON WALNUT SIDEBOARD, IN TWO PARTS



FIG. 12. PROVENÇAL, WALNUT KNEADING-TROUGH (END OF STYLE)



FIG. 13. ARLESIAN WALNUT CREDENCE-SIDEBOARD



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

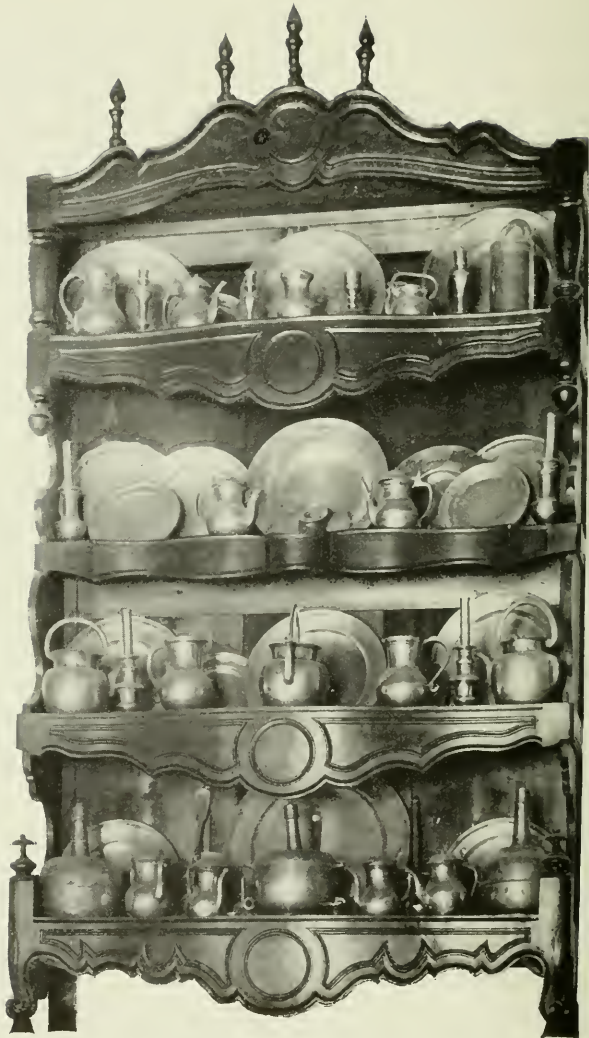


FIG. 15. PROVENÇAL, WALNUT DRESSER FOR PEWTER





FIG. 16. PROVENÇAL OAK  
FLOUR-BOX

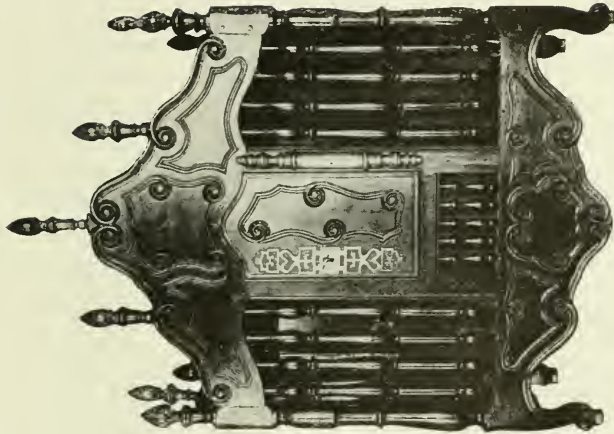


FIG. 17. PROVENÇAL WALNUT  
BREAD CUPBOARD



FIG. 18. PROVENÇAL OAK  
SALT-BOX



FIG. 19. ROSEWOOD SECRETARY-CUPBOARD



FIG. 20. ROCAILLE COMMODE OF COROMANDEL, LACQUER

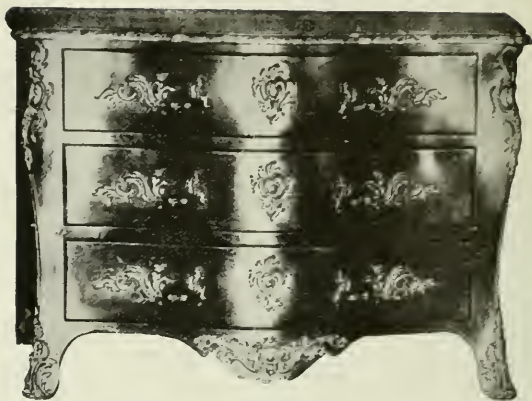


FIG. 21. ROCAILLE COMMODE, VENEERED WITH PALISANDER



FIG. 22. PYRENEAN WALNUT COMMODE



FIG. 23. SMALL COMMODI, ROSEWOOD AND  
PALISANDER

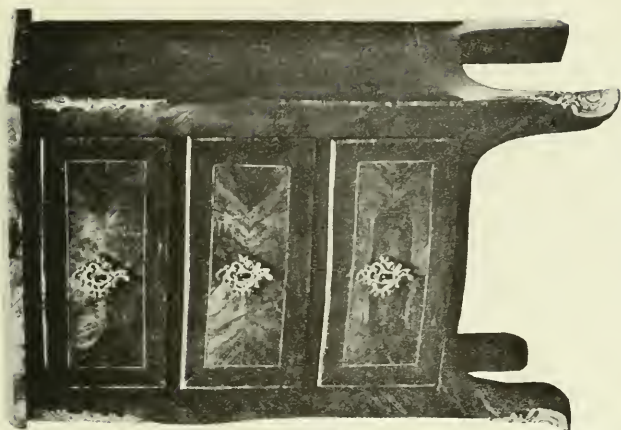


FIG. 24. COMMODI, ROSEWOOD AND  
PALISANDER



FIG. 25. CONSOLE COMMODOE, WALNUT



FIG. 26. CONSOLE COMMODOE, MAHOGANY



FIG. 27. GASCON COMMODE, CHERRYWOOD



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



FIG. 29. BORDEAUX COMMODE-SECRETARY, OF MAHOGANY



FIG. 30. ANJOU COMMODE-SECRETARY, OF WALNUT





FIG. 31. LARGE BORDEAUX SECRETARY, MAHOGANY



FIG. 32. TABLE WITH SUNK TOP, MAHOGANY

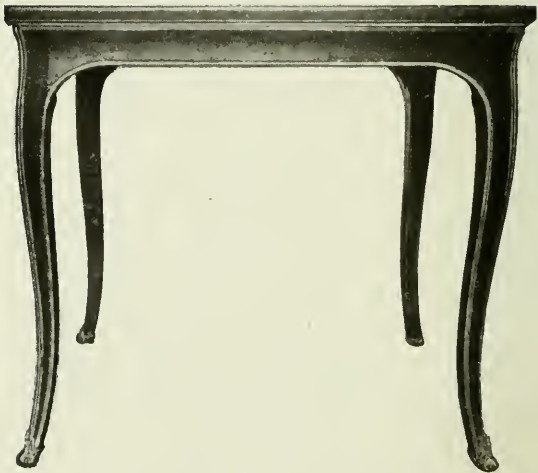


FIG. 33. TABLE PAINTED BLACK, WITH STUCCO TOP



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

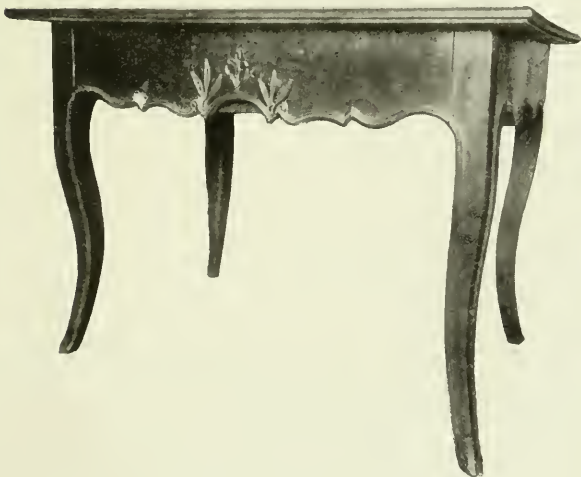


FIG. 35. BRETON TABLE, CHERRYWOOD

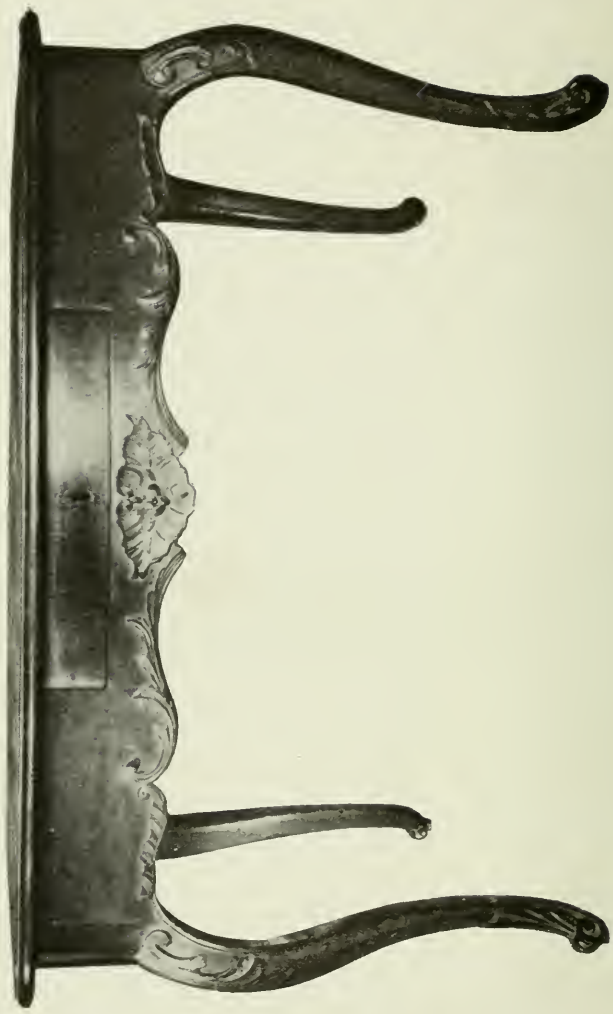


FIG. 36. LARGE CARVED MAHOGANY TABLE.



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



FIG. 38. ROCAILLE CONSOLE TABLE,  
OAK

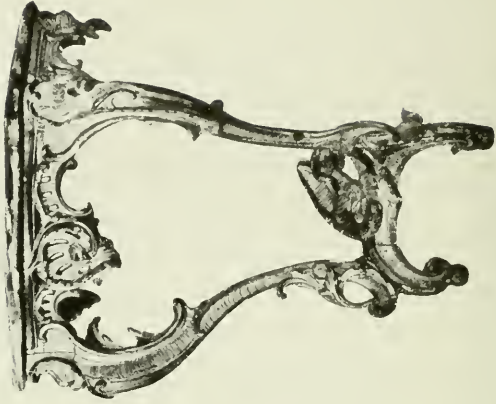


FIG. 39. ROCAILLE CONSOLE TABLE,  
GILDED WOOD

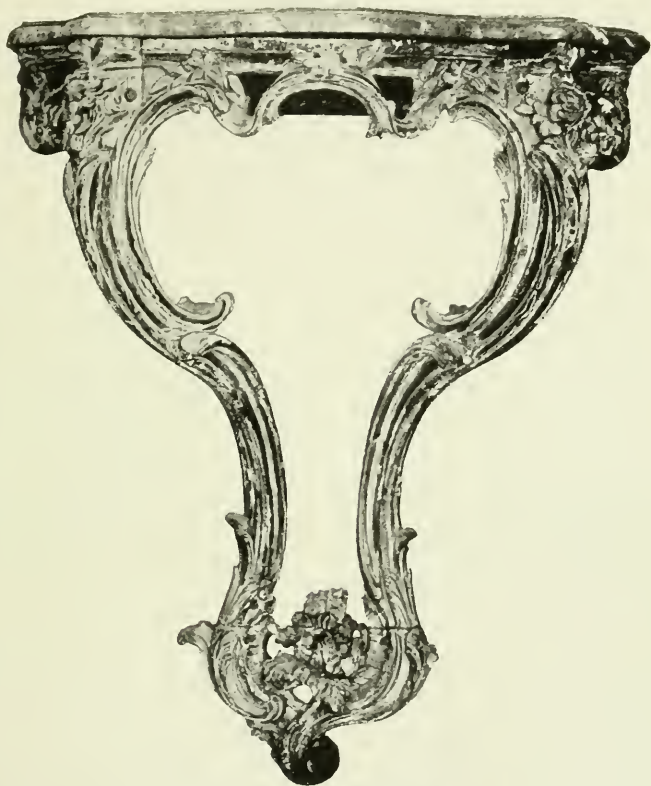


FIG. 40. SMALL, CONSOLE TABLE, CUL-DE-LAMPE FORM, GILDED WOOD  
*Pl. 27*



FIG. 41. TOILET TABLE, PALISANDER AND ROSEWOOD



FIG. 43. SMALL WALNUT TABLE  
FOR THE GAME OF TRI



FIG. 42. WALNUT TABLE  
WITH CHAMFERED CORNERS  
*Pl. 28*



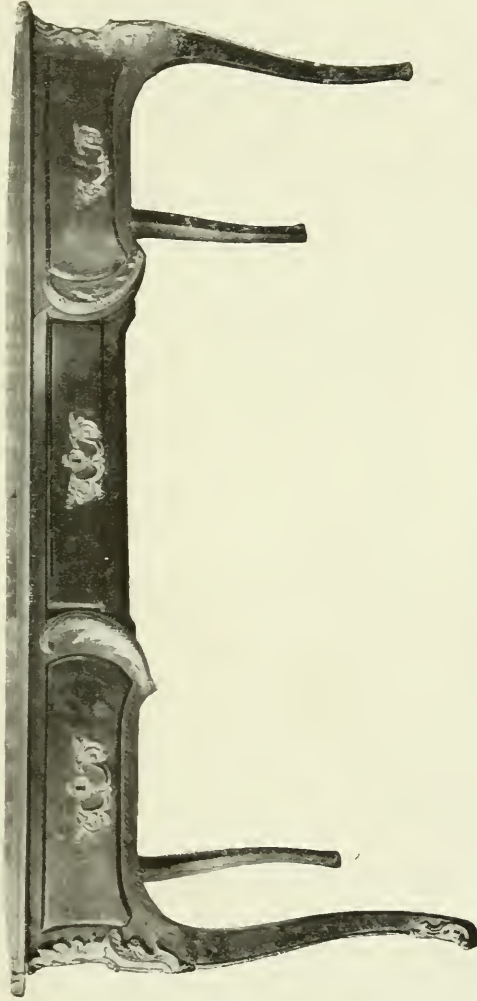


FIG. 44. BUREAU TABLE, PALISANDER



FIG. 45. SMALL BUREAU WITH SCREEN, ASH "FIGURE"

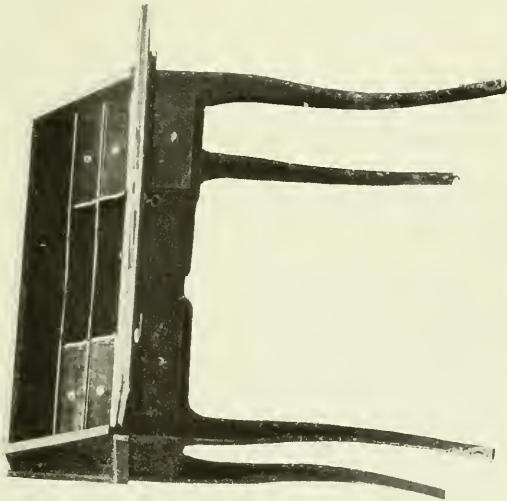


FIG. 46. SMALL, BUREAU WITH FALL, FRONT,  
CHERRYWOOD

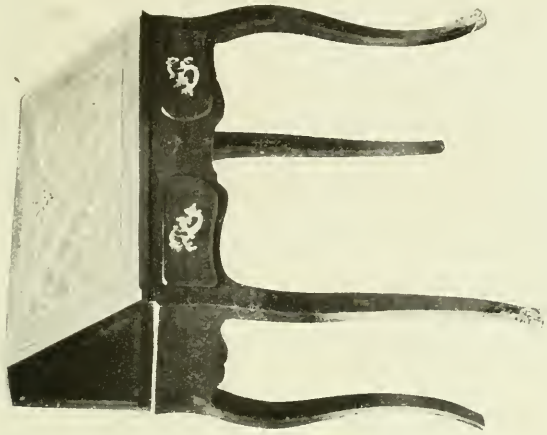


FIG. 47. SMALL, BUREAU WITH FALL, FRONT,  
PALISANDER AND ROSEWOOD

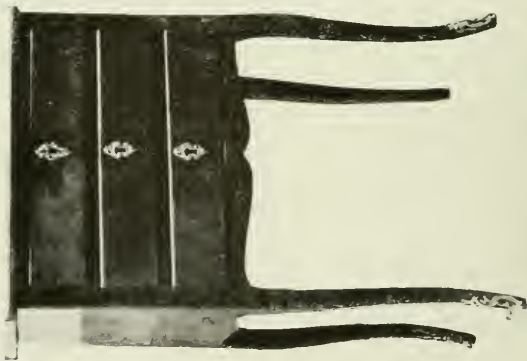


FIG. 48. CHIFFONNIÈRE, CHERRY-  
WOOD

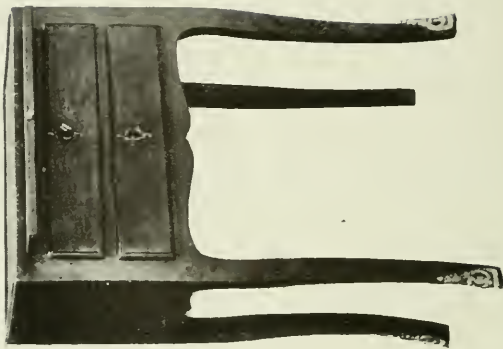


FIG. 49. CHIFFONNIÈRE WRITING-TABLE,  
CHERRYWOOD

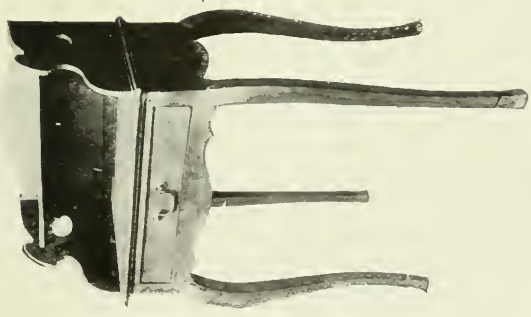


FIG. 50. SMALL WALNUT TABLE WITH SHELF

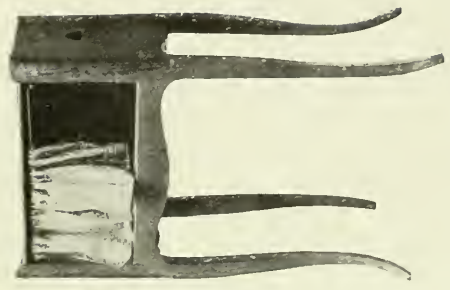


FIG. 51. OAK NIGHT TABLE



FIG. 52. LARGE ARM-CHAIR OF PAINTED WOOD WITH AUBUSSON  
TAPESTRY *Pl. 34*



FIG. 53. WALNUT ARM-CHAIR WITH HIGH  
BACK



FIG. 54. ARM-CHAIR WITH FLOWER AND  
ACANTHUS ORNAMENT

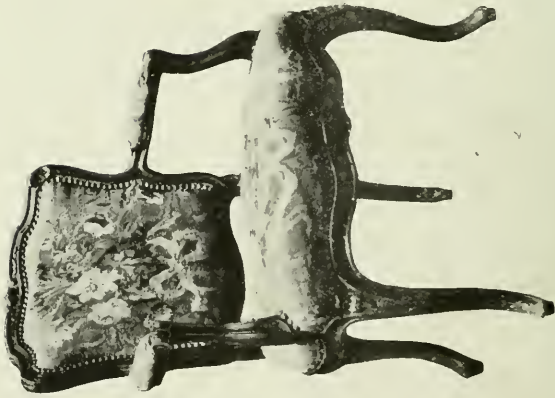


FIG. 55. "CABRIOLET" CHAIR WALNUT  
AND AUBUSSON TAPESTRY



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



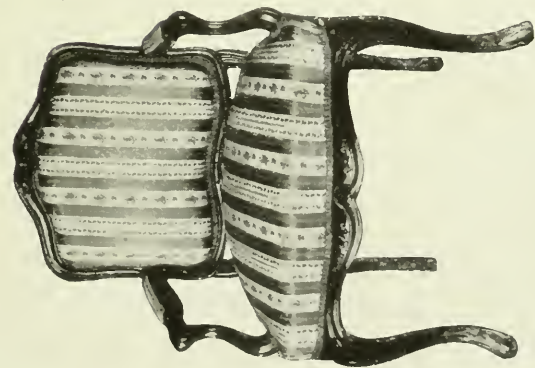


FIG. 57. WALNUT ARM-CHAIR WITH  
LOW BACK

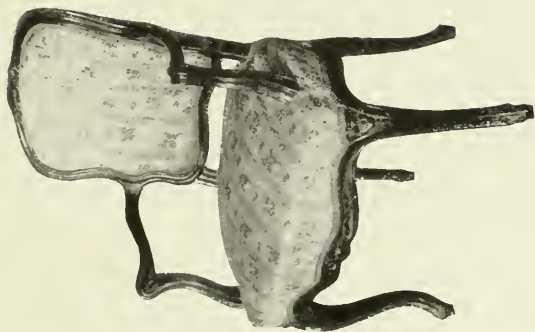


FIG. 58. SMALL "CABRIOLET" CHAIR  
WALNUT

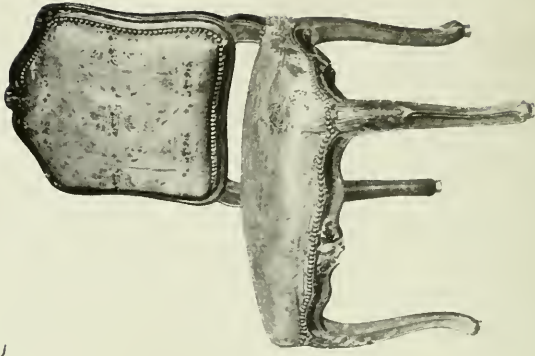


FIG. 60. WALNUT CHAIR, COVERED  
WITH BROCADE *Pl. 38*

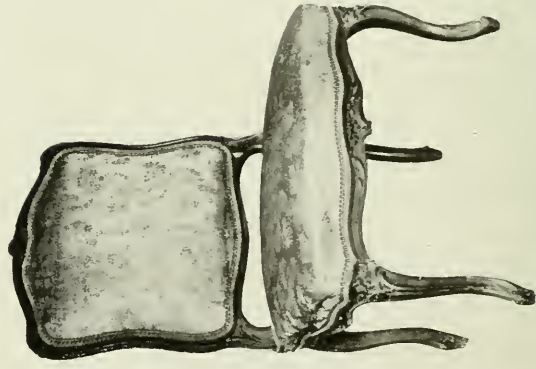


FIG. 59. WALNUT CHAIR, COVERED WITH  
BROCHÉ SILK

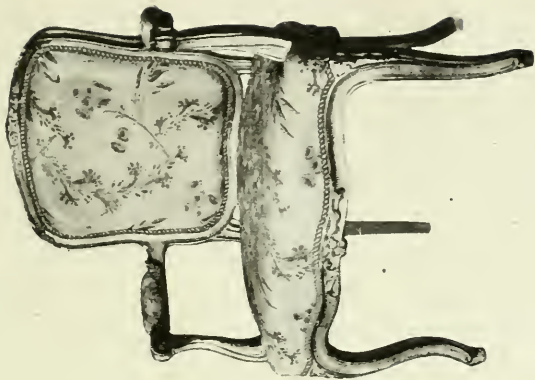


FIG. 62. ARM-CHAIR OF GILDED  
WOOD

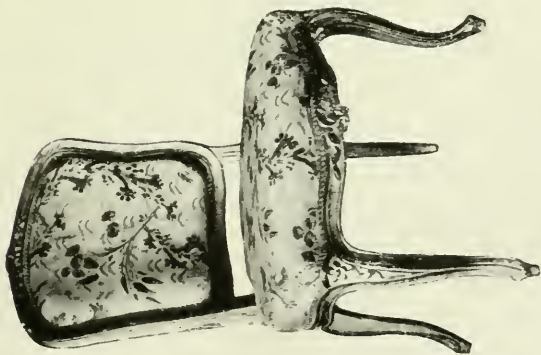


FIG. 61. CHAIR OF GILDED  
WOOD

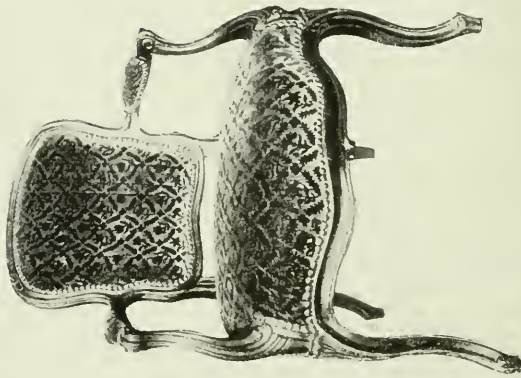


FIG. 63. "CABRIOLET" ARM-CHAIR WITH  
MOULDINGS

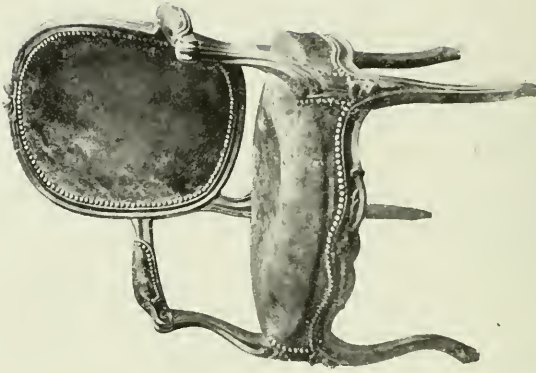


FIG. 64. ARM-CHAIR (END OF STYLE)

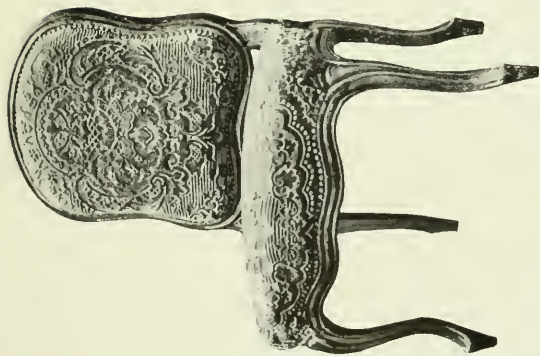


FIG. 65. WALNUT CHAIR WITH SIMPLE  
MOULDINGS

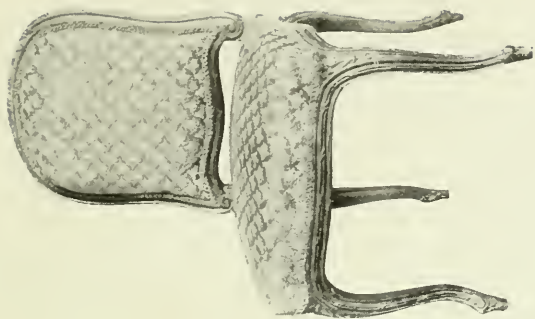


FIG. 66. WALNUT CHAIR (END OF  
STYLE)

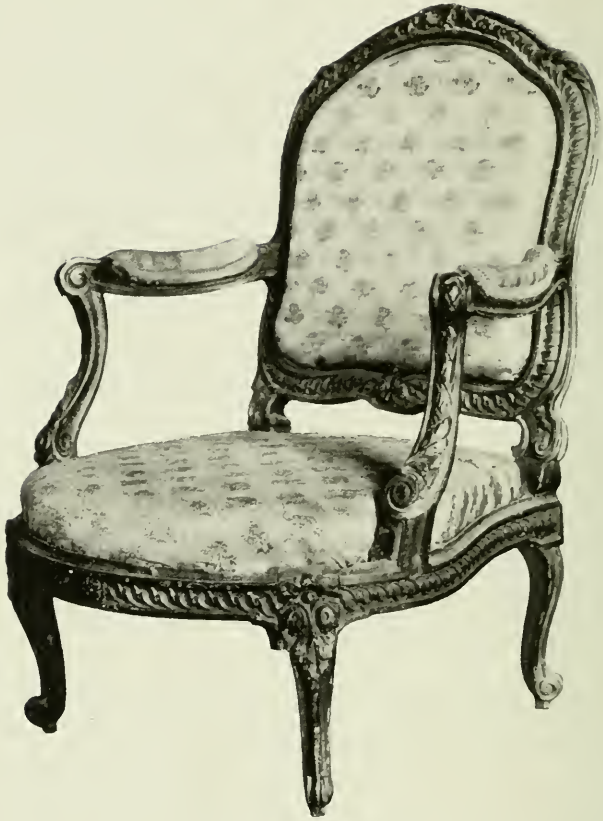


FIG. 67. LARGE ARM-CHAIR OF GILDED WOOD (END OF STYLE)



FIG. 68. REVOLVING WRITING CHAIR



FIG. 69. BERGÈRE WITH CARVED BACK, GILDED WOOD



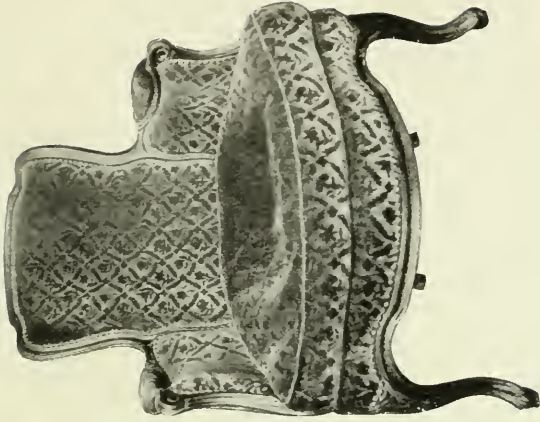


FIG. 71. BERGÈRE WITH SIMPLE  
MOULDINGS, WALNUT

Pl. 45

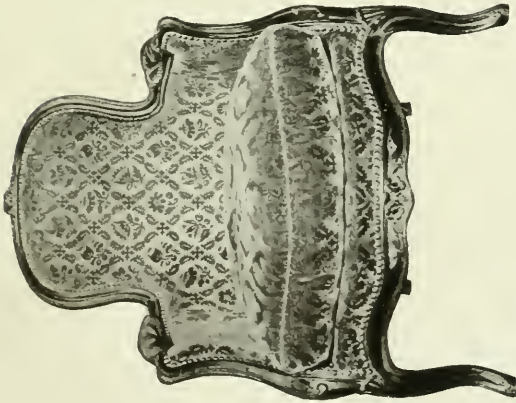


FIG. 70. "GONDOLA" BERGÈRE,  
WALNUT



FIG. 72. "GONDOLA" BERGÈRE, WALNUT



FIG. 74. "GONDOLA" BERGÈRE, WALNUT  
Pl. 47

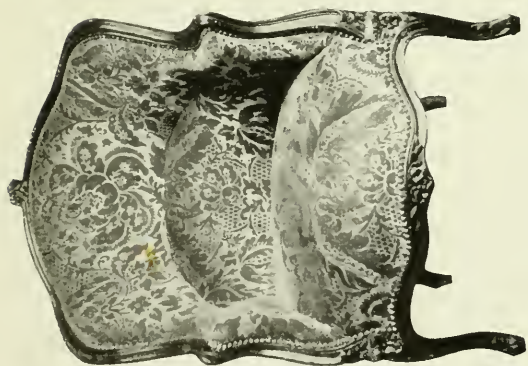


FIG. 73. "GONDOLA" BERGÈRE, WALNUT



FIG. 75. "CONFESSIONAL," BERGÈRE, WALNUT

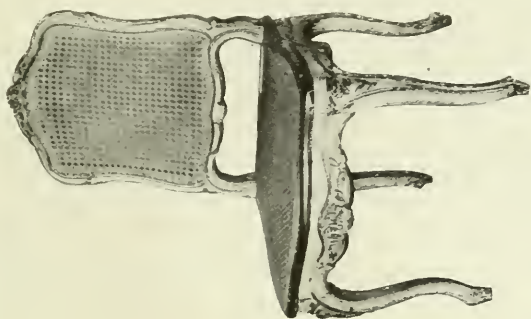


FIG. 77. CHAIR OF PAINTED WOOD  
WITH CANED BACK AND SEAT

PL. 19

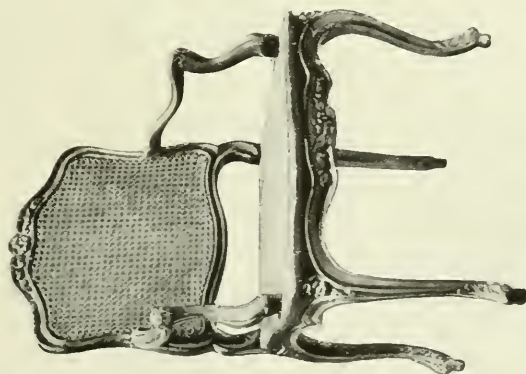


FIG. 76. BEECHWOOD CHAIR, WITH CANED  
BACK AND SEAT

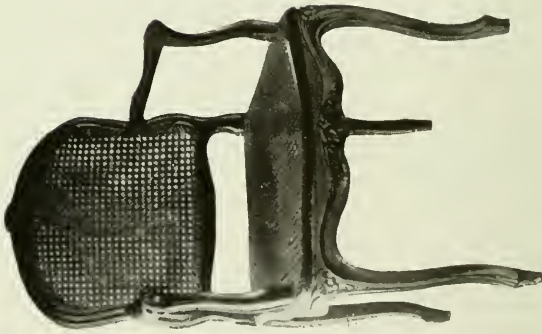


FIG. 78. BEECHWOOD CHAIR WITH CANED  
BACK AND SEAT

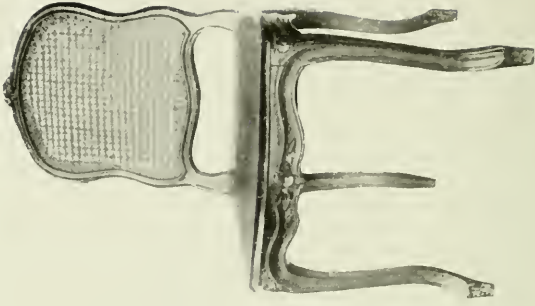


FIG. 79. BEECHWOOD CHAIR WITH CANED  
BACK AND SEAT

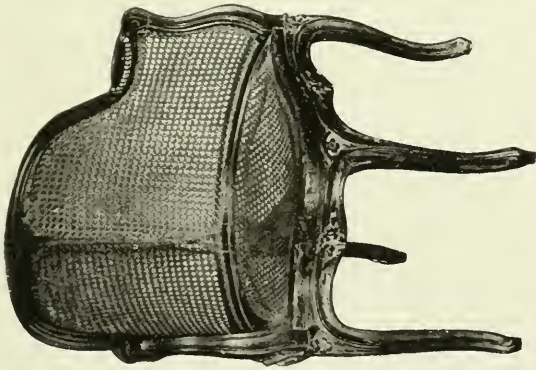


FIG. 80. TOILET CHAIR WITH PADDED  
ARM-RESTS, WALNUT

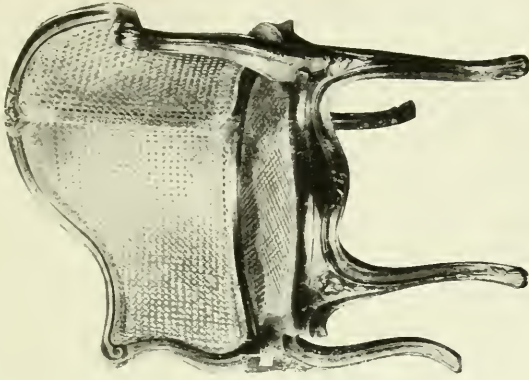


FIG. 81. TOILET CHAIR WITHOUT PADDED  
ARM-RESTS, BEECHWOOD

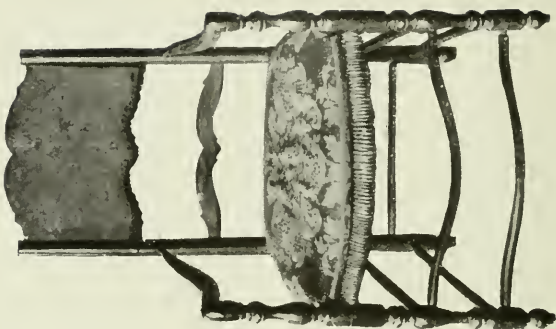


FIG. 83. STRAW CHAIR WITH  
CUSHIONS

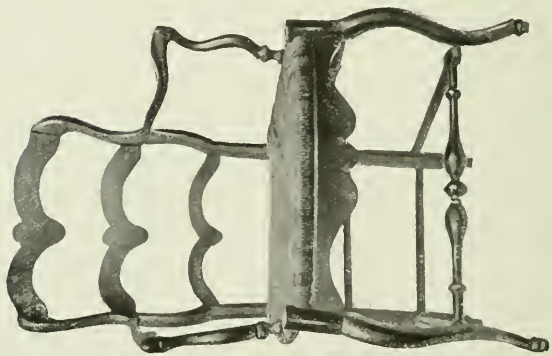


FIG. 82. WALNUT CHAIR WITH STRAW  
SEAT



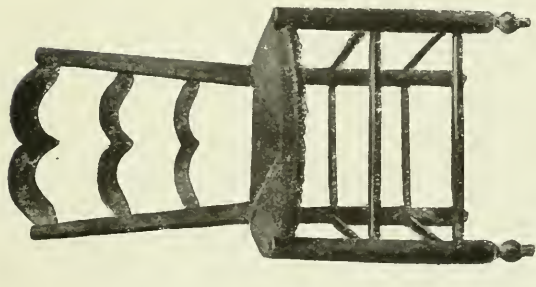


FIG. 84. CHERRYWOOD CHAIR  
WITH STRAW SEAT

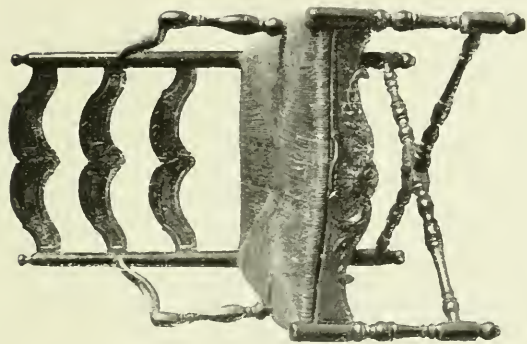


FIG. 85. WALNUT ARM-CHAIR  
WITH STRAW SEAT

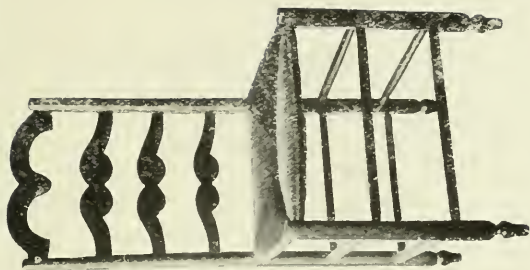


FIG. 86. WALNUT CHAIR WITH  
STRAW SEAT

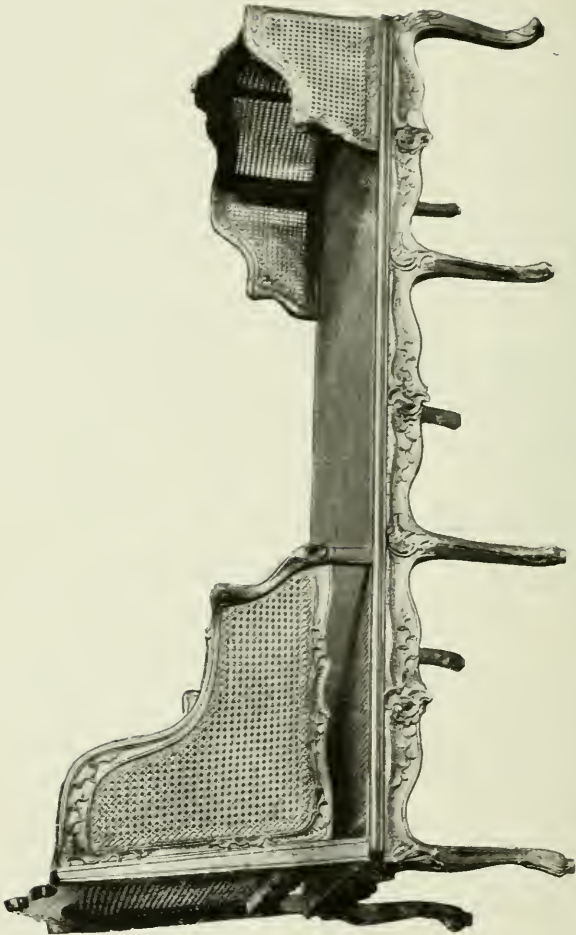


FIG. 87. CHAISE LONGUE OF BEECHWOOD AND CANE, WITH SIDE-PIECES AND ADJUSTABLE FOOT  
Pl. 54

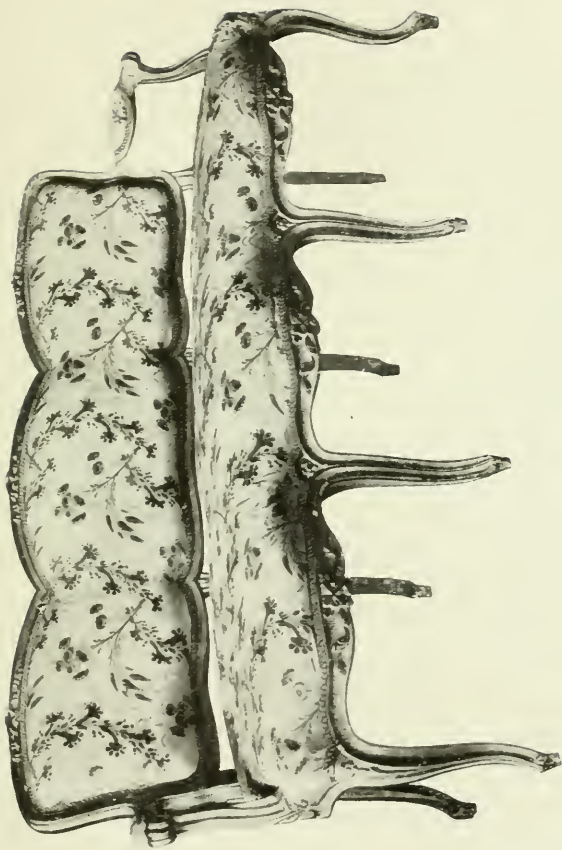


FIG. 88. SOFA OF GILDIED WOOD

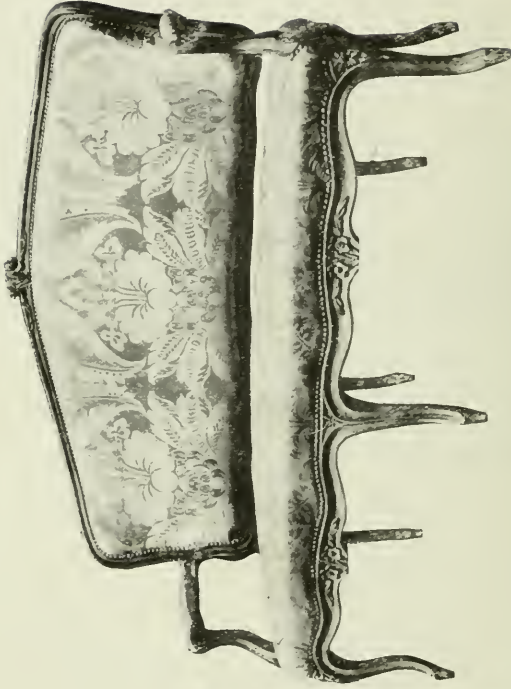


FIG. 89. WAINUT-WOOD SOFA

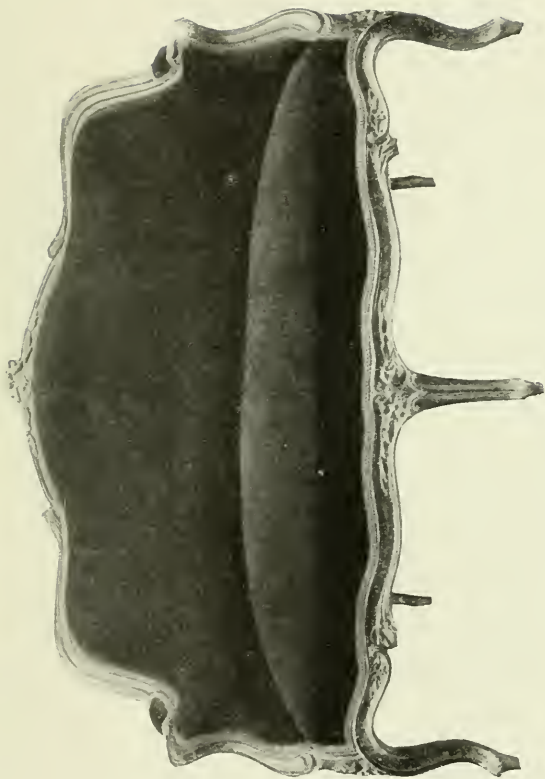


FIG. 90. WALNUT-WOOD SOFA

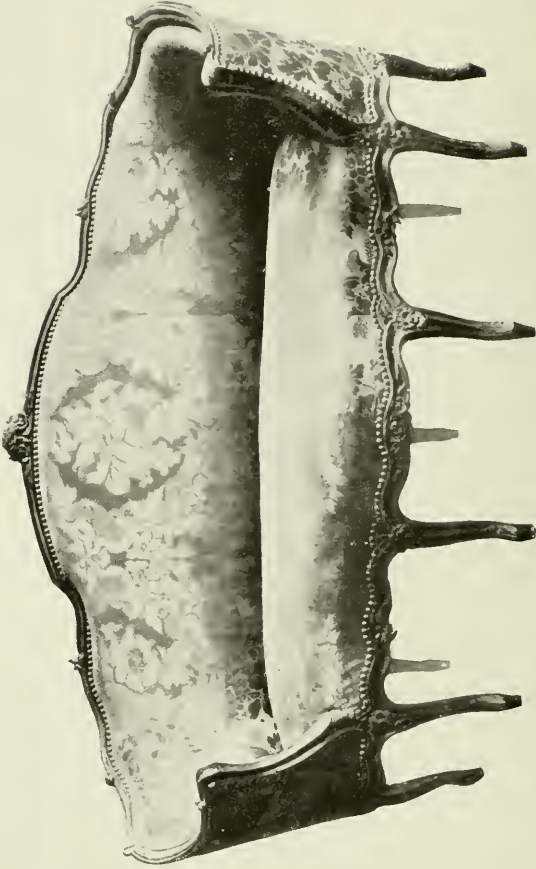


FIG. 91. WALNUT-WOOD SOFA



FIG. 92. PROVENÇAL BED, WITH HEAD AND FOOT, BEECHWOOD



FIG. 93. PROVENÇAL BED, WITH HEAD AND FOOT, CHERRYWOOD  
Pl. 60



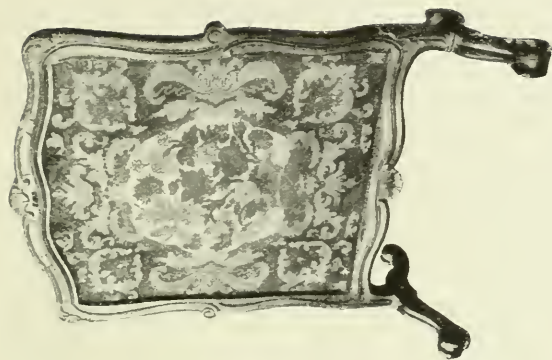


FIG. 95. WALNUT SCREEN WITH  
MODERN TAPESTRY

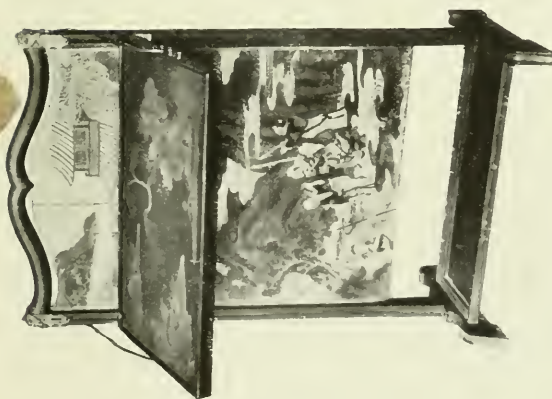


FIG. 94 SCREEN WITH SHELVES, LACQUER  
AND INDIA PAPER



FIG. 96. CLOCK OF  
PALISANDER WOOD

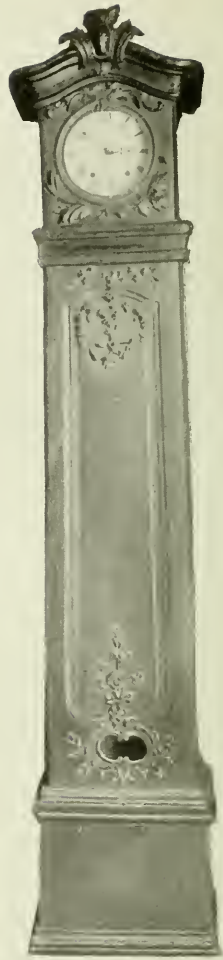


FIG. 97. CLOCK OF  
OAK AND PINE



FIG. 99. MIRROR FRAME OF  
GILDED WOOD

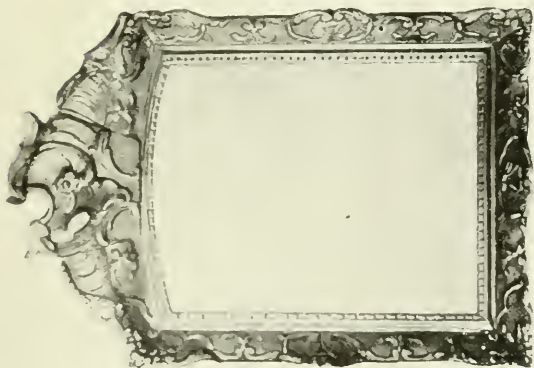


FIG. 98. MIRROR FRAME OF GILDED  
WOOD



FIG. 101. MIRROR FRAME OF  
GILDED WOOD



FIG. 100. MIRROR FRAME OF  
GILDED WOOD

# INDEX-GLOSSARY

- ALEPPO** breccia, 60-82  
 "Ambulantes" (*see* Table)  
 "Amortissement en chanfrein" (literally, deadening by chamfer), 75  
 Anatolian, carpet of, 115  
 Angel bed, 105  
 Antin, marble of, 60  
 Arlaten Museum of Arles, 119  
 Arlesian, from the town of Arles, South of France, 68, 69, 72, 73, 120  
 Arm-chairs, 3, 25, 32, 38, 92-98  
     "à la Capucine" (*see* "Capucine"), 101, 102  
     "bergère," 92  
     easy, 25  
     "en cabriolet," 25, 93  
     toilet, 101  
 Armoires (*see* Cupboards)  
 Auvergne, province of, 72, 73
- BACHAUMONT**, "Mémoires Secrets" of, 15  
 "Banquette" bench, 105  
 Barbier, the "Journal" of, 54, 61, 94  
 Bayle, "Dictionary," 2  
 Bean, woodwork, 37  
 Beaudoin, the painter, 125  
 Beauvais, French town, 96, 100  
 Beds, 105-107  
     Angel, 105, 106  
     Duchess, 105  
     English, 103  
     Polish, 105, 106  
     Provençal, 106  
     Veilleuse, 103  
 Belleville, suburb of Paris, 40  
 Bergame, name of Norman tapestry, 96  
 "Bergères," 21, 25, 26, 92, 95, 96, 102, 103, 104, 114, 115, 121
- Bimont, the writer, 98, 104  
 Blondel, the architect (he left work entitled "De la Distribution des Maisons de Campagne"), 16, 22, 24, 41, 118  
 "Bonheur du jour," kind of bureau, 85, 86  
 "Bonnetière" cap-cupboard, 70  
 Bordeaux, town of France, 45, 66, 67, 78, 79  
 Borders, frames, 109  
 Boucher, the painter, 52  
 "Boudoir," kind of "bergères," 96  
 Boulle, André Charles, cabinet-maker like his sons, 16, 47, 48, 70, 75  
 "Bourgeoisie," citizenship, 72  
 "Bout de pied" (literally, foot-end), low "bergère," 103  
 Brazil, wood from this country, 48  
 Brittany, province of, 44, 48, 64, 70, 72, 110  
 Brizeux, the architect, 16  
 Brocate, kind of marble, 60  
 Bruges, Belgian town, 98  
 "Buffet":—1. "Vaisselier," dresser-sideboard, 73  
     2. "Crédence," 72  
 Bureau, desk or writing-table, furniture, 83-87
- "CABINET," designs in Brittany, the wardrobe, 63  
 "Cabriolet (en)," kind of arm-chair, 25, 39, 93, 97  
 "Cachet," 71  
 Caffieri, Jacques, the sculptor, son of Philippe Caffieri the first, 13, 34, 115  
 Caffieri, Philippe II, son of Jacques, sculptor, 13, 34  
 "Caissons," coffers, 89

- Campan, Madame ("Mémoires"), 25  
 "Canapé," kind of sofa (bench), 104  
 "Capucine (à la)," kind of arm-chair and of straw chairs, 101  
 Carnavalet, Musée, 57  
 Carrara, marble of, 50  
 "Cartouche," wood ornament, 38, 115  
 "Chaise-longue," couch, 25, 102, 103  
 Champagne, province of, 48, 73  
 Chantilly, town, north of Paris, 41  
 Chardin, the French traveller, 40  
 Chardin, the painter ("Instant de la Méditation"), author, 99, 107  
 Chénier, André, the poet, 125  
 "Chiffonnier," high commode, 75-76, 78  
 "Chiffonnière," kind of table, 77, 88, 91, 118  
 China, the country, 35, 40-43, 55, 117  
 "Chinoiseries," Chinese articles, 4, 54, 55, 71, 107, 115, 116  
 Clairon, Mlle, Revolution's actress, 18  
 Clocks, furniture, 108  
 Cluny, Musée de, 57  
 Cochin, Charles Nicolas, the engraver, 15, 17, 118  
 "Commode," chest of drawers, 76-79  
 "Console" (*see* Table)  
 "Convalescente," kind of "ber-gère," 96  
 "Coq d'Inde," turkey, 39  
 "Corbeille de mariage," 63  
 Coromandel, lacquers from, 55, 107  
 "Correntilles" (*see* Table)  
 Crécy, Château de, North France, 71  
 "Crédence," kind of sideboard, Provençal furniture (*see* Buffet), 72  
 Cressent, Charles, the sculptor, 9, 13, 47  
 "Cul-de-lampe (en)," 82  
 Cupboards, furniture ("Ar-moires" in French), 61, 62, 63-71,  
 Cuvilliers, the designer, 122  
 DAGLY, the glazer, 56  
 D'Argenson, Marquis, 116  
 Dauphin, King's son, 56  
 David, the painter, 3  
 De Bandeville, the Présidente, 26  
 De Belhombre, Monsieur, 46  
 De Berry, the Duchesse, 76  
 De Bonnac, Marquis, 26  
 Debucourt, Philippe, the en-graver, 125  
 De Caylus, Comte, 15  
 De Cotte, Robert, the architect, 7, 9  
 De Fontenelle, the writer, 2  
 De Grimm, Frédéric Melchior, the writer, 19  
 De la Boissière, Monsieur, 86  
 De la Fontaine, Jean, the fabu-list, 96  
 De la Popelinière, Madame, 61  
 De Luynes, Duke (he writes "Mémoires"), 16  
 De Mailly, Madame, 96  
 De Marigny, Marquis de, brother of Madame de Pompadour, 14  
 De Metternich, the Austrian Minister, 34  
 De Montesquieu, the writer, 2, 17, 125  
 De Parabère, Madame, 28  
 De Pompadour, Marquise, 14, 15, 19, 28, 40, 46, 61, 71, 97, 102, 105, 116, 117  
 De Richelieu, Marshal, 61  
 De Rohan, Princess, 55  
 "Déshabillé," dressing-gown, 90, 104  
 De Soubise, Prince, 54  
 De Troy, the painter, 125  
 De Voltaire, the writer, 2, 40

- "Dictionnaire critique, pittoresque, etc.," 11  
 "Dictionnaire de Trévoux" (1708), 76  
 Diderot, Denis, the philosopher, 19, 114  
 Directory Style, 5  
 Dordogne, the river, 66  
 D'Orléans, Duchess, 76  
 D'Orléans, Philippe, the Regent, 3, 6  
 Dresden, flowers of, in Saxony, 117  
 Drouot, the Hôtel, auction rooms in Paris, 111  
 Duchess, the, bed, 105  
 "Duchesse brisée," kind of recumbent chair in three pieces, 103  
 Duchesses, couch, 25, 103, 104, 118, 121  
 Dumb waiter (*see* Table)  
 Dutch art, 48, 79  
 Duvaux Lazare, the merchant-mercator, 12, 13, 18, 45, 46, 54, 71, 77, 86, 87, 117  
 "EBÉNISTES," cabinet-maker, 12, 13  
 Egyptian-green, 60  
 Elbeuf, Norman town, 96  
 "Empire" Style, 8  
 "Encyclopædia," the, of d'Alembert and Diderot, 20, 49, 65, 87, 114  
 "En galante," method of hair-dressing, 90  
 English table (*see* Table)  
 "Epergues," used for table-decoration, 116  
 "Équivoque, en," method of hair-dressing, 90  
 "Escudié," Gascon name for a dresser-sideboard, 73  
 "Espagnolettes," bronzes, 9  
 "Étagère," set of shelves, 73  
 FIRE-SCREENS, 107  
 Flemish Style, 3, 79  
 Flying-table (*see* Table)  
 "Folly," pleasure-house, 54  
 "Form," seventeenth-century bench, 105  
 "Format," size of the book, 70  
 Frederick II, King of Prussia, 57, 58  
 GABRIEL, Jacques Ange, the architect, 15  
 "Garderobe," the wardrobe (in Provence), 63  
 Garonne, the river, 66  
 Gascony, province of, 73  
 Gaudreaux, François Antoine, cabinet-maker, 13  
 Genoa, damask of, 97, 98  
 Germanic art, the, 43  
 Gillot, Claude, the painter, 9  
 Gothic art, the, 27, 42, 43  
 Greek art, the, 28  
 Greuze, the painter (author of the "Malédiction maternelle"), 102  
 Grizel, the writer, 60  
 "Gros de Tours," the tapestry, 97  
 Guimard, Mademoiselle, famous dancer, 81  
 HAITI, Isle of, 45  
 Hamilton, Anthony, the Scotsman, 2  
 Havard, Henry, author of the great "Dictionnaire de l'Ameublement," 12, 19  
 Havre, Le, seaport, 45  
 Henry II Style, 74  
 Herculaneum and Pompei ruins, influence, 18  
 Honduras, the country, 45  
 "Hôtel Drouot" (*see* Drouot)  
 Houdon, the sculptor, 116  
 "Huchiers-menuisiers," hutch-joiners, 12  
 INDIA, the country, 45, 47, 50, 107, 119, 122  
 Inn-tables (*see* Table)

- "Inventaire général du Mobilier de la Couronne" (1760), 74  
 Italian art, style, 42, 50, 114
- "JARDINIÈRE," flower-stand, 120  
 Jeaurat, the engraver, 118, 125  
 Jesuits, the Catholic fathers, 39  
 Jouy, village near Paris, where the Oberkampf factory was founded, 122
- LANGLOIS, the glazer, 56  
 Law, the financier, 7  
 Le Brun, Charles, King Louis XIV's painter, 2, 4  
 Lekain, the actor, 18  
 Lenormant de Tournehem, uncle by marriage of Madame de Pompadour, 14  
 Le Nôtre, the garden-draughtsman, 5  
 Le Roy, the decorator-glazer, 56  
 Lesage, author of "Gil Blas" and "Turcaret," 2  
 Les Andelys in Normandy, 42  
 "Lingère," wardrobe, in southwest France, 63  
 Lorient, seaport of France, 45  
 Lorient, cabinet-maker of Louis XV, 27  
 Lorrain, from the province of Lorraine, 64  
 Louis the Great (*see* Louis XIV), 40  
 Louis the Well-Beloved (*see* Louis XV), 40  
 Louis XIII, the, Style, 32  
 Louis XIV, the, Style, 1, 2, 3, 20, 24, 25, 29, 36, 53, 92  
 Louis XV, characteristics of the, Style, 2, 21-43  
 Louis XV, the King, 5, 27, 95  
 Louis XVI, the, Style, 1, 16, 19, 32, 37, 69, 75, 81, 87, 122  
 Louis-Philippe, the, Style, 74
- "MAGOTS," Chinese figures, 4, 117  
 "Manchette," cushion, 94
- Mansart, François, first architect of King Louis XIV, 7  
 Marble, 60, 82  
 Marie-Antoinette, the Queen, 23, 126  
 Marivaux, the writer, 2  
 Marly, King's residence, 4, 14, 102  
 Marot, the decorator, 4  
 Marseilles, the seaport town, 119  
 Martin, the (four brothers, all glazers), 55, 56, 57  
 Meissonier, Juste Aurèle, the ornament designer, 6, 7, 8, 13  
 "Ménage," dresser-sideboard, in Champagne, 73  
 "Menuisiers d'assemblage," solid wooden furniture-makers, 12  
 de placage," veneerers, 12  
 de marqueterie," inlayers, 12
- Mercier, Sebastien, the writer, 10, 11  
 "Mercure de France," the French periodical publication, 17, 27, 60  
 Michelet, Jules, the historian, 21, 28  
 Migeon, the cabinet-maker, 61  
 "Moiré," kind of satin, 97-99, 114  
 Molière, the author-comedian, 5  
 Mondonville, French composer, 40  
 Monsigny, French composer, 40  
 "Moquette," stuff, 99, 105, 114, 115, 118  
 Moreau, the painter (author of "Petit Souper)," 125
- NATTIER, Jean Marc, the painter, 17  
 Netherlandish monkeys, 3, 79  
 Némorin, allegorical personage often employed in the pastoral scenes, 40  
 Normandy, the province of, 44, 64, 65, 68, 70, 72, 110



- OBERKAMPF, chintz manufacturer, 122  
 "Obligante," kind of "ber-gère," 96  
 Oeben, Jean François, the cabinet-maker, 13, 14  
 Oppenord, Gilles-Marie, the architect-designer, 6, 7, 8
- PAGODAS (*see* "Magots")  
 Palissy, Bernard, the ceramist, 6  
 "Pamela," an eighteenth-century novel, 88  
 "Paphose," kind of bed, 103  
 "Papier," paper, 115  
 "Papier d'Angleterre," flock paper, 115  
 "Papier de tontisse," paper, 115  
 "Papier drappé," paper, 115  
 "Par excellence," 90  
 Parisian flat, 113, 120  
 Patte, Pierre, the architect, 23  
 "Paysan parvenu," the upstart countryman, novel, 88  
 Pekin, silk of, 97  
 Persian carpet, 115  
 "Pied de table," table-leg, 82  
 "Pieds de biche," doe's feet, 3, 29, 39, 80  
 "Pieds de Jésuite," woodwork, 39  
 "Point de Hongrie," herringbone pattern, 24, 50  
 Poisson, Mademoiselle (*see* De Pompadour), 15  
 "Portor," kind of marble, 60  
 Potsdam, near Berlin, 57  
 "Poudreuse," toilet table, 88  
 "Pourpre," precious shell, 26  
 "Poussah," 77  
 Provençal, the, Style, 20, 67, 68, 70, 106  
 Provence, the province of, 48, 63, 65, 72
- QUIMPER, French town, 110
- RÉCAMIER, Madame, 104  
 "Réchampi," 54
- Regency, the, Style, 1, 4, 5, 35, 45, 55, 75, 90, 94  
 "Renaissance" the, Style, 34, 52  
 Rhodes, the wood of, 49  
 Riesener, Jean-Henri, the cabinet-maker, 13  
 "Rigueur, de," 94, 117  
 "Rinceaux," woodwork, 38, 49, 59  
 "Rocaille," the, Style (in favour between the Louis XIV and Louis XV Styles), 6, 7, 8, 10, 15, 16, 17  
 "Rondin," round cushion, 103  
 "Roquillards," the base of the cupboard, 30  
 "Roses d'Amathonte," woodwork, 38  
 Roubo, junior, 93  
 Rouen, the French town, 96, 102, 110
- SAINT-ANTOINE, Faubourg, in Paris, 68  
 Saint-Hubert, Château de, 105  
 Saintongeais, of the province of Saintonge, 69  
 Saint-Ouen, suburb of Paris, 54  
 Saint-Wulfran at Abbeville in Somme, 42  
 Sans-Souci, Frederick II's residence, 57  
 "Satinade," kind of stuff, 98  
 "Scalata," precious shell, 26  
 Scallop-shell, "Coquille" in French, 35, 44  
 Screens, 106  
 "Scribanne," secretary - commode made by the Dutch, 79  
 Seats, 25, 92-106  
   caned, 101  
   characteristics of, 25, 92  
   how to cover the Louis XV 96-100  
   straw, 101  
   stuffed, 93-101  
 Secretary-commode (*see* Frontis-piece), 75, 78

- "Serre-papiers," paper-holder, 84  
 Seven Years War (1756-1763), 78  
 "Siamoise," stuff, 98, 100, 102  
 "Singeries," monkeyisms, 41  
 Slodtz, the decorator, 7  
 Soufflot, Jacques-Germain, the architect, 16  
 "Sultane," kind of bed, 103
- "TABERNACLE, tiny hinged cupboard, 73  
 Table, 26, 80-91  
   " Ambulante," 82  
   bed, 90  
   bureau, 81-88  
   card, 83  
   " console," 82-93  
   " Correntilles," 82  
   dining-room, 81  
   dumb waiter, 81  
   English, with adjustable leaves, 81  
   flying-, 27  
   inn- or " cabaret," 26  
   jewels, 90  
   night, 90  
   toilet, 88-90  
   " volante," 27  
   work, 87  
   writing, 86  
 " Tabouret," stool, 105
- Tavernier, French traveller  
 Toilet (*see* Arm-chair)  
 Trianon, near Versailles, 1  
 "Tripe," stuff, 99  
 Troyes, cathedral of, 42  
 Turkey, 41, 103  
 "Turquoise," kind of bed 104
- UTRECHT, Dutch town, 99  
 115
- "VAISSELIER," dresser-side in Auvergne, 73, 74  
 Van Loo, French painter, 4  
 "Veilleuse," or English bed (Bed), 103  
 "Veilleuses," couch, 25  
 Velvet, the, stuff, 83  
   of Genoa, 98  
   of Utrecht, 99  
 "Verdure," Flemish stuff,  
 Versailles, King's residence 14, 23  
 "Vertugadins," dress, 94  
 "Vide-poche," pocket-em 90  
 Vincennes, town near  
   flowers, 116-117
- WALLACE, the, Collection,  
 Watteau, Antoine, the painter, 3, 9





6  
12

53

THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF ART, (1907.)










IN MEMORIAM



ROBERT HOLMES

R  C  A  
FOR MANY YEARS A TEACHER  
IN THIS COLLEGE    
THIS BOOK IS ONE OF A NUMBER  
FROM THE LIBRARY OF MR HOLMES  
PRESENTED TO THE ONTARIO  
COLLEGE OF ART BY HIS RELATIVES  
JUNE  1930



R. B.



LITTLE ILLUSTRATED BOOKS ON  
OLD FRENCH FURNITURE

IV. FRENCH FURNITURE  
UNDER LOUIS XVI AND THE EMPIRE

## FRENCH FURNITURE

- I. FRENCH FURNITURE IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND UNDER LOUIS XIII
- II. FRENCH FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XIV
- III. FRENCH FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XV
- IV. FRENCH FURNITURE UNDER LOUIS XVI AND THE EMPIRE

## ENGLISH FURNITURE

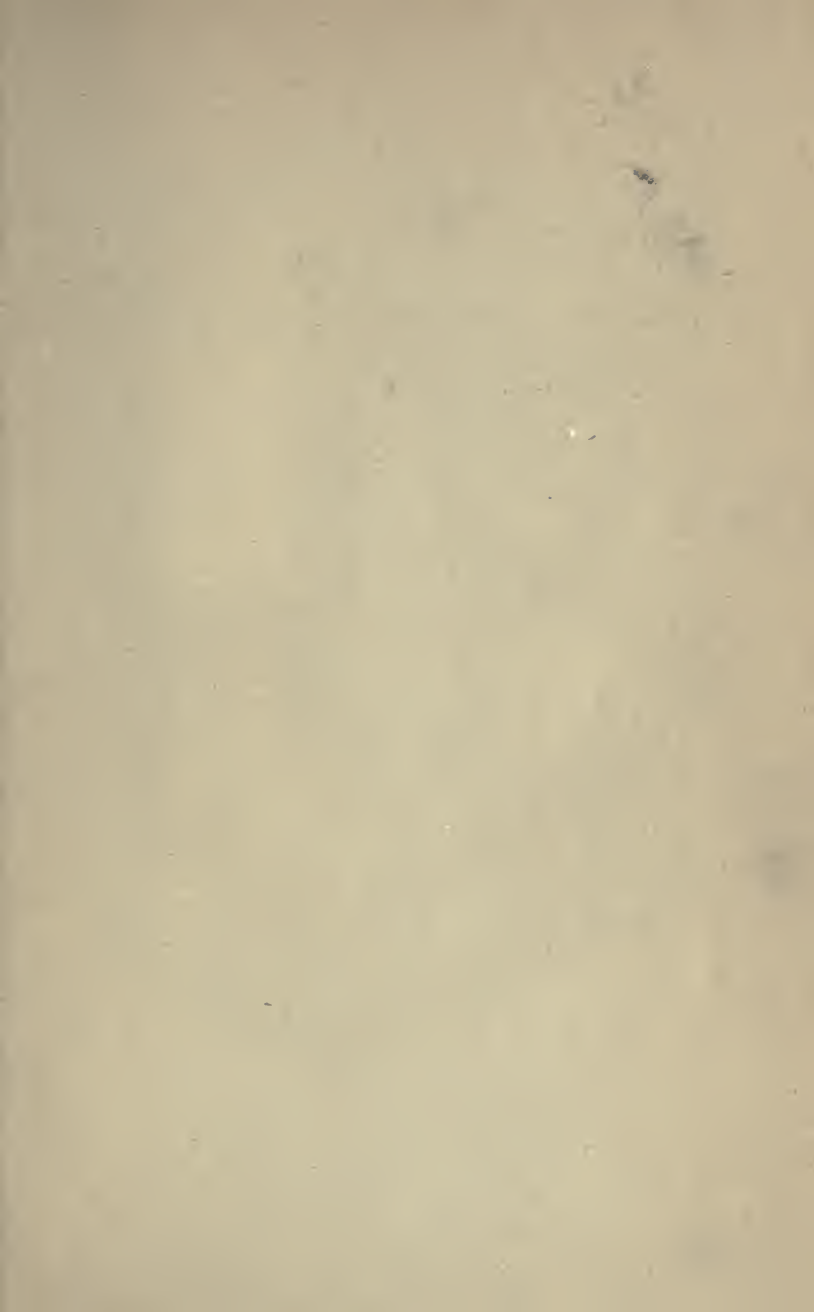
*(Previously published)*

- I. ENGLISH FURNITURE UNDER THE TUDORS AND STUARTS
- II. ENGLISH FURNITURE OF THE QUEEN ANNE PERIOD
- III. ENGLISH FURNITURE OF THE CHIPPENDALE PERIOD
- IV. ENGLISH FURNITURE OF THE SHERATON PERIOD

Each volume profusely illustrated with full-page reproductions and coloured frontispieces

*Crown 8vo, Cloth, price 4s. 6d. net*

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN





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

LITTLE ILLUSTRATED BOOKS ON  
OLD FRENCH FURNITURE IV

FRENCH FURNITURE  
UNDER LOUIS XVI  
AND THE EMPIRE

BY ROGER DE FÉLICE

TRANSLATED BY  
F. M. ATKINSON



LONDON MCMXX  
WILLIAM HEINEMANN

1031

53





## INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> The asterisk refers to the index at the end.

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

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

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

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



## PRINCIPAL AUTHORITIES

BAYARD, EMILE: "Le Style Louis XVI." Paris.

"Le Style Empire." Paris.

BENOÎT, FRANÇOIS: "L'Art français sous la Révolution et l'Empire." Paris, 1897.

CHAMPEAUX, ALFRED DE: "Le Meuble" (Bibliothèque de l'Enseignement des Beaux-Arts). Paris.

HAVARD, HENRI: "Dictionnaire de l'Ameublement et de la Décoration." Paris.

LAFOND, PAUL: "L'Art décoratif et le Mobilier sous la République et l'Empire." Paris, 1900.

MOLINIER, EMILE. "Histoire générale des Arts appliqués à l'Industrie." Paris, 1896 (Vol. III.).

SEYMOUR DE RICCI: "Le Style Louis XVI." Paris, 1913.





# CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	v
PART I	
A HISTORY OF THE TWO STYLES	i
PART II	
LOUIS XVI FURNITURE:	
I. CHARACTERISTICS AND TECHNIQUE OF THE STYLE	37
II. PANELLED FURNITURE AND TABLES	52
III. CHAIRS AND VARIOUS PIECES: A LOUIS XVI INTERIOR	68
PART III	
EMPIRE FURNITURE:	
I. CHARACTERISTICS AND TECHNIQUE OF THE STYLE	93
II. VARIOUS ARTICLES OF FURNITURE AND THEIR USE	115
INDEX-GLOSSARY	135



# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

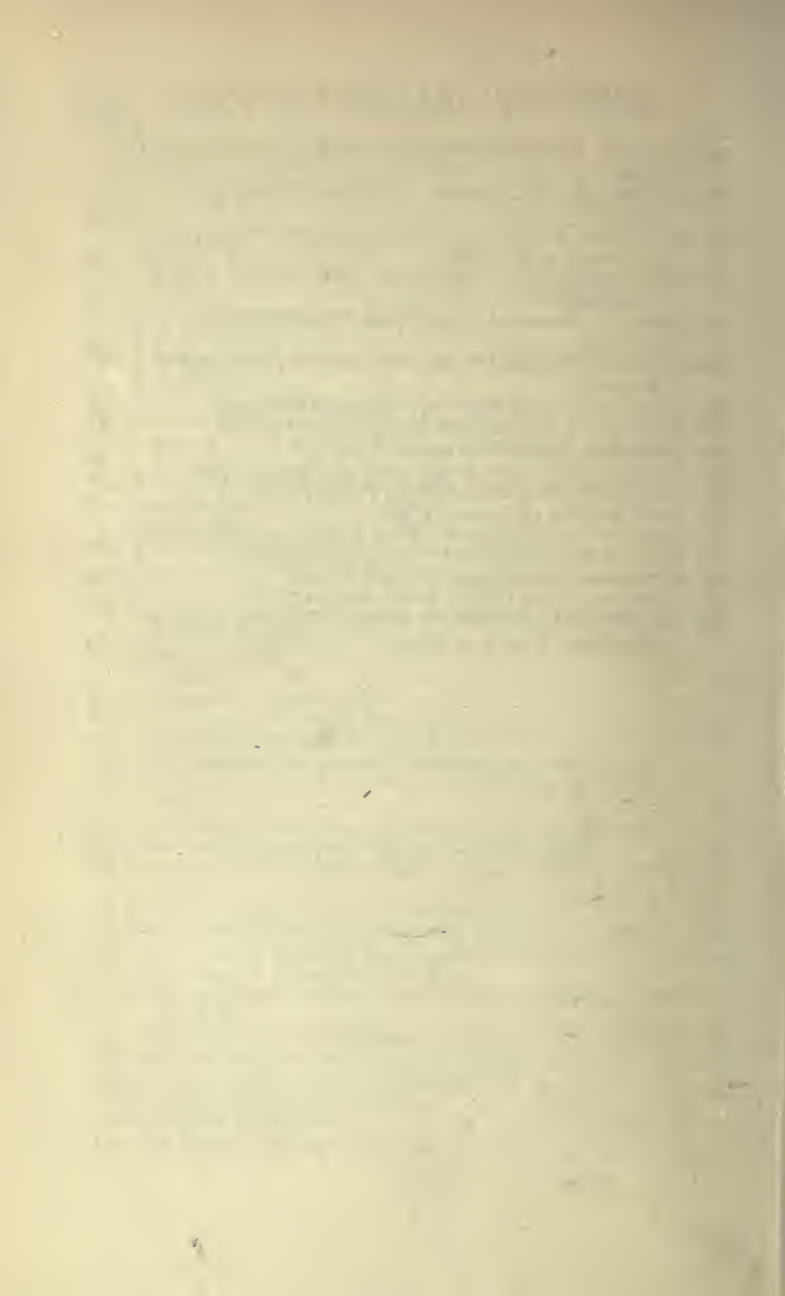
FIG.	PLATE
<i>Four-poster Bed, Mahogany and Brass, with Satin Hangings</i>	
	<i>Frontispiece</i>
1. Leaf of a Door } 2. Panel of Carved Wood } 3. Normandy Cupboard in Oak } 4. Cupboard with Revolutionary Emblems } 5. Large Cupboard from the Gironde, Half-moon Shaped } 6. Mahogany Cupboard from the South-west of France, with } Mouldings } 7. Provençal Cupboard in Walnut } 8. Credence Sideboard from Arles, in Walnut } 9. Étagère } 10. Bread Cupboard } 11. Provençal Vitrine in Walnut } 12. Étagère from Arles, in Walnut } 13. Kneading Trough from Arles, in Walnut } 14. Vitrine in Mahogany with Brass Ornaments } 15. Corner Cupboard in Marquetry, of different Coloured Woods } 16. Drop front Escritoire in Marquetry with Gilt Bronzes } 17. Bonheur du Jour with Roll-front, in Mahogany and Brass } 18. Commode with Two Drawers and on Legs, in Marquetry } 19. Commode with Terminal-Shaped Legs and Pierced Brasses, } in Walnut } 20. Commode with Flutings, Diminished at the Base, in Walnut } 21. Commode with Toupie Feet, in Mahogany and Brass } 22. Commode on Legs, in Mahogany Veneer } 23. Commode with "Pieds de Biche," in Rosewood, Tulip- } wood and Lemon-wood } 24. Provençal Commode with Revolutionary Emblems, in } Walnut } 25. Tall Chiffonnière with Toupie Feet, in Mahogany and } Brass } 26. Escritoire-commode from the Gironde, in Elm-wood } 27. Card Table on Pivot, in Mahogany } 28. Triangular Folding Table, in Walnut } 29. Bouillotte table in Gilt Wood and Marble } 30. Bouillotte table in Mahogany, Brass and Marble } 31. Console with Two Legs, in Painted Wood } 32. Console with Two Legs, in Walnut } 33. Console with Two Legs, in Gilt Wood } 34. Small Table with "Pieds de Biche," in Walnut (begin- } ning of the style) } 35. Night Table in Mahogany and Brass } }	

# xvi LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIG.	PLATE
36. <i>Chiffonnière in Tulip-wood and Marble</i> }	26
37. <i>Chiffonnière in Mahogany and Brass</i> }	26
38. <i>Arm-chair (end of the style)</i>	
39. <i>Bergère in Wood, Upholstered in Lyons Satin Brocade</i> }	27
40. <i>Arm-chair of Painted Wood, Upholstered in Utrecht Velvet</i>	28
41. <i>Cabriolet Arm-chair, Medallion Back</i>	
42. <i>Cabriolet Arm-chair with Fiddle Back</i> }	29
43. <i>Cabriolet Arm-chair with Round Seat, in Walnut</i> }	
44. <i>Cabriolet Arm-chair in Gilt Wood</i> }	30
45. <i>Arm-chair with Square Back, in Walnut</i>	
46. <i>Arm-chair with Upright Consoles, in Gilt Wood (end of the style)</i> }	31
47. <i>Large Arm-chair covered in Aubusson, Gilt Wood</i>	32
48. <i>Chair with Quiver-shaped Legs, in Walnut</i>	
49. <i>X-shaped Stool in Gilt Wood, with Square Aubusson Cushion</i> }	33
50. <i>Bergère in Walnut, Upholstered in Utrecht Velvet</i> }	
51. <i>Small Bergère, in Painted Wood</i> }	34
52. "Confessional" <i>Bergère, in Painted Wood</i>	35
53. <i>Chair with Flat Baluster Back, in Gilt Wood</i>	
54. <i>Lyre-Backed Chair in Gilt Wood</i> }	36
55. <i>Chair with Open Back, in Painted Wood</i> }	
56, 57 and 58. <i>Mahogany Dining Chairs with Cane Seats, or Covered in Leather</i>	37
59, 60 and 61. <i>Straw-seated Chairs and Arm-chair with Lyre Backs</i>	38
62. <i>Carved Straw-seated Chair</i>	
63. <i>Straw-seated Arm-chair with Cushions</i> }	39
64. <i>Straw-seated Chair with Sheaf Back</i> }	
65. <i>Straw-seated Chair from the Dordogne, in Cherry-wood</i>	
66. <i>Straw-seated Arm-chair from the Dordogne, in Cherry-wood</i> }	40
67. <i>Straw-seated Chair from the Dordogne, in Cherry-wood</i> }	
68. <i>Straw-seated Sofa from Provence with its Cushions</i>	41
69. <i>Sofa in Gilt Wood, Upholstered in Broché Silk (end of the style)</i>	42
70. <i>Chaise Longue in One Piece, Gondola Shape</i>	43
71. <i>Chaise Longue Brisée in Two Equal Pieces</i>	44
72. <i>Chaise Longue Brisée in Two Unequal Pieces</i>	45
73. <i>Chaise Longue Brisée in Three Pieces</i>	46
74. <i>Four-poster Bed from Lorraine, Carved in the Renaissance Tradition</i>	47
75. <i>Angel Bed with "Hat"-shaped Dossiers, in Painted Wood</i>	48
76. <i>Angel Bed with Arched Dossiers, in Painted Wood</i>	49
77. <i>Screen in Painted Wood and Broché Silk</i> }	
78. <i>Screen in Walnut and Brocatelle</i> }	50
79. <i>Case Clock in Oak, Paris</i> }	
80. <i>Case Clock in Oak from Lorraine</i> }	51

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS xvii

FIG.	PLATE
81, 82 and 83. <i>Small Mirrors with Carved Pediment, in Gilt Wood</i>	52
84. <i>Cupboard from the Gironde, in Walnut (beginning of the style)</i>	53
85. <i>Drop front Escritoire in Mahogany with Brass Inlay (beginning of the style)</i>	54
86. <i>Bonheur du Jour in mahogany with Flat-gilt Bronze Ornaments</i>	55
87. <i>Console in Rosewood Inlaid with Brass (beginning of the style)</i>	} 56
88. <i>Console with Arched Sides, in Pear-wood (beginning of the style)</i>	
89. <i>Console with Caryatides, in Mahogany and Bronze</i>	57
90. <i>Slope-fronted Bureau with Revolutionary Emblem</i>	58
91. <i>Chair with Rolled Back, in Gilt Wood</i>	} 59
92. <i>Arm-chair with Open Rolled Back, in Painted Wood</i>	
93. <i>Arm-chair with Rolled Back, in Painted Wood</i>	} 60
94. <i>Small Bergère, in Painted Wood</i>	
95. <i>Arm-chair with "Horned" Back (beginning of the style)</i>	} 61
96. <i>Chair of the Revolutionary Period, in Mahogany</i>	
97. <i>Méridienne in Mahogany and Gilt Bronze</i>	62
98. <i>Mahogany Chaise Longue in the Antique Style</i>	63
99. <i>Bed with Rolled Dossiers, in Painted Wood (beginning of the style). Used as a Divan</i>	64



## PART ONE : A HISTORY OF THE TWO STYLES

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

## 2 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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



## THE VOGUE OF ANTIQUITY 3

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

## 4 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

## 6 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

## 8 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

    Ten years later, Cochin's wish was granted;

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

"fortunately for us

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 16 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

## 18 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

To sum up, the Empire Style was formed

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

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

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

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

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

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

So now it is that pieces no longer decorated

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

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

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

## 26 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

## ALLEGORICAL FURNITURE 29

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> The Vendôme Column is his work.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 34 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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



SECOND PART  
THE LOUIS XVI FURNITURE



## CHAPTER ONE: CHARACTER- ISTICS AND TECHNIQUE OF THE LOUIS XVI STYLE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

## 44 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 5.

<sup>2</sup> See the *chapeau* top of the arm-chair in Fig. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Framing of the cupboard doors in Fig. 4; the drawer of the *escritoire* (Fig. 16), etc.

<sup>4</sup> Cornice of the cupboard (Fig. 4).

<sup>5</sup> Top of the cupboard (Fig. 4).

<sup>6</sup> Fixed central part of the same cupboard (Fig. 4).

<sup>7</sup> The same (Fig. 4) on the lower part of the cornice; framing on the drawers of the *commode* (Fig. 24),

## 46 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Back of the arm-chair (Fig. 38); arm consoles (Figs. 40 and 47)

<sup>2</sup> See the cupboard, Fig. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Figs. 20, 26, 28, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Figs. 14, 25.

<sup>5</sup> Figs. 6, 14, 25, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Figs. 48, 50, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Figs. 29, 47.

<sup>8</sup> Fig. 15.

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Fig. 40

<sup>3</sup> Figs. 14, 17, etc,

<sup>4</sup> Fig. 33.

<sup>5</sup> See the *chutes* of the commode in Fig. 28, etc.

## 48 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Top of the cupboard in Fig. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Arm of the chair in Fig. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Commode (Fig. 24), consoles in Figs. 31 and 33.

<sup>4</sup> Woodwork in Figs. 1 and 2, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Console (Fig. 33); bergères (Figs. 51 and 52, etc.).

<sup>6</sup> Fig. 76.

<sup>7</sup> Fig. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Figs. 3, 7, 9, etc.

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Figs, 37, 43, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Fig. 24.

## 50 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Figs. 14, 21, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Fig. 14.



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

## CHAPTER II : PANELLED FURNITURE AND TABLES

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

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

The Normandy cupboard reproduced in Fig. 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

Under Louis XVI there was invented prac-

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

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

## 56 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 58 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

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



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

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

## 60 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> What we say here of table legs applies also to the legs of chairs.

## CHARACTERISTIC LEGS 61

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

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

## 62 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 64 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

## 66 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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



## STRANGE COMBINATIONS 67

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 70 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

## 72 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Mahogany chairs are an innovation introduced in this period.

<sup>2</sup> They were also styled *à la capucine*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

## 76 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 78 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

## 80 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

## THE DRAWING ROOM 81

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

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

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

<sup>2</sup> Not a real "lustre," but a *lanterne*.

## 82 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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



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

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

But it would be much more difficult to group

<sup>1</sup> For example, the *escritoire* (Fig. 85), the consoles (Figs. 87 and 88), the arm-chair (Fig. 95), the *bergère* (Fig. 94), the bed (Fig. 99).

## 84 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

Philippe it was still battling against that hideous triumphant rep.

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

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

## 86 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

In a bedroom we must have a bed, or two

## 88 LOUIS XVI FURNITURE

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> Cased clocks.

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

<sup>1</sup> We write this face to face with a buffet from the Pyrenees which stands little less than ten feet high from feet to cornice.



THIRD PART  
THE EMPIRE FURNITURE



## CHAPTER ONE : CHARACTERISTICS AND TECHNIQUE OF THE STYLE

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

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

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

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

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

## 96 EMPIRE FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> The late German Embassy in Paris.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>2</sup> For instance, the ornamentation of the drawer of the same piece, whose flat gilt bronzes are of excellent workmanship.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

## 108 EMPIRE FURNITURE

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup>The bronzes on the *escritoire* in Fig. 86 are very good examples of these various qualities.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 114 EMPIRE FURNITURE

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



## CHAPTER II : VARIOUS ARTICLES OF FURNITURE AND THEIR USE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

## 126 EMPIRE FURNITURE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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





FIG. 1. LEAF OF A DOOR.



FIG. 2. PANEL OF CARVED WOOD.



FIG. 3. NORMANDY CUPBOARD IN OAK.



FIG. 4. CUPBOARD WITH REVOLUTIONARY EMBLEMS.



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





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



FIG. 7. PROVENÇAL CUPBOARD IN WALNUT.



FIG. 8. CREDENCE SIDEBOARD FROM ARLES, IN WALNUT.



FIG. 9. ÉTAGÈRE.

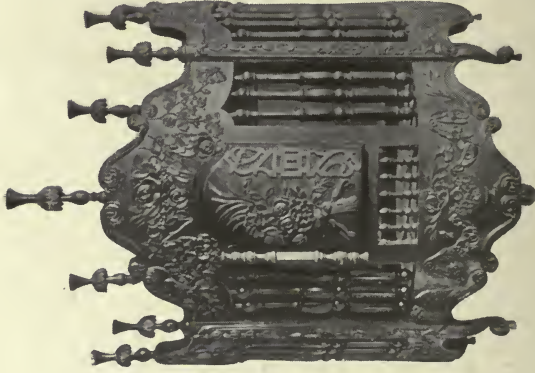


FIG. 10. BREAD CUPBOARD.



FIG. 11. PROVENÇAL VITRINE IN WALNUT.



FIG. 12. ÉTAGÈRE FROM ARLES, IN WALNUT.



FIG. 13. KNEADING TROUGH FROM ARLES, IN WALNUT.



FIG. 14. VITRINE IN MAHOGANY WITH BRASS ORNAMENTS.



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



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





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



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



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



FIG. 20. COMMODE WITH FLUTINGS, DIMINISHED AT THE BASE, IN WALNUT. *Pl. 15*

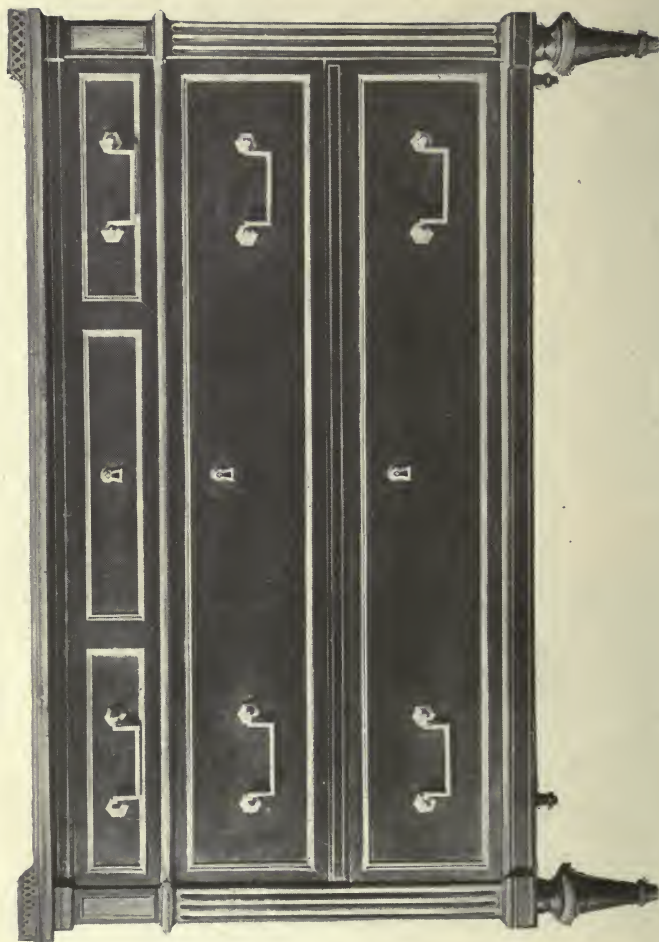


FIG. 21. COMMUNE WITH TOUPIE FEET, IN MAHOAGANY AND BRASS.



FIG 22. COMMODE ON LEGS, IN MAHOGANY VENEER.



FIG. 23. COMMODE WITH "PIEDS DE BICHE," IN ROSEWOOD,  
TULIP-WOOD AND LEMON-WOOD. *Pl. 17*

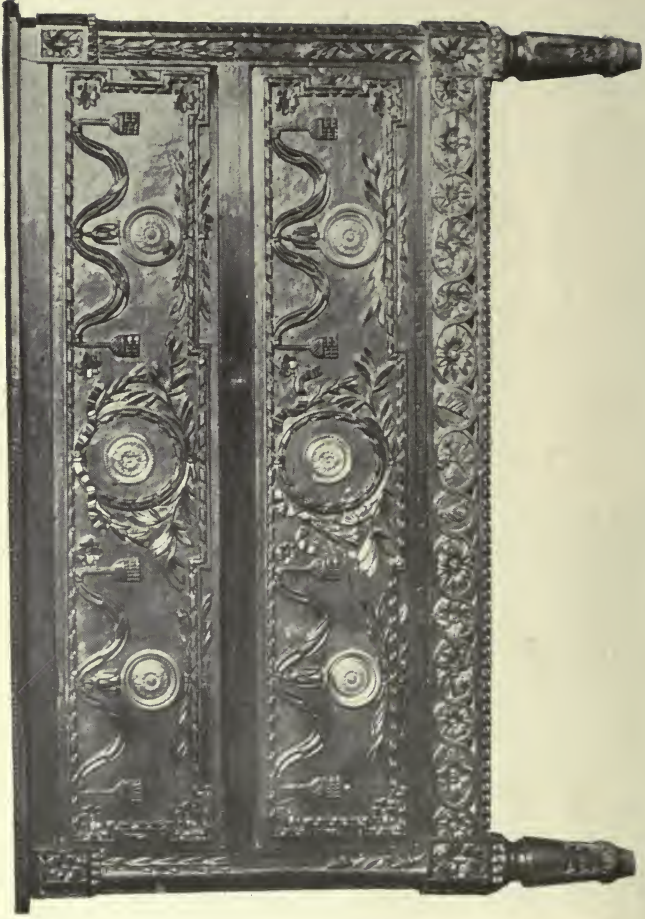


FIG. 24. PROVENÇAL COMMODE WITH REVOLUTIONARY EMBLEMS, IN WALNUT.  
*Pl. 18*



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



FIG. 26. ESCRITTOIRE-COMMODE FROM THE GIRONDE, IN ELM-WOOD.  
Pl. 20





FIG. 27. CARD TABLE ON PIVOT, IN MAHOGANY.



FIG. 28. TRIANGULAR FOLDING TABLE, IN WALNUT.



FIG. 29. BOUILLOTTE TABLE IN GILT WOOD  
AND MARBLE.



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



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



FIG. 32. CONSOLE WITH TWO LEGS, IN WALNUT.



FIG. 33. CONSOLE WITH TWO LEGS, IN GILT WOOD. *Pl.* 24



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



FIG. 35. NIGHT TABLE IN MAHOAGANY  
AND BRASS. *Pl. 25*

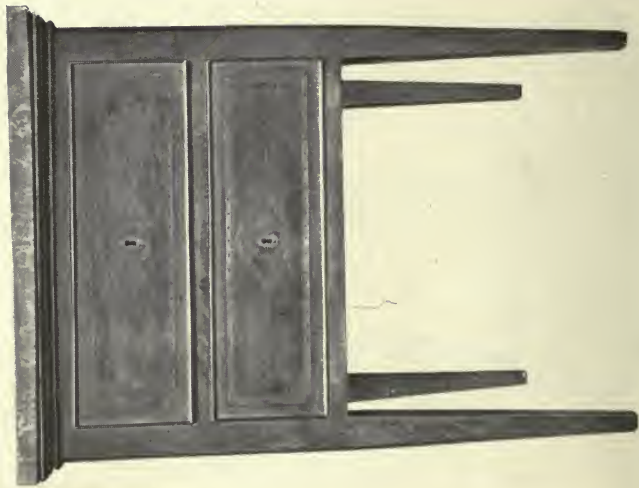


FIG. 36. CHIFFONNIÈRE IN TULIP-WOOD  
AND MARBLE.

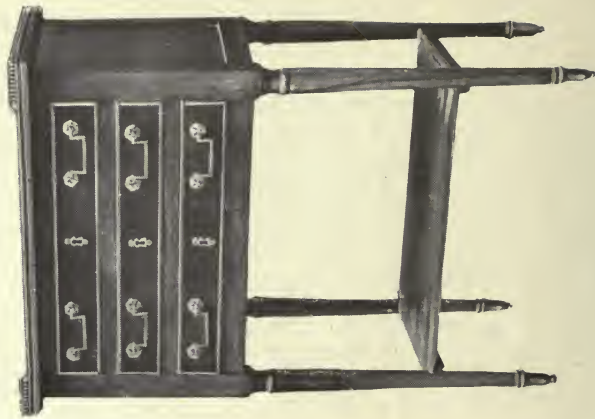


FIG. 37. CHIFFONNIÈRE IN MAHOGANY  
AND BRASS. *Pl.* 26



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

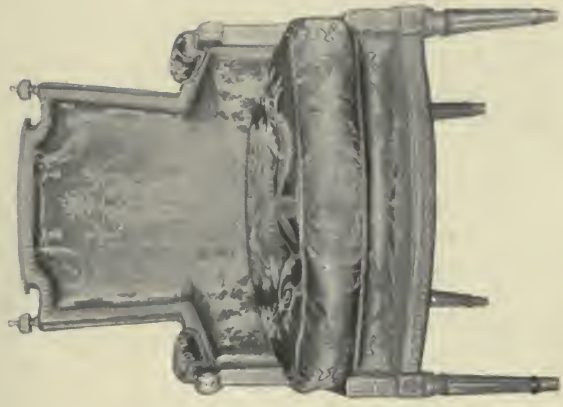


FIG. 39. BERGERE IN WOOD, UPHOLSTERED IN LYONS SATIN BROCADE. *Pl.* 27



FIG. 40. ARMCHAIR OF PAINTED WOOD, UPHOLSTERED IN  
UTRECHT VELVET.



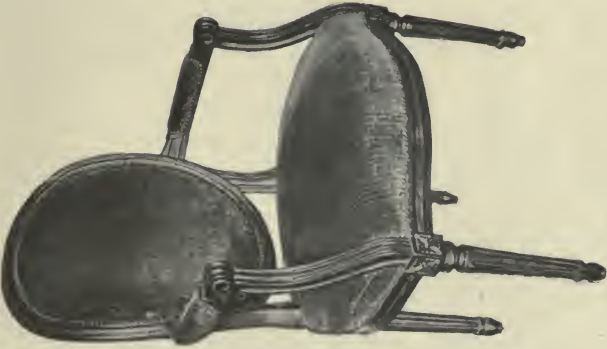


FIG. 41. CABRIOLET ARM-CHAIR,  
MEDALLION BACK.



FIG. 42. CABRIOLET ARM-CHAIR WITH  
FIDDLE BACK. *Pl.* 29

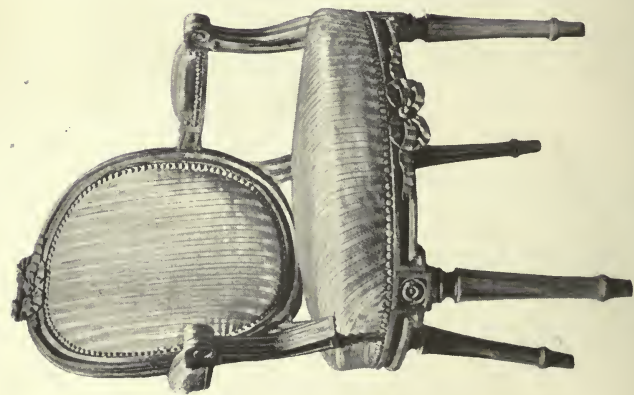


FIG. 43. CABRIOLET ARM-CHAIR WITH  
ROUND SEAT, IN WALNUT.

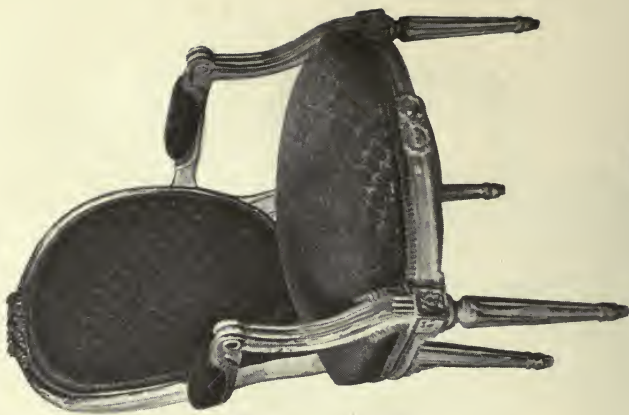


FIG. 44. CABRIOLET ARM-CHAIR IN  
GILT WOOD. *Pl. 30*

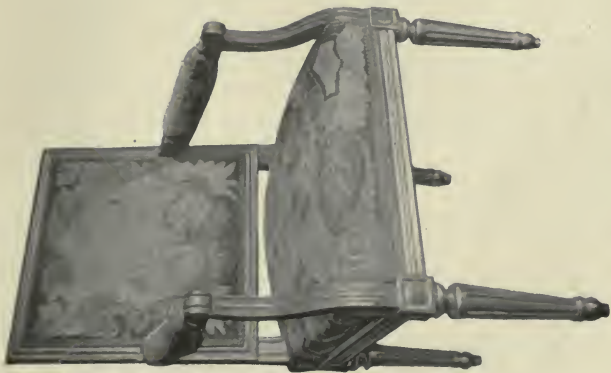


FIG. 45. ARM-CHAIR WITH SQUARE BACK,  
IN WALNUT

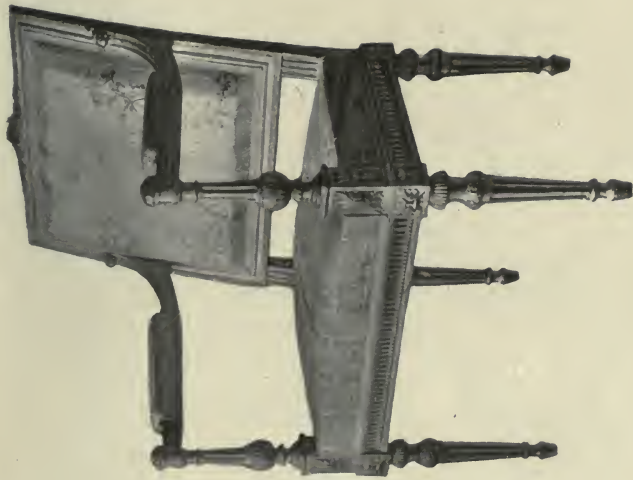


FIG. 46. ARM-CHAIR WITH UPRIGHT CONSOLES,  
IN GILT WOOD (END OF THE STYLE).



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

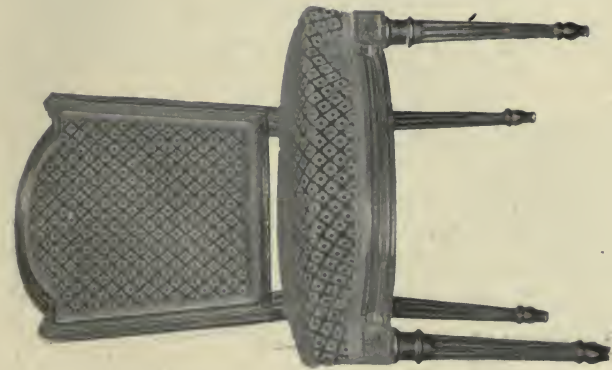


FIG. 48. CHAIR WITH QUIVER-SHAPED  
LEGS, IN WALNUT.

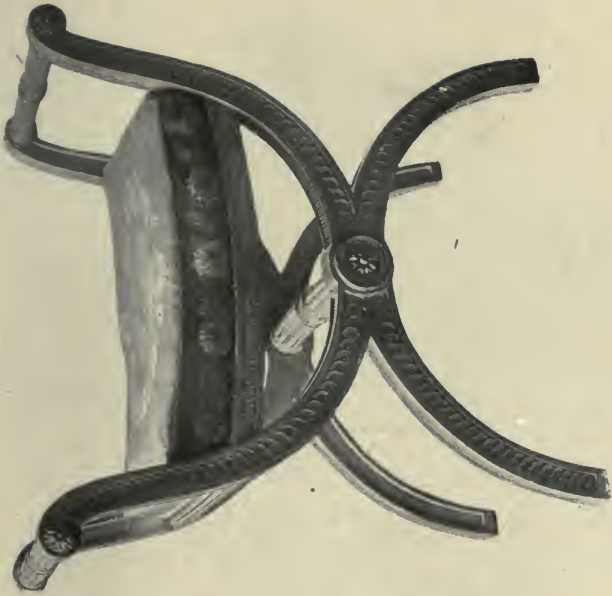


FIG. 49. X-SHAPED STOOL IN GILT WOOD,  
WITH SQUARE AUBUSSON CUSHION. *Pl. 33*



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

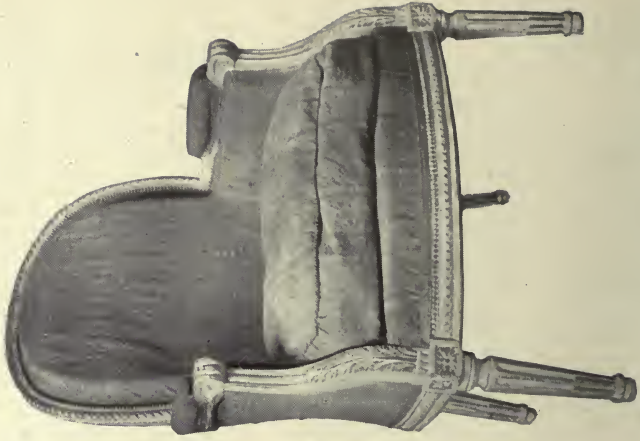


FIG. 51. SMALL BERGÈRE, IN PAINTED WOOD.  
Pl. 34

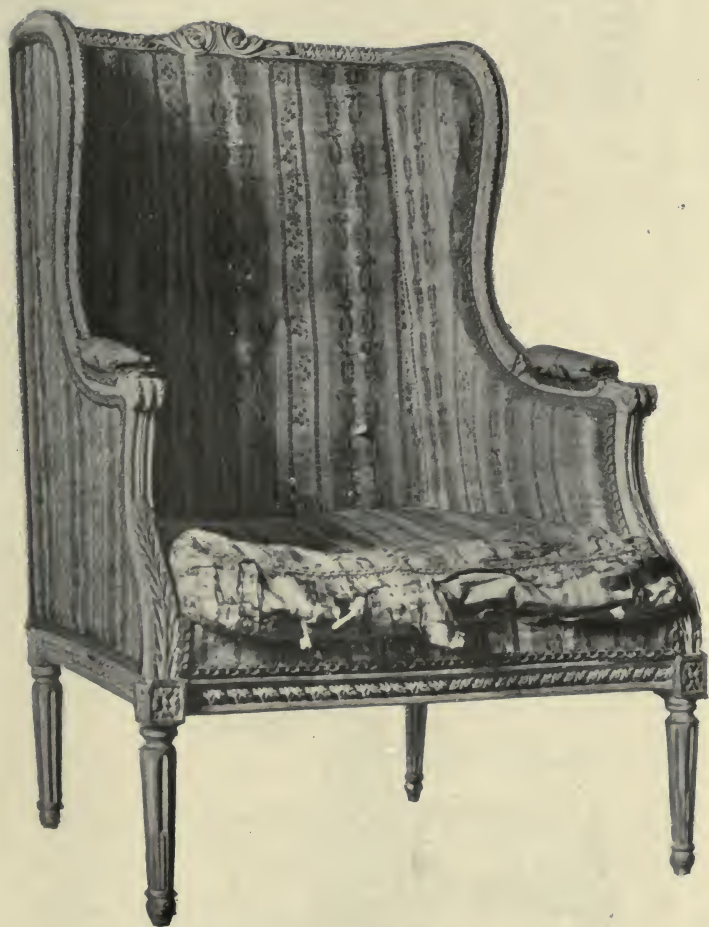


FIG. 52 "CONFESSIONAL" BERGÈRE, IN PAINTED WOOD

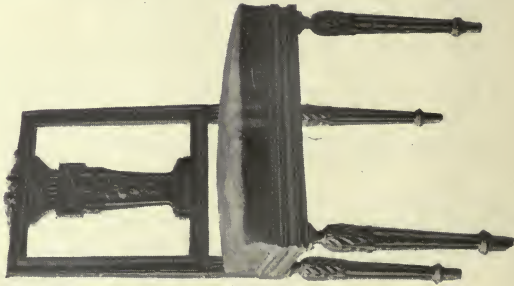


FIG. 53. CHAIR WITH FLAT BALUSTER  
BACK, IN GILT WOOD,

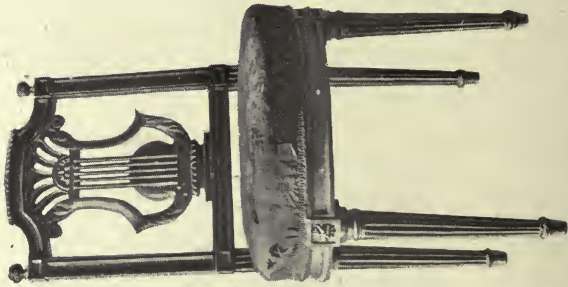


FIG. 54. LYRE-BACKED CHAIR,  
IN GILT WOOD,

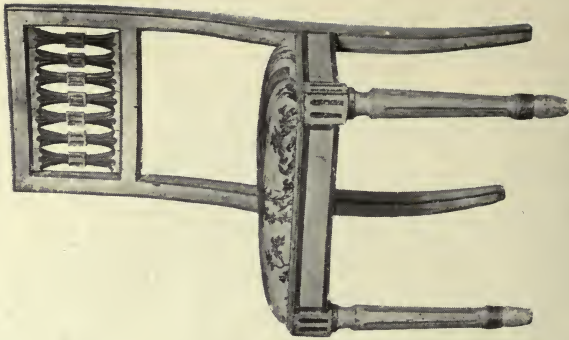
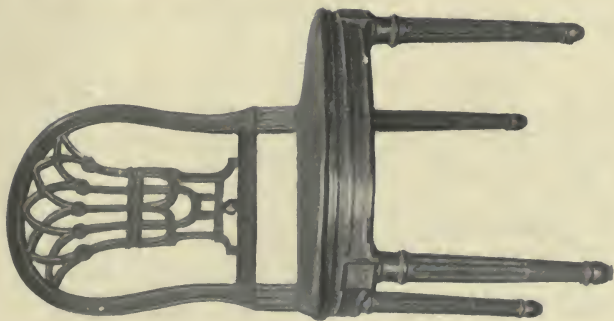
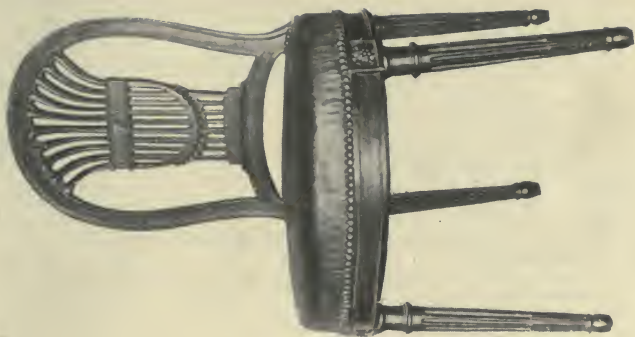
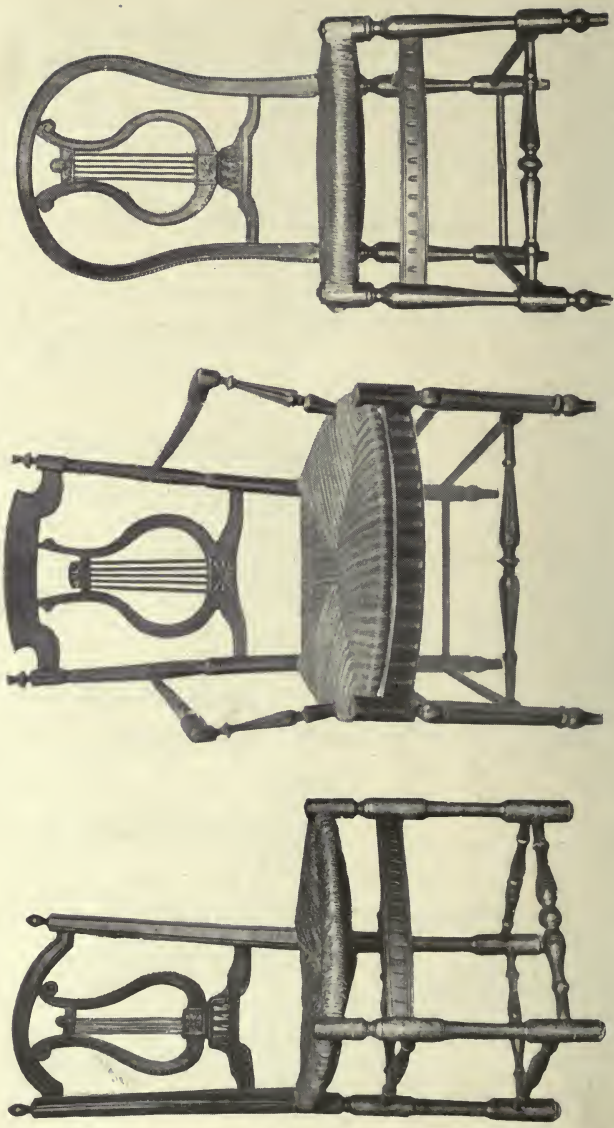


FIG. 55. CHAIR WITH OPEN  
BACK, IN PAINTED WOOD.





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



FIGS. 59, 60 and 61. STRAW-SEATED CHAIRS AND ARM-CHAIR WITH LYRE BACKS. *Pl.* 38

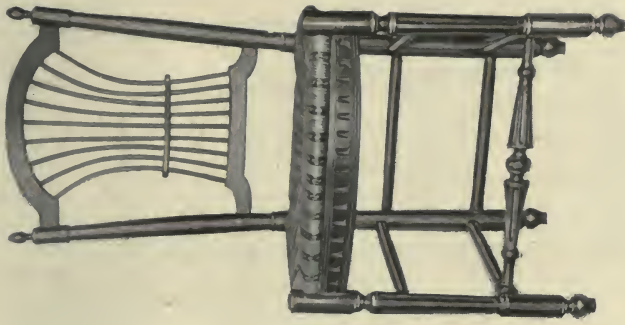


FIG. 64. STRAW-SEATED CHAIR  
WITH SHEAF BACK. *Pl. 39*

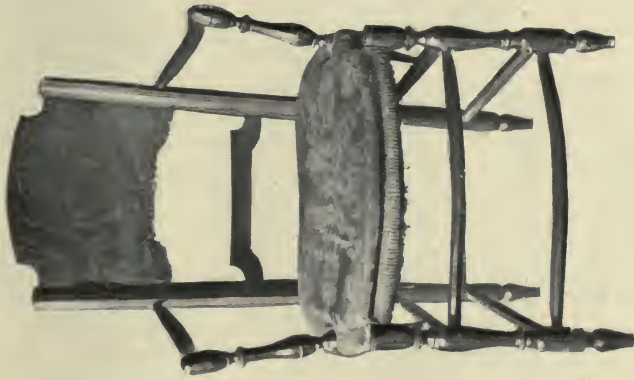


FIG. 63. STRAW-SEATED ARM-  
CHAIR WITH CUSHIONS



FIG. 62. CARVED, STRAW-SEATED  
CHAIR.

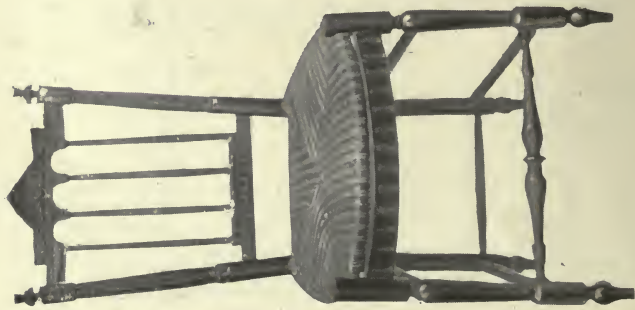


FIG. 65. STRAW-SEATED CHAIR  
FROM THE DORDOGNE, IN  
CHERRY-WOOD.

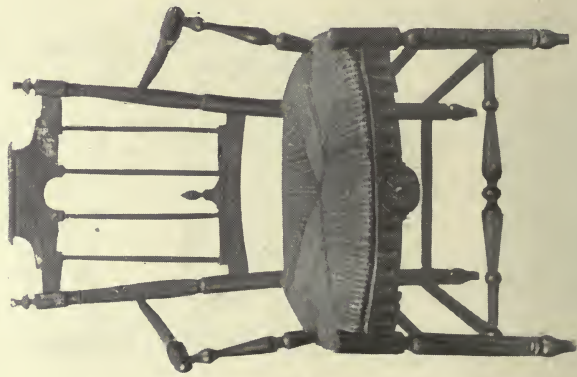


FIG. 66. STRAW-SEATED ARM-CHAIR  
FROM THE DORDOGNE, IN  
CHERRY-WOOD.

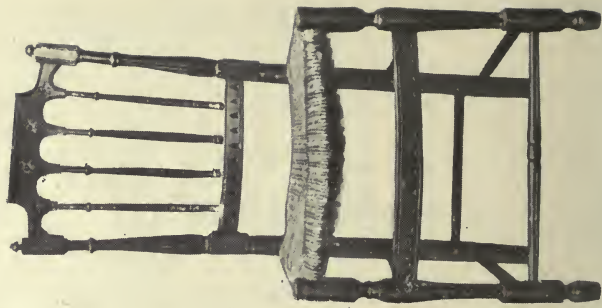


FIG. 67. STRAW-SEATED CHAIR  
FROM THE DORDOGNE, IN  
CHERRY-WOOD.

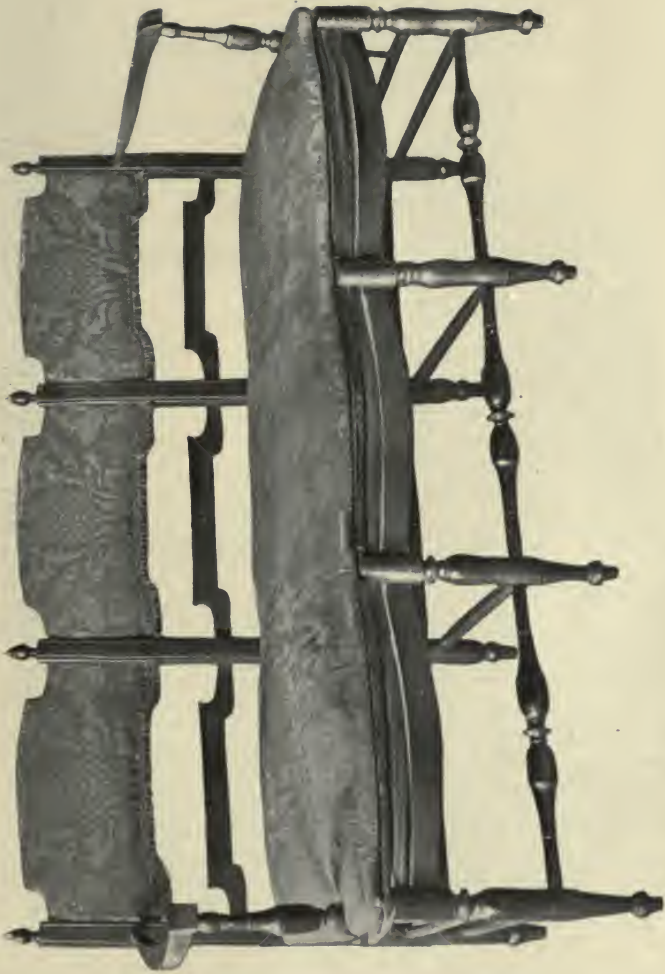


FIG. 68. STRAW-SEATED SOFA FROM PROVENCE, WITH ITS CUSHIONS.  
*Pl. 41*



FIG 69. SOFA IN GILT WOOD, UPHOLSTERED IN BROCHE SILK  
(END OF THE STYLE).  
*Pl.* 42

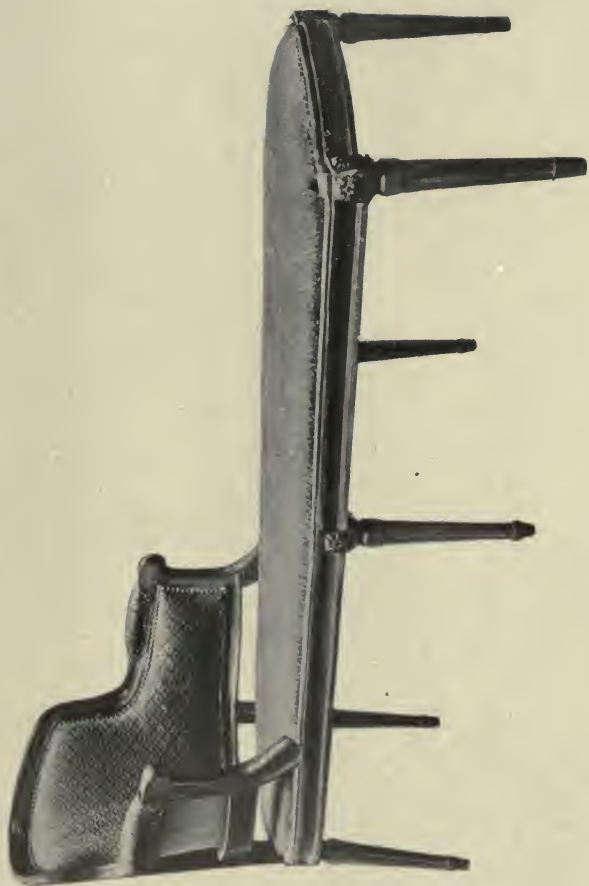


FIG. 70. CHAISE LONGUE IN ONE PIECE, GONDOLA SHAPE.  
*Pl. 43*

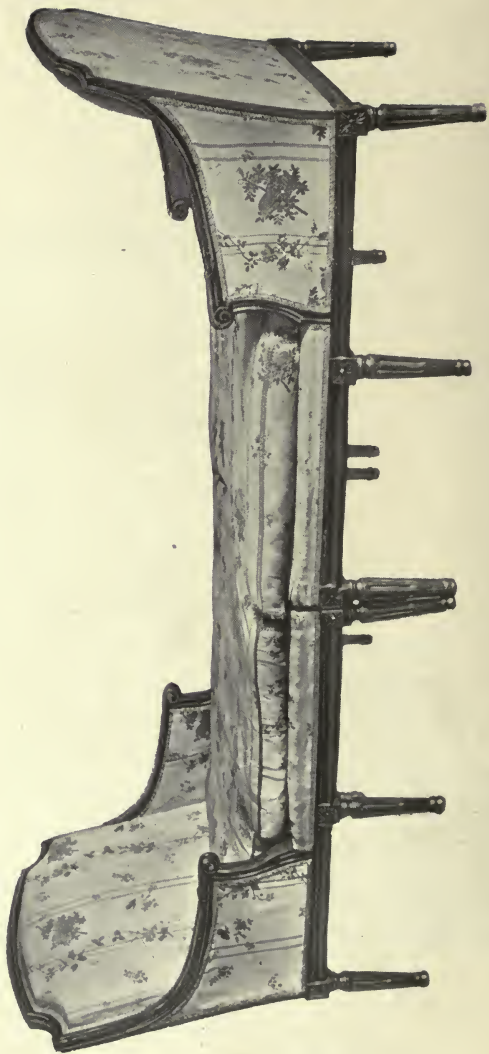


FIG. 71. CHAISE LONGUE BRISÉE, IN TWO EQUAL PIECES. *Pl. 44*





FIG. 72. CHAISE LONGUE BRISÉE, IN TWO UNEQUAL PIECES.  
*Pl. 45*



FIG. 73. CHAISE LONGUE BRISÉE, IN THREE PIECES.  
*Pl. 46*



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



FIG. 75. ANGEL BED WITH "HAT"-SHAPED DOSSIERS IN PAINTED WOOD.  
*Pl. 48*



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

*Pl. 49*

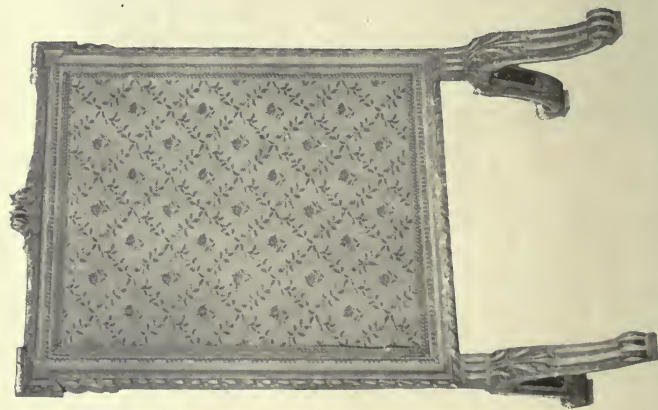


FIG. 77. SCREEN IN PAINTED WOOD AND  
BROCHÉ SILK.



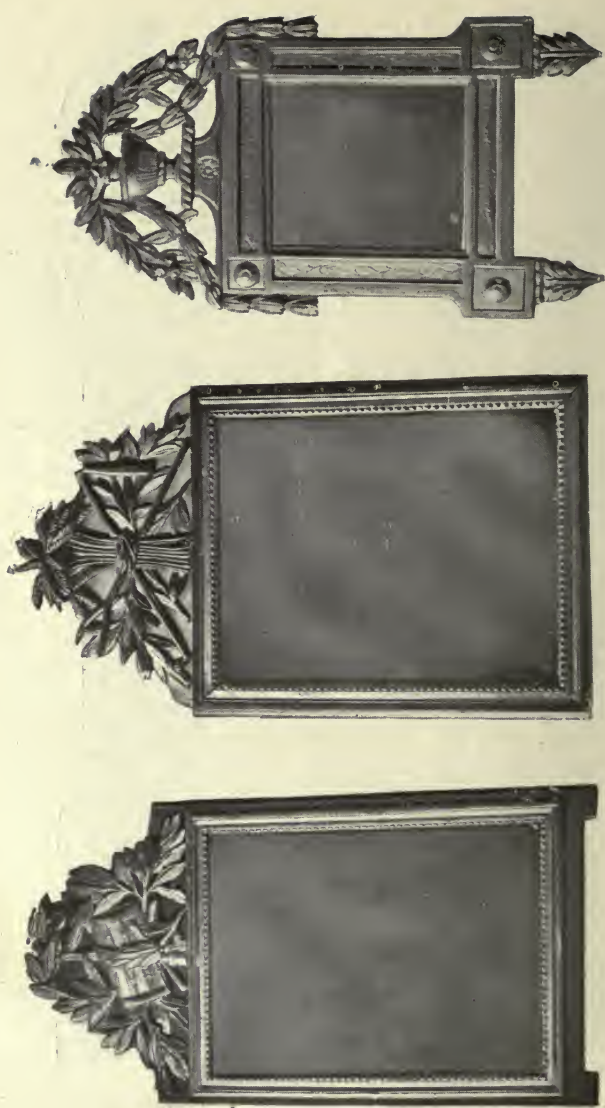
FIG. 78. SCREEN IN WALNUT AND  
BROCATELLE. *Pl. 50*



FIG. 79. CASE CLOCK IN OAK, PARIS.



FIG. 80. CASE CLOCK IN OAK FROM LORRAINE.



FIGS. 81, 82 and 83. SMALL MIRRORS WITH CARVED PEDIMENT, IN GILT WOOD.  
*Pl. 52*





FIG. 84. CUPBOARD, FROM THE GIRONDE, IN WALNUT  
(BEGINNING OF THE STYLE). *Pl. 53*



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



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

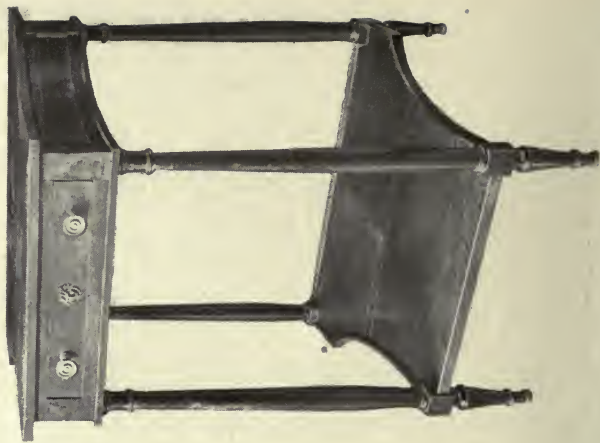


FIG. 88. CONSOLE WITH ARCHED SIDES, IN PEARWOOD (BEGINNING OF THE STYLE).  
*Pl. 56*

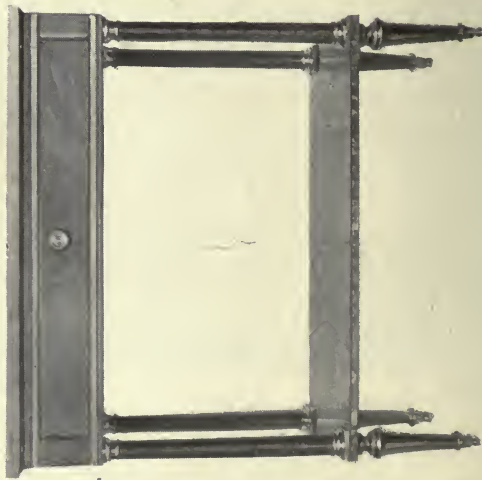


FIG. 87. CONSOLE IN ROSEWOOD INLAID WITH BRASS (BEGINNING OF THE STYLE).



FIG. 89. CONSOLE WITH CARYATIDES, IN MAHOGANY AND BRONZE.  
*Pl. 57*



FIG. 90. SLOPE-FRONTED BUREAU WITH REVOLUTIONARY EMBLEM.  
*Pl. 58*

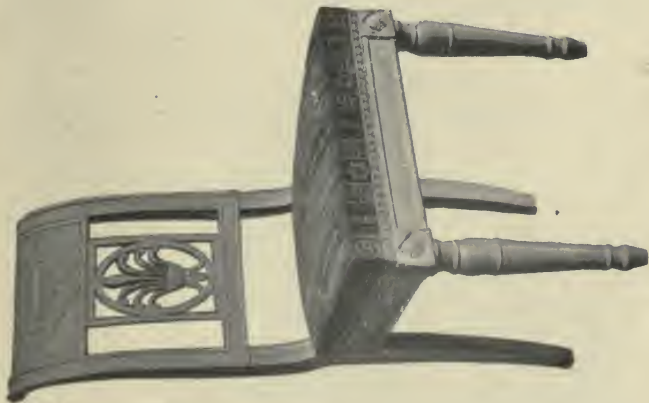


FIG. 91. CHAIR WITH ROLLED BACK,  
IN GILT WOOD.

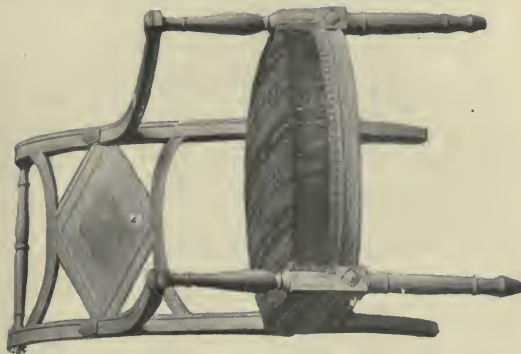


FIG. 92. ARM-CHAIR WITH OPEN ROLLED  
BACK, IN PAINTED WOOD. *Pl.* 59

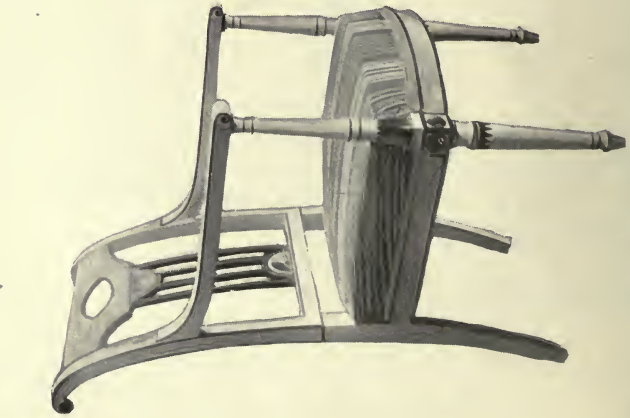


FIG. 93. ARM-CHAIR WITH ROLLED BACK, IN  
PAINTED WOOD.

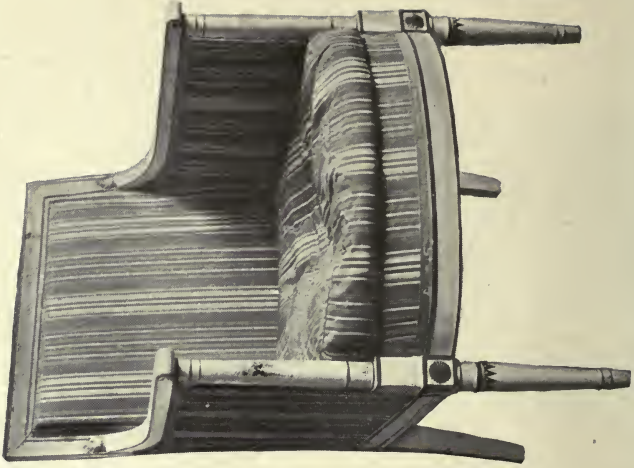


FIG. 94. SMALL BERGÈRE, IN PAINTED WOOD.  
Pl. 60





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

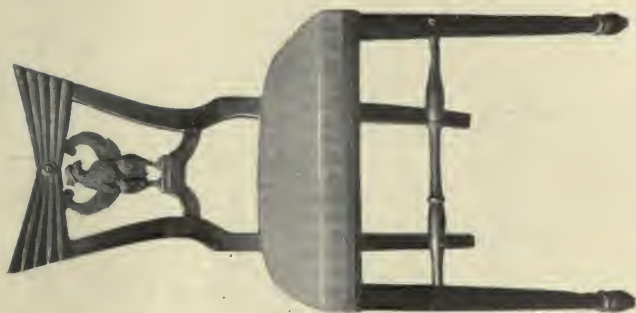


FIG. 96. CHAIR OF THE REVOLUTIONARY  
PERIOD, IN MAHOGANY.



FIG. 97. MÉRIDIEUNE IN MAHOGANY AND GILT BRONZE.



FIG. 98. MAHOGANY CHAISE LONGUE IN THE ANTIQUE STYLE.  
*Pl.* 63

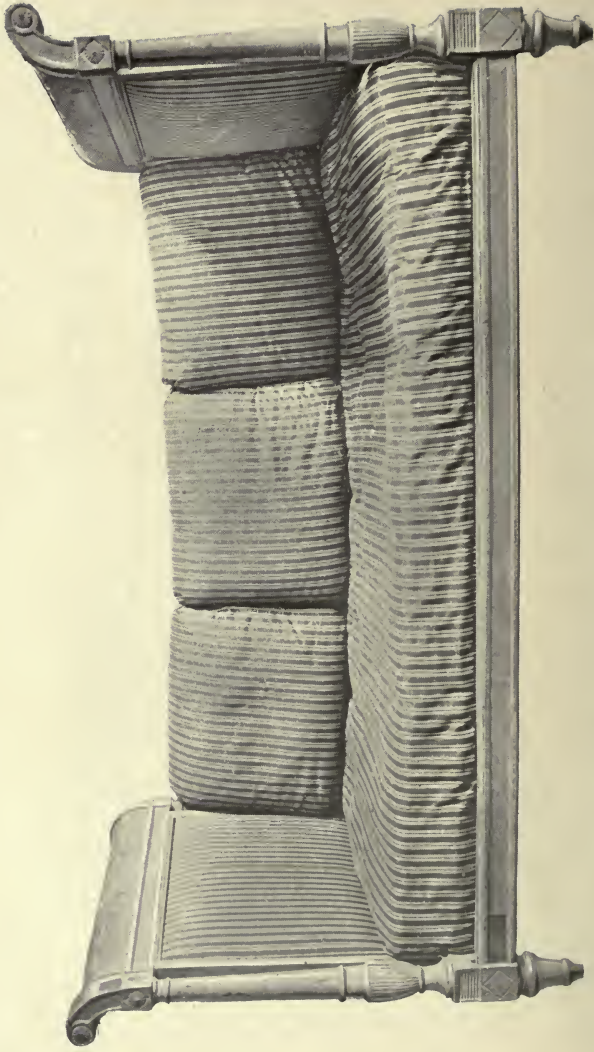


FIG. 99. BED WITH ROLLED DOSSIERS, IN PAINTED WOOD (BEGINNING OF THE STYLE). USED AS A DIVAN.  
Pl. 64

# INDEX - GLOSSARY

- ACANTHUS leaf in ornament, 48  
 " Accotoirs," 69  
 Alembert, d', 41  
 Allegorical furniture after  
 Egyptian campaign, 29  
*Amateur (L')*, comedy, 9  
 "American bureau," the, 66  
 "Angel bed" (*see* "Lit d'ange")  
 Antilles, woods from the, 49  
 Antin, Capucins d', convent of, 17  
 Antiquity, Greco-Roman, influence on style of furniture, 1-4, 39, 40, 86  
     sacred character of, 95-96  
 Antoinette, Marie, *escritoire* and commode of, by Riesner, 11  
     *boudoir* at Fontainebleau, 17, 49  
     chair of, 74  
     jewel cupboard by Schwerdfeger, 19  
 Arabesques, 48-49  
 Aranjuez, 34  
 Arcade, Rue de l', 17  
 "Arcatures (à)," 73  
 Architecture, the Greek manner in, 5, 6, 17  
     Louis XVI Style in, 78, 79  
 Arcola, 28  
 Arles, buffets from, 86-87  
 Arm-chairs of the transition period, 9, 10  
     antique, of the Revolutionary period, 23  
     Empire Style, 103  
 Armoires, Louis XV Style in the provinces, 52  
     Empire Style, 115  
     from the Gironde, 53, 54  
     from Provence, 54  
     "taking of the Bastille," 53  
 Arthur, paper-maker, 79  
 Artois, Comte d', sleeping chamber of, 18  
 "Asperge," 46  
 Assembly, the Constituent, 21  
 "Athéniennes," 20, 50, 64  
 Aubert, designer, 20  
 Aubusson, carpets, 131  
 Avril, Etienne, 13, 19  
 BACHAUMONT, *Mémoires Secrets*, 9  
 Backs of chairs, 70-71  
 Bagatelle, style, 17  
 "Balustres," 47  
 Barras, influence, 26  
 Barry, Madame du, 37  
 Barthe, N. T., 9  
 Barthélemy, Abbé, *Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis*, 15  
 Bas-reliefs, 97  
 Bastille, taking of the, "armoire," 53  
 Beauharnais, Hôtel de, 98 *and note*  
 Beauvais tapestry, 28  
 Bedroom, furnishing the, 87-89  
     an "Empire," 130-31  
 Beds, Louis XVI Style, 75  
     boat, 122-23  
     Empire Style, 121  
     the "lit d'ange," 75-76, 88, 121  
 Bellangé, 28  
 Bellicard, *see* Cochin  
 Bellona, 29  
 Benedictines, the, 5  
 Beneman, Guillaume, 19  
 Bergères, popularity, 71-72  
 Berthaud, upholsterer, 28  
 Boat beds, 122, 123  
 "Bonheur du jour," 56, 66, 82, 116-17

- "Bonnetières," 89  
 Bookcase bureau, 120  
 Bosio, Jean, 24  
 Boucassin, 90  
 Boucher, Sieur, 21-22  
 Boudins, 45  
 Boudon-Goubeau, III  
 Bouillotte, game of, 63  
 Boulle, André-Charles, 19  
 "Bout de bureau," 65  
 Brass inlay, 13, 50-51  
     gilded, 56  
     leg ornaments, 61  
     pierced brass, 55  
 Breakfast table, the, 64  
 Brimborions, 44  
 Brongniart, works, 17, 18  
 Bronze, artists in, 44  
 Bronzes, the "ancient," 9  
     Empire, 107-8  
 Brosses, Président de, *Lettres*, 3, 4  
 Brown, "Etruscan," 23  
 Brumaire, *coup d'état* of, 31  
 Brun (Le), 16  
 "Bucranes," 48  
 Buffet, à "Normandy," 86-87  
 "Buffet-crédence," 87  
 Buffets, style in the provinces, 52  
 "Buffets-Vaisselleis," 90  
 Buonaparte, General, mansion,  
     28-29  
 Bureau-ministre, 65-66, 120  
 "Bureaux à dessus brisé," 120  
 "Bureaux de dames," 112  
 Bureaux, Louis XVI Style, 65-66  
     18th century, 120  
 Burette, 95  
  
 CABINET-MAKERS of Louis XVI,  
     10, 18-19  
 "Cabinet" mounted on legs, 17th  
     century, 57  
 "Cabriolet (en)," 70  
 Caffieri, bronzes, 45  
 Caillot, *Mémoires* quoted, 79-82,  
     85, 87, 89, 131  
 "Camaïeux," 17  
 "Canapés," 74-75  
 "Canaux," 46  
  
 Cane-seated chairs, 72-73  
 "Cannelures," 46  
 Canova, 33  
 "Capital," the, in ornament, 47  
 Card-tables, Louis XVI, 63  
 Carlin, Martin, 12, 19, 95  
 Carnavalet Museum, 53  
 "Carreaux," 72  
 Caryatides, 20, 47, 56, 106-107  
 Cased clocks, 89-90  
 "Cassolette," 118  
 Castors, use of, 61  
 "Cathedra," 20  
 Caylus, Comte de, 3, 4  
 Cellierier, 17  
 Ceramics, Greco-Etruscan, 15  
 Cerceau, A., 2  
 Chairs, Louis XVI, 68-71  
     à la capucine, 72 *and note*  
     backs of, 70-74  
     "canapes," 74-75  
     cane-seated, 72-73  
     "consoles montantes," 70  
     "consoles reculées," 69-70  
     coverings for, 81  
     dining-room, 87  
     Empire, 123-27  
     "en cabriolet," 70  
     lyre-backed, 74  
     mahogany, 72  
     straw, 72-74  
     the "bergère," 71-72  
 "Chaise-longue," the, 75, 88,  
     126-27  
 Chalgrin, works of, 17  
 "Chandelle," 46  
 Chantérine, Rue, 17-18, 28  
 "Chapiteau," the, 77-78  
 "Chaplets" of olives, etc., 46  
 Chateaubriand, 16  
 Chénier, André, poems, 16  
 Cherry-wood, use, 74  
 Chiffonnières. 60, 64, 118  
 Chimney-pieces, Louis XVI  
     Style, 79  
 Chinese lacquer panels, 12  
     papers, 77  
     trinkets, 86  
 "Chinoise (à la)" bed, 75

- Choiseul-Gouffier, *Grèce-Pittor-  
esque*, 14  
 "Chutes," 47, 49, 56  
 "Chutes de guirlandes," 48  
 Clocks, ornamental, 16  
   cased, 89-90  
   Louis XVI Style, 77  
 Cochin, 3  
   article in the *Mercur*e, 6-9  
   Bellicard and, *Observation  
  sur les antiquités d'Hercu-  
  lanum*, 4-5  
 "Coin," the, 55  
 Colours, light, vogue of, 79  
   for drawing rooms, 80-81  
 "Column," the, use in ornament,  
 46-47  
 "Commode ouverte à l'an-  
 glaise," 59  
 "Commodes à dessus brisé," 60  
 Commodes "en console," 58  
 Commodes of the transition  
 period, 10  
   construction, 58-59  
   faults in decoration, 59-60  
   Louis XVI, 57-58  
   Provençal, 58  
   the half-moon, 59  
 Compiègne, 34  
 Conciergerie, the, 74  
 Condillac, 41  
 Condorcet, Lycée, 17  
 "Confidants," 75  
 Console pier glass, 59  
 Console, the, 47  
   Empire Style, 118-19  
   Louis XVI Style, 62-63  
 "Console-commode," 119  
 "Consoles d'accotoirs," 70  
 "Consoles montantes," 70  
 "Consoles reculées," 69-70  
 Convention, furniture for the, 25  
 "Corbeil de vannerie," 72  
 Corinthian style, 109  
 "Côtes," 46  
 Country house furnishing, 89  
 Cressent, 95  
 Cupboards, Louis XVI, 52-54  
   corner, 55-56  
 Curule chairs, 20  
 DARTHENAY, *memoiré historique*,  
 4  
 David, F. A. (*see* Maréchal,  
 Sylvain)  
 David, Jacques Louis, influence, 6  
   *Belisarius*, 16  
   canvases of, 99  
   his antique pieces, 24  
   Napoleon and, 31  
   *Oath of the Horatii*, 16  
   on ornamentation, 42  
   portrait of Mme. Récamier,  
   127  
   studio, 130  
 Decoration, internal, end 18th  
 century, 17  
 Deffand, Marquise du, 38  
 Delacroix, *quoted*, 40  
 Delorme, Philibert, 2  
 "Denticules," 45  
 Designers, furniture, 20  
 Desmalter, Jacob, work of, 25,  
 29, 33, 95, 112  
 Diderot, 5, 38, 39.  
 Dining-room, furnishing the,  
 86-87  
 Dining-tables, extending, 62  
 "Diphros," chair, 97  
 Directoire Style, 17, 26-27, 69  
   *and note*, 115  
 Dolphins, 48  
 "Don d'Amitié," inscription, 45  
 Doric frieze, 47  
   style in brasses, 109  
 "Dossiers," 76  
 "Dossiers en chapeau," 71  
 "Doucine," 100  
 Drawing-room, the walls, 79-80  
   furniture, Caillot, *quoted*, 81-  
   82  
   knick-knacks, 85-86  
   mixing of styles, 82-84  
 Dresden ornaments, 81, 85  
*Duchesses*, 75, 88  
 Dugourc, designer, 20  
 EBONY, disuse and re-appearance  
 of, 49-50

- Egyptomania, 15, 29, 108-9  
 Elastiques, à, style of upholstery, 126  
 Elysée, the, 34  
 Empire furniture, history of the style, 1-2, 9-10, 19  
   bronzes, 107-8  
   characteristics, 93-100  
   colours used, 84-85  
   development of the, 20-21, 26, 30-34  
   ornaments, 108-10  
   technique, 100-107  
 "Entrelacs," 9, 45, 62  
 "Entrelacs à rosaces," 56  
 Escritoire, the large drop-front, 56  
   Empire Style, 116  
 Escorial, 34  
 Etruscan brown, 23  
   goblets, 28  
 "Evoc," 28
- FÉDÉRATION, day of the, 22  
   beds à la, 121  
 "Feuilles d'acanthé," 45  
 "Feuilles d'eau," 45  
 Flat gilding, 45, 111  
 "Fleuron," 126  
 "Fleurs de Vincennes," 65  
 Flower-tables, 120-121  
 Flutings of marquetry, 46-47  
 Fontaine, Pierre, and Charles Percier, art of, 2, 18, 25, 28, 31-34  
   allegorical pieces, 30  
   designs for flower-tables, 120-121  
   Egyptian pieces, 29  
   influence on the art of furnishing, 93-96  
   on compromise, 97-98  
   on the new mouldings, 114  
   use of new lines, 99-101, 103  
 Fontainebleau, boudoir of Marie Antoinette, 17, 49  
   furniture in style of Louis XIV, 18  
   Napoleon's throne, 112
- Fontainebleau, work of Beneman, 19  
 Four-poster bed, 75  
 Francois I, 2  
 French decorative art, Egyptian architecture in, 15
- GABRIEL, architect, 59  
 Garde-Meubles, palace, façades, 11, 59  
 Gardeur, discovery, 114  
 Giovanni of Udine, 49  
 Gironde, armoire from, 53  
 "Godrons," 45  
 Goncourt Bros., *cited*, 21  
 Gouthière, 45, 111  
 "Gouttes," 47, 56  
 "Grands façonnés," 129  
 Greco-Etruscan ceramics, 15  
 Greco-Roman *motifs*, 108-9  
 "Greek manner," articles in the, 3, 5-9, 69, 77  
   fashions under the Empire, 117-18  
   influence at time of Revolution, 21  
   monumental architecture, 17  
 Greeks, furniture of the, 96-98  
 Greuze, 39  
 Grimm, Diderot and, *Correspondence littéraire*, 7  
 Grotesques, 48  
 Guéridon, the, 64, 117-18  
 Guilds, suppressed by the Revolution, 25-26
- HAMILTON collection, some gems, 11, 15  
 Hancarville, 15  
 Handles, "drop," of Louis XVI epoch, 57-58  
 "Haricots," ornament, 54  
 "Hat" design, the, 71, 73, 76  
 Hellenic art, Roman, and, 15  
 Herculaneum, discovery, 4  
   book on, 4-5  
   style, 20  
 Hervieux, Mlle. d', mansion of, 17-18



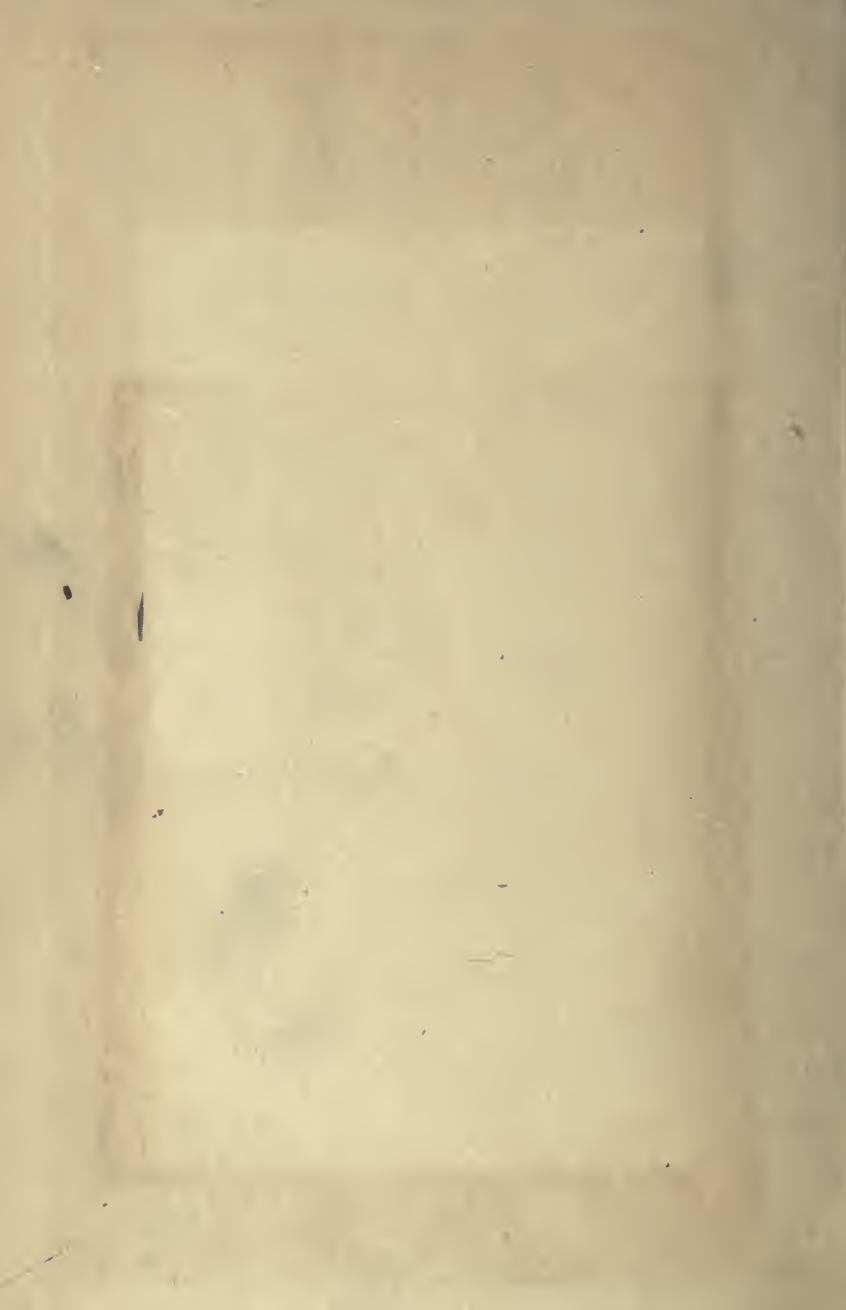
- Homer, influence seen in salon of 1785, 16, 17  
 "Horse-shoe" back, 73  
 Hôpital, Marquis de l', *Mémoire historique*, 4  
 Howard, Henry, 112
- "IMPERIALE (à l')," beds, 75  
 Indian ornaments, 86  
 Inlay work, 13, 112  
 Inscriptions, Académie des, 3, 5  
 Interiors of the Republic, 28  
 Ionic capital, use, 47  
 Italian tour, fashion of the, 3  
 "Italienne (à l')," beds, 75
- JACOB, Georges, 24, 25, 113, 124  
 Jacquart loom, the, 129  
 Japanese trinkets, 86  
 Jardinière, the, 65  
 Joiners, guild of, 50, 73  
 Jons, 46  
 Josephine, restoration of Malmaison, 31, 132  
*Joues pleines*, 71  
*Journal de la Mode et du Gout*, 21, 23  
 Jouy linen, 88
- KAUFMANN, Angelica, 33  
 Keyholes, Louis XVI Style, 55, 56, 58  
 Kneading-trough, the, 87  
 Knick-knacks, popularity, 85-86  
 Knitting, the rage for, 64
- LACQUER, the Martin, 49  
 Lalonde, designer, 20  
 "Lampas," 129  
 "Lanternes," 81 *note*  
 Lassalle, Philippe de, 80  
 "Lavabo," the, 119-20  
 Ledoux, 2  
 Legion of Honour, Palace of, 17  
 Legs, characteristic, 60-61  
   bed, 76  
   chair, 68, 69  
 Leleu, 13, 19  
 Lepalisse, M. de, *cited*, 93
- Leroy, 3  
 Lescott, Pierre, 2  
 Levasseur, 18  
 Lignereux, 95  
 Lines of construction, transformation in, 9-10  
 "Listel," 160  
 "Lit d'ange," 75-76, 88, 121  
 Literature, the antique in, 15-16  
 Livy, influence seen in salon of 1785, 16-17  
 Louis XII, 2  
 Louis XIV Style, copied by cabinet-makers of Louis XVI, 18-21, 37  
   bureaux, 66  
   colour, 84-85  
   ornaments, 45  
 Louis XV Style, decay of, 1-3  
   a drawing-room, 82  
   a "Louis Quinze," by Riesener, 10  
   armoires, 54, 76  
   basket-shaped ottomans, 74  
   beds, 75  
   bronzes, 107  
   bureau in the Louvre, 11  
   card-tables, 63  
   character, 5-9, 37, 73, 89, 115  
   *note*  
   commodes, 57, 60  
   form, 21  
   marquetry, 13  
   *motifs*, 49  
   mouldings, 11, 43  
   ornaments, 45, 54  
   style of clocks, 77  
   tables, 61-62  
 Louis XVI, taste for the antique under, 14  
   society of the age, 37-40  
 Louis XVI Style, history, 1-2, 9, 10, 21  
   armoires, 54  
   beauty of the pieces, 43-44  
   beds, 75  
   characteristics, 11-12, 37-40, 115  
   colour, 84-85

- Louis XVI Style, commodes, 57  
 definition of surfaces, 42  
 difference from Louis XV Style, 83-84  
 escritoirs, 116  
 lines, 99-100, III  
*motifs*, 45-49, 54  
 moulding, 43  
 non-development in the provinces, 52  
 ornamentation, 44-46  
 pieces with revolutionary emblems, 21  
 principle of the straight line, 40-42  
 tapestries, 80
- Louis-Phillipe, fashions under, 84-85, 132-33
- Louveciennes, pavilion of, 37
- Louvre, the, bureau of Louis XV, 11  
 restoration, 31  
 sample of Beneman, 19
- "Lumière (bras de)," 81 *note*
- Lions, looms of, 80
- Lyre, the, *motif*, 72  
 lyre-backs, 73-74
- MAHOGANY, vogue of, 49-50, 72, III
- "Mains," Louis XVI, *pendantes*, 57-58  
*fixes*, 58
- Malmaison, restoration, 31, 34
- Manchettes, 69
- Marat, *Ami du Peuple*, quoted, 25-26
- Maréchal, Sylvian, F. A. David and, *Antiquités d'Herculanum*, 5
- Marguerite, the, in ornament, 69
- Marie-Louise, 132
- Marquetry, Roentgen and, 13-14  
 flutings of, 46-47  
 for escritoirs, 56
- Marquise, the, 82
- Mars, Champ de, the triumphal arch, 22
- Marseilles, 90
- Martin lacquer, the, 49
- "Mascarons," 49
- Mercur de France*, the "Supplication," 6-7
- "Meridiennes," 127
- Merveilleuses, the, 27-28
- Mésengère, La, *Journal des Modes et des Dames*, 27
- Meslay, or Meslée, Rue, 25
- Metal ornaments on seats, 112-13
- "Militaire (à la)," bed, 75
- Mirrors, small, 77, 78  
 movable, 119-120
- Modillions, 54
- Montesquieu, 15-16
- "Montgolfière (en)," 72
- Montigny, 18
- Moreau, 24
- Mosaics of Florence, 14
- "Motifs," ornamental, 46-47  
 antique, 52  
 Louis XVI, 54  
 the drapery, 58
- Mouldings, beaded, 11-12  
 atrophied, under the Empire, 100-101  
 Louis XVI Style, 43
- "Moyenne," the, 77-78
- NAPOLEON, First Consul, 30-31  
 throne at Fontainebleau, 112
- Neuwied, 13
- Normandy cupboards, 52-54  
 buffets, 86-87
- Nouveaux Riches after 1795, 26-27
- OBERKAMPF, 88
- Odiot, 22
- Oëben, works of, 10, 11, 27, 95
- Ornaments, Louis XVI Style, 44-49  
 Empire Style, 108-110
- Osmont, Hôtel d', 17
- Ottomans, 74-75
- "Oves," 45
- "PADUASOY," 129
- "Paestum Style," 17
- Painting, the antique in, 16-17

- Panels, definition of, 42-43  
 "Panurge (à la)," 75  
 "Papiers des Indes," 77  
 "Pâtisseries," 79  
*Paul et Virginie*, 16  
 Pediments, mirror, 77-78  
 Peinture et de Sculpture, Académie de, 3  
 "Petit Dunkerque," the, 44  
 Percier, Charles (*see* Fontaine, Pierre)  
 Pianoforte, the, 129  
 "Pieds de biche," 9, 20, 48, 57, 58, 60, 62  
 "Pieds en carquois," 61  
 "Pieds en gainé," 60  
 "Pilastres," 47  
 Piranesi, 14-15  
 "Polonaise (à la)," beds, 75-76  
 Pompadour, Mme. de, 3, 5, 37  
 Pompeii excavations, influence on taste of the time, 4, 24, 40, 64, 86  
 Porcelain plaques, 50  
 Printed linens, 90  
 Provence, armoires from, 54  
     commodes from, 58  
 Provincial workshops, work during the Revolution, 22  
 Pyrenees, buffet from, 90 *note*  
 "QUART de rond," 100  
 Quinquet, lamps of, 130  
 "RAIS de cœur," 45  
 "Rang de feuilles," 69  
 "Rang de perles," 69  
 "Rangs de piastres," 9, 45-46, 69  
 "Rangs de Sapèques," 46  
 Rascalon, 95  
 Ravier, bronzes by, 108, 131  
 Récamier, Mme., portrait by David, 24, 127  
     decoration of her house, 28  
*Recueil d'antiquités*, etc., 3  
 Regency, style of the, 21, 69-70  
 Rempart, Rue Basse du, 17  
 Renaissance, the first French, 2  
     influence on style of ornament, 48-49  
 Republic, style of the, 24  
     interiors of the, 28  
     turners under the, 100  
 Restoration Style, 34, 132-33  
 Réveillon, papers made by, 79-80, 88  
 Revolutionary period, style, 19, 21, 115  
     chairs, 125  
     pieces of the, 83-84  
     symbols on Louis XVI pieces, 21-22, 58  
 Ribbons, knots of, 14, 49  
 Riesener, Jean Henri, 10-11, 19, 27, 43, 95  
 "Rinceaux," 17, 19, 20, 45, 47, 48, 54, 124  
 Rivoli, 28  
 "Rocaille," 6  
 Rococo Style, 54  
 Roederer, he *Opuscles*, *quoted*, 103-5  
 Roentgen, David, marquetry of, 13-14  
 Roman architecture, influence on the Louis XVI Style, 40, 43  
 Romans, furniture of the, 96-98  
 Rondin, 103  
 Rosace, ornament, 23, 43, 45, 69, 108  
 Rousseau, 38, 65  
     construction of the Hôtel de Salm, 17  
     love of antiquity, 5  
 Royale, Rue, 60  
 "Rubans enroulés," 45  
 "Rudenté," 46  
*Ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grèce*, 3  
 SAINT-ANTOINE, Faubourg, cabinet makers, 22  
 Saint-Cloud, restoration, 31, 34  
 Salm, Hôtel de, 17  
 Salon of 1785, 16-17  
 "Salons de compagnie," 82  
 Saunier, Claude C., 13, 19  
 Schwerdfeger, 19  
 Screens, 76-77

- Seats, Empire, 122-23  
 "Secrétaire à abattant," 56  
 "Secrétaires-commodes," 60  
 Séverin, cabinet-maker, 18  
 Sèvres china, popularity, 50  
     plaques, 56, 65, 111  
 "Sheaf" back, 73  
 Skirts of the Regency, 69-70  
 Sofa à le Pommier, 127  
 Sofas, Empire, 126-27  
 Soubise, Hôtel de, 17  
 Soufflot, 2, 3  
 Soupière, 121, 124  
 Straw chairs, 72-74, 126  
 Symbols, Revolutionary, on  
     Louis XVI pieces, 21-22  
 Symmetry in Empire Style, 102-3  
  
 "TABLE à fleurs," 65  
 "Table de nuit," 67  
*Tableaux tirés d' Homère et de Virgile*, 3-4  
 "Table-bouillotte," 63  
 "Table-coiffeuse," the, 119-20  
 Tables, crooked-legged, 9  
     à l'anglaise, 62  
     card, 63  
     consoles, 62-63  
     Empire, 117-18  
     legs of, 60-61  
     Louis XVI small, 62-64  
     the cross-piece, 61-62  
     the frame, 62  
     writing, 65-66  
 "Tables-dessertes," 86  
 "Tabliers," 47  
 Talma, 28  
 "Termes," 118  
 "Tête du pied," 61  
 Thomire, bronzes, 108  
 Thorwaldsen, 33  
 Toilet arm-chairs, 72  
 Toilet tables, Louis XVI, 63-64  
 "Toilette," 18th century, 119  
  
 "Tombeau, (à la)," bed, 75  
 "Tores," 45  
 "Toupies," 55  
 "Transition" pieces, 52  
 "Tricoteuse," the, 64  
 Triglyphs, 47, 56  
 Trinkets, the Greek manner in, 6  
     popularity of, 85-86  
 Tuileries, restoration, 31  
 Turkey carpets, 129  
 Turners, guild of, 50, 73  
 "Turque (à la)," bed, 75  
 Tuscan order, the, 109  
 Twin beds, 88  
  
 VANDERBILT collection, the, 11  
 Vandières, Marquis de, 3  
 "Various ways of ornamenting chimney pieces," 15  
 Vatican Loggias, arabesques, 49  
 Vendôme Column, 29 *note*  
 Versailles, 18  
 Vigée-Lebrun, Mme., *Souvenirs*,  
     *cited*, 27-28  
     style, 65  
 Vitrine, the, 55-56  
 Vitruvius, 5  
 Vivant-Denon, savant, 29  
  
 Wallace Collection, 19  
 Wall-hangings, Empire, 128-29  
 Wall-papers, 80  
 Walpole, Horace, 38  
 Wedgwood, bas-reliefs, 50  
     plaques, 112  
 Weisweiler, Adam, 20, 51  
 Winkelmann, J., 14  
 Windsor Castle, redecoration,  
     34, 112  
 Woods, used under the Empire,  
     111  
 Writing tables, 65-66  
  
 X-shaped stools, 20





4  
128

1031

~~749.24~~  
~~749.24~~

749.24

THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF ART,

NK  
2240  
F34  
v.IV  
c.2

